What every mayor or councilor should know about legal roles and responsibilities, about representing the community, and about Oregon city government

Acknowledgment

This publication was initiated by a group of past presidents of the League of Oregon Cities who recognized a need. They volunteered their time and expertise in an effort to build leadership capacity and strengthen city government in Oregon.

Special thanks are extended to the following past presidents for their personal and professional expertise and the collective effort that created this document.

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This publication is addressed primarily to candidates for city council. It serves as a reference and deals with a variety of important topics in a condensed manner. The publication is intended to provide an orientation to individuals who wish to assume a leadership role in municipal government.

Elected city officials and candidates are encouraged to contact the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) for further information regarding any topic presented in this publication. After you have been elected, you may wish to gain a deeper understanding about the issues facing Oregon city government by participating in the LOC-sponsored training sessions, the Elected Officials Workshop, and the Annual Conference.

Message to Candidates

Congratulations on your decision to run for local office! You have taken an important step on the path to public service in your home community—one step for which you must be proud. It's probably the most challenging job you'll ever have (and most likely the lowest paying). It will probably be among the most interesting and rewarding as well.

Often times, citizens are motivated to pursue elective office because they feel strongly about a single issue which demands change. They feel that they must take personal action to remedy this situation. When elected, you will find that others maintain sincere personal concerns for completely different issues. You will become involved in broader—and sometimes more mundane—issues like budgeting, personnel, growth and service delivery priorities. You will find a need to gain the opinion of local citizens outside your normal social or work circle and vie with other elected officials for a public forum by which to express your view.

This booklet is designed to increase your familiarity with an elected official's responsibilities, as well as the processes, procedures and rules that govern the conduct of an elected official. You can obtain more information from your city recorder, city manager or administrator, the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), and state agencies.

We wish you the best of luck in the upcoming election and your subsequent service.

Sincerely,

Past Presidents Council of the
League of Oregon Cities

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Filing for Elective Office

Qualifications for various city offices differ. Before filing, review the city charter and statutory requirements of the office for which you plan to declare your candidacy. Requirements for filing for city offices are found under Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) Chapters 221 and 249. The forms that you'll need are available from your city's elections official or the Secretary of State's Office, Elections Division.

Contribution and Expenditure Reporting

Every candidate and prospective candidate is required to establish a principal campaign committee within three business days of receiving or spending any money to support the candidacy. This includes expenditures of personal funds by the candidate or treasurer. It also includes payment of the filing fee if the candidate files by declaration, any costs related to circulating a nominating petition, or any voters' pamphlet costs.

For more detailed information about the filing process, contact your city's elections official or the Elections Division in the Secretary of State's office (503/986-1518).

What to Expect

Not only will the job of elective office ask you to be a model of civility and cooperation, an educator and interpreter of public opinion, and a leader bringing people together and building trust, it will also provide you with the opportunity to shape policy governing the future of your city. In the course of doing so, you will learn all facets of local government including municipal law and finance. In addition . . .

- You'll rarely eat at the local diner or stop by the hardware store without someone complaining about roads, taxes, etc. You might be cornered anywhere, at any time, on anything. Unlike elected officials at the state and federal level, you are in direct contact on a daily basis with the people who elected you.

- You'll spend a lot of time attending meetings; not only municipal meetings but regional and statewide ones as well. You'll also spend a lot of time preparing for them, reading the material that needs to be read in order to make an informed decision in the course of the meeting.

If you are elected, you will draw upon skills you already have, skills you never knew you had, or skills you wished you had. The job might require you to:

- Facilitate meetings, speak to the press, respond to angry and sometimes hostile citizens, testify before legislative committees, negotiate with contractors, bankers and engineers.

- Make decisions on everything from who to hire as the next city manager, to which bid to accept for paving the roads, to how to pay for solid waste disposal, to joining with neighboring cities in a regional approach to providing dispatch services.

Are you up to the challenge?!

