



MINUTES

August 5, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Albany Police Department, Community

Room Approved: 10/07/2026

Call to Order

Chair Cynthia Green called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Cynthia Green; Bessie Johnson; Kevin Kreitman; Sheree Speaks-Mahi, Joanna Robinson; Mark Stewart

Members absent: Erik Rau; Nick Fowler

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

The June 3, 2026, minutes were approved as presented.

Fire Chief LaBelle and Chief of Police Marcia Harnden recognized Walker Blevins, Bailey Blevins (unable to attend in person), Elijah Sneckner, and Rylan Pown for their actions during a vegetation fire at Timber Linn Park. Fire Chief LaBelle read the following statement:

On July 8, at approximately 2:30 p.m., the Albany Fire Department was dispatched to a reported vegetation fire at Timber Linn Park. The initial report indicated a fire in short grass; however, strong winds were rapidly pushing the fire east toward an area of tall grass, brush, and trees. Beyond that vegetation were structures along Goldfish Farm Road, creating the potential for a much more significant incident.

Engine 13 arrived to find an approximately quarter-acre fire that had nearly reached the heavier fuels. Members of the City's Parks & Recreation Department were already on scene, working to slow the fire's spread until firefighters arrived. The Engine 13 crew quickly brought the fire under control and extinguished it before it could extend into the heavier vegetation or threaten nearby homes.

While suppression efforts were underway, the on-duty Battalion chief began speaking with witnesses at the park. During those conversations, several young community members shared that they had taken photographs of the individual they believed had started the fire. Just minutes later, officers from the Albany Police Department arrived, obtained witness statements and photographs, and immediately began searching the area. By approximately 3:25 p.m., the suspect had been located and taken into custody.

This incident is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished when first responders and community members work together. The quick thinking and willingness of Ryan, Elijah, Walker, and Bailey to document what they witnessed and share that information with responding officers played a critical role in identifying and locating the suspect. Their actions helped prevent a potentially dangerous individual from posing a continued risk to the community.

The Albany Fire Department and Albany Police Department are grateful for their awareness, courage, and commitment to helping keep our community safe. Their actions exemplify the positive impact that engaged citizens can have during an emergency, and they deserve recognition for their outstanding assistance.

For their outstanding actions, Chief Harnden and I would like to present each of them with a challenge coin from our respective department.

The three recipients present were each presented with challenge coins and photos were taken with the permission of family members who were present during this portion of the commission meeting.

Commissioner Kevin Kreitman moved to remove item A on the agenda, listed under Business, from the members. Commissioner Kreitman explained that he did not believe the Public Safety Commission was the appropriate forum to discuss the subject matter of the report Commissioner Mark Stewart compiled. Commissioner Kreitman referenced the commission charter and its stated missions as a basis for the motion and advised that he felt the subject was outside the scope of the commission. Commissioner Kreitman said he appreciated the work Commissioner Stewart put into the report but felt presenting the information to the City Council may be a more appropriate venue.

Commissioner Bessie Johnson seconded the motion, and Chair Cynthia Greene asked if anyone would like to discuss the motion.

Commissioner Mark Stewart stated that he felt the commission should review the report he compiled, that the subject matter was important, that a potential crisis was coming quickly, and that the matter was not receiving the serious attention it deserved. Commissioner Stewart expressed concerns about the city's preparedness for an oil crisis if supply was depleted or unavailable. Commissioner Stewart pointed to what he viewed as an inadequate response to the global pandemic of 2020 by local, state, and federal governments and expressed concerns about potential supply shortages that could impact emergency services and economic disruptions that need to be evaluated and prepared for.

After discussion among the commissioners, the body voted to remove the item from the agenda.

Commissioners Kreitman, Johnson, and Green voted Yes. Commissioners Speaks, Robinson, and Stewart voted No. The vote was a tie.

Commissioner Green suggested providing Commissioner Stewart 15 minutes after the staff reports to provide an overview of his presentation to the commission. All commissioners agreed.

