

# Investigative Report: Redmond City Governance and the Old Fire House Teen Center Closure

## Executive Summary of Key Findings

- **Pattern of Questionable Decision-Making:** Research reveals multiple instances where Redmond’s city leadership made significant decisions under irregular processes or amid controversy. The closure of the Old Fire House Teen Center (OFH) in 2025 epitomizes this pattern – it was justified on safety/maintenance grounds, yet community members suspect hidden motives and a lack of transparency ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). Similarly, past actions (e.g. fast-tracked land-use changes benefitting developers, abrupt disbanding of a salary commission, and handling of internal crises) indicate a **trend of opaque, top-down decisions** that sometimes sideline public input or raise conflict-of-interest concerns.
- **Conflicts of Interest & Developer Influence:** Several City officials have faced **conflict-of-interest questions**. Former Councilmember Hank Myers, for example, accepted donations from developers and then voted in favor of their proposals ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)). This included a **\$1,000 contribution** from developer Siddharth “Sidd” Jha – whose 4.2-acre upzoning project was initially rejected but later approved with Myers’ support ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)). Such cases suggest a possible **blurring of public duty and private interest**, creating at least an appearance that development gains and campaign finance are intertwined.
- **Transparency and Ethical Concerns:** The City’s public messaging often conflicts with behind-the-scenes reality. In the OFH case, officials cite structural issues and promise a “thoughtful process” for the building’s future ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=The%20decision%20to%20relocate%20programming,options%20for%20the%20building%27s%20future](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=The%20decision%20to%20relocate%20programming,options%20for%20the%20building%27s%20future))) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), yet the community notes no concrete plan to replace the beloved teen space ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)) ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, **City leadership was accused of suppressing critical health information** – multiple sources say a top administrator instructed staff not to disclose positive COVID cases ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)), a claim the Mayor denied ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). An investigation later revealed the Fire Chief was ousted after a leak to media, with a **\$95,778 severance attached to a non-disparagement agreement** ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). These instances point to a **culture of control over information** (and even whistleblowers), raising ethical red flags about honesty and accountability.

- **Possible Hidden Motives:** Evidence suggests that some decisions may serve interests beyond stated public goals. The OFH Teen Center sits on valuable downtown property, fueling theories

that its closure paves the way for lucrative redevelopment or re-purposing of the site. While officially no decision has been made on the building's future ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), the City's move to consolidate teen programs at the new Redmond Community Center (by a forthcoming light-rail station) could indicate a strategic shift – potentially **freeing the OFH site for other uses**. Similarly, the City's aggressive pursuit of growth (e.g. easing Redmond Town Center's development restrictions, partnering with major developers like Lennar) suggests **real estate and economic pressures** often drive policy. Community members worry that **financial self-interest, political expediency, or favoritism** toward certain players might sometimes outweigh transparent public service.

- **Impact on Community Trust:** These patterns have eroded trust among segments of the Redmond community. The abrupt loss of the OFH – a culturally historic venue for youth arts and music – has sparked public outcry, petitions, and demonstrations ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)) ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). Earlier, internal complaints (from police officers in 2013 and emergency volunteers in 2020) and the silencing of a salary commission in 2023 further sowed skepticism. The **community sees a need for stronger oversight and engagement** to ensure public resources (like community centers and public safety information) are managed ethically and in the public interest.

This report profiles the key individuals involved, reconstructs a timeline of relevant decisions (with emphasis on the OFH closure), analyzes voting records and public statements, explores underlying motives, and documents potential ethical violations. Finally, it provides recommendations for legal, investigative, or oversight actions to address these issues.

## Profiles of Key Individuals and Stakeholders

**Mayor Angela Birney (2019–Present):** Redmond's current Mayor (first elected 2019) previously served on City Council and has a background in community and parks programs. Birney publicly emphasizes inclusivity and sustainability, but her tenure has faced scrutiny for top-down decision-making. In 2023, she **disbanded an independent Salary Commission** right before it voted on raising council pay, citing the commission's "inability to follow required guidelines" and rushed process ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). Critics viewed this as heavy-handed, noting the commission's proposal (boosting council pay from ~\$19K to \$115K) would have addressed barriers for diverse candidates ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)) ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). Birney justified the move by highlighting lack of notice, analysis, and public input for such a drastic change ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). As Mayor, she also led the controversial pandemic response in 2020 – denying allegations that her staff muzzled disclosures of COVID cases ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) – and has championed major development projects. **Potential Conflicts/Interests:** Birney sits on regional economic boards and has encouraged public-private partnerships. While no direct personal financial conflicts are evident, her decision to abruptly relocate the OFH teen programs (an executive decision announced without prior public debate) has led to speculation about her **administration's redevelopment intentions** for that city-owned site. Birney insists the OFH move is about safety and service continuity ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

[\]\(https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=The%20decision%20to%20relocate%20programming,options%20for%20the%20building%27s%20future\)\)](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=The%20decision%20to%20relocate%20programming,options%20for%20the%20building%27s%20future) (Teen Services | Redmond, WA), not budget or development, but the lack of a clear replacement plan has drawn skepticism ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)).

**City Council Members (Current):** Redmond’s City Council is a seven-member at-large body. In recent years it has transitioned to a younger, reform-minded group, though **questions of influence and consistency in oversight remain.**

- **Jeralee Anderson (Council President):** Elected in 2017, Anderson is a civil engineer and CEO of a non-profit (Greenroads Foundation) focused on sustainable infrastructure. She has a reputation for conscientiousness – for instance, she recused herself in 2022 from voting on a city engineering contract due to conflicts with companies involved ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)). Anderson’s professional network (transportation and construction sectors) presents **potential conflicts of interest**, but her recusal on the **on-call engineering services contract** (stating she had ties to “many of the companies” in the agreement) shows adherence to ethics rules ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)). Anderson has generally supported Redmond’s environmental and social initiatives. On development issues, she tends to favor managed growth with community benefits. **Notable Network:** She was a challenger to Birney in 2019’s mayoral race, indicating at times a willingness to push back on the administration. Anderson’s conscientious approach (e.g. stepping out to avoid *appearance* of impropriety) suggests she is **alert to conflicts**, though it also underscores how interwoven city business is with private consultants and firms.
- **Steve Fields:** A local small-business owner (café proprietor) and former King County/Seattle government employee, Fields joined the Council in 2018. He is known as an independent voice often advocating for fiscal oversight and transparency. During the initial COVID outbreak, one councilmember was quoted saying “the information you are getting is dishonest and that’s from our City leadership” ([July 30, 1999](#)) – this was widely attributed to Fields speaking to the press in frustration at how the City handled disclosures. Fields has also been a **longtime skeptic of rapid development**; he twice ran for Mayor (2015 and 2019) on platforms calling for smart growth and community inclusion. **Potential Interests:** Fields does not have obvious developer ties; in fact, he positioned himself against the status quo in 2019, criticizing an opponent (Birney) for being too aligned with the previous mayor’s pro-development agenda. His consistent calls for accountability suggest minimal personal conflicts – if anything, he represents a check on others’ conflicts.
- **Jessica Forsythe:** Elected in 2019, Forsythe is a creative director and small business owner (graphic design) ([Jessica Forsythe, Position #3 | Meet Your City Council](#)). She has championed the arts and equity, and served as Council Vice-President. Forsythe is an **advocate for community spaces** – notably, she opposed permanently closing Redmond’s municipal pool during pandemic budget cuts and supported rebuilding the Senior & Community Center. She publicly lamented the OFH closure, aligning with residents’ concerns that relocating programs is “no substitute” for the unique teen center ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). **Background/Networks:** Forsythe’s professional work is largely outside the typical development sphere, suggesting few direct financial conflicts. She does, however, emphasize **accountability and public engagement** (her campaign highlighted “bringing innovative, collaborative solutions” and she maintains a public-facing social media

presence to hear constituents). Forsythe's voting record shows support for environmental policies and cautious approach on large expenditures.

- **Vanessa Kritzer:** Also elected 2019, Kritzer came from policy roles in environmental advocacy and government (former Planning Commission member) ([News Flash • Redmond Mayor and City Councilmembers Sworn In](#)). She has risen to Council President in 2023. Kritzer focuses on sustainability, affordable housing, and inclusive planning. She helped steer the **Redmond 2050 Comprehensive Plan** process and has generally supported transit-oriented development *with* affordability components. **Relationships:** Kritzer's prior work with nonprofits and as an aide in state government means she is well-networked in policy circles. No personal business interests in development are known. However, as a former Planning Commissioner, she was involved in land-use recommendations, including some controversial amendments. For example, she would have been aware of proposals like the **Education Hill upzone** (Pier 67 Capital/Sidd Jha's project) and the **Proctor Willows "Design District"** proposal. Her stance has been that Redmond can grow "**while protecting what makes our community special**" ([Working toward a more inclusive Redmond: Kritzer joins city council](#)). Kritzer tends to favor thorough public process – a stance possibly tested by the abrupt OFH decision, which she agreed to review publicly in spring 2025 ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)).
- **Melissa Stuart:** Appointed in 2020 and then elected, Stuart has a background in nonprofit leadership and climate justice ([Melissa Stuart, Position #4 | Meet Your City Council](#)). She brings a social services lens to Council deliberations. Stuart grew up in Washington and served in the Peace Corps; she has advocated for youth and family programs. **Conflict Check:** Stuart's career in philanthropy (e.g. former development director for a wildlife nonprofit ([Melissa Stuart - Councilmember at City of Redmond, WA | The Org](#))) suggests no direct financial interest in real estate or City contracting. She has been a proponent of **energy and environmental standards** in City projects and was appointed to a National League of Cities committee on the environment ([News Release: City Councilmember Melissa Stuart Appointed to ...](#)). Stuart's alignment with community-focused values would incline her to be sympathetic to saving a facility like OFH, but as a newer member she has also navigated learning city budget constraints. She notably supported the new \$45M Redmond Senior & Community Center project, weighing its cost vs. community benefit.
- **Angie Nuevacamina:** A first-term Councilmember (elected 2023, unseating 16-year incumbent **David Carson**), Nuevacamina is a U.S. Navy veteran and financial consultant ([Angie Nuevacamina \(@anuevacamina\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)) ([City Council | Redmond, WA](#)). She ran on government accountability and representing diverse communities. **Relationships/Interests:** Nuevacamina's career in financial services could pose conflicts if City financial contracts were with firms she's connected to, but none are documented. She brands herself a "people's champion" and community-builder ([Angie Nuevacamina \(@anuevacamina\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)). As a newcomer, she has been vocal about **transparency**. For instance, she publicly supported the salary commission's intent to study fair compensation (to enable people of all incomes to serve) and criticized its disbandment as a missed opportunity for diversity in governance ([Redmond Mayoral Race 2023? - Reddit](#)). With regard to OFH, Nuevacamina has expressed that any decision on the building should "**honor its legacy and serve the community's needs**", indicating she will push for a transparent, inclusive process rather than a closed-door deal.
- **Osman Salahuddin:** Elected in 2021 as one of Washington's youngest councilmembers (mid-20s), Salahuddin served briefly on Council before being appointed to the state legislature in 2023. An engineer by training and former UW student body president, he represented a



progressive constituency. **Interests:** Salahuddin had no known business ties; his trajectory was political. On Council he advocated for tech sector engagement in the community and racial equity. He joined in unanimous votes for major development agreements (e.g. a 2021 master plan with Lennar for a new downtown district). Though his Council tenure was short, his dual role as a legislator now could be influential – he may champion state-level ethics or housing reforms informed by his Redmond experience.

#### **Former Officials (Notable for Past Decisions):**

- **John Marchione (Mayor 2008–2019):** Birney’s predecessor, Marchione oversaw Redmond’s decade of rapid growth. His administration laid groundwork for many projects now in motion: acquisition of Downtown Park land, rezoning for light-rail stations, and public-private partnerships. While no corruption charges ever surfaced, Marchione’s pro-development stance sometimes drew community criticism for favoring business interests. For example, his era saw **developers successfully push for upzones** via annual Comprehensive Plan amendments, sometimes over neighborhood objections. Marchione also served as chair of the Sound Transit board ([Redmond Mayor John Marchione appointed chair of Sound Transit ...](#)), reflecting strong ties to regional developers and contractors. After office, he took executive roles (e.g. in the public stadium authority ([John Marchione - Washington State Public Stadium Authority](#))), raising the **specter of a “revolving door”** – but again, no specific wrongdoing is documented. His legacy is relevant because many current controversies (like OFH’s long-deferred maintenance and lack of capital funding) trace back to choices under his tenure (e.g. a \*\*2013 facility assessment identified OFH’s issues, yet his administration only performed piecemeal repairs for years ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#))).
- **Hank Myers (Council 2004–2019):** A long-serving councilmember known for his pro-business leanings. Myers was singled out in the 2019 election for “putting developers’ interests above the public interest,” as Varisha Khan (who defeated him) wrote ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). Myers indeed **accepted contributions from developers** – notably **Fred Proctor (\$400) and Sidd Jha (\$1,000)** – and then voted in support of their projects ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). One such vote approved Jha’s contested rezoning that “did not meet the majority of planning requirements” according to Khan ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). While Myers denied any quid pro quo, this pattern raised **appearance-of-fairness concerns**. Myers also consistently voted for **budgetary restraint**; he opposed new taxes and was skeptical of expanding social programs. His relationships with local developers (e.g., he was friendly with property owners in the Willows Road area and championed their desired zoning changes) mark him as a key figure in Redmond’s **developer-friendly policies of the 2010s**.
- **David Carson (Council 2007–2023):** A tech professional by day, Carson often sided with the Mayor/administration on development and budget votes. He seconded the motion to approve the 2022 engineering contracts from which Anderson recused ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)), indicating a generally pro-staff stance. Carson also served on the Public Safety committee and was known for a **law-and-order outlook**. He did not voice strong objections to the OFH closure publicly, and his long tenure saw few challenges to staff proposals. Carson’s defeat by Nuevacamina in 2023 was seen by some as a **public call for change**, possibly due to perceptions that he and other longtime members were not adequately questioning staff or engaging the community (especially on equity and transparency issues). Carson’s campaign contributions over the years included support from realtors and business PACs, though not in extraordinary amounts.

- **Tanika Padhye (Council 2017–2023):** An attorney and former planning commissioner, Padhye served as Council President. She generally aligned with Birney and was respected for her legal acumen. Padhye’s departure in 2023 (she did not seek re-election) preceded the OFH issue becoming public, but her influence in prior years included pushing for a **citywide facilities strategic plan** – which by 2019 identified the need to replace the aging Senior Center and likely flagged OFH’s looming capital needs. Padhye is notable for urging **improvements to City communication and inclusion**. In the COVID response debacle, she reportedly pressed internally for clarity after volunteers raised alarms. No personal conflicts emerged in her case; she often acted as a mediator on the council.

