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Neighborhood committee will start with transportation, land use

Committee to advise Bend council on issues from a community perspective



"Sharrows" like this symbol on a Bend street indicate the lane should be shared by bikes and cars. Neighborhood groups around the city are concerned about transportation safety. (Joe Kline/Bulletin file photo)

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A new city committee focused on quality of life for Bend residents plans to start its work by looking at neighborhood transportation safety and how the city's land-use processes work.

The review is part of a response to concerns from neighborhood association leaders that the city wasn't listening enough to neighborhoods, which prompted the Bend City Council earlier this year to form a committee with representatives from each of Bend's 13 neighborhood associations. The Neighborhood Leadership Alliance is expected to advise the City Council on issues from a community perspective, the way the Bend Economic Development Advisory Board provides input from a business standpoint.

Neighborhood Leadership Alliance members

- Awbrey Butte: Hans Jorgensen, 68, retired
- Boyd Acres: Matt Bryant, 40, a social media manager who works from his home

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The group won't work on issues that only affect one neighborhood, said Hans Jorgensen, chairman of the Neighborhood Leadership Alliance and co-chairman of the Awbrey Butte Neighborhood Association.

Instead, the group will pay attention to broad problems, like safe transportation, that may manifest differently in different parts of town. Residents of Awbrey Butte, for instance, are affected by speeding on Mount Washington Drive.

"Not everyone here is concerned with speeding, necessarily, but as it relates to safety, I think everyone's concerned about safety," Jorgensen said.

City Councilor Bill Moseley, the council liaison to the Neighborhood Leadership Alliance, said he believed four or more current city councilors would be willing to give the committee \$200,000 to \$400,000 to work on traffic safety issues. That money wouldn't be allocated until after a new city council begins budgeting and setting goals in early 2019, and Bend will have at least two new city councilors at that point because Mayor Casey Roats and City Councilor Nathan Boddie are not running for re-election.

Neighborhood Leadership Alliance members also want to start working on ways to improve the city's land-use notification policies. The city requires developers to send letters to neighborhood association land-use chairs and nearby property owners, and large developments such as apartment complexes have to hold public meetings for neighbors.

In most cases, neighborhood associations receive notices two weeks before those scheduled meetings, said Lisa Mushel, chairwoman of the Century West Neighborhood Association. Her association board meets monthly, which means it may not have time to

discuss or share information about planned development with the wider neighborhood before the developer meetings occur.

“We’ve had some issues where the land-use notifications are getting to us too late in the process for us to do anything to get this information out to our constituents,” she said. “Is it realistic that we can send these out 30 days in advance? That may not work with developers.”

Oregon law requires cities to approve or deny development applications within 120 days, which could make providing more notice to neighborhoods difficult. Committee members will learn more from the city’s planning department before making any recommendations.

Bill Galaway, chairman of the Southeast Bend Neighborhood Association, said problems with land-use policies extend beyond how much notice neighborhoods receive. Residents feel like they’re not heard by developers or the City Council, he said.

“The whole land-use process in the NAs is a joke,” he said. “We get a public notice that there’s a public meeting going to happen. We go to the meeting. We fill out a form. It gets signed. It goes to the city. It doesn’t matter at all.”

Other priorities for the Neighborhood Leadership Alliance could come from the results of a professionally done community survey the city of Bend will conduct later this fall, or from goals set by the new City Council early in 2019. City councilors on Wednesday discussed possibly having the group look at whether Bend should enact policies to limit light pollution if the next council decides that’s a worthy use of city time.

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