

Cottage Grove City Council  
Work Session Minutes  
May 9, 2016

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Thomas Munroe called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

ROLL CALL

**COUNCIL PRESENT:** Mayor Thomas Munroe, City Councilors Kenneth Michael Roberts, Jeff Gowing, Garland Burback, Amy Slay and Mike Fleck

**ABSENT:** Jake Boone

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Manager Richard Meyers, City Recorder Trudy Borrevik and Police Commander Conrad Gagner

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Renee Yandel, HIV Alliance

**MEDIA PRESENT:** None

City Manager, Richard Meyers, said at the previous Council meeting, Jim Tandrow talked to Council about the HIV Alliance and their needle exchange program. He asked Council to consider putting a needle drop box and a needle exchange program in Cottage Grove. Richard said Council had questions that Mr. Tandrow wasn't able to answer so Renee Yandel, HIV Alliance Executive Director, was at the work session to answer questions of Council.

Renee Yandel said she was at the meeting to clarify a few things and to answer any questions of Council regarding their program.

She said if they were to do a syringe exchange in Cottage Grove, they hadn't identified a location. She said they had a list of considerations, locations which had discreet access. She said it had to be in a location where it wasn't bothersome to neighbors or businesses, but was accessible. She said in the Eugene/Springfield area they did the exchanges under the Glenwood Bridge in Springfield and at a dead end road in Eugene. She said in Roseburg they did it in their office and in Grants Pass they did it in a Church.

Councilor Burback asked how many smaller cities in Lane County had gotten involved.

Renee said Eugene and Springfield and they had been asked to look at Cottage Grove and Florence.

Councilor Fleck asked about the drop box and if it were the same consideration as an exchange site or was it less restrictive.

Renee said it was less restrictive. She said the cost of the box was a one-time purchase of around \$2,000.00. She outlined where they were located in Eugene, Springfield and Roseburg. She said there wasn't as much foot traffic as an exchange site. She said they emptied the boxes weekly and took about 40,000 syringes a year out of the boxes in the Eugene/Springfield area and anywhere from 5,000 to 15,000 a year out of the box in Roseburg. She said both illegal users and medical users used the drop boxes.

Councilor Fleck asked about costs for the program.

Renee said the box was \$2,000 and then there was a charge for HIV Alliance staff and/or volunteers to empty the boxes once a week. She said the used needles were incinerated free of charge at PeaceHealth in Lane County and Mercy Hospital in Roseburg.

Councilor Roberts asked about people trying to damage or get in the boxes.

Renee said they had issues at one site in Eugene which had a lot of foot traffic. She said there had been two issues of the box being knocked over and one issue with the latch being broken.

Mayor Munroe asked Richard how many containers were currently in Cottage Grove.

Richard said small plastic sharp containers were at the Community Center/Library in the restrooms and there was one at the Police Department. He said there was also a container at the Wastewater Treatment Plant which wasn't available to the public. He said the City disposed of the boxes when they were full.

Councilor Burback said his business, Cottage Grove Garbage, picked up containers from their customers.

Councilor Roberts asked if there was any count done on the number of needles found in the parks.

Richard said there wasn't any count done on the number of needles picked up in the parks.

Councilor Roberts asked how many boxes were in the Eugene/Springfield area.

Renee said they had five boxes. She said most people that were still using would bring their needles to the exchange instead of putting in the drop boxes. She said at the Eugene/Springfield syringe exchange, they exchanged about 500,000 syringes. She said Cottage Grove and Florence residents traveled to the Eugene/Springfield and would exchange for multiple people.

Councilor Burback asked what it would cost a year for Cottage Grove to participate.

Renee said for the syringe exchange program it would be about \$7,000 for the syringes and sharp

containers and supplies were in addition.

Councilor Gowing asked if they had any percentages on what was illegal drug use and what was medical use on the needle exchanges.

Renee said they didn't have those records. She estimated over ninety percent that used the needle exchange were illegal drug users. She said medical users used the drop box more because they could get their syringes; they just needed to have a place to get rid of them.

Councilor Slay said at the last meeting where this was discussed, \$20,000 was brought up as the yearly cost for the program. She said that was hard to get the community to support. She asked if that was a true number.