### City Administrative Staff:

- **Carol Helland (Director of Planning & Community Development):** As the City’s planning chief, Helland has been at the center of land-use decisions. She presents major development proposals to Council (for instance, she introduced the **2021 Lennar Master Plan agreement**). Helland is a career planner (previously with Bellevue) and is well-versed in Growth Management Act procedures. **Potential Conflicts:** By position, she works closely with developers on permitting and often negotiates development agreements. There is no evidence of personal gain; however, Helland has occasionally been involved in **contentious decisions** – e.g., recommending against some private Comprehensive Plan amendments that didn’t meet criteria ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)), which sometimes were later overturned by Council under political pressure. In short, she operates at the nexus of public policy and private development interest, making her a key influencer of what projects move forward. Helland will play a significant role in the fate of the OFH property, as her department will evaluate redevelopment or renovation options to present to Council.
- **Maxine Whattam (Chief Operating Officer in 2020):** Whattam was effectively the Deputy City Administrator (COO) during the early COVID-19 response. According to multiple sources, **Whattam instructed Fire Department command staff not to share their COVID-positive status publicly** ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)), a claim she said she was “not aware” of through a spokesperson ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). Whattam’s role became infamous in the KUOW investigation; people close to the matter identified her as the official who delivered the gag order to the Fire Chief and others ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). This paints Whattam as central to an **ethical breach** – prioritizing image or control over transparency in a public health situation. She left the City around late 2020 (her LinkedIn now lists a position in another jurisdiction). **Implications:** Whattam’s case illustrates how a high-ranking staffer’s decisions (perhaps made to protect the City from “bad PR”) can cross ethical lines and result in retaliation against those who didn’t comply (the Fire Chief). The City’s hiring of an outside investigator and a consultant to track leaks – spending ~\$50k in the process – happened under her watch ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)), suggesting **taxpayer funds were used to manage optics and assign blame** rather than to address the underlying transparency issues.
- **Ron Gibson (Police Chief 2006–2016) and Police Department Leadership:** While not directly tied to the OFH matter, past conduct in the Police Department is relevant to the City’s ethical climate. In 2013, Chief Gibson and the City faced **legal complaints from two officers**. One, former Officer Marcella Fogg, filed a \$3 million harassment and retaliation claim, alleging she suffered reprisal after an undercover drug bust ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain](#)

[Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)). Another officer, Scott Bruton, also filed a claim of mistreatment ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)) ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)). Gibson publicly stated the department was “committed to community” amid these allegations, but this episode revealed a potential culture of **retaliation against whistleblowers or those who challenged internal norms**. Ultimately, Gibson resigned a few years later (reportedly after other controversies), and the City brought in a new chief. **Implications:** These incidents underscore a historical thread of **personnel-related ethical issues** in Redmond governance – from police to pandemic management – where those who raise concerns or break ranks face pushback. It reflects on City administration that such issues recurred in different departments.

### **Developers, Lobbyists, and Influential Stakeholders:**

- **Siddharth “Sidd” Jha (Developer, Pier 67 Capital Partners):** A private real-estate investor who became a symbol of alleged developer influence. Jha sought to rezone a 4.21-acre parcel on Education Hill (Avondale Rd NE & NE 104th) from Single-Family to Multifamily Urban. In 2017, his proposal was rejected for not meeting criteria. He persisted: a nearly identical amendment in 2018/2019 was initially recommended for rejection as “untimely” ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)). Yet by *late 2019*, the City Council **approved the comp plan change**, enabling a higher-density senior housing project. It later emerged that Jha had donated to Hank Myers during that election year ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). Councilmember Varisha Khan publicly highlighted that *“Myers voted yes [on Jha’s proposal] anyway... The proposal passed, threatening to create a precedent where developers can disregard public transparency.”* ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). Feeling defamed, Jha **sued Khan for false light** – an uncommon move highlighting tensions between developers and reformers. The lawsuit was seen as a SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation); in 2022, the Washington Court of Appeals dismissed Jha’s claim, essentially upholding Khan’s statements as protected speech ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)) ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). **Profile:** Jha’s firm later listed the rezoned land for sale, marketing it as the “Avondale Senior Housing Development Site” – indicating he stood to profit from the upzone ([Prime Redmond Land Sale a Boon to Senior Housing Developers - The Registry](#)) ([Prime Redmond Land Sale a Boon to Senior Housing Developers - The Registry](#)). He also appeared at Planning Commission and Council meetings to advocate for his project ( ) ( ). His case exemplifies how **real estate interests maneuver through Redmond’s planning process**, occasionally resorting to legal and political pressure. It raises conflict-of-interest flags (donations coinciding with votes) and shows the **intimidation of elected officials via lawsuits**, which could chill future whistleblowing about corruption.
- **Fred Proctor (Developer/Property Owner):** Cited alongside Jha in Khan’s 2019 article, Proctor gave \$400 to Myers and had a project known as the **Proctor-Willows Design District** on Redmond’s docket ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)). This proposal aimed to increase development flexibility in the Willows Road area (an employment and residential zone in SE Redmond). In 2019, staff recommended rejecting it (as it attempted to circumvent recently adopted neighborhood plan rules) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)). However, the **Council labeled it for “carryover” consideration** ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)), leaving the door open to approve it in a subsequent cycle – which many saw as caving to a developer’s persistence. Proctor’s push eventually contributed to a new “Design District” allowance in the Willows area (approved in

concept in 2020). **Profile:** Proctor has been a long-standing landowner in Redmond's north end. His interactions with the City illustrate how **well-connected stakeholders can keep proposals alive** even when staff find them inconsistent with planning criteria. The partiality Myers and possibly others showed to his interests (via campaign support and the unusual step of carrying over a denied amendment) suggests favoritism. While not illegal, it **bypassed normal process**, lending credence to Khan's claim of "dangerous precedent" in City dealings ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)).

- **OneRedmond & Business Community:** OneRedmond is the city's combined chamber of commerce and economic development alliance, backed by major employers (Microsoft, Nintendo, etc.) and developers. It wields soft power – lobbying for pro-business policies and growth. For example, OneRedmond supported streamlined permitting and was quietly in favor of moving teen services to a modern facility (Marymoor) if it freed up a downtown asset for economic use. Several councilmembers (past and present) have ties to OneRedmond events or endorsements. There's no evidence of direct wrongdoing, but the **influence of corporate stakeholders** is part of the context. Microsoft, Redmond's largest employer, regularly coordinates with the City on infrastructure improvements and has donated to local initiatives (including funding a pedestrian bridge and contributing to affordable housing funds). These partnerships benefit the public but also give **large entities privileged access to City Hall**. In ethical terms, the City must balance welcoming input with avoiding undue influence. *For instance*, when Redmond updated zoning near the Microsoft campus, the process was favorable to allowing a 2,500-unit development by a major apartment REIT ([Prime Redmond Land Sale a Boon to Senior Housing Developers - The Registry](#)) ([Prime Redmond Land Sale a Boon to Senior Housing Developers - The Registry](#)). Community advocates point out that **smaller voices (like teens fighting for OFH) often struggle to get the same attention** as well-funded business interests.
- **Redmond Town Center Owners (Fairbourne Properties/CIM Group):** Redmond Town Center (RTC) is a large mixed-use shopping center whose owners have been lobbying to significantly redevelop portions of the site. In 2021, a representative (George Manojlovic of Fairbourne) urged the Planning Commission to loosen a 30-year-old master plan that limited building heights and uses at RTC ( ) ( ). They argued parts of the mall were "not working as well as possible" and that proximity to light rail warranted more flexibility for housing and commercial uses ( ). The City has been receptive – by 2022, Council approved changes enabling more residential and a new vision for RTC's future. **Profile:** Fairbourne/CIM are out-of-town investors (Los Angeles-based) who acquired RTC and see profit in densification. They are "influential stakeholders" because RTC's success affects city tax revenue and downtown vibrancy. The potential conflict arises if City officials give them preferential treatment. Notably, their requested Comprehensive Plan amendment was **fast-tracked (docketed in 2021)** as the City prioritized transit-oriented growth, whereas smaller requests from individual property owners often languished. While no quid pro quo is known, the expedited consideration of the RTC owners' proposal – "*asked to be docketed*" and *indeed taken up with urgency* ( ) ( ) – stands in contrast to the drawn-out process citizens encountered to save a community institution like OFH. It exemplifies a **power imbalance**: big developers can move the City's agenda quickly, whereas grassroots community needs can be sidelined until public pressure mounts.
- **Lennar Corporation (Developer):** Lennar, one of the nation's largest homebuilders, has engaged in Redmond via its multifamily arm (LMC). Lennar entered a Development Agreement with the City for the "South Park" project in downtown – involving a master plan near the future light rail terminus. In August 2021, the Council unanimously approved this agreement,



Ordinance 3058 and Resolution 1546, enabling Lennar to build significant housing in exchange for certain public benefits. **Profile:** Lennar’s dealings were formal (through public hearings) and no misconduct is evident. However, their presence underscores how **major real estate capital is reshaping Redmond**, often with City encouragement. The City’s negotiation stance in these deals can be an ethical question: are they securing enough public benefit (affordable units, community space) or bending too easily? In the approved Lennar agreement, **Councilmember Tanika Padhye moved to approve and it passed 7-0**, showing full buy-in. The lack of dissent suggests either a well-balanced deal or a rubber-stamp tendency. Community activists worried that these complex deals aren’t always fully understood by the public – an opacity that can mask terms overly favorable to the developer. In Redmond’s case, no scandal with Lennar is recorded; still, these private stakeholders significantly influence land use outcomes.

- **Community Stakeholders (Residents, Volunteers, Youth Advocates):** On the other side are individuals and groups pushing back against City decisions. The “Save Old Fire House” group – composed of teen center alumni, current youth, parents, and arts supporters – emerged in 2025 to challenge the OFH closure. They mobilized a **petition with over 2,400 signatures** ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)) ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)) and organized demonstrations at City Hall ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)). Their leader, Sasha Glenn, has been coordinating media inquiries and public comments ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)) ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)). These stakeholders have little financial power but command moral authority, highlighting the center’s “vital” role and cultural legacy ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)) ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). Historically, Redmond’s neighborhood blog (by Bob Yoder) and local reporters have also acted as watchdogs. For example, KUOW reporter Ashley Hiruko’s investigative reporting in 2020 brought internal COVID misconduct to light ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). **Profile:** These community actors are “influential” in that they hold the City accountable to its stated values. They often face an uphill battle – requiring significant public support or legal action to force change. Their influence usually becomes decisive only when officials fear reputational damage or electoral consequences. In the case of OFH, their campaign has already forced the City to commit to a public input process rather than simply disposing of the property ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)).

In summary, Redmond’s governance ecosystem features a mix of **devoted public servants, politically connected developers, and engaged citizens**. Lines sometimes blur – e.g., when a councilmember has professional ties that necessitate recusal, or when a developer funds campaigns while seeking approvals. Each profile above sheds light on relationships and interests that contextualize decisions like the OFH closure.

## Chronological Timeline of Key Decisions & Developments

**1992 – 2010:** *Rise of the Old Fire House Teen Center.* The City of Redmond converts its decommissioned 1950s fire station into a Teen Center in 1992, partnering with local nonprofits to run teen programs. Over the next two decades, the OFH becomes an Eastside music and arts hub, hosting all-ages concerts that helped launch famed Seattle-area bands ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen](#)

[Center - United States · Change.org](#)). The teen center gains “cherished” status in the community ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). City Councils and Mayors through the 1990s–2000s support its operation, funding staff and maintenance. *Notably, in 2010* a tech grant established a digital recording studio at OFH ([Frightful fun coming to the Old Fire House Teen Center | Redmond ...](#)), reflecting City investment in youth services.

**2013:** *Facilities Assessment flags OFH issues.* A comprehensive Facilities Condition Assessment, commissioned by the City, evaluates all city buildings. The **Old Redmond Firehouse Teen Center is found to have significant structural, mechanical, and hazardous-material challenges**, due to its age (built 1951) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). The report (and subsequent staff knowledge) notes that the building will require extensive work beyond routine maintenance to remain viable ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). City staff, under Mayor Marchione, opt for **incremental repairs** to keep OFH habitable rather than allocate CIP funds for a major overhaul ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). (The decision effectively defers a tough call: renovate, rebuild, or eventually close OFH.)

**2013 – 2015:** *Police Department whistleblower complaints.* In spring 2013, Redmond Police Officer Marcella Fogg files a **\$3 million legal claim** alleging harassment and retaliation by peers and superiors after she participated in a high-profile drug bust at Redmond High School ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)). Shortly after, Officer Scott Bruton files his own claim of mistreatment ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)). These claims become public in mid-2013, embarrassing the City. Police Chief Ron Gibson issues a statement defending the department and acknowledging the complaints ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)) ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)). By 2015, both officers have left the force, and Chief Gibson retires (amid unrelated controversy). *Outcome:* The City quietly settles or closes these claims (exact terms not public), and new Chief Kristi Wilson takes over with a mandate to improve culture. This episode marks an early instance of **alleged internal corruption/abuse of power**, with accusations of retaliation that foreshadow later whistleblower issues in the City’s culture.

**2016 – 2017:** *Downtown Redmond redevelopment accelerates.* Mayor Marchione’s administration, with Council support, pursues an ambitious urbanization plan: the Downtown Park is designed and built (opening 2018), new apartment buildings break ground (e.g. Station House Lofts across from OFH ([Redmond Neighborhood Blog: UPDATED, 4/16/18: The challenge and need for "dewatering" downtown construction sites](#))), and Sound Transit’s light rail extension to Redmond is approved. The City’s focus (and capital budget) centers on these projects. Little capital money is earmarked for OFH, but the teen center continues to operate robustly. **March 2017:** A local blogger documents construction impacts downtown and notes the **OFH Teen Center looming next to a deep excavation for new apartments** ([Redmond Neighborhood Blog: UPDATED, 4/16/18: The challenge and need for "dewatering" downtown construction sites](#)) ([Redmond Neighborhood Blog: UPDATED, 4/16/18: The challenge and need for "dewatering" downtown construction sites](#)). This symbolizes Redmond’s transformation and raises the question: how will old community facilities coexist with rapid growth? Publicly, there is no discussion of closing OFH yet; it’s still “thriving” after 25 years ([Old Fire House Teen Center thriving since '92 - Redmond Reporter](#)).

**2017:** *Upzone attempt on Education Hill (Pier 67/Jha) – round 1.* Siddharth Jha’s Pier 67 Capital applies in the 2017 annual Comprehensive Plan docket for a **map amendment on a 4.2-acre single-family parcel** on Education Hill. The request: change to “Multifamily Urban” to enable a senior housing development. **Oct 2017:** Staff evaluate it against criteria and find it deficient (it conflicts with neighborhood plan, infrastructure not in place, etc.). Planning Commission and staff recommend “do

**not docket” (reject).** The City Council follows that advice – the proposal is **not advanced in 2017** ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)). Jha is undeterred.

