



MINUTES

August 6, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Albany Police Department, Community Room

Approved: **10/01/2025**

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Bessie Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Bessie Johnson; Kevin Kreitman; Katie Pleis; Erik Anderson; Erik Rau;
Sheree Speaks-Mahi (arrived after roll call taken)

Members absent: Cynthia Greene; Nick Fowler

Staff present: Chief of Police Marcia Harnden; Fire Chief Chris LaBelle;
Rochelle James, Administrative Assistant

The June 4, 2025, minutes were approved.

Vice-Chair Johnson mentioned she found the information in the June 4, 2025, public safety commission minutes relating to Narcan usage surprising and the overdose numbers concerning. Chief Harnden advised that she would touch on that information in her update.

Staff Updates:

Police Update – Chief Marcia Harnden

Chief Harnden presented the second quarterly report to the commission for review. This report, along with the annual report, will be made available on the City of Albany's website and will also be presented to the City Council. Nationally, violent crime is trending downward. However, upon reviewing the report, it was noted that the number of calls received has increased. Despite this increase, our use of force has decreased, indicating that our training and other initiatives are having a positive impact.

Several APD officers have suffered significant injuries in 2024 and early 2025, prompting efforts to reduce these injuries. State law requires the reporting of certain information; however, the Albany Police Department (APD) provides significantly more data than mandated. This report aids in identifying trends. In 2022 or 2023, APD began tracking cases involving mental illness, acute mental episodes, and drug influences.

In the previous meeting, it was mentioned that drug law violations are on the rise, which reflects a significant change in the law. Chief Harnden explained her involvement with the Governor's Commission for distributing grant dollars for deflection program grants. Linn County is one of the program's early success stories, having utilized \$500,000 in grant funding. Funding remains a persistent issue.

When asked about the use of grant funding, Chief Harnden advised that its application varies among counties. She described the composition of the commission, noting that the Criminal Justice Commission establishes the criteria for grant applications, which must align with deflection objectives. Counties awarded grants are free to use the funds as they see fit, based on their specific needs; however, recipients of the funding are subject to reporting requirements.

Chief Harnden discussed the approach taken by District Attorneys in Benton and Linn Counties regarding individuals with substance use disorders who have non-criminal contacts. These individuals may be referred to Chance, the deflection provider. If there is a criminal aspect to the contact, both District Attorneys request that a citation be sent to their office. If the individual meets the criteria for deflection, it may be offered, depending on their previous history and likelihood of success. All candidates receive only one opportunity for deflection, and if they do not follow through, it will not be offered again, primarily due to resource availability.

The commission also discussed the factors that determine the allocation and distribution of funds.

Self-initiated police activity is on the rise due to improvements in staffing levels. Chief Harnden explained the different priority levels of calls. An increase in priority four calls, which are non-emergency in nature, was noted. This increase may be linked to the growing use of the online reporting system. Moreover, emergency calls have also decreased.

Commissioner Kreitman mentioned that he does not recall any instances of deadly force being used in the Albany area. In contrast, such incidents appear to be increasing in other regions. He noted that Oregon appears to experience fewer of these incidents compared to neighboring states and wondered if this might be due to differences in training.

Chief Harnden indicated that both the Albany Police Department (APD) and the Corvallis Police Department (CPD) are committed to providing Crisis Intervention Training to all sworn officers, support personnel, and dispatchers. This training aims to equip them with a basic understanding of crisis intervention techniques to help prevent the use of force.

Chief Harnden also described an incident involving a barricaded subject and how minimal use of force was used to bring the subject into custody. Commissioner Pleis inquired about how the CIT training is delivered. Chief Harnden explained that the curriculum is provided by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, and it must be followed for department personnel to achieve certification. Additionally, she noted that all use-of-force incidents are thoroughly documented and reviewed, including video recordings and reports, to identify trends and address these through further training.

Overdose deaths have seen a slight decrease, and the usage of Narcan has increased. The Albany Police Department is on track to match the number of overdose deaths recorded in 2024. Fentanyl and methamphetamine remain the most prevalent substances involved. In the case of an overdose death, the narcotics team will investigate, and if the source or dealer can be identified, we will prosecute that individual for manslaughter or negligent homicide.

Additionally, there has been a concerning rise in suicides countywide over the past month and a half.

With the approval of the latest budget, two new police officer positions have been added. These two officers are scheduled to begin in September. There is currently one vacancy in the dispatch department; however, we have an applicant on maternity leave who is expected to be hired in December, pending successful completion of the background check process. Kris Schendel, our code compliance officer, will be leaving to accept a position as a Human Resources manager with the City of Albany. A testing process for an open sergeant position is scheduled for tomorrow. Furthermore, Captain Jerry Drum has announced his retirement, effective July 1, 2026.

There was some discussion regarding cuts to federal funding and their effect on local outreach organizations, the victim advocate position at APD, and the availability of resources for mental health and addiction services.

