

Good Morning,

I am writing on behalf of the City of Oakridge Oregon, a small community of about 3500 people, that is located about halfway between Eugene and the Willamette Pass. Our community went through a fiscal crisis several years ago, and we are still working to recover. This crisis followed years of economic decline due to lost jobs in the timber industry. The number of city staff has fallen over the years, including a loss of 1 FT and 1 half full time position in the office since 2011 when I came to work for the city. We now have 3 full time and 1 halftime employees that “do it all” from my position of finance director/HR/city recorder/payroll clerk/pro tem judge, to one person who is the Utility Billing/accounts payable/library liaison clerk, one assistant planner/assistant recorder/front counter clerk and the one halftime position of municipal court clerk. The assistant planner and I help with court payments when the clerk is gone. It’s a balancing act.

HB 3505 will put unnecessary burden on our already small staff. Many older records are stored off site, due to limited space in our old (early 1960’s) building. It takes a great deal of time to track down and copy these records, as there is no copier/scanner where they are stored. We do not have a “public records” person, requests are handled as quickly as possible. Our fees are reasonable, if it’s something we can locate quickly (under 15 minutes), then the cost is only the copy charge, which is currently \$0.25 p/page. Most of our requests from local citizens fall into this range. This bill contains arbitrary deadlines that would put larger outside requests in front of those from local citizens. That simply is not fair. These large outside requests are often for information to include in some report or study that our citizens, who are footing the costs, will never see or gain from. Large requests that are submitted simply to tie up staff as a form of harassment (yes it happens on occasion) would also get priority over legitimate requests. That simply isn’t fair. The intentions of this bill may be to improve transparency, which we all strive for, but the results of this bill will not achieve that.

We recently passed an ordinance change that effected the entire city, it was dealing with changes in state law and the legalization of marijuana. We placed notices in our local newspaper, posted at various locations around town, on our website that contained when the issue was to go before our planning commission. A letter containing the changes to our current ordinance was mailed out to all property owners in our area, this letter also contained the date, time and location of the public hearing that would take place during the regular city council meeting. Again, this information was placed in the local newspaper, posted in various locations, placed on our website and on our Facebook page. We try our best to notify our citizens of issues, and to communicate to them in several ways how to have their opinion heard, and their concerns addressed.

HB 3505, does nothing to improve on that.

As an employee working for a small city with limited staff and resources, I strongly oppose HB3505.

Thank you.

Susan LaDuke
City Recorder/Finance Director