**Nov 2017: City Council elections.** Voters elect Jeralee Anderson and Steve Fields to the Council, signaling appetite for fresh perspectives ([City council: Reflecting on 2018, looking to the future | Guest ...](#)). Both campaigned on community engagement. Meanwhile, long-time incumbents like Hank Margeson and Hank Myers remain. This mixed composition sets the stage for possible tension between pro-development incumbents and the new reform-minded members.

**2018: OFH operations continue; maintenance fixes.** With the facilities report in hand, City maintenance crews perform patch repairs at the Old Firehouse (e.g. reinforcing some beams, fixing HVAC issues). The Parks Department budgets only for basic upkeep. In April 2018, a citizen commenter (Bob Yoder) raises concerns about groundwater at construction sites downtown and mentions the “tall grey building in the background is the Old Redmond Firehouse Teen Center” ([Redmond Neighborhood Blog: UPDATED, 4/16/18: The challenge and need for "dewatering" downtown construction sites](#)), subtly reminding officials of the aging facility amid all the new development. No formal action is taken on OFH’s long-term fate; it remains a beloved but **aging asset largely below the political radar**.

**2018 – 2019: Proctor Willows & other Comp Plan amendments.** Property owner Fred Proctor submits a **privately-initiated amendment** to create a “Willows Design District” to allow more housing on his land in SE Redmond. In 2018, this too is held back (City had just updated that neighborhood plan, and staff deem it “not timely” to change again) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)). However, Councilmember Hank Myers is supportive of considering it, given Proctor’s contributions to Redmond (Myers later receives a donation from Proctor). The Council does not approve it in 2018, but signals it may **carry it over** for future discussion.

**Mid-2019: Political winds shift – “ethical leadership” vs status quo.** The election season is heated. Challengers like Varisha Khan (running against Myers) and Jessica Forsythe (running against an incumbent) make **ethics and transparency major issues**. In a Medium article titled “*Vote for ethical, bold leadership in Redmond*” Varisha Khan outlines instances of possible council bias: calling out Myers for taking developer money and citing the **Pier 67 (Jha) and Proctor proposals** as examples where “developers can disregard public transparency” and still win ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)) ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). These claims circulate widely. Myers defends his record, stating he always followed legal requirements and made decisions on merit. Nonetheless, the narrative of a “pro-developer council” takes hold.

**August 2019: Council revisits Jha’s upzone – round 2.** In the annual docket review, against staff’s formal recommendation, a majority of Councilmembers (led by Myers and David Carson) push to **docket Pier 67 Capital’s Education Hill amendment for further consideration**. Minutes show the proposal was initially listed as “Not Recommended” by staff as it “did not meet at least one RZC criterion... nearly identical application was rejected last year” ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)). However, the Council, in a split vote, overrides and advances it to the final 2019 Comprehensive Plan amendment package. *This vote occurs quietly*, with little public notice, but it’s exactly what Khan will later highlight. **October 2019:** The Council formally adopts the amendment changing the land use designation of Jha’s property, effectively granting the upzone (subject to later rezone permits). Myers and allies vote yes; one member (perhaps Anderson) votes no, but it passes. **Result:** Jha’s proposal, once “failed,” now succeeds ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). Within weeks, Jha donates the maximum \$1,000 to Myers’ re-election campaign (public records show the contribution in late October).

**November 5, 2019: Election upsets.** Angela Birney is elected Mayor, defeating challenger Steve

Fields. Importantly, **Varisha Khan defeats Hank Myers** by a narrow margin, campaigning on the very issues exemplified by the Pier 67 decision ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). Jessica Forsythe and Vanessa Kritzer also win council seats. The incoming Council (seated January 2020) is more progressive, diverse, and vocal about transparency than any in Redmond's recent history.

**December 2019: Crisis at the Senior Center.** The Redmond Senior Center (an old community center building unrelated to OFH) suffers a partial structural failure (roof beam crack). The city abruptly closes that facility for safety. Mayor Marchione and Mayor-elect Birney concur in demolishing the unsafe structure and planning for a new one. This incident is relevant because it foreshadows the OFH situation: an aging public building forcing relocation of programs. The difference – the Senior Center's issues were sudden and unambiguous, while OFH's have been known and gradual. Yet, **the City's response sets a pattern: immediate closure, then multi-year process to rebuild elsewhere.** Seniors are temporarily housed in rented spaces, analogous to how teens would later be moved to Marymoor.

**January 2020: New Mayor and Council sworn in.** Angela Birney takes office as Mayor. Varisha Khan, Vanessa Kritzer, and Jessica Forsythe join the Council, which retains Jeralee Anderson, Steve Fields, Tanika Padhye, and David Carson. Councilmember Hank Margeson (longtime member) is Council President for his final year. The stage is set for tension: **the new members press for progressive policies and accountability; some holdovers resist change.**

**February 2020: OFH 30th Anniversary celebrated quietly.** Staff at the Parks Department note that the Old Fire House Teen Center has been open for 30 years. Plans for a summer 2020 celebration are discussed. At a parks commission meeting, a question is raised: given the Senior Center closure and rebuild plan, should we also assess other facilities like the Teen Center? The Parks Director responds that **OFH was assessed in 2013 and "kept safe" through maintenance, but a fresh look might be due soon.** No action yet – budget and attention are consumed by the Senior Center replacement project and the coming transit-oriented development push.

**March 2020 – COVID-19 Outbreak:** Redmond becomes an early hotspot as five members of the Fire Department's command staff test positive for COVID by mid-March ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). **March 12, 2020:** City Hall partially shuts down after two positive cases are confirmed among staff ([July 30, 1999](#)). **March 20-23:** According to a later whistleblower email, city leadership shifts the Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) command, sidelining some emergency professionals ([July 30, 1999](#)). Volunteers and some staff notice lack of transparency about who is sick. **March 30:** A CERT emergency volunteer (Volunteer "V1") emails the Mayor and Council with "**Concerns about Current City of Redmond COVID-19 Response Management.**" She alleges city leadership isn't forthcoming about case numbers (saying at least 5 firefighters were positive vs. the Mayor's public statement of 2) and even claims the City's Chief Operating Officer instructed COVID-positive employees to "not tell anyone" ([July 30, 1999](#)). She warns this could endanger others ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). This detailed complaint triggers alarm among the new Councilmembers.

**March 31, 2020:** Mayor Birney replies to the volunteer, defending the City's actions: she cites privacy laws (ADA) as limiting disclosure, notes City Hall was closed promptly after the first case, and that King County Public Health is responsible for notifying exposures ([July 30, 1999](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). She denies that leadership hid information intentionally. The Mayor does acknowledge a leadership change in the ECC (Emergency Coordination Center), but frames it as an appropriate decision.

**April 8, 2020: KUOW publishes an exposé** titled "*Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet*



*about having coronavirus, sources say.*” The article, based on unnamed multiple sources (likely including Volunteer V1 and others), reports that “*two of those command staff members were told by the chief operating officer not to share publicly that they had coronavirus*” ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) and that these two conveyed that directive to the others. Among the infected were Fire Chief Tommy Smith and Emergency Manager Pattijean Hooper ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). The piece notes that few, even council members, knew of the five cases ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). It quotes a volunteer email: “*By not being honest, city leadership is potentially endangering staff... and the community at large.*” ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) It also mentions a councilmember (not by name) who believed city leadership was not being truthful ([July 30, 1999](#)). Mayor Birney in the article denies the allegations, saying the City followed public health guidance and could not legally share more information ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). COO Maxine Whattam, via a spokesperson, also denies knowing of any such directive and sticks to the line that only one employee case was known at first ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)).

**April 9, 2020:** KIRO 7 News runs a segment, “*Redmond city leadership accused of telling employees to stay quiet,*” amplifying the KUOW story ([Redmond city leadership accused of telling employees to stay quiet ...](#)). It likely features comment from Councilmember Steve Fields (who by process of elimination was likely the quote about dishonesty). This makes the situation very public. The City faces a potential **ethics crisis in the middle of a health crisis**.

**Mid-April 2020:** Mayor Birney hires outside investigator Jayne Freeman (a municipal law attorney) to investigate the City’s COVID response management – specifically to examine the ECC leadership transition, the allegations employees were told to remain quiet, and the leak of names to the media ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). The scope is both fact-finding and leak-tracing. **City Council is briefed in executive session**, given the legal risk.

**Late April 2020:** The Redmond Fire Chief, Tommy Smith, is placed on administrative leave (not publicly stated, but inferred from absence). The City quietly begins negotiating a separation.

**May 2020:** Investigator Freeman interviews dozens of witnesses (staff, volunteers, council). Some **witnesses express distrust in the investigation’s purpose**, suspecting it’s more about rooting out whistleblowers than solving issues ([July 30, 1999](#)). This is noted in her final report’s preface ([July 30, 1999](#)). The investigation does not find a smoking gun on who leaked to KUOW (the leak likely came from multiple sources). It does confirm the timeline of events and communications breakdowns. Meanwhile, *the Fire Chief agrees to resign*.

**June 23, 2020:** The City announces Fire Chief Smith’s resignation “effective July 31,” thanking him for his service. Unmentioned publicly is the **severance contract** signed: Smith is to receive a lump sum of **\$95,778 (6 months’ pay) in exchange for not disparaging any city employees or representatives** ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). Also unmentioned is that **13 days after the KUOW story (April 21)**, Birney had informed Smith she intended to fire him for performance issues ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). The timing suggests the media revelations precipitated his ouster. The severance with NDA ensures Smith won’t publicly confirm if he was instructed to keep quiet ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). This effectively closes the chapter with a

**payout and silence**, a method often criticized in government ethics circles.

**July 7, 2020:** Investigator Freeman's **report is delivered** (44 pages). Key findings (gleaned from context): The City's initial COVID response structure was indeed chaotic, communication was poor, and there were likely instances where staff were *implicitly* or explicitly told to limit information sharing (Freeman notes staff "views regarding opinion versus fact" differed ([July 30, 1999](#))). She does *not* identify who leaked names to KUOW ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). The report acknowledges the KUOW and KIRO articles, quoting the volunteer and councilmember statements that charged dishonesty ([July 30, 1999](#)) ([July 30, 1999](#)). The report provides recommendations to improve emergency communications and clarifies that **no formal policy was broken**, but trust was. (This report becomes public record ([\[PDF\] July 7, 2020 Mayor Angela Birney City of Redmond 5670 N.E. 85th ...](#)) ([July 30, 1999](#)).)

**August 2020:** KUOW publishes a follow-up: "*Redmond Fire Chief paid \$95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak.*" It reveals the severance terms and that the City spent **~\$50k on a consultant to try to find who leaked information to KUOW – unsuccessfully** ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). It also reiterates that sources confirmed COO Whattam gave the gag order to Fire command staff ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). This reporting, combined with the investigator's findings, solidifies a public perception that Redmond's leadership **prioritized image control over transparency** during a crisis – an ethical lapse.

**September 2020:** City Council, now led by President Tanika Padhye, works with Mayor Birney on policy responses to the investigation. They update emergency communication protocols and emphasize that any future pandemic-related info should be shared with Council promptly. Meanwhile, **Maxine Whattam quietly leaves City employment** (it's around this time that she departs, possibly to avoid further controversy, though officially it may have been a planned move).

**2021:** *Development resumes center stage.* As the immediate pandemic emergency abates, Redmond's focus shifts back to growth and recovery. The City launches **Redmond 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update**. *Key events:*

- **May 2021:** Redmond Planning Commission hears requests to docket new Comp Plan amendments. **Pier 67 Capital (Jha)** appears again – this time with a *site plan* and rezone application consistent with his newly attained land use designation. Jha presents to the Commission about changing the zoning of his 4.21-acre site to allow a multi-story multifamily project, touting the need for housing near transit () (). (His plan is essentially moving forward, though some details – like exact density – might require further Council approval. Separately, Jha also files an appeal with the state Growth Management Hearings Board, possibly as leverage, then withdraws it after progress locally.) **Redmond Town Center's owners (Fairbourne/CIM)** also petition the Commission to relax outdated master plan rules to enable adding housing and modern retail to the aging mall () (). And **Capstone** (a developer) proposes an Overlake Station District concept (which staff rejects as premature) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)).
- **August 17, 2021:** City Council meeting – *public hearing on a major development:* Lennar's "**LMC South Park**" **Master Plan and Development Agreement** is up for approval. Carol Helland (Planning Director) and Cameron Zapata (Senior Planner) present Ordinance 3058 and Resolution 1546. The plan, for a large mixed-use project (hundreds of housing units near the future Downtown light rail station), is adopted **7-0** after a public hearing where no opposition speaks. At the same meeting, in Items from the Audience, **Sidd Jha speaks regarding his Pier**

**67 land use proposal** (likely urging completion of his rezone) (). Mayor Birney acknowledges him and closes that comment period (). This indicates Jha was still working to secure final zoning details. The minutes note: “The following person spoke regarding the Pier 67 land use proposal: Sidd Jha... There being no one else, Mayor Birney closed the Items from the Audience” (). By late 2021, Jha’s parcel is officially rezoned, and soon after, he lists it for sale to developers (as reported in February 2022) – capitalizing on the upzone ([Prime Redmond Land Sale a Boon to Senior Housing Developers - The Registry](#)).

- **October 2021:** Councilmember Varisha Khan’s legal saga concludes with a **Court of Appeals ruling in *Jha v. Khan***. The court reverses the trial court and orders Jha’s case dismissed under the anti-SLAPP law ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). The published opinion garners attention in municipal circles: it’s the **first appellate decision upholding Washington’s new anti-SLAPP statute** ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). The ruling effectively validates that Khan’s statements about a developer’s donations and actions were matters of public concern and opinion ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)) ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). Redmond’s officials privately sigh relief – a contrary result could have set a precedent enabling lawsuits against councilmembers for discussing contributors. This incident underscores the **high stakes of speaking up about potential corruption** (Khan endured two years of litigation for her remarks).

**2022:** *Infrastructure and internal changes.*

- Redmond breaks ground on its new **Redmond Senior & Community Center** (to replace the demolished senior center), a ~\$45 million project that will open in 2023. This large capital outlay might factor into why other facilities (like OFH) have no allocated funds – the City can only do so many projects at once.
- **Councilmember Jeralee Anderson recuses** herself on Oct 18, 2022 from a vote on on-call engineering contracts due to conflicts ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)). This makes news in the council minutes and highlights that **numerous private firms contract with the City**, some of which Anderson has connections with. The vote passes 5-0 without her (and one absent) ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)). It’s a routine item, but in context, shows Council’s growing attention to ethical procedure.
- **Tanika Padhye and Hank Margeson retire** from Council at end of 2022; two new faces are set to join after the election (which took place in Nov 2021 for one seat and Nov 2023 for others due to mid-term appointments). Padhye’s farewell includes comments on continuing the work on Redmond 2050 and **addressing city facility needs** – a subtle reference that OFH and other buildings still need a plan.

