



MINUTES

February 4, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Albany Fire Department, Ralston Room

Approved: 06/03/26

Call to Order

Chair Cynthia Green called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Cynthia Green; Bessie Johnson; Kevin Kreitman; Erik Rau; Sheree Speaks-Mahi, Nick Fowler; Katie Pleis

Members absent: None

Staff present: Chief of Police Marcia Harnden; Fire Chief Chris LaBelle;
Kate Hennessy, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Battalion Chief Joe Brier; Division Chief-EMS Ray Wooldridge; Community Paramedic Hillary Kosmicki; Firefighter Damon Martin; Firefighter Alex Funicello; and Firefighter Austin Thingvall

The December 3, 2025, minutes were approved as presented.

Staff Updates:

Police Update – Chief Marcia Harnden

Harnden presented to City Council on January 28, 2026. She noted a 2,000 call jump from 2024 to 2025, including a significant jump in traffic violations due to new photo enforcement. She mentioned that each biennium Police is having to ask for an increase to cover a growing call load.

She pointed out that they have been saving a lot of lives due to their Narcan program, although this may change in 2026, when free Narcan goes away with federal budget changes and is not so readily available. Greene asked about a spike in Narcan deaths in 2023, and Harnden said that was because the Narcan distribution program wasn't in effect then. The current program (with grants) lets officers leave Narcan when they respond to an overdose. Law enforcement across the state saw similar effects, and Albany Police is meeting monthly with law enforcement in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties monthly to try and get ahead of the problem.

Rau asked about a correlation between calls going up, but personal and property crimes going down, asking whether or not Albany Police compares their statistics state-wide and nation-wide. Harnden replied that crime statistics tend to be cyclical. She pointed out that in 2023, Albany had seven homicides and said that one benefit of being data-driven is that they can see trends start to form and adjust resources accordingly within a day of noticing.

Pleis asked if there was any other way Narcan was being distributed other than by police officers. Harnden responded that they give them to Chance employees who are going out to the camps, as well as to schools (although schools also get and distribute it on their own). She mentioned that in addition to Chance, Narcan is also accessible from the health department and public hospitals. Johnson added that Family Tree Relief Nursery was offering it.

Kreitman asked about calls for service and whether they were through 9-1-1 calls/Dispatch or they were officer-driven. Harnden said both. When he asked for clarification on how many were phone or computer reports, Harnden answered that the statistic is thrown off by the way the call defaults to the address of the police station if no address is given. If there are more priority one or two calls, it might be a sign to get more officers or CSOs. There was a shooting and a suicide in January. Benton county took on the investigation of the shooting and Linn County investigated the suicide.

They will renew the lease on the Coastal Farms substation for another five years. It has had a positive impact.

Harnden said that Police has had double-digit hiring every year since her arrival, hiring 11 new personnel in 2025. They have a CSO in backgrounds and a new behavioral health specialist just started (Heidi Davis, formerly of Adult Protective Services). Out of five police positions they are currently hiring for, two are new positions, and three are to replace retirees. Steve Corder retired February 1 but will be working back, and Jerry Drum and Mike Wood are both retiring in March. The City is allowing workback for them. Greene asked if the new behavioral health specialist can come and talk to the commission in the future, and Harnden said yes.

Regarding photo enforcement, Harnden said that there will be a daily dashboard which will be public-facing. The first graph is speed vs. red light citations, the second is a breakdown of ticket by location. There have been 6,482 citations so far. They only ticket those going 11 or more miles an hour over the speed limit. In 2025, there were 424 people get more than one ticket, but that number is dropping. All cameras became active in September 2025, so they will have more complete data by September 2026. The expectation is that in two years the statistics will plateau out, although they expect to issue between 9,500 and 15,000 tickets in 2026, necessitating the hiring of more personnel to cover the workload.

She noted that she is going to court to testify for four citations she issued. She said the City hopes to use the leftover revenue to improve traffic and pedestrian safety by installing flashing lights at crosswalks, etc. Pleis asked who would pay for and install the safety features and Harnden said it would be a city project, pointing out that it would require the efforts of many different departments, such as Police, Public Works and Finance. Fowler asked whether the cameras have improved public safety by decreasing accidents. LaBelle responded that Fire still goes on a lot of collisions (over 500 last year). Harnden said Police can track this data but would need two to three years to get a good reading. Johnson asked about a diversion program for the tickets. Harnden stressed that those enrolled in the program would still have to pay a the presumptive minimum fine as well as the school.

Fire Update – Chief Chris LaBelle

He brought some of his personnel in to do a demonstration of the new lifting devices that were distributed to the local memory care, nursing, and assisted living facilities. He pointed out that Fire has been on 6,930 calls so far this fiscal year. LaBelle said that Fire tends to see a spike in calls every five years, so they will be looking at run numbers, tracking what happens over the next couple of years.