Chief Harnden announced her retirement from the Albany Police Department. She advised she is taking a position with the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training in Salem, Oregon, in November 2026. Captain Jerry Drum will be the Interim Chief until a replacement is found.

Staff Updates:

Police Update – Captain Jerry Drum

There have been four additional overdoses since the last time the commission met. All have been due to fentanyl. There doesn't appear to be any more heroin in our community at all. We have seen some spiking with meth, but we have not seen any overdoses caused by it. You will probably see an increase in cocaine at the next meeting, and we will discuss it at that time.

In 2025, we hired 11 people. In 2026, to date, we have hired 12 people: 11 officers and one clerk. We currently have two officers in the process. We have one vacancy coming up, so we will begin the hiring process by identifying candidates.

With the nicer weather, we have seen a spike in shoplifting as more people are out in stores. Livability challenges, such as prohibited camping reports, have spiked, and those reports keep coming in. This shows our community is active, paying attention, and continuing to make those reports. Generally, the crime rate

remains stable. We have seen fewer calls for service. Our proactive, self-initiated activities are lower this year, but we believe that can be attributed to the number of new officers on the street and training them.

Commissioner Robinson asked about the difference between business burglary and shoplifting. Captain Drum explained that burglary occurs when a business is closed, and someone breaks glass or breaks in a door to steal. It can occur during the daytime, but generally it happens in the evening.

Commissioner Johnson asked about speeding ticket statistics. Chief Harnden advised statistics are available on the city website. Commissioner Stewart asked if the red-light cameras were operational, and he was advised those cameras have never been out of operation. Commissioner Robinson asked if there were any specific reasons to explain the increase in person crimes. Captain Drum advised that numerous factors could explain the increase, but there is no way to attribute it to any specific cause.

Fire Update – Chief Chris LaBelle

We ended fiscal year 2026 with 11,656 total calls for service, slightly down from the previous fiscal year. Commission Chair Cynthia Greene asked how Albany's calls for service compared to other cities. Albany has more calls than Corvallis, which has a larger population.

Fire and life safety evaluations, which are business inspections, are not at the level they need to be. We have three employees in our life and safety division, and two of them do inspections. We lost two positions in the 2021 budget cycle. Since then, we have tried to hire additional Deputy Fire Marshals through grant opportunities but have been unsuccessful. Those inspections are important to make sure the building is suitable for their business plan. Commissioner Speaks-Mahi asked what obstacles there are to obtaining grants. Chief Labelle advised that you do not typically receive feedback on why you are not awarded the grant. Chief Labelle stated that Albany Fire is conducting a standard of coverage and feasibility study with AP Triton, which he believes will show the fire and life safety division as woefully understaffed. According to the national standard, a community of our size with the type of industry and care facilities we have should probably have around seven individuals in that division.

Looking at average response times, emergent responses average seven minutes and three seconds, which is very good. The City of Millersburg reached out with questions as their average response time was seven minutes and thirty seconds. They were concerned about their response time for a city of their size.

Commissioner Kreitman asked about the new dispatch system and if AFD is notified immediately after the address and coding are entered. Chief Labelle confirmed this and advised response times should improve. He also said they will investigate any potential hurdles with the new system for dispatchers that need to be addressed. The average response time to structure fires is six minutes and twenty-four seconds to get on scene. Reported structure fires have dipped this year compared to last year. Those fires can take several hours and keep crews out of service for extended periods.

Community Paramedic Hillary Kosmicki is doing a phenomenal job. You can practically draw a nexus between our reduction in calls for service and our lifting device program at our care facilities. Those devices are used an average of 30 times per month, which translates to a significant reduction in 911 calls at those facilities.

The top 25 responses have not really changed, with the top three being sick person fall, lift assist, and breathing problems.

There are ongoing conversations with Samaritan Health on how we can improve hospital-to-hospital transfers to get the ambulance back into service quickly.