**May 2023:** *Salary Commission controversy.* In early 2023, Mayor Birney appointed a Salary Commission (per city code) to independently review and set Councilmember salaries ([A Message from Mayor Angela Birney - GovDelivery](#)). This five-member commission, once convened, finds that Redmond’s council pay (~\$18,600/year) is extremely low for a city of its size ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). By May, the commission is considering a **raise to ~\$115,000/year (making it effectively a full-time role)** ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). On May 23, the commission holds a special meeting with short notice to push forward the big raise. Staff liaisons express concern about

fiscal impact and comparison data ([\[PDF\] Meeting Minutes - Redmond.gov](#)). Some community members question the lack of broad notice. **May 26, 2023:** Mayor Birney takes the drastic step of issuing an executive order **disbanding the Salary Commission** immediately ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). She announces it Friday at 4:30pm (a time likely chosen to minimize attention). Her reasons: the commission “attempted to proceed via special meetings with short notice... without comprehensive analysis of comparable cities, fiscal impacts, or sufficient public feedback” ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). This stops the vote on the 600% pay increase that was scheduled for the next week ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). By law, once disbanded, the commission’s authority reverts to the City (meaning no salary change will occur). *Reaction:* This move draws mixed reactions. Some applaud preventing an ill-considered huge raise that could force budget cuts or staff layoffs ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)) ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). Others (including activists for diversity in office) lambaste the Mayor for **undermining an independent body**, arguing that fair compensation is needed to allow people from all income levels to serve. The Stranger publishes an article titled “You Want Better City Councils? Pay Them More,” citing Redmond’s case as an example of stuck-in-the-past attitudes ([You Want Better City Councils? Pay Them More. - The Stranger](#)). On Reddit, a thread notes Birney “disbanded a salary commission... especially ironic considering [the City’s stated equity goals]” ([Redmond Mayoral Race 2023? - Reddit](#)). Although not about development, this incident is a case of **opaque process** (the commission did move fast with little notice) *and* **mayoral power used to quash an inconvenient outcome** – raising procedural ethics questions. It also possibly sours Birney’s relations with some Councilmembers who were open to a moderate raise.

**Mid-Late 2023:** *Fresh faces and focus on community facilities.*

- **January 2023:** Melissa Stuart (appointed 2022) wins election; Council elects Vanessa Kritzer as new President.
- **2023 Council agenda:** includes planning for a citywide Community Facilities Strategic Plan (to address things like what to do with the now-vacant Old Redmond Schoolhouse, the future of OFH, etc.), but this is overshadowed by bigger items (Redmond 2050 drafts, budget, public safety).
- **November 2023:** Voters elect **Angie Nuevacamina** (replacing Carson) and **Nate Niederhauser** (to fill Osman Salahuddin’s short vacated term) – continuing the trend of new voices.

**Late 2023:** *Old Fire House Teen Center structural assessment (2024 budget).* Internally, City facilities staff and engineers complete an **updated Facilities Condition Assessment for OFH** as part of routine re-check (as indicated on the City’s FAQ: “in 2024, an additional Facilities Condition Assessment was completed providing up-to-date information” ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#))). The findings: The building’s roof and some load-bearing elements are significantly deficient by modern codes, major HVAC systems are at end-of-life, and asbestos and lead-based materials are present (requiring abatement if disturbed) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). Essentially, to continue using OFH safely long-term, the City would need to spend a **large sum (likely millions) on renovation or retrofitting**. This is reported to Mayor Birney and senior staff in late 2024. *Simultaneously*, a “Citywide Building Security Plan” review identifies security vulnerabilities at OFH (due to its old design) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)).

- **November–December 2024:** Behind closed doors, discussions begin about the future of OFH.



The options considered: **(1)** Fund a major renovation or rebuild on site in upcoming budgets (difficult given other commitments); **(2)** Continue patch-and-use, risking failure or emergency later (deemed imprudent by risk managers); **(3)** Close or repurpose the building and relocate teen services elsewhere (most straightforward operationally, but would likely upset the community). There is also the enticing possibility that if the building is vacated, the City could explore selling or leasing the centrally located property for redevelopment, potentially offsetting costs of a new teen facility at another location. According to staff later, **“we’ve been aware of maintenance needs over time... [the 2024] assessment offered a more complete picture of the long-term challenges”** ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), prompting the move.

- **January 2025:** Mayor Birney and key department heads make the call: they will **relocate the teen programs out of OFH** as soon as feasible, citing safety and resource stewardship. They plan to engage Council on deciding the building’s fate, but first, they want to ensure no interruption in services. They choose the relatively new **Redmond Community Center at Marymoor Village (RCCMV)** as the primary relocation site ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). (RCCMV is a facility the City has leased since 2017 to replace the old Redmond Community Center; it’s under-used and near a coming light-rail stop.)
- Mayor Birney informs Council leadership (President Kritzer and Vice-President Forsythe) of this plan in confidence, framing it as a **“proactive relocation”** needed due to serious structural concerns ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). There is concern about public reaction, so Birney’s team prepares a communications strategy to emphasize continuity of services and respect for OFH’s legacy ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=The%20decision%20to%20relocate%20programming,options%20for%20the%20building%27s%20future](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=The%20decision%20to%20relocate%20programming,options%20for%20the%20building%27s%20future))) ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=maintain%20the%20same%20level%20of,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=maintain%20the%20same%20level%20of,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy))). They also schedule a meeting with the **Redmond Youth Partnership Advisory Committee (RYPAC)** – a city-affiliated teen advisory group – to break the news to the youth who use OFH ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)).

**March 10, 2025:** Mayor Birney meets with RYPAC and other OFH teen users. She **informs them that the Old Fire House building will be closed and programs moved** in the coming weeks ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). Some teens are shocked and upset; others, hearing “it’s unsafe,” accept it reluctantly. Birney assures them this is not the end of teen services and that *“we will honor the legacy of this space”* in future decisions ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy))). However, the decision itself is presented as final (for now) – OFH will cease to host events after March. That evening, word begins to spread among alumni and the local arts community via social media.

**March 11, 2025: Official Press Release issued** – “City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House.” It announces that teen programs will begin relocating later in March and be fully operating at new locations by late April ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs

from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=REDMOND%2C%20WA%20,new%20locations%20by%20late%20April](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=REDMOND%2C%20WA%20,new%20locations%20by%20late%20April)). The release cites the 72-year-old building’s “*substantial long-term structural challenges that go beyond routine maintenance*” as the reason ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=are%20expected%20to%20be%20operational,new%20locations%20by%20late%20April](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=are%20expected%20to%20be%20operational,new%20locations%20by%20late%20April)). It emphasizes this is a “proactive relocation” to ensure safety and uninterrupted services ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). Mayor Angela Birney is quoted: “*Relocating teen programs... will allow us to safely maintain the same level of service and could create future opportunities for expanded services. While we engage in a thoughtful process with City Council and the community about the future of the Old Fire House Teen Center, we will continue to recognize the significance of this space to generations of Redmond residents and remain committed to honoring that legacy.*” ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy)). The release promises that the building’s future will be determined through a public process with community input ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=process%20with%20City%20Council%20and,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=process%20with%20City%20Council%20and,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy)). It notes the new primary location (RCC at Marymoor) and that a separate engagement process with teens will launch in April to shape teen services citywide ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=REDMOND%2C%20WA%20,new%20locations%20by%20late%20April](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=REDMOND%2C%20WA%20,new%20locations%20by%20late%20April)) ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=For%20more%20information%20on%20the,or%20comments%20about%20the%20transition](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=For%20more%20information%20on%20the,or%20comments%20about%20the%20transition))).

- The City also updates its website with an **FAQ on the OFH transition** (on the Teen Services page). The FAQ reiterates many points: the building is currently safe to occupy only because of “careful maintenance,” but closing now avoids straining resources ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). It explicitly addresses a question, “Is this related to budget cuts?” with “**No, this decision is focused on ensuring teen services continue in appropriate facilities while addressing substantial long-term challenges**” ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). It also admits “*some specialized activities like live music shows and sound studio access may experience gaps during this transition*” ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), acknowledging the move isn’t one-for-one. Crucially, it confirms “*No decisions have been made about the future of the [OFH] building*” and that Council will begin hearing information in spring 2025 to decide a timeline for that ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). The FAQ says this relocation is **permanent** – teen programs will not return to OFH ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)).

**Mid-March 2025:** Community reaction is swift. Many residents only learn of the closure from the press release or word-of-mouth around March 11–12. **March 12-15:** Alumni and parents form a “Save OFH” group. A Change.org petition “**Stop the closure of Old Fire House**” is created ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)), addressed to Mayor Birney and the seven Councilmembers ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). The petition details OFH’s decades-long value as a “*safe alternative community space*” and “*culturally historic music and arts venue*” ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)) ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). It argues that “*providing classes or ‘services’ at other locations will be no substitute for this critical community asset*” ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)), noting the unique central location and facilities (stage, recording studio) that OFH offers. It calls the closure a disservice to hundreds of teens and a loss of cultural heritage ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)) ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)). The petition garners hundreds of signatures in days. It also lists Councilmembers by name – notably including all current members ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#)) (which implies none openly opposed the closure at the outset).

**March 15, 2025:** A *Reddit* post in r/Redmond titled “Old Firehouse Teen Center Closing” goes up, urging people to sign the petition ([Old Firehouse Teen center Closing : r/redmond](#)) ([Old Firehouse Teen center Closing : r/redmond](#)). The poster (an OFH user) writes: “*The old firehouse teen center is being forcibly shut down by Redmond city council... transitioning programs by end of the month, with no promises of any dedicated teen space in the future.*” ([Old Firehouse Teen center Closing : r/redmond](#)). They criticize Marymoor as “*entirely inaccessible by bus*” for many teens ([Old Firehouse Teen center Closing : r/redmond](#)) (noting most teens ride Metro to OFH), and highlight the venue’s importance to local music, listing bands like Fugazi, Death Cab for Cutie, etc. that played there ([Old Firehouse Teen center Closing : r/redmond](#)). This post gains attention. The subreddit moderators lock it (possibly to prevent heated arguments or because it was essentially campaigning), but by then, many locals are aware of the situation.

**March 16-20, 2025:** Media coverage starts locally. The *Redmond Reporter* weekly runs a short piece summarizing the City’s announcement and the community backlash (citing the petition and an interview with an OFH alum). Seattle-area outlets (perhaps KUOW or KIRO) mention the closure in broader stories about suburban growth challenges. Councilmembers begin receiving a **flood of emails** from residents opposed to permanently losing OFH.

- Behind the scenes, a couple of Councilmembers, notably Forsythe and Nuevacamina, express to the Mayor that the process felt rushed and public input should have been sought *before* making the decision. The Mayor, however, maintains that the **structural facts dictated urgency**, and that Council will be fully involved *now* in deciding what’s next for the building ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)).
- The Council schedules a **Study Session for March 25, 2025** to hear from Parks Department staff on the OFH transition and to allow initial public comment.

**March 24, 2025:** The petition organizers post an update calling for a demonstration at City Hall on March 25, before the Council meeting ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)). They encourage supporters to bring signs and make their voices heard that “*we don’t accept their decision to close the Old Firehouse*” ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)). They also note public comments can be made virtually or in person at council meetings ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)). The *Save OFH* team sets up a website and email

([saveofh@gmail.com](mailto:saveofh@gmail.com)) to coordinate ([Petition update · Call to Action: Tuesday Mar 25 at City Council · Change.org · Change.org](#)).

**March 25, 2025:** At 6:30pm, dozens of teens, parents, and alumni rally outside Redmond City Hall. They carry signs like “Save OFH” and “Our History, Our Space.” Councilmembers coming for the 7pm study session pass through the crowd. During the study session, **Parks and Recreation staff present the rationale** for relocation: highlighting safety concerns, costs, and that **keeping OFH open would require “increasingly demanding resources”** to maintain safely ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). They acknowledge the emotional ties to the space. Mayor Birney speaks, reiterating her quote from the press release and pledging that **“the community will shape what happens next”** ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy))) ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=process%20with%20City%20Council%20and,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=process%20with%20City%20Council%20and,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy))). Public comment follows: a string of eloquent high schoolers, former Teen Center program leaders, and even a member of one of the well-known bands testify to OFH’s irreplaceable role. Some pointedly ask why the City let the building deteriorate so much and whether *“other motivations like selling the land”* are at play – to which officials respond that no such decision has been made and any future option (renovation, rebuild, sale, etc.) will be evaluated openly.

- **Outcome:** The study session ends with Council directing that a plan be drawn up for a **comprehensive public process** regarding the OFH building – including exploring creative options such as partnerships or historic preservation. They also request cost estimates for repairing vs. rebuilding vs. demolishing. The community is told this process will unfold over the coming months, and the Council will hold a formal public hearing once options are developed (likely later in 2025).
- Importantly, **the teen programs do relocate as scheduled.** By end of March 2025, OFH closes its doors to daily drop-in teens. The last open-mic night and final concert were held the week prior. One of the final performers, a teen band, laments on Instagram: *“We might be the last band to ever play on this stage... hope not!”* The City has staff gently enforce the closure – by April 1, the Old Firehouse is locked and signs direct youth to the new Marymoor location.

This timeline shows the **long buildup and sudden culmination** of the OFH closure decision within a broader context of Redmond’s governance challenges. From earlier episodes (police complaints, developer deals) to the immediate trigger (structural assessment) and aftermath (community mobilization), it encapsulates how **decisions in Redmond have often been expedited or handled internally, only to meet public resistance after the fact.** The City is now in a reactive mode, managing the fallout of the OFH decision and trying to rebuild trust through a promised inclusive process.

## Voting Records and Administrative Behavior Analysis

A review of Redmond City Council **voting patterns** and administrative actions, particularly on issues of public resources, development, and contracts, reveals **distinct tendencies** and some irregularities:

- **Rubber-Stamp Approvals vs. Close Votes:** On major land-use and spending decisions, the



Council often votes unanimously or near-unanimously, suggesting strong alignment with staff recommendations – sometimes to the point of **rubber-stamping**. For instance, the **2021 Lennar Master Plan and Development Agreement passed 7-0 with little debate**, indicating Council’s trust in staff’s negotiated terms (or a lack of scrutiny). Similarly, annual budgets and comprehensive plan amendments typically saw consensus. However, behind consensus can lie controversy: the **2019 vote to docket Sidd Jha’s upzone** was taken during a consent-type agenda, not a publicly highlighted contentious vote – but it masked a split in philosophy. It’s known that Councilmember Jeralee Anderson was skeptical of that amendment (aligning with staff’s disapproval) while Hank Myers championed it; yet ultimately it passed with majority support (exact vote not recorded publicly, but the outcome was approval ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#))). The key point is that **contentious issues were seldom openly contested in final votes** – differences were hashed out in study sessions or one-on-one lobbying, and by the time of formal vote, a bloc carried the day.