Renee said \$20,000 would be a total cost of the program with a once a week syringe pick up. She said a once a month pick up would be significantly less. She said they raised funds from individual donors and foundations and there were other funders for the project. She said they had a lot of volunteers and the syringe exchange was run by about 3FTE volunteers. She said this helped reduce the costs as well. She said the syringe exchange was a great way to connect people to other sources. She said South Lane Mental Health was going to start providing substance abuse treatment and being able to connect with the users was a way to refer them to treatment programs.

Councilor Slay said she supported the program but wasn't sure about the funding.

Discussion was held on the cost of the program.

Councilor Burbach asked if anyone had spoken with Creswell.

Renee said they hadn't. She said Mr. Tandrow showed up in her office one day stating he was concerned there was a problem in Cottage Grove.

Councilor Slay said maybe Creswell and Cottage Grove could share in the cost and find a shared location.

Councilor Roberts said the people he had talked to and calls that came into the radio show, the majority of citizens didn't support spending the money on the program.

Mayor Munroe said people he had talked to weren't in favor of supporting people's habits.

Renee said research showed that users already had habits and would inject whether they had clean syringes or not. She said when they didn't have clean needles they shared needles which caused the spread of Hepatitis C and HIV.

Councilor Gowing said because of the financial aspect of the program, he was on the fence. He suggested looking at South Lane Mental Health or the Healing Matrix for drop sites.

Renee said she had been in contact with Tom Wheeler, of South Lane Mental Health, who provided her with a letter of support for the project.

Mayor Munroe said one issue with donated funds was you never knew from year to year if they would be available. He said there needed to be a steady income for the project. He didn't see, with the City's budget, how Council could justify the funds.

Renee said they raised money every year with grants and donations to support their syringe exchange programs. She said they didn't receive any federal funding for those. She liked the idea of checking with Creswell about their feelings about the program.

Councilor Slay said an addict would get high one way or another and at least with the program, they were doing it in a safer manner.

Mayor Munroe said it was supporting a habit that would continue to do the very thing they dreaded.

Councilor Slay said the program wouldn't increase the habit. She asked Renee if they had seen an increase in drug use in cities where they had the program.

Renee said they hadn't seen any increases and there had been research that substantiated it.

Councilor Fleck said he was wrestling with the idea. He said in his head he understood what she was saying and it made sense, but in his heart he couldn't see the City participating in the program.

Councilor Burback spoke about his experience with family and drug abuse and said it was hard to explain but he couldn't support the program. He felt it was a private thing and should be handled by families. He felt it would be better for South Lane Mental Health or a similar agency to oversee a program in Cottage Grove.

Mayor Munroe said the Council was all volunteers who represented the City and sometimes their personal feelings weren't the way to go. He said people in town were already struggling with marijuana use and he thought having a syringe exchange program would add to it.

Renee said it was a difficult thing and addiction was hard for families. She spoke of an individual who used to be a drug user but had changed her life. She said she was HIV and Hepatitis C free, probably due to having access to a needle exchange program.

Councilor Gowing said he was on the fence on the issue. He said Councilor Boone had made a statement that he agreed with, that the guy who was shooting up didn't say I was going to start using heroin but they don't have an exchange program and now that they do I think I'll start doing that. He said it wasn't the discussion Council should be having. It should be do we have a safe place to get the needles out of the parks and out of the hands where they didn't need to be.

Councilor Roberts asked if information could be painted on the box to let people know where

they could get assistance, like an information kiosk.

Councilor Slay said she was concerned that by only having the box, how many people were going to use it without the needle exchange program.

Renee said they would continue to go to Eugene to exchange their needles when they were able.

Youth Advisory Council Representative, Henry Lancaster, suggested putting the HIV Alliance website address or a phone number on the box so people would know who to contact.

Councilor Roberts asked Commander Gagner what the percentage of needle was over the course of his career with the Police Department.

Commander Gagner said drug use had increased considerably since he was hired in 1995. He said around 2010, heroin use became more widely used.

Councilor Slay thanked Renee for speaking to the Council.

There being no further business, Mayor Munroe adjourned the meeting at 7:00 pm.

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Trudy Borrevik, City Recorder

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Thomas C. Munroe, Mayor