Benton County OREGON

Board of Commissioners
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MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Friday, November 22, 2024, 10 AM

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

Elected Official: Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff

Staff: Maura Kwiatkowski, Meeting Recorder; Sean McGuire, Sustainability; Anne Thwaits, Public Information Officer; Jennifer Ambuehl, Jeramie Martin, Greg Munn, Debbie Sessions, Financial Services; Lacey Mollel, Christine Mosbaugh, Community Health Centers; Gary Stockhoff, Public Works; Matt Wetherell, Juvenile; Dawn Dale, Sheriff's Office; Shannon Bush, Petra Scheutz, Community Development

Guests: Ryan Beathe, City of Albany Civil Engineer; Terri Fackrell, City of Corvallis; John Harris, Horsepower Productions; Nick Wallace, Community Member

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Augerot called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM, recessed at 10:10 AM, and reconvened at 10:12 AM. Introductions were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

Renewal of the County's 2025 National Association of Counties (NACo) membership and dues payment were added to the agenda. The Executive Session was removed from the agenda.

3. Announcements

McEneny introduced the County's new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Greg Munn.

4. Proclamation

4.1 Proclamation No. P2024-023, Proclaiming National Rural Health Day in Benton County – Lacey Mollel, Community Health Centers

Mollel read the proclamation.

MOTION: Malone moved to proclaim November 21, 2024 as National Rural Health Day in Benton County, Proclamation No. P2024-023. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

5. Comments from the Public

No comments were offered.

6. Consent Calendar

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the Consent Calendar. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

7. New Business

7.1 Authorization of an Application for an Innovative Mobility Program Grant for a Rural Shuttle Service Feasibility Study – Gary Stockhoff, Public Works

Stockhoff indicated the purpose of the grant application was to secure funds to study the potential for operation of a rural shuttle. A rural shuttle program would serve the southwestern portion of the County – Alpine, Alsea, Blodgett, and Monroe. The Oregon Department of Transportation reviewed the County's September pre-application and found the request appropriate for a grant funding application. The requested amount is $80,000.

Following the completion of a feasibility study and with Board approval, the County would seek funding to operationalize the program. Timing would likely be the 2027-29 biennium.

Augerot thanked community member Nick Wallace for being instrumental in getting the process started.

MOTION: Malone moved to authorize staff to submit an application for an Innovative Mobility Program Grant for a Rural Shuttle Service Feasibility Study. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

7.2 2025 Public Works Fee Schedules, Order No. D2024-054 – Gary Stockhoff, Public Works

Stockhoff directed the Board's attention to the proposed fee schedule in the meeting packet. The proposed 2025 fees represent an increase of 3.7%, which is based on the Consumer Price Index.

MOTION: Malone moved to adopt Order No. D2024-054. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

7.3 Order No. D2024-058, Granting Authority to Provide Banking Services and Designating Custodian of Funds, County Treasurer, and Investment Officer – Greg Munn, Chief Financial Officer; Debbie Sessions, Financial Services

Sessions advised the Board the Order for consideration designates Greg Munn as the Treasurer and Custodian of Funds. The Order will allow staff to update bank signature cards to add Munn.

MOTION: Wyse moved to adopt Order No. D2024-058. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

7.4 Approval of County Administrator's 2024-25 Goals – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

Augerot indicated that the goals before the Board were those previously discussed for the County Administrator. Once approved, Augerot will enter the goals into the formal NEOGOV system. Wyse asked the other Commissioners if they wished to add anything. There were no suggested additions or changes.

Wyse asked County Administrator McEneny to speak briefly about the goals.

McEneny indicated Goal 1 was to increase transparency and efficiency in Board of Commissioners Office operations. The primary component of this goal is the implementation of the CivicPlus Board Meetings Management Platform. Goal 2 is the operationalization of the Crisis Center for its May 2025 opening. Leadership and coordination across the County will be required to increase Behavioral Health staffing to staff the Crisis Center. It will require innovative approaches to recruitment because recruiting qualified mental health associates and professionals is currently very difficult. Goal 3 is to build capacity for continuous improvement based on equity, diversity, inclusion, transparency, and sustainability. The objective is to hire a change manager who will be located in the Board of Commissioners Office and will work closely with the County Administrator to work with departments on team building, continuous process improvement, enhanced service delivery, and improved communications The change manager will also work closely with Human Resources to implement a more robust employee training program with respect to diversity and inclusion.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the County Administrator's 2024-25 goals. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

7.5 Establishment of 2025 Legislative Priorities – Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator

Crager called the Board's attention to the 2025 Legislative Priorities document included in the meeting packet. In addition to the items listed in the Priorities document, Crager indicated there will be a great deal of discussion at the Legislature about renewal of the transportation legislation. The Board may wish to add the topic as a general item the County would support as it could. The other issue is support related to changes to the Transient Lodging Tax to provide more flexibility, particularly the 70 percent usage.

Crager noted there is a great deal of work to be done in the next six months regarding sustainable materials management; there may be opportunities through policy change and funding initiatives.

Regarding increasing housing opportunities, the Planning Commission has been doing good work to promote affordable housing and address homelessness. The County received $2.5 million in the last session for permanent supportive housing. The issue remains a high priority for the Governor. The challenge is the ability to create capacity. Crager noted that some counties, such as Lane and Tillamook, have hired a housing staff person who is reaching out across their counties, particularly in the rural areas.

