

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, April 23, 2024
9:00 a.m.

Present: Xanthippe Augerot, Chair; Nancy Wyse, Commissioner; Pat Malone, Commissioner; Rachel McEneny, County Administrator; Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator

Elected Official: Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff

Staff: Marriah De La Vega, Maura Kwiatkowski, BOC; Cory Grogan, Public Information Officer; April Holland, Health Services; Jeramie Martin, Debbie Sessions, Financial Services; Erika Milo, Board Recorder; Petra Schuetz, Community Development

Guests: Michael Ahr, Benton Soil and Water Conservation District; Joe Franell, Rachael Maddock-Hughes, Rural Prosperity Partners; Pegge McGuire, Community Services Consortium; Ryan Vogt, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments

1. Opening & Introductions

Chair Augerot called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

3. Work Session

3.1 Community Services Consortium (CSC) Quarterly Update – Pegge McGuire, Executive Director, Community Services Consortium

McGuire previously sent an Annual Impact Report to the Board. McGuire gave an update on the Continuum of Care (COC). Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will not offer a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for COC funding in 2025. Instead, HUD will allow CSC to unofficially register and will appoint a Technical Assistance Team (TAT) to the Portland HUD Field Office to help CSC exit the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care (ROCC). HUD will also provide technical assistance to ROCC. McGuire confirmed that all elements are in place, including the Homeless Management Information System and the Coordinated Entry System. CSC is currently interviewing for the position, which will establish the COC in this region, working closely with the HUD TAT, the various partners and communities, and the ROCC team to set up committees. When HUD

issues the NOFO, CSC will officially compete as a Tri-County Continuum with a new name.

The other component is General Housing Assistance Program funding for capacity building. CSC heard from community partners who want to utilize any Affordable Housing Development funding, such as service-enriched housing. CSC applied for funds to begin a training program and develop collaborations between housing developers and service providers to create support for residents. The Corporation for Supportive Housing will also provide technical assistance. CSC is talking to potential partners, and has some funding for partners to develop affordable housing.

CSC is also establishing the Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO), which is the trade association for community action agencies. CSC became a grantee for a statewide diaper distribution project. Research shows that providing people with diapers keeps babies cleaner, leading to better sleep for babies and parents. This improves the health of children and families, so there is less engagement with the child welfare system, saving the community thousands of dollars. CSC is beginning to distribute diapers in the community and will track family outcomes, then expand the program to partners.

McGuire discussed partner collaboration in Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCW COG) is one of CSC's main partners, but CSC is also contracting with culturally specific organizations, such as Casa Latinos Unidos, the NAACP, and the Corvallis Multi-Cultural Literacy Center. This will provide diverse community voices at CSC's Community Action Advisory Council meetings, ensuring CSC is serving in a culturally appropriate way.

3.2 Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCW COG) Quarterly Update – Ryan Vogt, OCW COG

Vogt presented highlights from the annual report, including financial empowerment program Stand By Me (SBM). When Vogt joined OCW COG in 2020, SBM was not receiving enough attention. Support from Augerot helped the program grow. Participant numbers continue to grow. SBM has been moved within the organization to assist in future growth. SBM now has coaches in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties, some of whom are Bilingual. There are no income barriers for program participants.

Augerot was glad Lincoln County had invested in the program and hoped to see financial support from Linn County as well. Benton County offers a small amount of funding, but that is enough to provide potential matching funds for grants.

Vogt introduced new Community and Economic Development Director Jaclyn Disney, who previously led a community action agency in California. OCW COG wants to offer grant writing services for smaller communities in the region which cannot fund a full-time grant writer. The organization will hire several grant writers to provide to those communities for a shared cost. The writers would also assist with grant administration. Due to high demand, OCW COG has hired its first grant writer. Given the regional interest in large-scale Safe Streets and Roads for All grants, the new grant writer will apply for a Regional Planning Grant for the Highway 101 Corridor to the Coast and either Highway 20 or Highway 34 to the City of Sweet Home. OCW COG plans to expand the Regional Grant Program in 2025.

Vogt advised that one of OCW COG's two Veterans Services Officers had resigned. Vogt expressed confidence in remaining Veteran Services Officer Mark Lapinskas, who will continue to provide services while OCW COG recruits for the open position. In 2023, OCW COG processed 640 new disability claims for Benton County veterans, of which 236 were awarded, totaling about \$1.4 million in benefits.

Vogt discussed the Philomath Boulevard/Highway 20 Design Study, headed by the Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. An open house is scheduled for May 8, 2024.

Malone invited McGuire to discuss ongoing discussions on collaboration between CSC and OCW COG.