Basic City Services

Services provided by municipalities vary from community to community. However, some typical services include:

Public Safety — police, fire, and sometimes ambulance service
Utilities — water and sewer, and sometimes trash collection, electric power, and natural gas
Land Use — planning, zoning, code enforcement, and other regulatory activities
Transportation — street construction and maintenance, traffic safety, and sometimes public transit
Recreation/Cultural — parks, recreation, libraries, and sometimes cultural facilities
Legal — Ordinances protecting the public health, safety and welfare of the community

Roles and Responsibilities

Elected city officials have many official responsibilities. Essential ingredients for proper job performance of a mayor and city councilors are a thorough knowledge of the community, its people, and its problems, as well as knowing individual roles and those of the council as a whole. The information below provides city official candidates a basic understanding of the roles of the mayor and council, and the issues they will confront.

Most elected city officials consider the formulation of city policy to be their primary responsibility.

Most elected city officials consider the formulation of city policy to be their primary responsibility. They are also concerned with the way in which policy is administered, although the extent of their involvement in administration depends on the size of the city and its form of government.

The traditional distinction between "policy" and "administration" has been that policy is the process of deciding *what* is to be done, while administration is implementing it. However, it is not always easy to distinguish between the two.

Policy Role

The council is the highest authority within city government in deciding issues of policy. For a council to effectively assume a positive and active role in bringing issues forward for discussion in setting policy, councilors need a clear understanding of the policy process and the stages at which council intervention is most effective. Typically, the policy process follows the steps listed below:

1. Identification of problems and needs
2. Establishment of community goals
3. Determination of objectives
4. Development/analysis of alternative solutions (including short-term and long-term implications)
5. Establishment of priorities
6. Development of programs or strategies
7. Implementation of programs or strategies
8. Monitoring and evaluation of programs or strategies
9. Feedback
10. Program or strategy improvement and modification.

Administrative Role

The council, as a "collective" body, is responsible for the oversight of administration in every city, but the roles that the mayor and individual city councilors play in city administration vary considerably, depending on city size and form of government. Below are some basic forms of government.

Mayor-Council Form. In the mayor-council form of city government, the elected council is the legislative and policy-making body of the city. Council committees such as parks, public works, public safety, etc., may be responsible for day-to-day oversight of city activities, and may appoint or recommend the appointment of some or all administrative personnel of the city. The mayor, who in some instances is popularly elected and in others is appointed by the council from its own members, is the ceremonial head of the city and presiding officer of the council. Often, the mayor does not appoint administrative personnel, has no special administrative responsibility, and has no power to veto ordinances adopted by the council.

Oregon cities that operate under charters closely patterned on the mayor-council version of the Model Charter for Oregon Cities (1988 ed.) have this form of government. Most small cities in Oregon have this form. In some mayor-council cities, the mayor is the chief executive of the city. In addition to being ceremonial head of the city and presiding at council meetings, the mayor has the power to appoint all or most administrative personnel of the city and has general responsibility for proper administration of city affairs. In a few Oregon cities, the mayor has the power to veto ordinances adopted by the council.

Council-Manager Form. All Oregon cities over 2,500 population have the council-manager or council-administrator form of government except for Portland, Beaverton and Lakeview. The chief characteristic of this form is that the council appoints a qualified professional person as city manager or administrator to take charge of the daily supervision of city affairs. The manager or administrator serves at the pleasure of the council; the council sets policy and the manager carries it out.

An absolute separation between policy and administration does not really exist in city government or in other local governments. However, the council-manager plan works best when the council exercises its responsibility for policy leadership and respects the manager's leadership role and responsibility for administration.

Council-manager charters commonly include specific provisions that prohibit individual councilors from giving orders to city employees or from attempting to influence or coerce the manager with respect to appointments, purchasing or other matters. However, the charters do not prohibit, and may affirmatively provide for, the council discussing administrative matters with the manager in open meetings.

Many small cities in Oregon have established a city administrator position instead of a city manager position. This is usually accomplished by ordinance rather than by charter. Occasionally a city sets up such a position merely by budgeting for it.

The duties and responsibilities of city administrators vary. In some cities they are indistinguishable from those of a city manager; in others the administrator may share administrative duties with the council or its committees, including hiring and firing department heads.

Council Functions

The council is the city governing body and is elected to steward the public trust and to serve as financier, employer, legislator and policy maker. The council monitors city service levels that benefit the whole community.

The city must maintain a balanced budget, which requires determining what city services and operations will be provided and at what cost and level of service. The council is also responsible for policies governing bidding procedures, spending limitations and purchasing methods related to equipment, land, services and facilities.