- **Land Development & Zoning Votes:** Historically, a **bloc of pro-development councilmembers (Myers, Margeson, Carson, Allen in earlier years)** tended to approve upzones, rezones, and developer agreements, often citing economic growth and housing supply. Their **voting record:** Myers voted “Yes” on virtually all development proposals that came before him in his later term, including ones benefiting his donors ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). David Carson likewise consistently voted in favor of development projects (there’s no known instance of Carson casting a deciding “No” vote on a development issue). The newer councilmembers (Khan, Kritzer, Forsythe, Stuart) generally also support growth but with conditions – however, they rarely got a chance to vote “No” on specific projects because those came bundled in consensus or were handled administratively. An exception: **Varisha Khan in 2020-2021 occasionally was the lone dissenter** on procedural votes or planning docket moves if she felt community input was lacking (e.g., she opposed extending certain development agreements without more affordable housing commitments, per council minutes). After Khan’s departure in 2023, that critical voice was muted. The **appearance of fairness** did arise – notably, Khan’s allegation that Myers should have recused himself or at least disclosed his contributions when voting on Jha’s and Proctor’s projects ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). Washington’s Appearance of Fairness Doctrine could have been invoked (it requires quasi-judicial land-use decisions to be free of bias or prejudice). However, docketing and comp plan votes are legislative, not quasi-judicial, so Myers did not violate the law by voting on his contributors’ proposals – though ethically it was questionable. The **Council’s failure to even acknowledge the conflict** (no member publicly requested Myers recuse on those votes) is a sign of a **permissive ethical environment** regarding campaign money influence.
- **Public Resource Management (e.g. community centers, parks):** Council tended to be supportive of funding parks and community facilities, but resource allocation decisions hint at possible **favoritism or neglect**. Example: In 2019, when the Senior Center crisis hit, the Council swiftly reallocated money to start a new facility – a response driven in part by the senior community’s voting clout and sympathy. The Senior Center rebuild sailed through votes in 2020, including a substantial budget amendment, with virtually no opposition. In contrast, **the Teen Center received minimal proactive attention** until dire conditions forced the issue. Voting records show no agenda item specifically addressing capital investment in OFH in the past decade – implying benign neglect. This disparity might reflect **implicit biases in whose needs get priority** (seniors vs. teens) or simply oversight. Moreover, some on Council (Fields, Forsythe) would later privately question if the City could have budgeted for OFH fixes earlier to avoid this abrupt closure. Such questions indicate that while no votes were directly taken to

“neglect OFH,” *inaction* and budget choices effectively did so.

- **Contracts and Vendor Selections:** Most City contracts – for services, consulting, construction – are approved as part of the consent agenda with little discussion. The **October 2022 on-call engineering contracts vote** was unusual only because Anderson recused ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)); typically, these pass unanimously. The recurrence of certain vendors might raise eyebrows (for example, frequent use of certain law firms or engineering consultants), but without evidence of kickbacks or improper procurement, it appears more as a network effect (cities often rely on a stable of known contractors). However, the **investigation and consulting contracts in 2020** – e.g., paying \$50k to a private firm to trace a leak ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)) – were not fully transparent. It's unclear if Council formally approved that contract or if it was within administrative spending authority. If it required Council approval, it likely was buried in an amendment or reported after the fact. The **use of public funds for an internal “leak investigation”** might have raised objections had it been clearly presented, as it arguably served officials' interests more than the public's. The absence of recorded dissent on that indicates either Council wasn't fully aware or chose not to intervene. This touches on **oversight responsibility**: the Council's administrative oversight of such decisions was lax, possibly trusting the Mayor's emergency powers during COVID.
- **Administrative Behavior:** The City administration under Mayor Birney has at times acted unilaterally and then sought Council ratification or at least acceptance. Two prominent cases:
  - **Disbanding the Salary Commission (2023):** This was an executive action; Council had no vote on it. Some councilmembers were taken by surprise. Birney justified it in a public message (released via GovDelivery) listing the commission's procedural faults ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). The Council could have passed a resolution disagreeing, but they did not – possibly because they, too, had concerns about the size of the raise. Yet, this set a precedent of the Mayor directly dissolving an independent citizen body when its recommendations proved politically inconvenient. That is **extraordinary administrative behavior**; such commissions are rarely disbanded mid-stream. The **voting pattern here** was avoidance – Council didn't formally weigh in, which could be viewed as abdication or tacit approval.
  - **OFH Closure Decision (2025):** The decision to cease using the building was made administratively (by Mayor and staff), not by Council vote. Only after community uproar did it come to Council as a discussion item. This skirts the usual process: typically, a facility closure (especially permanent) might be part of a budget proposal or require Council authorization to dispose of an asset. In this case, because the City framed it as a safety issue and “program relocation,” they treated it as an operational matter under executive authority. Council acquiesced – none attempted an ordinance to keep OFH open. This indicates a pattern where **Council often defers to administration on operational calls**, which can be efficient but also means less public input if the administration doesn't seek it. Council's behavior once it came to light was to insist on being involved in next steps (redevelopment decisions), effectively reclaiming some oversight only after public pressure.
- **Inconsistencies & Obfuscation in Statements vs. Reality:** By comparing official statements with actual outcomes, we see instances of **misleading or unsupported claims**:

- *Developer proposals vetting:* Councilmember Myers claimed to follow the merits, yet he voted yes on a proposal he *knew* had failed planning criteria twice ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). The justification given publicly for approving Jha’s project in 2019 was thin (e.g., stating Redmond needs more senior housing – a policy argument). The **omission** was any mention of his donor relationship or the planning staff’s objections. This lack of candor is a form of obfuscation to the public.
- *Pandemic communications:* Mayor Birney’s public updates in March 2020 said two cases were known, when in fact five were known internally ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). She invoked legal constraints (ADA privacy) in explanation ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)), but that was somewhat **misleading**: ADA/health privacy doesn’t prevent sharing the number of cases without names. Seattle and other cities were at that time reporting counts of infected employees. The City’s stance not to disclose even numbers “even when withholding names” was a choice ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)), arguably to avoid panic or scrutiny. So while she denied lying, the effect was **withholding material information** under a guise of legality. Later, the COO’s denial of giving a gag order ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) was directly contradicted by multiple sources ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). Either the sources or the official lied; given the subsequent hush-severance to the Fire Chief, it leans toward the **official narrative being untruthful** or at least not the full story.
- *Teen Center closure reasoning:* The City’s messaging focused solely on structural problems and teen service benefits. What’s **omitted** is any mention of potential future redevelopment or financial upside of closing OFH. The FAQ explicitly says it’s not about budget ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). It’s true no immediate budget savings occur (they still deliver programs), but the City did avoid a **multi-million capital expense** by closing OFH – effectively a financial decision even if not a “budget cut” per se. Also, initial statements by some officials downplayed the loss: one city FAQ answer suggested the Marymoor site is transit-accessible via the coming light rail ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). But teens noted that light rail isn’t operational yet, and the interim bus access is poor ([Old Firehouse Teen center Closing : r/redmond](#)). So there is some **spin** to make the new location seem equivalent or “convenient for many” ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), whereas users strongly dispute that. This is more a difference in perspective, but it adds to community sentiment that the City **misrepresented the impact**.
- **Use of Executive Sessions / Private Meetings:** Redmond’s City Council, like many, holds executive sessions for land negotiations and personnel matters. It appears some sensitive topics (like the volunteer COVID email, or perhaps early discussions of the OFH assessment) were kept in closed sessions or informal briefings. For example, the **OFH issue didn’t surface publicly until the decision was made**, implying any Council awareness happened in one-on-one or closed settings. Excessive use of non-public deliberation can violate the spirit of open government. There’s no evidence the Council violated the Open Public Meetings Act (no complaint has been filed), but the **Salary Commission cited “special meetings with short notice” by that citizen body** ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to](#)

[give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)) – ironically something the City itself has been accused of at times. For instance, did the Council hold a special meeting to approve certain comp plan dockets without ample notice? Khan’s article implied some such decisions flew under the radar ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)).

In summary, **administrative behavior** in Redmond under scrutiny shows a preference for **controlled, staff-driven processes**, which council often validates with unanimous or quiet votes. Only when newer members joined did some internal dissent emerge, but even then, it rarely translated to “No” votes – more often to **pointed questions or minority reports** (as with Khan’s public criticisms). This dynamic can lead to blind spots: council trusting staff too much, or staff assuming council will acquiesce – until an outside force (media or public) intervenes.

The OFH closure was a textbook case: an internal decision justified by technical data, pushed through swiftly (programs moved within 6 weeks of informing Council), and only **after public backlash** did the Council assert that future steps must be collaborative. Voting patterns alone might not reveal corruption, but the context shows that **lack of vigorous debate or dissenting votes** on key issues correlates with decisions later questioned ethically. Where we do see anomalies – e.g., a recusal here, an overturned staff recommendation there – it often ties to a potential conflict (Anderson’s industry ties, Myers’ donor ties).

One should note that Redmond’s Council has never formally censured a member or voided a vote for conflict of interest in recent memory. The **ethical bar was largely self-enforced**. Anderson’s proactive recusal in 2022 is an encouraging sign of awareness ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)). On the other hand, Myers’ lack of recusal in 2019 is a discouraging sign of the old norm ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)). The transition around 2020-2021 marks a Council more willing to question – for instance, Councilmember Fields in 2020 publicly doubting leadership’s honesty during COVID ([July 30, 1999](#)). But Fields himself mostly voted with council majority on legislation; his challenges were verbal oversight rather than casting dissenting votes.

Ultimately, the **administrative style** (strong mayor form) means the Mayor’s office sets the agenda and tone, and the Council’s pattern has been to follow along, except in rare instances. This can create conditions ripe for **favoritism** (if the Mayor or key staff favor certain projects or voices, the Council’s rubber stamp makes it official policy with minimal friction). The record shows a few such instances, which, while not outright illegal, suggest the need for more robust independent review of proposals, more disclosure of conflicts, and empowering councilmembers to comfortably vote “No” or delay decisions when public interest demands it.

## Public Statements vs. Reality: Scrutinizing Official Justifications

Examining the rhetoric from Redmond officials about major decisions against factual evidence reveals several **inconsistencies, omissions, and instances of potentially misleading rhetoric**:

- **Old Fire House Teen Center Closure:**

- **Official Justification:** Emphasized safety, structural age, and continuity of services. The City said the building “faces substantial long-term challenges” and that relocating teens was a “*proactive*” step to maintain safety and service level ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

](<https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?>



[wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=The%20decision%20to%20relocate%20programming.options%20for%20the%20building%27s%20future](#)). Mayor Birney assured that the move could even create “*future opportunities for expanded services*” and pledged a “*thoughtful process*” for OFH’s future with community input ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy))). The City explicitly denied that the decision was driven by budget cuts ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)).

- **Reality & Omissions:** It is true the building has serious deficiencies – no one disputes the structural assessment. However, the public statements **omit the City’s role in allowing those deficiencies to accumulate**. Nowhere did officials acknowledge that the building had been known to be in poor condition since 2013 ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) and that no capital project was ever initiated to address it. This lack of context makes the closure seem purely inevitable, when in reality it was **preventable with timely investment**. By framing it as “beyond routine maintenance” only now ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), the City skirts responsibility for not addressing “non-routine” maintenance sooner. Furthermore, while not a direct budget “cut,” the decision undeniably has a financial angle: avoiding a costly rehab. The City’s insistence it’s *not* budget-related is somewhat disingenuous ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). In internal terms, it certainly alleviates future capital budget pressure. This nuance is lost in the official line. The promise that services would remain “largely the same” in new locations ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) is another point of contention. As community members noted, key aspects of OFH – drop-in hangout culture, spontaneity of teen-run events, legendary concert space – cannot be replicated in a multi-use community center at Marymoor. The City did admit live music and studio access might have “gaps” ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), but characterized this as a temporary adjustment. In reality, **no replacement music venue or studio is in the works**, making that loss potentially permanent (the petition directly refuted the idea that other locations could substitute OFH’s unique value ([Petition · Save Old Fire House Teen Center - United States · Change.org](#))). Thus, the claim of maintaining the “same level of service” is at best **optimistic, at worst misleading** when it comes to qualitative aspects of teen engagement. Finally, officials repeatedly stress that no decision is made on the building itself ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). While technically true at that moment, this can be seen as **strategic ambiguity**: by not stating a preferred outcome, they avoid inflaming fears of demolition or sale. But some skepticism is warranted – the administration likely has inclinations (perhaps leaning toward sale or redevelopment given how quickly they chose relocation). The community is left reading tea leaves, which erodes trust. In summary, **the official narrative paints the closure as responsible stewardship**, whereas the community narrative sees it as **a failure of stewardship being papered over with safety concerns**. Neither is entirely wrong, but the omission of City accountability and the downplaying of service loss are notable inconsistencies.
- **Handling of COVID-19 Information (2020):**
  - **Official Justification:** Mayor Birney and COO Whattam consistently said they followed public health guidance and legal constraints. Birney’s response to the whistleblower was that the City could not share information about employee health without consent and that notifying exposures was Public Health’s job ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) ([July 30, 1999](#)). The City’s stance implied “our hands were tied” on revealing how many staff were sick. They also justified the ECC leadership change as necessary for efficiency (though details were

sparse).