Vogt discussed OCW COG and CSC's joint venture in the Corvallis Office on Ninth Street. As the partnership evolves, the organizations are working to align policies, software systems, telephone systems, and email systems. Both organizations now have a shared Information Technology structure and a shared Human Resources team. This will ensure consistent policy interpretation, reduce redundancy, and produce more service. Because the other administrative teams have more complex functions, OCW COG and CSC do not plan to merge those currently.

Malone mentioned that this collaboration was similar to the merger between the Benton County Fairgrounds and the Natural Areas and Parks Department into the Natural Areas, Parks, and Events Department. The merger ensured quality operations.

McGuire noted she would retire at the end of 2024. Both CSC and OCW COG have appointed a subcommittee to discuss leadership and recruitment for both organizations. CSC may recruit a director and leave other functions unchanged for now. A new director would continue the plan to combine CSC and OCW COG.

Wyse noted that OCW COG was seeking partnerships for SBM. Wyse asked if OCW COG still intended to have SBM staff speak to other partners, as stated on OCW COG's website.

Vogt confirmed.

Wyse asked if Vogt had ever presented about SBM to any Chambers of Commerce or Rotary Clubs.

Vogt responded that Program Manager Alicia Lucke stays in contact with the Chambers of Commerce and also works with partner agencies such as Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center and Casa Latinos Unidos.

Wyse suggested presenting the program at Philomath Chamber of Commerce luncheons.

3.3 Presentation of 2023 Annual Report – Michael Ahr, Benton Soil and Water Conservation District

Ahr provided an update on the Invasive Species Program at the Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (BSWCD). The County provides \$5,000 a year for invasive species removal. Ahr coordinates the Benton Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA), the Willamette Mainstem Cooperative (WMC), and general outreach and education.

CWMA meets twice annually to strategize with public agencies, non-profit groups, land trusts, and watershed councils. On May 18, 2024, CWMA will hold a volunteer noxious weed removal event, Let's Pull Together, at four locations in Benton County.

WMC and CWMA overlap somewhat. WMC is the watershed council for the 22-mile section of the Willamette River between the Cities of Corvallis and Albany. WMC provides a great deal of hands-on management of invasive aquatic weeds. Some BSWCD partners also provide weed management, while others work on larger-scale fish restoration.

Ahr provided a list of common invasive species in the area (see presentation). BSWCD receives many calls from residents about noxious weeds, and public interest and meeting attendance has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Ahr praised the efforts of Benton County residents.

Ahr discussed the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) between Benton County and BSWCD. IGA programs include a weed management Road Crew Program and a volunteer Special Management Area Weed Pull that helps maintain an area owned by Greenbelt Land Trust.

{Exhibit 1: 2023 BSWCD Presentation}

3.4 Rural Broadband Task Force Quarterly Update – Rachael Maddock-Hughes, Joe Franell, Rural Prosperity Partners (RPP)

Maddock-Hughes provided an update on the Broadband Action Team (BAT) for Linn, Benton, Lincoln, and Lane Counties, which receives funding from one Federal and three State programs. The Broadband Technical Assistance Program (BTAP) supports groups such as the BAT by conducting feasibility and engineering studies with Internet Service Providers (ISPs). RPP submitted \$4.4 million in grant requests on behalf of the region. However, the Broadband Office only appropriated \$1.5 million for this round of funding, and the region was not selected to move to the next round. RPP is advocating with the Broadband Office to release more funds, which could occur during the potential E-Board meeting in May 2024. The first round of State infrastructure funding, the Broadband Deployment Program (BDP), will close soon. This \$157 million fund originated from the American Rescue Plan Act. ISPs Alyrica and Pioneer plan to apply for BDP in Benton County. The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program offers \$688 million in funding but involves a long application process. Another Federal funding source is Reconnect, which provides up to \$25 million. Pioneer may be able to apply, and RPP is supporting Alyrica to apply for a grant for Linn County.

Maddock-Hughes also discussed the Affordable Connectivity Plan (ACP). In Oregon, about 240,000 low-income households are enrolled in the ACP, which provides \$30 per month per household for internet connectivity. Congress did not renew the program, which ended in April 2024. This caused a major setback for digital equity and inclusion, so many ISPs nationwide are working to create other affordable plans. In February

2024, RPP helped launch the Oregon Broadband Equity Coalition, led by Oregon State University (OSU), ISP Link Oregon, and others. RPP is hosting monthly calls.

Franell explained that recent BAT meetings have focused on BTAP. The Oregon State Broadband Fund has allocated funding for programs such as BTAP. The State Universal Service Fund also offers funds through the Public Utility Commission. RPP is keeping people informed about the BDP, which does not require match funding, although extra points are awarded for a match. Because BEAD requires a 25% minimum match, it will be difficult to make the business case for building infrastructure in remote areas. The first round of Federal funding for Digital Equity has been announced, and the State will receive \$9.9 million from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. RPP is advocating for the ACP at the Federal level, and there is opportunity to add broadband to the Federal Universal Service Fund in addition to telephone service. The ACP is starting a work group to explore a State solution. The BAT for Benton, Linn, Lincoln and Lane Counties has an unusually high level of ISP involvement.