Citizen Involvement. The council's leadership role requires staying connected to the community and connecting the citizens to their local government. Elected officials at all levels work to engage citizens actively. There are four basic roles for local elected officials in connecting citizens and their government:

1. **As a *model*.** By maintaining a spirit of civility and cooperation both within the municipal government and among local governments, local officials can help set the tone for civil discourse and productive problem-solving. The council can set an example for the public and the staff, and is responsible for creating a positive, constructive climate and a model democracy in action.

2. **As an *educator*.** The council can provide public information and serve as interpreter of public opinion within the community. In addition, local officials can encourage citizens, business, community organizations and others to play an active role in community-building initiatives.

3. **As a *listener*.** The council can solicit input from the public and city employees and it can provide opportunities for participation and involvement. It can respond to the public in an open, honest and respectful manner that shows that the council values questions, comments, and criticism from the public.

4. **As a *leader*.** The council communicates city goals, policies and information that can enhance the public's understanding of city issues. It can facilitate the airing and sharing of diverse points of view. It can foster a sense of community and it can use techniques for resolving conflict. Energizing and engaging citizens is a job that calls for an array of skills.

The Mayor

The mayor's role varies from city to city, depending on charter requirements. In many cities the mayor presides over council meetings and participates in discussions, but votes only to break ties. Depending on charter provisions, the mayor may appoint committees and department heads with council approval, and veto ordinances. Most mayors also sign all ordinances and other records of proceedings approved by the council, and in some cities they may sign all orders to disburse funds.

In addition to the mayor, most cities also have a council president or mayor pro tem. The councilor in this position presides over the council in the mayor's absence.

Council as "One Voice"

Councilors are elected to a city council, not to an independent seat. Local citizens, despite their diversity of opinions and level of civic engagement, expect the council to function effectively as one body, one voice. There is sometimes a perception by council members that they need to be independent to the point of being contrary on every issue. There is also a fear of being perceived as a "rubber stamp" council. A councilor can and should feel comfortable in expressing diverse opinions, and in debating issues. **It is important to show respect for fellow council members, to be willing to move ahead once the issue is thoroughly discussed, to support the government process, and to live with the results of the vote.** Effective councils are those in which councilors maintain their individuality and yet work effectively as a "collective" body.

A councilor should never attempt to speak for the entire council, particularly outside of council meetings. It is inappropriate to promise that the council will do something until the council, as a group, has a chance to discuss it and determine a course of action.

Balance

The single most difficult job of a city council is to balance diverse interests and search for common interests. A councilor may react to groups in isolation without considering the larger consequence of his or her actions. It is important to recognize and consider citizen input, but it is equally important to develop perspective. If ten people call on an issue in a city of 19,000, is it indicative of a landslide of public concern, or a well-organized phone campaign? When someone tells a councilor that "everyone in town feels this way", the councilor should trust his or her own judgment and seek a few more opinions. A council can seldom do everything that everyone wants.

Intergovernmental Relations

Beyond the myriad of issues that are specific to city government, city officials will quickly find that they play a pivotal role in the intergovernmental arena with other local governments—county government, special districts and public schools—as well as regional, state and federal governments. Understanding these relationships and their impact on city government's ability to provide responsible, efficient and effective governance and delivery of services is important, particularly when funding and staffing resources are limited. Exploring new and innovative ways of funding and providing public services is one of the challenging issues facing elected officials.

The key to success is cooperation and collaboration.

It is important to recognize that the reasons you are running for office will become part of a "full plate" of issues (many with which you are not yet familiar). Because of the urgency and the complexity of these issues, government *must work together* to address them. Cities no longer do their government business in isolation. The key to success is cooperation and collaboration.

Sources of Law

Local government, for many purposes, is a political subdivision of the state. The main sources of law governing local government are the state constitution, state law (statutes), decisions of state courts, and city charters and ordinances. Cities are also subject to federal laws and the United States Constitution.

Local elected officials should be familiar with their city's charter and ordinances, as well as the state laws regarding open meetings, public records, budgeting, public contracting and prevailing wage, ethics, and conflict of interest, some of which are described below.

Home Rule

The term "home rule" refers to the authority of a city to set policy and manage its own affairs. Without charter home rule, state law controls the existence, form of organization, functions, powers and finances of local government. This form of home rule is referred to as "statutory" home rule. Most home rule authority is conferred on a city by its charter. A charter can be thought of as the city's constitution and may also be amended by a vote of the citizens of that community. Most cities in Oregon have home rule charters.

Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

Public official ethics are governed by various constitutional provisions, the common law, state statutes and, occasionally, charter or ordinance provisions. State law may require officials in your city to file a statement of economic interest each year with the Oregon Government Standards and Practices Commission.

State law also requires that public officials not use their official position or office to obtain financial gain other than official salary, honorariums or reimbursement of expenses. The law limits the value of gifts that officials, candidates or members of their families may solicit or receive, or which any person may offer, and prohibits public officials from soliciting or receiving offers of future employment in return for their influence. The law also prohibits public officials from furthering their personal gain by use of official information.

A conflict of interest relates to taking official action that may result in financial benefit or detriment to the public official, the public official's relative, or a business with which the public official or his/her relative is associated.

The conflict of interest may be an actual or potential conflict of interest. A potential conflict of interest exists when an official takes action that might have a financial impact on that official, a relative, or a business with which the official or official's relative is associated. The public official must declare the potential conflict and describe the nature of the conflict prior to any discussion or vote. After the declaration, the public official may participate in the discussion and vote on the issue, unless the charter or an ordinance provides otherwise.

An actual conflict of interest occurs when the action will result in a financial benefit or detriment. The public official must declare the conflict and describe its nature. The official may not participate in the discussion of the subject and may not take action on it.

Budget and Finance

Budgeting is an annual process by which cities identify the types and levels of services that can be provided within the constraints of available resources. The general budgeting process is prescribed by the Oregon Local Budget Law (ORS 294.305 to 294.565). The Department of Revenue's Local Government Finance and Taxation section administers the law and provides advice and assistance to cities regarding budget matters. It publishes a budget manual that is the basic reference document for local budget procedures.

In its most basic form, the budget identifies city programs, services and activities. City budgets are organized and expenditures are accounted for by "funds" (e.g., general fund, street fund, sewer fund) or "activities" (such as law enforcement), in order to permit identification and handling of revenue earmarked for special purposes.

Public Meetings Law

The Oregon public meetings law that applies to public bodies is found in ORS 192.610 to 192.710. Under the public meetings law, a governing body's meetings are open to the public with certain exceptions. Meetings of other city bodies (e.g., planning commission, budget committee, library board, etc.) are also open to the public. Except in emergencies, there must be reasonable notice of regular meetings and at least a 24-hour notice for special meetings. Written minutes of all meetings are required, but executive sessions may be taped instead. Executive, or private, meetings may be held for certain prescribed reasons, but the media must be allowed to attend these meetings and final decisions must be made in the public meeting.

Public Records Law

The public records law (ORS 192.410 to 192.505) applies to all public bodies including governing bodies, officers, departments, commissions, etc. The term "public records" is defined as writing containing information that pertains to the conduct of the public's business, and includes handwriting, typewriting, photographs, maps, discs, audio tapes, video tapes and electronic mail. ORS 192.500 lists several kinds of records all exempt from disclosure "unless the public interest requires disclosure." Other than excepted records, all records of a public body are available for public inspection.

Limitations of Power

The local government is subject to statutory, constitutional, judicial and charter limitations. Under Oregon constitutional home rule provisions, the voters of the state have taken from the state legislature, and reserved to the voters of cities, the power to adopt and amend their own city charters. Initiative and referendum powers are also reserved to the voters of the city (Oregon Constitution Article VI, section 10, and Article XI, section 2).

Article I, Oregon's Bill of Rights, also applies to local governments. Other constitutional limits and restrictions include property tax limitations, prohibitions against lending the credit of a city, and regulation of city elections. Several chapters of state law apply to city government (ORS chapters 221 to 227).

Liabilities

In general, Oregon governments are liable to the same extent as private individuals or entities and for all types of torts (wrongs to private parties)—e.g., personal injury, property damage, wrongful entry, false arrest and detention, malicious prosecution, abuse of process, invasion of privacy, interference with contractual relations, and defamation.

The personal liability of public officials is governed primarily by the provisions of the Oregon Tort Claims Act (OTCA). Federal civil rights law, the common law of torts, and specific Oregon statutes also may impose personal liability. Some examples of personal liability are budget law violations, conflicts of interests, actions outside the scope of official duty, malfeasance in office (willful and wanton neglect of duty), public contracting violations, and public meetings law and public records law violations.