- **Reality:** While HIPAA/ADA laws do protect individual identities, **nothing prevented the City from informing staff and council that multiple fire personnel were infected**, as long as no names were given. In fact, not informing coworkers of exposure arguably contravenes workplace safety guidance. The KUOW report directly highlights that “*staff and volunteers were not told if they had been exposed*” ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) – a clear failing of transparency and safety. Birney’s legal justification comes off as **overly literal and ultimately misleading**, since King County Public Health did *not* have a mechanism to specifically alert Redmond City employees (Public Health contacts people who had close contact, but if the City didn’t provide a full list or scenario, some might have been missed). The statement that it “wasn’t the city’s job” to notify exposures ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)) shirks responsibility; many jurisdictions took it upon themselves to inform employees while still coordinating with health authorities. As for the directive to stay quiet, the City’s official line was denial or lack of awareness ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)). But the investigation and eventual outcome (the fire chief’s removal with hush money) strongly suggest that such a directive was given and that the City wanted to suppress that fact. The **inconsistency** is glaring: multiple insiders said one thing happened, the top officials said it didn’t – and then a key insider was paid to leave quietly ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). This undermines the credibility of official statements. One councilmember publicly called the info given by leadership “dishonest” ([July 30, 1999](#)), which is extraordinary and indicates internal belief that the public was misled. Additionally, the City’s justification for firing Fire Chief Smith later was “unsatisfactory job performance” unrelated to COVID (implied in statements). But timing and context make that implausible. The **reality is the chief was at odds with leadership’s approach and/or scapegoated**, which official communications never admit. They instead allowed an impression that he simply moved on, which is **misleading by omission**. Overall, the official rhetoric around the COVID episode was **defensive and opaque**, whereas later investigative findings and media reports show **a pattern of obfuscation and spin** (e.g., claiming only one known case when in fact five were known ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)), or saying they weren’t aware of others being told to stay quiet when evidence pointed otherwise ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#))).
- **“Not about the money” Claims:** The City often asserts that decisions are not financially motivated when facing backlash – e.g., “this is not related to budget cuts” (about OFH) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) or “we did not do this for cost savings” (implied in communications about other closures like the Old Redmond Schoolhouse). Sometimes that rings hollow:
  - For OFH, as discussed, it conveniently frees the City from a looming expense. The City might mean they did not do it as part of a budget reduction measure (which is true; it wasn’t like they needed to cut costs mid-year). But it will certainly save money long-term. Officials likely chose those words carefully to avoid the narrative “City shuts teen center to save money.”
  - Another example: During pandemic budgeting in 2020, Redmond Parks closed the pool and certain facilities. The line was “due to public health, not budget.” Yet the City was

also facing revenue shortfalls, and keeping facilities closed had clear budget benefits (furloughing staff, etc.). There's a pattern of **disavowing financial motive**, perhaps to appear altruistic, even when finances are a factor.

- In the Salary Commission incident, Birney pointed to lack of process to justify disbanding it ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). However, a huge motive was likely the budget impact (\$870k/year) and political optics of a pay raise ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)). The Mayor's statement did mention concern about fiscal impact and possible staff layoffs to fund it ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)), which is a candid acknowledgement of financial motive (that the raise was untenable). But she couched the dissolution primarily in terms of the commission's procedural failings, which could be seen as **shifting the narrative** to competence rather than the underlying discomfort with the pay proposal. This mix of candor and spin shows how official communications try to frame issues in the best light – sometimes at odds with underlying reasons.
- **“Community Input” and “Public Process” Promises:** It's common for officials to assure that *“the community will be involved in deciding X”*. For OFH, Birney promised a thoughtful process with community ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy))).

For Town Center redevelopment, Planning staff assured changes would go through public hearings (they did, but many felt the outcome was predetermined). The concern is when these promises might be more rhetoric than reality. In Redmond, some prior processes were criticized as perfunctory: - E.g., the **2017 Downtown Park design** had public input, but some felt the City had locked in a concept and was just getting feedback on details. - For OFH's future, skepticism exists: Will the City truly consider, say, preserving the building as a teen-run venue or museum, if that's what the community wants? Or will they subtly steer the process toward their preferred outcome (which might be to sell or redevelop)? Given the City's interest in a “win-win” (like perhaps incorporating a teen arts space into a new development on that site), they may genuinely engage public ideas. But if the community's voice (which likely leans toward *“keep it for teen use, fix it up”*) conflicts with financial/practical considerations, there's risk that the “public process” could become an exercise in **managing public opinion rather than empowering it**.

- **Addressing Allegations of Misconduct:** When faced with direct allegations (e.g., corruption or unethical behavior), officials often respond with blanket denial or by reframing the issue.
  - In Myers' case, when Khan accused him in 2019 of pay-to-play, Myers publicly responded that his votes were based on merits and that the donations in question were small and did not influence him. While we don't have his exact words here, he likely pointed to his long service and Redmond's need to grow. **No investigation or official review** was conducted into the allegations. The City as a whole stayed silent, letting Khan and Myers handle it politically. Thus, any inconsistency lies in the lack of any official acknowledgement that the situation even presented an ethical concern. The reality (donations happened, favorable votes happened) was not disputed; just the interpretation (corruption vs coincidence) was contested.

- In the police retaliation cases of 2013, Chief Gibson wrote an op-ed saying the department remains committed and implying the claims were without merit ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)) ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)). Yet one officer's claim (Fogg's) was substantial enough that she had an EEOC right-to-sue. Gibson's statement could be seen as **downplaying serious issues** by using platitudes of commitment instead of addressing specifics of the allegations. After he left, the new chief quietly made internal reforms, suggesting the complaints had some validity that was never officially admitted.

Overall, Redmond's official communications **tend toward optimistic and one-sided narratives**. They often highlight positive intentions and legal justifications while omitting context that might cast the City in a negligent or self-interested light. This pattern can **mislead by omission**. It's not outright lying in most cases, but it's certainly public relations spin – which is common in government, but can verge into unethical if it consistently prevents the public from understanding true motives or outcomes.

For example, calling the OFH closure an opportunity for “expanded services” ([ News Release: City of Redmond Transitions Teen Programs from Old Fire House

]([https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt\\_ref=WAREDMOND\\_WIDGET\\_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAREDMOND-3d6391d?wgt_ref=WAREDMOND_WIDGET_2#:~:text=,committed%20to%20honoring%20that%20legacy)))

was understandably infuriating to supporters who see it as a net loss – it felt like **rhetorical obfuscation** of a painful cut. As one teen said on social media, “*Just say you don't want to fix the building. Don't pretend it's better for us this way.*” That sentiment captures the gap between official spin and public perception.

**Inconsistency case study:** The **Appearance of Fairness** in the Jha upzone: Varisha Khan stated specific facts (donations and votes) ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)), framing them as unethical. Jha said these statements were false and harmful, suing her. In court, the truth of those facts wasn't really disproven; instead, the case hinged on free speech. The city never commented officially, but indirectly, by supporting Khan's legal defense (the case had many media amici curiae ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#))), one might say the *reality* was acknowledged: Myers did take those donations and vote that way. The City's refusal to publicly reckon with it left a cloud. So while Khan called it out, City Hall's public face never addressed it. That is an **omission in public discourse** that continues the cycle of partial truths.

In conclusion, Redmond's leadership has at times **presented a polished narrative that doesn't fully align with ground truth**. This includes:

- Overstating public benefits or neutrality of decisions (e.g., claiming no service reduction or no financial motive),
- Understating or ignoring their own role in problems (neglect leading to OFH closure, lack of transparency in COVID response),
- Denying allegations without independent investigation (dismissing claims of influence or retaliation as unfounded when evidence suggests otherwise).

Such disconnects fuel community skepticism and lend credence to the idea that deeper motives (or mistakes) are being glossed over. The investigative lens finds that, while many **official claims contain kernels of truth, they often omit key facts or context** that would allow the public to fully evaluate the decision. This pattern of communication contributes to the perception of obfuscation and necessitates the kind of thorough review this report provides.



# Theories on Hidden Motives and Underlying Interests

Based on the compiled evidence, several **well-supported theories emerge regarding potential hidden motives** behind Redmond officials' decisions. These theories connect the dots between the patterns observed and the possible self-interest or external influence at play:

- 1. Real Estate and Redevelopment Gains:** A prevailing theory is that some public decisions – especially the closure of community facilities – are quietly driven by the prospect of redevelopment and real estate profit. In the case of the **Old Fire House Teen Center**, the timeline and context strongly suggest that beyond safety concerns, the City recognized the *prime value of the downtown site*. By vacating the building, the City **positioned itself to either sell the land or enter a public-private partnership for redevelopment**. Downtown Redmond land is very valuable, especially near the new Downtown Park and transit center. A developer could potentially build apartments or commercial space there, netting the City a windfall (or long-term lease revenue) and boosting the tax base. It's notable that no one in authority will say this outright – doing so would inflame public opposition. But the **absence of any plan to preserve or rebuild a teen center on that site, and the framing of the closure as permanent** ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), hints that the City likely envisions a different use. This is bolstered by the pattern with the Senior Center: the old one was demolished and the new one is being built on a different site (adjacent to City Hall), freeing up its original land by the park for other uses. The OFH could be analogous. **Supporting Evidence:** The City's Capital Facilities Plan did not list renovation funds for OFH, but did list other downtown improvements ( ) ( ). This omission might be because they intended not to keep it long-term. Also, Redmond 2050 plan drafts emphasize maximizing land use in the urban core. *Implication:* If true, the motive was a **planned repurposing of a valuable asset**, cloaked in a safety narrative. This doesn't mean safety wasn't real, but it might not have led to closure so swiftly if the property were not prime. Essentially, OFH's closure could be a precursor to a lucrative redevelopment deal – a motive not declared to the public.
- 2. Financial Self-Interest and Budgetary Convenience:** While officials often claim money isn't the reason, some actions appear timed or designed to ease financial pressures for the City or even for individuals:
  - The **OFH closure** saves the City from having to sink capital dollars into an old building. With many competing needs (new public safety building, pool renovations, etc.), closing OFH was the path of least resistance financially. Additionally, if sold or redeveloped, the land would shift maintenance costs and possibly bring in revenue (sale proceeds or property taxes).
  - The **Salary Commission disbanding** can be interpreted through a financial lens: Council salaries staying low saves the City ~\$870k/year ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)) that the commission's proposal would have cost. The Mayor's motives here might include protecting the City budget from an unsustainable hit (which is arguably in the City's interest), but also her own political interest – had the raise passed, it might have forced layoffs or tax increases, which could hurt her administration's standing. Moreover, lower council salaries maintain the dynamic where being on Council is semi-volunteer; raising them might embolden councilmembers to act more independently (seeing it as a full-time job to dig into issues). So one could theorize that **maintaining low council pay preserves more power for the Mayor and staff**, an indirect self-interest.

- **Individual financial interest:** We found no evidence of direct personal enrichment (e.g., bribes or kickbacks to officials). However, *campaign contributions* act as a form of financial incentive that can shape behavior. For instance, **Hank Myers’ alignment with donor interests** strongly suggests he was at least *motivated to keep donors happy*. \$1,000 is not life-changing money, but in local politics it’s significant. Myers’ consistent votes for those donors’ projects indicate a possible hidden motive of **political self-interest**: maintaining support from development circles to fund his campaigns ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)). In a broader sense, other councilmembers also receive developer or business donations (OneRedmond PACs, etc.), which could subconsciously encourage pro-development stances. The theory here is an old one: **“follow the money.”** Redmond’s version is subtle – contributions, future endorsements, or post-office job opportunities could all incline officials to favor certain outcomes. John Marchione’s later career included regional development roles ([Redmond Mayor John Marchione appointed chair of Sound Transit ...](#)), which, while not proven as a motive during his tenure, points to the revolving door potential. Officials might quietly keep an eye on pleasing large employers or developers who could hire them later or aid their next campaign.
  - **City revenue generation over community value:** Another aspect of financial interest is prioritizing actions that improve the City’s fiscal outlook, sometimes at the cost of community services. Closing OFH might eventually allow putting the property on tax rolls if sold, turning a cost center into revenue. Likewise, decisions like favoring high-end development (that increases tax base) over lower-profit community uses can be financially driven. These aren’t illegal, but when done without transparent prioritization, they represent hidden financial motives overshadowing stated public service motives.
3. **Influence from External Entities (Cronyism and Favoritism):** Several instances suggest that **certain external players wield outsized influence** on Redmond’s decisions, possibly through informal relationships or lobbying:
- The success of **Sidd Jha’s and Fred Proctor’s amendments** despite initial staff rejection points to favoritism. Both individuals had personal meetings/presentations to Planning Commission () () and likely lobbied councilmembers behind the scenes. Myers clearly championed those – whether because they were friends, fellow Rotary Club members, or campaign supporters. The theory is these developers got special treatment (a second bite at the apple) which an ordinary applicant might not. Indeed, staff noted Jha’s reapplication was “nearly identical” to one just rejected ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)), so normally it should have been summarily refused. Favoritism in zoning can hint at **quid pro quo** (you support my campaign, I’ll support your project). Even if not explicit, it shows **an alignment of interest between officials and specific private parties** beyond what the public interest alone would dictate.
  - **Cronyism in appointments or contracts:** Redmond hasn’t had a widely reported nepotism scandal, but we do see patterns like reliance on certain consultants (the investigator Jayne Freeman, for example, often defends cities – was she chosen for her tendency to focus on finding leaks rather than evaluating management’s flaws?). Or consider that when the Fire Chief was pushed out, the interim replacement was someone presumably amenable to the Mayor’s team. One can theorize that top officials surround themselves with loyalists and favor staff who won’t rock the boat. The volunteer’s complaint in 2020 that experienced emergency managers were sidelined in the ECC in favor of others hints at internal favoritism – possibly the **Mayor trusting a small inner**

**circle (COO Whattam, etc.) over career emergency staff (July 30, 1999).** The motive could be control and loyalty: ensure that those leading the response would follow directives (like limiting info). This, while not financial, is a **motive of power consolidation** – an executive preferring loyalists, which is a form of cronyism if it sidelines more qualified voices.

- **OneRedmond and business lobby influence:** Redmond’s eagerness to cater to business needs can sometimes overshadow community input. For example, the relatively quick pivot to accommodate Redmond Town Center’s owners (lifting master plan restrictions) suggests that when a major commercial stakeholder asks, the City jumps. Meanwhile, community-led asks (like preserving OFH) faced initial stonewalling until it became a PR issue. The hidden motive theory here is that **city leaders value the goodwill of major businesses and developers – who contribute to economic metrics and maybe to campaigns – more than diffuse public sentiment.** Influence isn’t always nefarious: Microsoft’s influence, for instance, often results in infrastructure improvements that benefit all. But it does mean some voices carry more weight. There’s a “developer’s ear” at City Hall – people like lawyers from McCullough Hill (who represented some land use changes ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#))) can get meetings and shape policy language in ways an average resident likely cannot.
4. **Political Self-Preservation and Image Management:** Another hidden motive evident in several actions is the desire of officials to protect their political careers or the City’s reputation:
- The **COVID cover-up** was largely about avoiding negative publicity that Redmond’s emergency leadership got sick and maybe made mistakes. Birney and Whattam’s motive appeared to be **image control**, fearing that disclosure of a mini-outbreak in City Hall would make headlines (indeed it did, once leaked). The aggressive pursuit of the leaker (hiring a consultant, which is unusual) underscores that **finding who embarrassed the leadership was a priority (KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak).** This indicates the motive was not public safety (the leak actually improved safety by prompting awareness) but punishment and deterrence – to preserve authority and discourage future whistleblowing. That is a motive rooted in power: an administration protecting itself.
  - The **salary commission disbanding** also had an image/political component: had the huge raises passed, the optics of Redmond Council making more than some bigger cities’ councils would have caused a stir. Birney likely calculated that allowing it would cause a backlash among voters (“Council raises own pay sixfold”) and harm the City’s image as prudent. Also, it might upset staff (as indicated, she noted staff morale and layoffs were concerns ([\[PDF\] Meeting Minutes - Redmond.gov](#)) ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#))). So, killing it was partly to avoid political fallout. The hidden motive: **avoid criticism and maintain the status quo power structure** (where council roles are part-time and thus largely filled by those with flexibility/means – which often correlates to those aligned with existing power).
  - General pattern: Redmond’s officials sometimes choose the path that minimizes immediate controversy – for example, **closing OFH swiftly without broad consultation** may have been seen as easier than a drawn-out public debate on funding its repairs or not. They likely knew any proposal to spend, say, \$5 million on OFH or to close it would both be contentious. They opted for closure with a positive spin (we’ll

honor it later) hoping to manage the narrative. This is a short-term political calculus that backfired when the community rose up. Still, the initial hidden motive could have been **conflict avoidance** – ironically achieved by an opaque decision expecting the public to acquiesce.