The number of concurrent calls continues to rise, affecting resource availability.

Vice Chair Johnson asked about the large fire on Riverside Drive last week. Chief LaBelle confirmed this was a 10-to-15-acre fire caused by lightning that was threatening structures on Riverside Drive. A helicopter was requested through the state fire marshal's office. The helicopter arrived about 55 minutes later, and crews made good progress. Thirty-five homes were on a level two evacuation notice, which AFD had never done before. We also had assistance from Sweet Home Fire Department's new wildland division, which is a 20-person hand crew, as well as the Oregon Department of Forestry. We appreciate all the partnerships and mutual agreements we have in place. At the same time, we had several medical calls in town and another fire on the other end of town.

In June, we held heart screenings for student athletes at South Albany High School, and of the 52 student athletes who participated, two were found to have cardiac abnormalities. A cardiologist then works with the family for further checkups.

In a joint effort with APD, we had 100 kids attend Safety Camp in June.

We had 14 small fires related to fireworks on the 4th of July, and many were caused by illegal fireworks. Police and Fire have discussed how to respond to and address them, but we are not sure what more can be done. Commissioner Stewart asked whether all fireworks are illegal, and Chief LaBelle advised that Albany does not have a fireworks ban; however, most of the fireworks that started the fires were illegal aerial fireworks. Commissioner Stewart asked if they were illegal to sell since they are illegal to use. Chief LaBelle advised they are most likely purchased in Washington state and brought into Oregon.

Chief LaBelle provided a 2026 Oregon Wildfire Season Response Summary handout to the commission. Albany Fire has responded to 11 major wildfire incidents with 17 AFD personnel deployed. Three were pre-positioned in southern Oregon and are now heading to central Oregon to the Rome complex fire. The State of Oregon reimburses conflagrations at 100%, so there is no cost to the city. We also receive funding to recoup some of our equipment costs. For example, a Type 1 city fire engine costs \$100.00 per hour. That money goes toward equipment replacement. Chief LaBelle emphasized that if helping with wildfires would affect local staffing, we would not send people, because the Albany community is the number one priority.

Business from the Commission

Commissioner Stewart provided an overview of his presentation titled "2026 Oil/Energy Crisis".

Commissioner Stewart discussed the concept of demand distraction as related to oil. He explained that oil touches almost every commodity and is the bedrock of society and the economy. He discussed oil supply and demand, the roles of extraction companies and refineries, and its sale on the open market. He discussed the oil and gas crisis of the 1970s, caused by a 7% reduction in supply by the Gulf nations, and its effect on the economy due to production cuts and increased product costs.

Commissioner Stewart then discussed the state of the oil supply today and his view that oil prices are being artificially driven down, with roughly a 30% loss to the entire oil supply. Oil prices have basically stayed the same but should be much higher. Commissioner Stewart expressed his concerns that a shortage is occurring, but people do not see the dangers ahead. He discussed his frustrations with the administration's stance and actions as related to the ongoing Iran conflict and its effect on oil prices. He also expressed concern over the amount of crude inventory in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Commissioner Stewart discussed the reliance on oil, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab, destruction or damage to pipelines and production facilities, and the cratering of global inventories.

He then discussed his concern about the lack of preparation by local and state governments for a devastating oil crisis or a complete loss of supply. He discussed gas stations running out of fuel, people being unable to go to work, and food and supply shortages due to loss of transportation.

Commissioner Stewart discussed some ideas to mitigate some of the effects if we were to suddenly run out. He advised that we need to acknowledge what is happening and prepare for the worst-case scenario. He advised that some oil products are becoming harder to find, and some companies are planning for potential shortages.

Commissioners then discussed the information Commissioner Stewart presented and offered suggestions for other avenues he could use to address his concerns and raise awareness.

Next Meeting Date

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on October 7, 2026, at the Albany Fire Department.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Greene adjourned the meeting at 7:10 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.*