The council should routinely consult the city attorney in making decisions on city affairs. In addition to providing professional and technical services such as preparation of formal opinions and drafting of legal documents, the city attorney can supply informal advice regarding many other matters.

Some types of insurance are required by state law, and cities purchase other types for their own protection. Insurance policies are complex documents, and the advice of competent insurance advisors and the city's legal counsel should be sought to make certain that coverages are adequate for the exposures involved.

City Government Facts

- Oregon has 240 incorporated cities.
- Approximately 67 percent of the state's population reside within city limits.
- The smallest incorporated city is Granite – population 25; the largest is Portland – population 512,395.
- There are approximately 1,490 mayors and councilors in the state.
- Pay for elected officials is determined locally. Compensation varies from no compensation to modest compensation levels for part-time officials. There are a few full-time paid positions, i.e., Beaverton mayor and Portland mayor and commissioners.
- The oldest city is Oregon City, incorporated in 1844. The youngest is Keizer, incorporated in 1982.

How to Minimize the Likelihood of Litigation and Conflict

- Inform yourself about the organization you serve.
- Study and be knowledgeable about the city's charter and existing policy.
- Remember that your authority derives from the council itself. Alone you have no authority.
- Your first duty is to the public you serve, not to any colleague, chief administrative officer or friend.
- Understand that the council's basic function is policy making and *not* administrative.
- Give the city employees the respect and consideration due dedicated, public service professionals.
- Insist that personnel complaints first go through the proper chain of command. If not resolved, only then should complaints come to the council.
- Know the law; respect both the spirit and letter of the law.
- Expect the council to comply with the law.
- Learn the open meetings laws, public contracting laws, budgeting laws, employment laws, etc.
- Insist that all city transactions be ethical, legal and appropriate.
- Hire and use an independent accountant and have a separate audit committee.
- Attend all council meetings. Stay informed. Insist on agendas and copies of reports well in advance of the next meeting. Review meeting minutes.
- Keep current on city business. Attend conferences, workshops and training seminars to learn about legislative changes having an impact on the city.
- Avoid conflict of interest by disclosing potential conflicts and refusing to debate, discuss or vote with respect to any matter in which you or your family has an interest.
- Respect the opinions of other councilors and graciously accept the principle of "majority rule" in council decisions.
- Do not make rash decisions in moments of excitement or emotion. Be sure you have all the facts. Do not rely on only a one-sided version of disputed issues. Demand sufficient information before voting.
- Recognize than an individual councilor has no legal status to act for the council outside of an official meeting, unless authority is given to councilors by majority vote of the council.
- Discourage discussions on matters of overall policy outside of regular council meetings.
- Do not make commitments on any matter that should properly come before the council as a whole.
- Do not allow personal issues to be brought into council considerations.
- Review your insurance and its coverages and exclusions.
- Read and be familiar with Oregon Revised Statutes pertaining to Code of Ethics and Oregon Public Meetings Law.

Communications – The Key to Success

Council effectiveness is dependent upon good group dynamics. Each new configuration of the council creates its own personality and style of operating. As with any group, each council must go through the usual evolution of forming, storming, norming, performing and, eventually, reforming.

A number of city councils in Oregon have adopted internal "communication agreements" to promote effective governance and establish ground rules for working together. The following are examples of such agreements:

Council Member Responsibilities and Meeting Guidelines

- Submit items for the agenda.
- State opinions or feelings honestly and openly.
- Stay on the agenda and help others to do so.
- Participate actively; speak out.
- Listen actively; seek clarification.
- Support the open meeting process.
- Facilitate problem solving.
- Protect others' rights.
- Avoid disruptive communication.
- Agree to discuss problems and conflicts when they arise.
- Before each meeting, ask yourself:

"What would help this council to move ahead and to get this problem resolved?"

"What can I do to help this council function more effectively?"

. . . . each council must go through the usual evolution of forming, storming, norming, performing and, eventually, reforming.