Maddock-Hughes indicated the OSU Extension Service is developing a Digital Equity Plan that will pilot in the City of Florence, and is considering how to do the same in Benton County. RPP will continue monthly stakeholder meetings and review the Rapids Design Study recommendation. RPP will continue to facilitate conversations with ISPs about affordability and how to proceed without the Federal subsidy. Maddock-Hughes recommended that the County examine city and County regulations on permitting processes that may slow down infrastructure rollout once funding is secured. Then RPP can determine how to best position the County and ISPs for BEAD funding. RPP is contracted with Benton County through the end of 2024.

Augerot was contacted by a constituent on Vineyard Mountain asking whether the constituent resides in any of the internet service improvement areas. Augerot clarified that the constituent's question may relate more to service area categorization, and Augerot was not sure how to answer.

Franell explained that the BEAD Map challenge process opened recently. The State Map draws from the Federal Communications Commission Map, and if the constituent's residence is miscategorized as served instead of unserved, or the service is below the minimum standard, the constituent could challenge that through the State challenge process. The State-level results determine which locations are eligible for BEAD funding. ISPs are reviewing the map for accuracy and are not aware of any overstating of coverage in Benton County. The goal of BEAD is to serve every unserved location in Oregon first. Any download speed under 25 megabytes per second (MBps) and upload speed under 3 MBps is considered unserved, as are individuals who are only served with fixed or cellular wireless. Verifying that the location is properly labeled on the map will ensure that location is addressed by future funding. RPP can check the map and help facilitate a solution.

Maddock-Hughes added that RPP will ask the ISPs to identify the best method for individual residents to learn about future internet plans. Then RPP can create a quick reference sheet for the Board to use if contacted by constituents.

{Recorder's note: information about the State BEAD Map challenge process can be found at <https://www.oregon.gov/biz/programs/bead/pages/default.aspx>.}

Augerot confirmed she will respond to the constituent, and agreed the checklist would be helpful. Augerot asked how long the challenge period lasts.

Franell replied that the challenge period lasts for 30 days.

Maddock-Hughes added that the short challenge period does not give rural communities much time to respond. There will be a process for community members to find out when broadband will be available in their neighborhood.

Augerot suggested that Grogan add the challenge process information to the County Newsletter.

Malone asked RPP to provide information about the amount of BTAP funding that the E-Board is requesting.

Franell added that RPP can provide a draft email for County Legislators.

Chair Augerot recessed the meeting at 10:15 a.m. and reconvened at 10:20 a.m.

4. New Business

4.1 Approval of Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Federal Grant for the Adult Drug Treatment Court Program (DTCP) – Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator; Jeramie Martin, Financial Services

Crager requested approval to apply for the BJA Grant, which is specifically for start-up programs. Crager previously updated the Board in conversations that included Judge Matthew Donohue, Benton County Circuit Court. The goal is to restart the DTCP with a new concept and service provider. A Lane County service provider helped estimate program costs. The \$900,000 grant requires match funds, which the County has secured through approved State funding for a program coordinator position. The County has been able to leverage the work of the Policy Oversight Committee and external contributors. Funding will focus on treatment, and ongoing funding will rely on the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) Sustainability Grant. Although the BJA grant is not a sustainable funding source, it does support four years to re-establish the DTCP. Martin has helped secure funds for approximately the first year of operations until the County is ready to apply for the CJC grant. Consultant CFM Advocates has crafted the application. Ideally, the grant recipient will be notified in summer 2024, and the grant will be awarded by October 1, 2024. Facility space is a challenge; the County is trying to utilize the currently leased building at 1318 Northwest Ninth St, Suite 100, Corvallis, which is empty due to the move of Children and Family Services to 4185 Northwest Research Way. Once the new Crisis Center opens, the County will shift staff there from the Humphrey Hoyer Building at 557 Northwest Monroe Avenue, Corvallis, which was the former the Drug Treatment Court location. There are no additional costs at this time.

Malone asked about the vision for ongoing DTCP funding.

Crager responded that the most recent estimate for total program costs over four years is about \$2.9 million. The BJA grant should be viewed as seed funding until the CJC grant becomes available.

Martin noted that the County's in-kind contribution is almost \$1.6 million, which can be subtracted from the estimated program cost.

Crager added that the County in-kind contribution is well leveraged.