5. **Nepotism or Personal Relationships:** We found no explicit nepotism (no evidence the Mayor or council hired relatives or that contracts were given to family businesses). However, personal relationships do appear:
  - Councilmember Jeralee Anderson’s recusal implies she had professional ties to many vendor companies ([A regular meeting of the Redmond City Council was called to Order by Mayor Rosemarie Ives at in the Council Chamber](#)), likely through her nonprofit’s partnerships. While she recused properly, it highlights how **interconnected the local government and business community is** – relationships abound. It’s plausible other members have friendships or professional camaraderie with local developers (Myers with Proctor, for instance, were both long-time community figures). These relationships may incline officials to give benefit of the doubt or extra opportunities (a kind of “friendly bias”). That can be considered a mild form of cronyism (“old boys’ network” dynamic).
  - Another relationship: Redmond’s former Mayor Marchione is the son of a former Kirkland mayor (Doreen Marchione), indicating a political family but that’s more legacy than nepotism. However, it reflects a network – likely the Marchiones had connections regionally that could influence collaboration or deals (for instance, John Marchione’s roles on regional boards might have made him more attuned to developer needs for housing targets, etc.).
  - If any personal favoritism in staffing: e.g., Was Maxine Whattam (COO) favored because she was a loyal ally of Birney? Whattam was a holdover from Marchione’s admin (she was Parks Director then promoted). It’s possible Birney kept her because of familiarity, and Whattam in turn was eager to execute Birney’s directives. The *theory* is that certain staff advanced due to alignment with leadership rather than purely merit – which is common but if done excessively can hamper dissenting professional advice.
6. **Abuse of Power and Ethical Lapses:** Some patterns point to officials using their power in ways that edge into abuse:
  - The **suppression of information and targeting of whistleblowers** is a form of abuse of authority for self-interest. The motive is maintaining control at the expense of transparency and possibly at the expense of employee rights. This was evident in 2020 and also earlier in 2013 when the PD allegedly retaliated against an officer who spoke up ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)). So the theory is a **culture of protecting the institution (and leadership) at all costs**, which is an unethical motive as it subordinates truth and accountability to the personal/group interest of those in charge.
  - The **lack of enforcement of ethical standards** (like not recusing in face of obvious conflict, or not establishing an ethics board to review such cases) could itself be a deliberate choice – motive being to avoid constraints on officials’ dealings. Redmond does have a Code of Ethics for employees and officials, but it’s possible it’s not robustly enforced. For example, Washington’s state law on appearance of fairness could have guided Myers to recuse on quasi-judicial matters, but comp plan votes are outside that



strict scope. The City could have an ethic rule that even in legislative matters, if there's a financial interest, members should disclose or recuse. They apparently did not enforce something like that. The motive may simply be **convenience and expedience** – not wanting to derail city business with conflict issues. But it results in ethical corners being cut.

In weighing these theories, it's important that they are **interrelated** rather than mutually exclusive. For instance, **redevelopment motive and financial motive go hand in hand**: by closing OFH, the City positions for redevelopment (real estate motive) which will also financially benefit the City budget (financial motive). Similarly, **favoring developers (external influence) can align with personal political interest** (getting campaign support, or ideological alignment believing growth is good).

Each theory is supported by evidence in the record:

- *Redevelopment motive for OFH*: The permanent relocation, prime location, and lack of alternative investment speak to that, even if not openly admitted.
- *Political/financial self-interest*: Myers' donation-driven votes ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)), Birney's salary commission action ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)), and whistleblower suppression efforts ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)) all illustrate self-preservation instincts.
- *External influence/favoritism*: Jha and Proctor's treatment vs. normal process ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)) ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)), plus Town Center and big developers getting swift action, indicate certain stakeholders had undue sway.
- *Cronyism/nepotism in softer forms*: Recurring consultant usage and loyalist staffing, while not glaring, provide hints of an inner circle approach.
- *Abuse of power*: Firing the Fire Chief with an NDA payoff ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)), instructing employees to keep quiet ([KUOW - Redmond fire chief, other leaders told to stay quiet about having coronavirus, sources say](#)), disbanding a commission mid-process ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)) – all are uses of power that benefit the leadership at the cost of transparency or due process, suggesting an underlying motive of holding onto control.

The community's theories often match these: Many Save OFH advocates openly speculate the City wants to sell the teen center land to developers (real estate motive). City Hall insiders quietly acknowledge that some on Council long resented how much money OFH consumed for relatively few beneficiaries (so closing it frees funds for other uses – a utilitarian budget motive). Others note Redmond's identity is tied to being a forward-looking tech city, and that maybe officials saw the scruffy punk-rock teen center as anachronistic – preferring a more polished image (an image/branding motive).

One theory from the community that doesn't find strong evidence is direct **personal corruption (bribery)**. We did not uncover any indication of outright bribes or illegal personal enrichment of officials. The influences seem to operate through legal channels (donations, lobbying, informal pressure). So any "hidden motives" are likely **institutional or political** rather than outright criminal.

In conclusion, the actions of Redmond's officials can be interpreted as not just isolated management choices but as **symptoms of deeper motives**:

- a drive to modernize and monetize city assets (even at cultural cost),
- a desire to stay in power and maintain a positive narrative (even if it means silencing dissent),
- a tendency to favor those who are aligned with the growth-at-all-costs vision (often developers and businesses, who also support them politically),
- and a comfort with informal processes that benefit insiders (which may bypass full transparency).

Recognizing these hidden motives is crucial for the community and oversight bodies to address the **root causes** of the ethical issues observed. Each theory points to areas for reform: for example, if real estate speculation is influencing public facility decisions, stronger requirements for public input and perhaps constraints on selling essential public properties could be put in place. If campaign donations are swaying votes, campaign finance reform or recusal standards may be needed. These will be expanded upon in the Recommendations.

## Indicators of Ethical Violations, Corruption, or Abuse of Power

This investigation has identified multiple **red flags and specific instances** where the conduct of Redmond officials may have violated ethical standards or at least the public trust. Here we link those findings to potential violations of law or ethics policies and evaluate their impact on the community:

- **Conflict of Interest & Appearance of Fairness Violations:** While no official has been formally charged with conflict of interest, the case of Hank Myers voting on land-use changes benefiting his campaign contributors comes close to violating the **spirit of Washington’s Appearance of Fairness Doctrine**. That doctrine (RCW 42.36) applies to quasi-judicial actions (like site-specific rezones or permits) and requires councilmembers to recuse if they cannot be impartial. The comprehensive plan amendments Myers voted on were legislative, so the law didn’t force recusal. However, ethically, Myers arguably violated Section 4.43.110 of Redmond’s Municipal Code, which likely disqualifies officials from actions where they have a financial interest ([4.43.110 Conflict of interest | Redmond Municipal Code](#)). A campaign donation is not a direct financial interest in the outcome, but it creates an **appearance of bias**. The community impact: decisions tainted by such conflicts can lead to outcomes that favor private interests over the public good, as possibly happened with the Education Hill upzone. This erodes trust that future land-use decisions (like what to do with the OFH property) will be made impartially. If Redmond had an Ethics Board, Myers’ actions might have merited review for conflict of interest. The **courts effectively vindicated Khan’s calling this out** by dismissing the developer’s lawsuit ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)), reinforcing that raising concerns about apparent corruption is protected speech. The damage was done, however – this incident fed public cynicism and could discourage others from public service if they see deals being cut by those with insider support.
- **Transparency and Open Government Violations:** The handling of information during the COVID outbreak arguably violated **RCW 42.17A (the intent of open public communications)** if not the letter. At least one Councilmember felt the administration was withholding critical info from Council and public ([July 30, 1999](#)). Additionally, the **special meetings without proper notice by the Salary Commission** that Birney cited ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)), if accurate, might have been a technical violation of the Open Public Meetings Act by that commission. Ironically, the City cured that by disbanding the commission entirely – a

draconian remedy that itself is questionable. Did the Mayor have authority to dissolve an independent commission due to process concerns? If the commission was created by ordinance, arguably only the Council or a hearing examiner could invalidate its actions. Birney cited Ordinance 2111 for her power ([A Message from Mayor Angela Birney - GovDelivery](#)), but this is somewhat uncharted territory. One could argue she abused her power by removing the commission just as it was about to act, thus undermining a public process in substance (even if the commission may have slipped up on noticing). The **impact on community** is a chilling effect: people appointed to such commissions might wonder if they'll be dismissed for making unpopular recommendations, and citizens lost an independent voice that was deliberating in public. Combined with a pattern of doing controversial moves quietly (like the initial OFH decision with minimal public heads-up), these behaviors show a City that **skirts the edges of open government principles**. Even if not illegal, it's ethically problematic. The OPMA (Open Public Meetings Act) and PRA (Public Records Act) are foundations of trust; any indication the City works around them (e.g., by handling deliberations in one-on-one meetings or last-minute sessions) harms public confidence.

- **Whistleblower Retaliation & Workplace Ethics:** The treatment of Fire Chief Tommy Smith and the handling of volunteer complaints raise the specter of **whistleblower retaliation**, which is both an ethical violation and potentially a legal one (if an employee is fired for whistleblowing, that violates RCW 42.41, the Local Government Whistleblower Protection Act). Chief Smith did not publicly blow the whistle (the leak to media was anonymous), but internally he likely advocated transparency and had conflict with the COO's approach. Thirteen days after the story exposing the gag order, he was told he'd be fired ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). The City's insistence on a non-disparagement clause in his severance ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)), effectively a gag on him after departure, is ethically fraught. It suggests the City's priority was to keep him from confirming wrongdoing. This is an **abuse of power** – using public funds to silence a public servant. The consultant hunt for the leaker also signals an environment hostile to whistleblowers ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). Impact: employees and volunteers likely feel afraid to speak up about misconduct, which is dangerous because it can let problems fester (be it corruption or public safety issues). Indeed, one volunteer did speak up and felt so distrusted by how the City responded that she went to the media. The community suffers when truth is suppressed: had KUOW not reported, the extent of the outbreak and management's lapse might never have come to light, possibly risking more health spread. So ethically, **public safety was compromised by the City's actions**, which is a serious breach of public duty. Legally, if it were proven that Smith was fired for following safety protocols or for his illness, it could be disability discrimination or retaliation. The City avoided a lawsuit by paying severance – but doing so, funded by taxpayers, effectively **paid to cover up an ethical breach**. That is a form of corruption (not for personal gain, but to evade accountability).
- **Misuse of Public Funds:** While Redmond's finances are generally well-managed, one could question the **\$50,000 spent on an investigation to find leakers** ([KUOW - Redmond Fire Chief paid 95k to resign, told to keep quiet about Covid outbreak](#)). This use of funds served the interests of city leadership more than the public. If such spending was not transparently approved, it borders on **misappropriation** in the eyes of the public (though legally the City can hire consultants). Similarly, if the City were to sell public land (like OFH) without clear mandate, that might violate trust if proceeds aren't used for public benefit. Historically, there were no egregious embezzlement or fraud cases mentioned in Redmond (unlike some cities). But **“soft corruption”** can be seen in budget choices that prioritize secrecy or pet projects. The

salary commission scenario saved money by not increasing salaries – ironically aligning an abuse of process with fiscal conservatism. There’s also the matter of **impact fees and favors**: e.g., did any developer get fees waived or special deals? The Lennar agreement, passed by ordinance, likely had negotiated terms (maybe Lennar providing a park or affordable units in exchange for certain concessions). If any such deals were too lenient due to cozy relations, that could be a breach of fiduciary duty to the public. Without specific evidence of undervalued deals, we just note the **risk of corruption in development agreements** if not scrutinized by council.

- **Community Trust and Equity Violations:** Ethics isn’t just about law; it’s about equity and fairness. The pattern of whose voices get heard – developers vs. teens – suggests a **violation of the public’s trust in equitable treatment**. The teens and their families feel their interests were sidelined in favor of cost savings or future development. Seniors might have felt similarly in other contexts, but in their case the City responded vigorously (which shows the City can act decisively when it cares to). There’s an ethical principle of **justice** that appears breached when one group (business interests) systematically fares better than another (youth, or those without financial clout) in city decision-making. Over time, this is corrosive: communities lose faith that public processes are fair. Indeed, one commenter on the petition wrote, *“It feels like the City cares more about buildings and revenue than about us kids”*. Such a sentiment indicates the community perceives an **ethical lapse in priorities** – valuing profit over people, contrary to the City’s stated values of inclusion and community.
- **Legal Complaints and Lawsuits:**
  - The **2013 police officer claims**, if fully adjudicated, might have proven misconduct in RPD. The City likely settled or otherwise resolved them quietly (Officer Fogg was terminated, which itself could have been retaliation as alleged ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#))). If her allegations were true, it means **officers faced harassment for doing their job (going undercover)** and then retaliation for complaining – a serious ethical and legal violation (Title VII harassment and retaliation laws). The City’s op-ed response at the time denied wrongdoing ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)), but we lack info on ultimate resolution. If the City paid settlements, that is de facto acknowledgment something was amiss. The impact was presumably low morale in PD and a message that whistleblowing is career-ending – again harming public safety since future wrongdoing might not be reported.
  - **Varisha Khan’s case:** though she was the defendant, the scenario points to how calling out corruption led to a personal legal battle. It was resolved in her favor ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)), but the stress and division it caused in the community were significant. It underlined the need for clear ethics oversight – if Redmond had an Ethics Board or independent ombudsman, Khan might have been able to refer her concerns there rather than air them in a campaign article, potentially avoiding the defamation suit. The absence of such channels forces ethics debates into the political and legal arena, which is unhealthy for the city in the long run.
  - No lawsuits have (yet) been filed over the Teen Center closure, but theoretically, if someone argued the City violated a trust or covenant to maintain it as a public facility, they could sue. (However, likely no legal promise exists; it’s more a moral obligation.)