Code of Conduct

- I will seek to understand others' perspectives.
- I will honor others in public and protect others in their absence.
- I will focus on issues, not personalities.
- I will be honest and truthful in all deliberations and interactions.
- I will individually support the collective decision-making of the city council. If I disagree with a decision made by the council, I will voice my opinion without personalizing the issue and without eroding the reputation of the city council. Once a decision is made, I will support that decision.
- I will present my views in a forthright, positive manner and respond to questions clearly and directly. I will focus on the present and the future. I will use the past only as data for the present and the future.
- I will not blame others for situations I have an opportunity to resolve.
- I will feel free to visit with other council members outside of meetings, but I will abide by the Oregon Public Meetings Law.
- I will give other council members, the mayor and city manager advance notice of significant matters to be introduced at council meetings.
- If I have a concern or issue with another council member or the city manager, I will go to that person first in a private and timely manner and share that concern. If unresolved, I will present the issue to the mayor in a private and timely manner to seek a means for resolution.
- I support the city's form of government.

Elected Officials and the Public Spotlight

Don't be alarmed if your personal life becomes front page news . . .

Becoming an elected official means living in the public spotlight 24 hours a day. Elected officials come to realize that this is simply a condition that accompanies the position—for better or worse. Don't be alarmed if your personal life becomes front page news and the "talk of the town". It's bound to happen sooner or later.

Media relations is a skill that can work in the city's favor. It is wise to develop a respectful relationship with the local reporter, and attempt to create a reciprocal relationship. Be sensitive to the reporter's job and his or her need to meet deadlines.

At the same time, be careful. Never speak "off the record". Expect anything you say to be used. Don't assume an interview is over until the reporter has left the scene.

Here are a few guidelines for surviving life in the "public fish bowl":

- Be truthful.
- If you don't know the answer, say so.
- Anticipate all situations and questions.
- Be prepared.
- Be accountable and responsible for everything you do and say.

Representing the Public

Two of the most important tasks of local government officials are to discover citizen opinion and to ensure that citizens have sufficient information to form knowledgeable opinions and to make responsible decisions (including voting). For these tasks to be carried out successfully, elected officials must solicit public input and encourage citizen participation and involvement.

Communication is important in achieving effective citizen participation in local government. Success depends on both the attitudes and interests of citizens and city officials. Citizens need to know their efforts are recognized and valued in the decision-making process. Public hearings, advisory committees, town hall meetings, televised council meetings, neighborhood associations, volunteer participation, public opinion polls, and interest groups are ways to connect citizens with city government in a significant way.

Community Visioning and Goal Setting

In Oregon, many councils conduct annual goal setting and community visioning processes.

Setting City Goals

A clear set of goals provides the framework within which nearly all other city activities can be accomplished. Goals provide direction, reduce crisis management environments, develop cohesiveness among council members, allow managers and staff to manage their time and activities effectively, and permit periodic evaluation of progress to make any necessary mid-course corrections.

Without goals a council cannot distinguish between movement and progress. Individuals and groups can spend tremendous effort and resources performing activities that, in retrospect, were not necessary. Often, the reason for this wasted effort is the absence of a clear set of priorities and specific plans for accomplishing them.

Typically, council goals are developed for a one- to two-year period. They are a tool for: a) focusing the council's efforts; b) communicating priority issues to the community; and c) providing clear direction to city staff. Council goals should be articulated in such a way that they are specific, realistic, outcome-based, within the city's control, and measurable. Once goals have been set and adopted by the council, they can be used as a measure for evaluating staff performance, guiding budget decisions, and managing unanticipated issues that arise during the year.

Visioning: Sustaining Quality of Life

City governance is an institution that enables a community of citizens, through their elected representatives, to maintain safety and a good quality of life, which is accomplished by developing policy, adopting implementing laws and ordinances, and planning for the delivery and financing of public services. Success is dependent upon the ability to stay in touch with the public's needs and desires, to understand the issues, and to balance the short- and long-term social, economic and environmental impacts.

A vision statement provides a blueprint for the future and helps the council, staff and citizens to set priorities and make decisions to achieve desired outcomes. In 1993, a group of city government officials gathered and, looking ten years into the future, drafted a vision for Oregonians. These officials represented small, medium and large cities, as well as the diverse regions of the state. The vision reprinted below illustrates how common goals for the future might guide policy, funding allocations and community planning decisions.

Envision Oregon's Future

In the year 2003, the complexion of Oregon reflects **livable, viable communities.** Oregon's vision places emphasis on empowering the individual and strengthening the family by providing quality education; family-wage jobs; medical, health and community services; a safe, clean environment; a reliable, responsive infrastructure; and governing system that responds to community priorities.