Fire Update – Chief Chris Labelle

At the end of the last fiscal year, there were a total of 11,859 calls for service. Since the beginning of July, there have been 1,062 calls for service. There is a pressing need for additional deputy fire marshals. During the recent budget process, the Albany Fire Department (AFD) requested one more deputy fire marshal. Currently, there are three deputy fire marshals in the Life Safety Division, but a city the size of Albany should have a minimum of eight.

There was an opportunity to apply for a two-year grant, and if awarded, we hope to use it to fund this additional deputy fire marshal position.

Response times have improved, and we are monitoring the data to determine if this trend continues and whether it is linked to the new computer dispatching system. Other departments have reported improvements of 30 seconds or more in response times.

Community paramedic Hillary Kosmicki provided 459 consultations during the last fiscal year. These consultations proactively assist individuals in the community, helping to prevent unnecessary calls for service.

The single-role ambulance stationed downtown is now operating 24 hours a day. This enhancement provides additional ambulance services, allowing the North Albany fire engine to remain available in that area.

Commissioner Johnson inquired whether inter-facility transfers have decreased since they were discussed at the last meeting. Chief Labelle reported that the relationship with Samaritan Health has improved, and there is open communication about their practices and the impact on Albany Fire Department (AFD) services. Currently, AFD is averaging approximately 63 transfers per month.

AFD has also been providing heart screenings for student athletes. A screening was held at South Albany High School in June, and another took place today at West Albany High School. AFD is the only fire department in the state to offer this screening opportunity. Sixty-four students participated in the June screening, and today, a line formed for screenings at West Albany High School that extended out the door. Each student receives a regular sports physical in addition to a 12-lead EKG, which is reviewed by a doctor on-site. Other departments have reached out to AFD to inquire about the program.

We are extremely proud to announce that Fire Marshal Lora Ratcliffe has been elected president of the Oregon Fire Marshals Association for the upcoming year.

This summer, there have been six conflagrations in the state of Oregon, and AFD has responded to three of them.

The Albany Fire Department (AFD) has recently acquired a new water and foam system that has been installed on the back of a side-by-side ATV. This equipment will be useful for combating fires in locations like Simpson Park, where access can be challenging for smaller brush trucks. It has come to light that Simpson Park features an extensive trail system. In collaboration with GIS and the Albany Police Department (APD), AFD is currently working on marking and naming all trails to enable callers to provide more precise locations during fire or medical emergencies.

On August 29, 2025, eight paramedic firefighters will start a 16-week recruit academy, which will help AFD return to full staffing for the first time in over three years. With improvements in the job market, the department is seeing a rise in the quality of candidates.

An open house hosted by AFD is scheduled for October 5, 2025, at Station 14 in North Albany from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Additionally, the Citizen Advisory Group Appreciation Event will take place on October 15, 2025, at the Albany Community Center.

Commissioner Pleis inquired whether the trails in Simpson Park were informally created by the transient population or if they are designated man-made trails. Chief Labelle clarified that these are officially created hiking trails, but they currently lack markings or designations. There was a suggestion to use the naming of the trails as a fundraising opportunity. Commissioner Rau mentioned AFD's involvement in several high-profile water rescues. Chief Labelle noted that the area's rivers tend to be quite cold and emphasized the importance of wearing life jackets. Commissioner Pleis inquired about the life jacket program. Chief Labelle advised that kiosks containing various sizes of life jackets are available at all fire stations and at Bryant Park. The Albany Fire Department purchases life jackets for these kiosks each year. Commissioner Kreitman noted that the number of concurrent calls appears to be increasing, while Commissioner Rau pointed out a rise in the number of Fire and Life Safety Evaluations.

Chief Harnden reported that although participation in National Night Out was good, the number of attendees at this year's event was lower than in previous years.

Commissioner Johnson asked for clarification regarding the use of turning lanes at the intersection of Geary and Santiam Road when the light is red. Chief Harnden explained that it is permissible to turn from a one-way street to another one-way street, depending on the signage posted at the intersection. He also described how the camera at that location is used to enforce a complete stop for all vehicles at the intersection.

Business from the Commission

Commissioner Johnson asked if the commission member would prefer to change the meeting time to 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Pleis made a motion to change the meeting time, effective immediately, from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Speaks-Mahi seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor, with none opposed. The motion was approved.

Commissioner Pleis proposed creating a strategic work plan for the commission. Chief Harnden advised that if the commission wishes to pursue this path, the city manager would need to engage with the commission to determine their preferences and then proceed accordingly. After a lengthy discussion about developing a strategic plan and identifying potential focus areas and actions that members could take, the commission members agreed to explore the development of a strategic plan. Commissioner Pleis made a motion for the commission to support Chief Harnden in contacting the City Manager regarding the development of a strategic work plan. Commissioner Rau seconded the motion. All members voted in favor, with none opposed. The motion was approved.

Additional discussions took place regarding the frequency of the commission meetings, specifically whether they should be held once a month or every other month.

Next Meeting Date

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on October 1, 2025, at the Albany Fire Department.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Vice-Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Rochelle James
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewer's Name
Reviewer's Title

**Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. The documents are available by emailing cityclerk@cityofalbany.net.*