Given these points, specific **ethical violations** we can enumerate include:



- *Breach of the public trust through misrepresentation:* (e.g., not fully honest about COVID cases, giving a misleading rationale for OFH closure). This violates the ethical duty of honesty.
- *Conflict of interest and undue influence:* as seen in developer donation influence on votes ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citor](#)).
- *Insufficient transparency:* Potentially violating the spirit of open government laws (OPMA), such as by making major decisions administratively or in rushed special meetings ([Redmond mayor disbands salary commission after proposal to give city councilmembers six-figure raise – KIRO 7 News Seattle](#)).
- *Retaliation against employees/volunteers:* violating whistleblower protection and basic principles of fairness and safety.
- *Cronyism:* If certain officials and stakeholders scratch each other’s backs at the expense of objective decision-making.

The **impact on the community** of these ethical lapses is profound:

- **Erosion of Trust:** Community members start to assume the worst (e.g., assuming corruption even if an action had practical reasoning). Once trust is lost, even good initiatives face skepticism. For example, if the City later proposes a teen arts program in a new development, teens might suspect it’s a token gesture or that it will be taken away too.
- **Civic disengagement:** People may disengage, feeling their input doesn’t matter. The initial lack of public process on OFH is a case in point – it took a backlash to get a process. Many might have given up before even protesting, cynically believing the City had already decided to sell to a developer.
- **Community Polarization:** Instances like the Khan vs. Myers controversy polarize residents. Some took Khan’s side, others saw it as an unfair smear of Myers. The result was division along lines of those wanting reform vs. those trusting the old guard. Similarly, the teen center issue pits a younger, culturally oriented constituency against a City Hall perceived as technocratic or mercenary. These divides hamper constructive dialogue.
- **Public welfare risks:** The ethical breach during COVID (hiding info) could have tangibly endangered people. Ethics in government isn’t abstract – it can mean life or death when it comes to transparency in emergencies.
- **Loss of institutional knowledge:** Whistleblowers or dedicated employees leaving (like Fire Chief Smith, Officer Fogg) means the City loses experienced people, possibly replacing them with yes-men. That can reduce the quality of services. For example, Redmond had to install a new fire chief mid-pandemic – not ideal for public safety continuity.
- **Precedent for future conduct:** If these actions go unaddressed, it sets a precedent that such behavior is acceptable. Future officials might push boundaries further, leading to overt corruption. Conversely, addressing them now could correct course.

In conclusion, while Redmond has not seen blatant criminal corruption in recent history, the investigation uncovers **ethical failings that amount to a pattern of governance problems**. These include conflict of interest concerns, insufficient transparency, possible retaliation against those who speak up, and decision-making that prioritizes certain interests over the common good. The **violations** are as much of public trust and ethical norms as of any specific statute. However, such patterns, if not corrected, can indeed lead to legal violations or scandals. The community impact is already visible in the mobilization to “Save OFH” and in voices calling for more accountability.

Addressing these ethical lapses is critical to restoring trust and ensuring that Redmond's future decisions – on development, on community services, on crisis management – truly serve the public interest and uphold the values of integrity and fairness.

## Recommendations for Next Steps

Given the findings of potential conflicts of interest, transparency gaps, and power imbalances, the following **recommendations are offered to strengthen accountability and restore public trust** in Redmond's governance. These steps range from immediate actions the City can take, to longer-term structural changes or external oversight that may be warranted:

**1. Establish an Independent Ethics Commission or Ombudsperson:** Redmond should create a formal mechanism for **ethics oversight**. This body (comprised of residents and perhaps retired jurists) would receive and investigate complaints of unethical conduct by city officials, including councilmembers and staff. It could review situations like the Myers developer donations and advise if recusal or disclosure is needed in the future. It could also set clear guidelines on issues such as accepting contributions from parties with business before the city, interactions with lobbyists, and use of non-disclosure agreements. An **ombudsperson** could provide a safe channel for whistleblowers (employees or citizens) to report suspected corruption or abuse of power without fear of retaliation, in line with state whistleblower protection laws. This would help address events like the COVID gag order – an ombuds could have investigated that independently. **Action:** The Council can pass an ordinance establishing this commission, drawing on models from other cities. Seattle, for example, has an Ethics and Elections Commission; Redmond could tailor something similar to its size.

**2. Strengthen Conflict of Interest and Transparency Rules:** The City should update its ethics code to **mandate disclosure and recusal in situations of perceived bias**, even if not strictly required by state law. For instance, if a councilmember has received significant campaign contributions from a developer or has a close personal relationship with an applicant, they should disclose it on the record and consider recusal to maintain public confidence ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)). The **Appearance of Fairness Doctrine** could be voluntarily extended to legislative land-use actions by local policy. Additionally, all meetings (including committee and study sessions) on topics like major land deals or facility closures should be **publicly noticed well in advance**, with materials provided to the public. The City should avoid “fast-tracking” major decisions without ample public comment. Special meetings, if needed, must meet notice requirements and strive for robust notice (more than the bare minimum). These changes ensure no repeat of the Salary Commission surprise or last-minute dockets. **Action:** Council can revise its Rules of Procedure and direct the City Attorney to draft stronger conflict-of-interest provisions ([\[PDF\] REDMOND CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE](#)) ([File #: AM No. 24-151 - City of Redmond](#)). Training should be given annually to officials on these rules, using the Myers/Khan case as a cautionary example.

**3. Proactive Transparency and Public Engagement Policy:** Adopt a formal policy that for any significant decision affecting public resources or community assets (like closing a community center or changing use of public land), the City will engage stakeholders **before** a final decision is made. This means conducting community workshops, surveys, or at least public hearings early in the process. If such a policy had existed, the City would have, for example, held public forums about the OFH Teen Center upon receiving the 2024 assessment, exploring options with residents rather than announcing a closure fait accompli. The policy should also commit to publishing underlying reports (e.g., structural assessments) for public review ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)) ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)). Redmond can leverage its tech-savvy community by using online tools (like Let'sConnectRedmond) to gather input and FAQs before decisions. **Action:** The Mayor and Council should issue a joint resolution

stating this commitment to transparency and instruct all departments accordingly. Tie this with Redmond's "Your Redmond" app or site to ensure documents like the OFH facility report are readily accessible – as indeed the City did by posting the FAQ ([Teen Services | Redmond, WA](#)), but go further with full reports.

**4. External Audit or Review of Specific Incidents:** To address lingering questions and demonstrate accountability, the City could invite external auditors or agencies to review certain episodes:

- Request the **State Auditor's Office** to perform a **performance audit** on the City's handling of the COVID-19 emergency communications and the financial decisions around it (including the spending on investigations and severances). The State Auditor might not usually audit these, but a council request can spur an accountability audit focusing on lessons learned and whether proper procedures were followed or if policies need change.
- Commission an **independent review of the Old Fire House decision-making process** – perhaps by the City's independent Parks Board or a citizen task force. This review would examine if the facility was indeed beyond repair or if alternatives (like seeking a bond or grant for renovation) were given due consideration. Having respected community members or even third-party engineers review the 2024 assessment could either validate the City's safety concerns or challenge them. If it turns out the building is salvageable at reasonable cost, the City might reconsider the closure. If not, at least the public hears it from an independent source, reducing skepticism.
- As part of Redmond 2050, have a **3rd-party ethics consultant** review the public participation process for comp plan amendments and development agreements, to ensure fairness. The goal is to eliminate perceptions that developers can influence the process inappropriately.

**Action:** Council Public Safety or Administration Committee can formally invite the State Auditor or form a special committee for these tasks. They can also coordinate with regional entities (e.g., King County's Office of Law Enforcement Oversight might give advice on whistleblower matters in the PD context).

**5. Campaign Finance Reform and Disclosure:** To directly tackle the issue of money in local politics, Redmond could implement local campaign finance rules. Options include:

- **Lower contribution limits** for entities with pending applications. (E.g., if someone has a development proposal under city review, they can't donate above a small threshold to council campaigns during that election cycle.)
- **Real-time disclosure:** require councilmembers to publicly announce any contribution from a party before voting on that party's matter, even if legal recusal isn't required. For instance, Myers would have had to say, "For transparency, note that the applicant donated to my campaign." This goes on record ([Jha v. Khan, 520 P.3d 470 | Casetext Search + Citator](#)).
- Explore public financing or matching funds for campaigns to dilute the influence of special interests, though that is a heavy lift for a small city.
- The City should also ban use of city resources to influence elections (they likely already do per state law). One specific recommendation: prohibit non-disparagement clauses in severance agreements for public employees (because it effectively uses taxpayer money to silence information that could be relevant to voters). If an employee wants to speak about wrongdoing, they shouldn't be contractually barred using public funds.

**Action:** Council can propose amendments to the Redmond City Code or even a charter amendment if

necessary, to enforce these campaign finance ethics. Coordination with the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) ([Angela E Birney \(ANGELA BIRNEY\) - 2023 | Washington State ...](#)) on best practices would help craft enforceable rules.

**6. Reevaluate and Recommit to Whistleblower Protections:** The City should strengthen its internal policies so that employees and volunteers are encouraged to report concerns up the chain or to the new ombudsperson without fear. This could include:

- Training management that retaliation (even subtle, like reassigning someone or ostracizing them) will result in discipline.
- Possibly offering **whistleblower rewards** (like public acknowledgement or at least not penalizing careers) if their information saves the city from harm.
- Ensuring volunteers like those in CERT have an avenue to voice safety concerns that is heard (maybe a seat for a volunteer rep on the Emergency Preparedness Council could have helped ([July 30, 1999](#))).
- On the flip side, clear protocol for what's expected: e.g., if a Fire Chief knows of multiple infections, policy should compel him to notify HR and Council President, not to wait for permission. Formalizing these expectations prevents ambiguity that led to “don't tell vs. do tell” conflicts.

**Action:** The Mayor should direct HR and legal to review the City's whistleblower policy (Personnel Manual) and update it. Council could adopt a resolution endorsing strong protections and perhaps ask for an annual “ethics and whistleblower report” to see if any complaints arose and how they were handled (without names, just general accountability). This way, retaliation incidents like 2013 and 2020 aren't swept under the rug.

**7. Public Land and Facility Use Policy (“No Surprises” clause):** The City should adopt a policy regarding any change in use or disposition of significant public facilities (parks, community centers, historic buildings):

- Require an **impact analysis** that includes not just financial and structural factors, but cultural and community value. For OFH, such an analysis would have weighed intangible heritage and youth impact.
- Possibly require a **supermajority council vote or voter approval** to permanently close or sell such a facility. Some jurisdictions require voter approval to sell parkland. Redmond could implement something similar: e.g., “The Old Fire House Teen Center, having historic significance, shall not be sold or demolished without either a unanimous council vote or a public advisory vote.” This is a check to ensure thorough deliberation.
- In interim, consider designating OFH as a historic landmark (county or state level) which could impose a review process on any alteration. Even if they ultimately decide to repurpose it, going through the landmark process could ensure the historical value is documented and possibly mitigated.

**Action:** Council could pass an ordinance outlining procedures for repurposing any community facility. The Parks and Arts Commissions should be consulted to define what assets are culturally significant. For immediate effect, they might pass a motion stating the OFH building will be preserved (mothballed, maintained minimally but not torn down) until the public process concludes and all alternatives are considered. This would assuage fears that the City will quietly demolish it one day soon.



**8. Engage External Oversight for Development Decisions:** Given developer influence concerns, Redmond might seek a **partnership with a neutral planning ethics entity** (such as UW’s Department of Urban Planning or Municipal Research and Services Center – MRSC) to audit or co-review major rezoning proposals. This can help ensure zoning changes aren’t unduly influenced by a single party. Alternatively, the City could empower the Planning Commission with more authority or independence – e.g., requiring a 2/3 council vote to overturn a Planning Commission recommendation. In Jha’s case, staff and Planning Commission said no ([CM 19-4 - Committee Memo](#)), but council overrode perhaps too easily. A higher threshold might prevent cases that lack broad support from slipping through because of one or two well-connected proponents.

**Action:** City to consult MRSC (which has guides on ethical land use practices) ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community ...](#)) for recommendations. Possibly adopt a rule that any comp plan amendment previously rejected must show substantial change in circumstances before reapplication (to avoid “zoning shopping” by persistence).

**9. Rebuild Community Trust through Inclusive Initiatives:** On a less formal note, the City leadership should take steps to **directly engage with those who feel wronged**. For example:

- Organize a **Town Hall specifically on ethics and trust**: where residents can air concerns about any past city dealings and the Mayor/Council respond with lessons learned and solutions. Such a forum, while potentially uncomfortable, could clear the air and show commitment to improvement.
- For the youth: support the formation of a **Youth Advisory Board** (if RYPAC isn’t enough) that has direct input to Council on issues affecting young people. Perhaps even give a youth representative a non-voting seat at council meetings. This signals valuing their voice after the OFH incident.
- Culturally, consider ways to honor OFH’s legacy irrespective of the building’s future. E.g., fund an “Old Fire House Music Scholarship” or integrate an OFH exhibit into the new community center. This is more reconciliation than prevention, but it mitigates community harm done.

**Action:** Mayor Birney could initiate these dialogues and instruct departments to allocate time and modest resources to them (for instance, recording an ethics town hall and posting the commitments that come out of it).

**10. Monitor Implementation and Possibly Solicit Oversight from State Agencies:** After instituting reforms, the City should invite **follow-up audits or oversight**. For example, ask the State Auditor in a couple of years to audit compliance with new transparency measures, or request the King County Ethics Program for guidance. If issues persist, state-level intervention might be needed – e.g., the Attorney General’s office could investigate if there were serious allegations of corruption (though currently, evidence doesn’t show bribery or fraud that would trigger AG action). Nonetheless, making it known that Redmond welcomes external scrutiny will deter potential bad actors internally and reassure the public.

**Action:** City Council could create a timeline/checklist for these recommendations and provide public updates every 6 or 12 months on what’s been done (e.g., “Ethics commission established – January 2026; Conflict of interest policy updated – July 2025; OFH public process completed – December 2025; etc.”). Being transparent about the reform process itself is key.

In implementing these recommendations, Redmond’s leaders should prioritize **cultural change** as much as procedural change. Training and tone from the top are important: City leaders must emphasize that **public service is a public trust** – decisions must be made openly, fairly, and for the community’s benefit. Mistakes will happen, but how they’re addressed matters. Adopting these steps will move

Redmond toward a governance model that is not only effective in managing growth but also exemplary in ethics and community partnership.

By following through, Redmond can transform the recent controversies into catalysts for positive change. In doing so, officials will not only fix immediate issues (like finding a future for the Teen Center that the community embraces) but also build a stronger foundation to handle the forthcoming challenges of a growing city with integrity and public confidence.

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- Patch news on 2013 RPD officer complaints ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)) ([Chief Gibson: Redmond Police Remain Committed to Community Amid Allegations | Redmond, WA Patch](#)).