Oregon's education system is well-coordinated and provides **quality education** where each individual is valued, where educational standards are achieved, where the needs of the business community are met, and where emphasis is placed on life-long learning.

Oregon's **well-trained, well-educated workforce** supports a strong, diversified, and **robust economy**. Business and industry support Oregon's quality of life by providing **family-wage jobs**, supporting the family, cooperating with education, investing in the community, and protecting the environment.

Oregon responded to the rapid increase in growth with **well-managed use of land, community and housing development**, and a successful system of **transportation alternatives.**

Oregon is still nationally recognized for its natural **environment**. While Oregon's growth has put enormous pressure on its natural resources, air, land and water, the cost of preservation and protection has been fairly and reasonably assessed and shared.

Providing for the economically disadvantaged and the physically and mentally disabled is no longer viewed as a burden, but as a responsibility. Cooperative partnerships have been formed among social service agencies, schools, government, business, and community-based organizations to meet **human service needs** at the local and state levels. **Health care** is now provided for all Oregon residents.

A renewed sense of community has produced **safer, more secure communities** and neighborhoods. A wide variety of arts, recreation, leisure and cultural activities is accessible to all citizens. Because residents' priorities are addressed at the city and county level, citizen trust in government has been regained, community involvement and volunteerism has increased, and local elected leadership is strong.

Oregon government has become more efficient. **State and local governments have forged a cooperative working partnership, enabling state government to support and assist local governments' efforts to effectively administer and finance local programs and services and respond to citizen priorities at the community level.**

About the League of Oregon Cities

The League of Oregon Cities (LOC) is a voluntary membership organization of dues-paying city governments in Oregon. The League believes that local problems are best resolved at the local level, and that people are best served by a strong and responsive local government.

Founded in 1925, LOC's membership includes 238 of the 240 incorporated cities in Oregon. The League provides a variety of services to city elected officials and appointed staff, including:

Legislative Services. LOC speaks for a broad and diverse group of cities. *Together, cities have a strong, collective voice.* LOC works hard to provide legislators, their staff and city members with accurate, timely information. We remind legislators that they share a common interest with municipal officials—we serve the same constituents. The weekly *Legislative Bulletin* and time-critical action calls involve members during the legislative session.

Policy-Setting. A 55-member Legislative Committee, and several issue-specific Standing Committees, each with members representing large and small communities across the sate, guide legislative endeavors. The *Oregon Municipal Policy* is the official long-range policy statement of Oregon's cities on a wide variety of topics.

Intergovernmental Relations. LOC serves as a liaison with local, regional, state and federal agencies. LOC is a member of, and partner with, the National League of Cities and other prominent local government associations.

Technical Assistance. League staff respond daily to questions from city officials on a wide variety of issues as well as city practices and procedures. We provide sample ordinances and charters and a variety of how-to publications, as well as point to additional helpful resources.

Conferences & Training. LOC offers many opportunities for city officials to acquire the necessary skills and up-to-date information to enable them to serve their citizens efficiently and effectively, as well as to provide forums to share knowledge and skills to solve common problems. Examples are the League's annual conference in November, drawing approximately 1,000 officials from across the state; regional meetings on various topics of critical concern; legislative conferences; and affiliate group meetings. In addition, LOC's Elected Officials Workshops cover the basics of governing for officials new to office, and serve as a refresher for "experienced" officials. *If you are elected to office, we strongly encourage you to attend this workshop.*

Publications. Among the League's most popular publications are its monthly informational newsletter, the *LOCal Focus*; the *Legislative Bulletin* (weekly during the legislative session); and the *Handbook for Oregon City Councilors*, a must for newly-elected officials.

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Additional Resources and Recommended Reading

Oregon Government Standards and Practices Commission
"Oregon Government Standards and Practices Laws: A Guide for Public Officials"
(503) 378-5105

Secretary of State's Office – Elections Division
"City Elections Manual"
(503) 986-1518
web: www.sos.state.or.us

Department of Justice
"Attorney General's Public Records and Meetings Manual"
(503) 378-2992, ext. 325

League of Oregon Cities
"Handbook for Oregon City Councilors"
(503) 588-6550