

CORBETT: EO originally requested his evaluation in Feb. 2015

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expectations.” The rest of the council’s responses either elicited an “exceeds expectations” rating (26 percent) or “needs improvement” (8 percent).

The council generally gave good marks to Corbett for his ability to reflect Pendleton’s “core values,” which include respect, integrity and industriousness.

“One thing that stands out to me is that Robb displays respect to everyone that he meets,” one councilor wrote, giving Corbett an “exceeds expectations” score. “I have never heard anything negative about his demeanor or attitude when someone is working with or talking to him. He always tries to provide everyone with an opportunity to share their own thoughts.”

The 2016 council lauded Corbett for his economic development skills, with every council member agreeing that he either met or exceeded expectations.

One councilor cited the city’s work in continuing to support the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range, facilitating industrial expansion and upgrading the downtown area’s designation with the Oregon Main Street program.

“This is an area I think Robb has done an outstanding job,” another councilor wrote. “With his continued support of (economic development director) Steve Chrisman and business interests ... he has done an excellent job.”

Not every comment was effusive. Councilor Neil Brown both praised and chided Corbett for being “a nice guy” in 2015.

“I think Robb’s biggest problem is he is a nice guy,” Brown wrote. “No one wants him to change that, but things like rehiring our city planner (aren’t good management choices). Finance department needs (to be) addressed. Public works need to be directed, we do not seem to have the same agenda. A monthly report is a must! We can’t help if we are not aware.”

Rehiring former city planner Evan MacKenzie after he briefly took a job in Ketchum, Idaho, was a frequent point of

criticism from Brown and other councilors in 2015.

MacKenzie left the city permanently earlier this year, and a councilor in the 2016 evaluation wrote it was a move in the right direction, along with the hires of Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo, Pendleton Development Commission associate director Charles Denight and accounting supervisor Brian Harrington.

But a different councilor still had reservations.

“I do think Robb allows staff to dictate workload to him rather than the other way around,” the councilor wrote. “I honestly do not know if Robb attempts to standardize procedures to improve efficiencies but this would be a good idea.”

The same councilor who praised Corbett for his recent hires also commented that there were “leadership vacancies” in the parks and recreation department and the Pendleton Convention Center and the city needed to take a more proactive approach to street and park projects. Chrisman has since been named director of the Pendleton Convention Center.

It’s difficult to compare the 2015 and 2016 evaluations because the council used a different format in the prior year, rating Corbett on a scale of 1-4, with 1 considered “unsatisfactory” and 4 being “excellent.”

Based on 38 criteria over nine categories, Corbett averaged 2.5 points out of 4 in his 2015 evaluation.

In an interview, Corbett declined to speak specifically about the councilors’ comments but did say that the council’s frank assessments were important in finding ways to improve his performance.

Brown said evaluating the city manager is an important council responsibility and has noticed “vast improvements” in Corbett’s communication and managerial skills.

Brown said it was “human instinct” to say nice things about Corbett, but it was imperative to provide him with constructive criticism.

“He’s going to hear the bitter and the sweet,” Brown said.

While Brown said the comment section was the most important part of the evaluation, one member of the council elected to withhold their comments from the 2016 document.

Although he contributed ratings, Mayor Phillip Houk said he met with Corbett privately to discuss his job performance instead of adding it to the evaluation’s written comments.

“In the past, there were things that were put out of context,” he said about comments that were previously made public.

Houk praised Corbett for his integrity and said he would hire him again if he could. Corbett, hired in 2011, has previously served as the city manager for Burns, Prineville and Sutherlin. He makes \$120,572 per year.

The *East Oregonian* originally requested Corbett’s 2015 evaluation in February of that year. When City Attorney Nancy Kerns provided a copy in April 2015, she kept the scores but redacted the comments, writing in a letter that internal communications between the council and the city manager would have a “chilling effect” on “honest assessment.”

Kerns made similar redactions when the *East Oregonian* made a public records request for Corbett’s 2016 evaluation, prompting the *EO* to file an appeal with Primus to obtain the council’s comments.

“It is my belief that an evaluation can be conducted in executive session, as provided by statute. But without releasing the written evaluation, the public does not have the opportunity to know how the City Manager is performing their function,” Primus wrote in an Aug. 23 email explaining his decision. “The concern about ‘free flow of communication’ on councilors making statements can be remedied by redacting which council person made a particular statement.”

Kerns released the council’s 2016 comments Aug. 25, but said the unredacted versions of the 2015 comments were sent by mistake.

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DATA: Voter info separate from system that records votes

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Concerns have been raised in recent years that such information could be accessed through states’ centralized databases and used for financial or political gain.

There have also been worries that voter registration databases could be altered — artificially inflated with “ghost” voters or that actual voters could be deleted from the official list.

But Atkins said that the risk to voters’ personal information being accessed surreptitiously is low.

“...At this point we feel that we are pretty secure,” Atkins said. She added that while her agency took the threat of a breach of personal information “very, very seriously,” voters should not be concerned about the outcome of elections based on possible threats to personal information.

The database containing voter information is separate from the system that records votes, which in turn is not connected to the internet, Atkins said.

Among other duties, the secretary of state’s information technology employees monitor who “pings” or tries to access information maintained by the agency. IT employees also monitor sudden changes in voter registration records. Atkins said she did not “like to talk about the specifics” of the security measures the agency takes.

The Secretary of State’s Office also has a security plan that it shares with the state’s chief information officer, Atkins said.

But state data has been breached in the past.

The Secretary of State Office’s business registry and campaign finance databases were breached in early 2014 and the Oregon Employment Department was subject to a similar breach later that year.

Atkins said that after the 2014 breach, there was “some pretty good intelligence work by our folks about what was needed to prevent that from happening again.”

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