LaBelle reported that the Life Safety Division is doing well (423 inspections for the current fiscal year) and that response times are down. He pointed out that the statistics on structure fires are not necessarily indicative of working incidents (every time they send all five stations on a potential fire) – they have had 53 of them so far this fiscal year. On-scene time ranges from 15-20 minutes to several hours, although there are times when firefighters have to hold the scene overnight on fire watch.

The Community Paramedic program is also doing very well. He said out of the top 25 responses, numbers two and three are falls and lift assists. The new lift devices have proved helpful for patients as well as the crews, lessening strains, sprains, and hurting backs and shoulders.

He indicated that they need to keep watching out for concurrent calls – there have been 513 cases of five concurrent calls so far this fiscal year, with two incidences of eight concurrent calls. In those cases, they call in Corvallis or Lebanon to provide an ambulance. Medic 10 has been a game changer for Fire, adding 24-hour coverage from the original peak times of 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

LaBelle told the commission that Fire is in the process of designing and purchasing a new fire engine. It costs over \$1.1 million to design and purchase a new fire engine, and they hope to receive it within 28 to 34 months. They will be replacing auto extrication equipment – Council approved \$300,000 to replace the fleet.

They had eight new firefighters and one single role start in December and they just got approval from City Council to hire three new firefighters. They got the go-ahead from the Deputy City Manager to hire three new firefighters, so they want to make sure the upcoming academy is full (five to six personnel). Training Chief Tom Henke retired at the end of December, and they will be posting the position soon. La Belle explained the position maintains certifications with the State, facilitates training, and runs the academies.

Kreitman asked if it would be possible for someone to put together the cost of replacing vehicles for both Fire and Police and he was told yes. He said it would be good for the public to know. Harnden pointed out that the 700 single band radios, for instance, cost \$11,000 each, and LaBelle said even the Fire's dual band radios are \$5,000 to \$6,000 each.

Presentation

Community Paramedic Hillary Kosmicki, Division Chief – EMS Ray Wooldridge, and Firefighters Damon Martin, Alex Funicello, and Austin Thingvall presented on the ELK and CAMEL inflatable lifting devices that have been distributed to the local memory care, nursing, and assisted living facilities.

Kosmicki gave the statistics surrounding falls and lift assist calls, noting that since distributing the lifting devices; over a 10-day stretch in December, they recorded seven lift assist calls they did not have to go on because of these new devices (there have been 17 calls in January that they haven't had to go on). They are also working to encourage facilities to perform basic evaluations, lift assists, and to transport non-emergency cases themselves. She iterated that the care facilities are legally and financially obligated to handle these cases, pointing out that Fire should only be called in cases of actual emergency.

Kosmicki pointed out the difficulties of high turnover among personnel and lack of training that personnel receive (they are not required to have first aid or CPR training, for instance). She cited this as a problem when it comes to reaching employees to teach them to use the lifting devices.

Kosmicki, Wooldridge, Martin, Funicello, and Thingvall then demonstrated the two devices. Kosmicki made a pocket guide on how to do a basic evaluation and how to use each device to hand out to personnel at the facilities. She pointed out that the CAMEL can be used for people who are bed-bound or who cannot sit up on their own. Kosmicki also taught them how to use a sheet to slide people onto the CAMEL.

Wooldridge pointed out that each compressor (used to inflate the devices) has a 12 hour charge and the ability to lift 700 pounds. It costs about \$60 to replace the batteries in the compressors, which last for several years. The cost of the ELK is approximately \$1,600, whereas the CAMEL costs about \$2,400. The devices need to be wiped down and dried after each use. It's up to the facilities to follow their protocols regarding lifting (a one- or two-person lift) and assessment. After demonstrating the CAMEL, Fire personnel demonstrated the ELK. There is currently an ELK on each engine. Kosmicki said that facilities are also required to maintain a list of device usage, noting the demographics of the people being lifted.

Business from the Commission

Rau said that he would like the new behavioral health specialist from Police to speak at the next meeting.

Johnson asked about ICE activity in the community. Harnden reported that they are working with the community to build and foster trust. She noted that Police was aware, when the immigration crackdown started, that there would be difficulties (Oregon being a sanctuary state, for example). She said that Police will not do immigration enforcement, and they are openly monitoring the situation. She mentioned the Diversity Advisory and Alliance Team, which she formed in 2020 in concert with community members to address issues surrounding public safety and building trust within the community.

Police is mindful of getting lumped in with the federal forces, especially with regard to their tactics, which are concerning. In response to a question of whether or not traffic photos and data are being shared with the government, Harnden said that data from the FLOCK cameras is only shared with law enforcement within the state, due to the sanctuary law.

Rau asked about changes to federal funding or coordination. Harnden said there are a number of things happening financially, due to Oregon's status as a sanctuary state – for example, the HIDTA (high intensity drug trafficking areas) program experienced a cut to their funding.

Pleis asked about the status of the strategic workplan. Harnden said she would check with the Deputy City Manager.

Harnden offered to show the drone program to the Commission, if the Mental Health Specialist is unavailable.

Next Meeting Date

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on April 1, 2026, at the Albany Police Department.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Greene adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Kate Hennessy
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.*