MOTION: Malone moved to, in coordination with the Oregon Judicial Department, apply for a \$900,000 grant from the Bureau of Justice Administration to support the planning and continuation of the Adult Drug Treatment Court Program in Benton County. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

5. Information Sharing

5.1 Xanthippe Augerot, Chair

Augerot, Holland, Rebecca Taylor (Benton County Hope Project Manager), and McEneny attended the Oregon House Bill 4123 Summit on the pilot program for Coordinated Homelessness Response. Augerot learned from the seven other pilot areas about additional innovations and tools the County can utilize. Augerot attended the Board Meeting of Inter-Community Health Plans Coordinated Care Organization (IHN CCO), which is updating processes for the Delivery Services Transformation Grant Program. Augerot and several other Board members urged IHN CCO not to lose the collaborative flexibility of many community-based organizations. Augerot met with former Community Development staff member Chris Bentley and Community Development Director Darren Nichols to discuss Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs), since the Community of Alsea is re-creating its CAC. Bentley shared ways to best support such communities as the County updates its Comprehensive Plan. Augerot will attend the Jackson Street Youth Services annual Youth Rising fundraiser, and will probably attend a demonstration of Zonehaven, an emergency evacuation software platform, next week.

5.2 Nancy Wyse, Commissioner

Wyse shared that as Chair of the Local Officials Advisory Committee, she was invited to an informal lunch in the City of Lebanon with the director of the Department of Land Conservation and Development and the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). The lunch partly overlaps with the CSC Governing Board meeting on April 25, 2024, so Wyse will arrive late to that meeting. Then Wyse will attend the Cascades West Economic Development District Executive Board Meeting. LCDC has a Leadership Roundtable Meeting on April 26, 2024. If the other Commissioners have feedback on land use issues, Wyse offered to relay that. Wyse also asked if any of the Commissioners received a request to speak with *Statesman Journal*.

Malone and Augerot indicated no.

Wyse also did not, but an article in *Statesman Journal* stated that none of the Commissioners responded to a request for comment. Wyse requested that the Board and staff look into the matter.

McEneny noted that according to Grogan, no such request was received. Staff can follow up, and McEneny can contact the journalist. It is good to go on record that no Commissioner was contacted personally or through the Board of Commissioners Office.

5.3 Pat Malone, Commissioner

Malone recently toured the Jackson-Frazier Wetlands with Natural Areas, Parks, and Events Interim Director Jesse Ott and Sherry Brubaker from Representative Val Hoyle's Office. The County requested \$800,000 from Hoyle's Office for the Boardwalk Replacement Project. Malone wanted to demonstrate the natural area's proximity to low-income housing. Hoyle had asked the County to concentrate on one project to request from Fiscal Year 2025 Federal appropriations.

Malone reported the Board recently met with Senator Jeff Merkley at a pre-town hall meeting with local elected officials. The Board discussed several priority projects for the next appropriations cycle.

Last week, as liaison to the 911 Emergency Communications Services District, Malone met with the District's Board. The District passed a bond several years ago for more robust equipment and more personnel. Operator recruitment has been very challenging, with only about 16 of 24 possible positions filled. Malone attended a recent Broadband Meeting at Alyrica's office in the City of Philomath. Pioneer Telephone received two \$25 million grants to fill service area gaps.

Malone recently attended a Fair Foundation Meeting with Ott and the Benton County Fair Board. Malone participated in the Road User Task Force (RUTF) regarding options to repair the Oregon Department of Transportation budget, which is not sustainable, especially regarding maintenance. As vehicles are built with better gas mileage, the Gas Tax on large trucks has declined, failing to keep up with inflation. The RUTF proposes to replace the Gas Tax with a Road-User Mileage Tax and introduce tolls, especially in the Portland area.

5.4 Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

McEneny will attend the Benton County Employee Breakfast event and tour the Public Works Department.

5.5 Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator

Crager updated the Board on Oregon House Bill 4002, the Behavioral Health Deflection Program. Staff will apply for those State funds today, which is the deadline. Crager, Van Arsdall, Holland, and Sands met last week to discuss potential resources. The group has also discussed ways to leverage the Crisis Center and build in robust substance abuse services. Because a program coordinator is required by law, the group considered how to leverage current positions, since this would not initially be a full-time position. The group is still working with District Attorney John Haroldson. After a best practices symposium on May 9, 2024, Crager recommended convening a stakeholders group to discuss resources.

Augerot asked if the group had examined any of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) grants or other Federal grants. Augerot was cautioned by Federal colleagues that some of those grants may not be available in the next Federal Fiscal Year.

Crager responded staff will explore this as more information emerges .

6. Other

No other business was discussed.

7. Adjournment

Chair Augerot adjourned the meeting at 10:53 a.m.



Nancy Wyse, 2025 Chair



Erika Milo, Recorder



Rachel Bulder, Board Meetings
Coordinator

*NOTE: Items denoted with an asterisk do NOT have accompanying written materials in the meeting packet.