The third legislative priority is the Jackson-Frazier Wetland Boardwalk. The project is shovel ready; funding is all that is needed. A capital request of $1.1 million will be submitted later this month, which leaves $1.5 million to fill the gap to move forward.

Another legislative priority is capital investments for the Fairgrounds Master Plan, which includes the Exhibit Hall. Crager suggested it might be helpful to freshen up the previous study on this project. County staff will continue to identify and pursue funding opportunities.

Crager also reported the Deflection Program is on the brink of completing a permanent hire for the program, perhaps as early as December 1. Measure 110 will be a substantial discussion during the upcoming legislative session. The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) also needs to push funding for this program.

Regarding the preservation of the Historic Courthouse, the County still needs to identify the ultimate purpose and how it would be funded, particularly the seismic rehabilitation. Funding opportunities beyond the State – private partnerships, for example – need to be explored to move this project forward.

Emergency Radio Infrastructure is a continuation of the success of the Sheriff's Office in relation to securing $2 million in Federal funding to support a more robust interoperability system and enabling more communication around the emergency network. This is a potential capital request fund that we might want to put forward.

Regarding rural water and sewer infrastructure, the County is making investments with American Rescue Plan Act funding to get systems back to a State of less risk. Alsea needs more capacity. The significant interest in investing in rural infrastructure may result in more funding opportunities.

Regarding funding for a new jail and other infrastructure, the question remains, how does the County secure funding? This is a much longer-term discussion.

Augerot indicated it is important for the Board to define what priorities are included on the County list versus those that should be part of AOC's agenda. One item that would be a good fit for AOC would be the certification of qualified mental health professionals, including reciprocity with Washington and California. There is a State taskforce working on this issue currently. With the opening of the Crisis Center, this should be a high priority for the County.

Regarding the Historic Courthouse, Augerot remembered the County had identified a National Park Service technical assistance program. Once in, there are more opportunities to get access to private partners. The County may want to tighten its Federal approach by being more specific about the ask.

Augerot also suggested it would be a god idea to reengage with the new AOC staff person working on governance and revenue and to get in front of AOC subcommittee dealing with infrastructure. Is there any coordination with the City of Corvallis regarding these priorities? McEneny responded no but is meeting with City Manager Shepard next week and will discuss. Augerot would like to see at least one common County/City priority.

Malone characterized the legislative agenda as a work in progress. As more information becomes available and circumstances change, the County needs to be flexible. The Fairgrounds Master Plan is ambitious, and the County has not been particularly successful securing Federal or State support. The Exhibit Hall is a $10 million-plus project, and it has been difficult to get support at that level. Incremental funding requests should be explored. One suggestion Malone heard from Congressional staff is to make the Fairgrounds an emergency operations center (EOC). The space is there, but there is little infrastructure or staffing and no dedicated generator.

Crager clarified the Board was considering the State agenda, although many items are on both the State and Federal priorities lists. Crager asked for clarification/guidance regarding EOC investment at the Fairgrounds.

Augerot pointed out the Fairgrounds had been used in the past as an emergency evacuation center for animals. The County should talk with the Economic Development

Office and tourism staff about the economic development component of the Fair Master Plan. Augerot expects there will be some opportunities in the future.

Wyse pointed to priorities that include bridges and other infrastructure; can these be added? Wyse also noted the need to view priorities through the lens of climate change. It is important to think about the issue as the County looks at creative funding opportunities.

Crager agreed these are important priorities. For example, infrastructure is needed to support new housing. The priorities list will be broadened to incorporate these concepts into facilities.

Malone believes the specificity of projects is important to secure funding. Specific requests will likely be more successful.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the 2025 State Legislative Priorities as presented and adjusted through the meeting's discussion. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

Chair Augerot recessed the meeting at 11:07 AM and reconvened at 11:12 AM.

6.6 Discussion Regarding 2025-27 Budget Priorities – Greg Munn, Debbie Sessions, Jenn Ambuehl, Financial Services; Assistant County Administrator Rick Crager

New CFO Munn introduced himself to the Board.

Munn noted that budget development usually follows a strategic planning effort and cited the County's 2040 Initiative. The goal is to develop a budget that produces outcomes that align with 2040.

Crager agreed that the 2040 initiative is a key component that drives much of the County's work. Two years ago, the County did not have specific budget priorities, so a new process was introduced that includes current service levels and policy option packages for strategic activities. The goal is to make budget planning a single, coordinated process.

Crager indicated the budget process and the 2025-27 budget will look different; it will be tighter. There is no COVID relief money remaining, and assessed values have not increased as forecasted. It is important to be mindful of these conditions and to identify the highest priorities for investments and/or what the County will/will not continue to do.

The draft budget Priorities document represents what staff has heard from the Board. There is now an opportunity for the Board to clarify priorities and make changes if desired.

Sessions noted the Priorities document helped set the tone for department budget planning. Significant capacity for funding policy packages is not anticipated; a narrower view of Board priorities is needed.

Augerot did not believe the 2040 initiative exercise was important to identify the values of the County. The Board needs to start thinking strategically for consideration of budget priorities. Augerot would like to see Behavioral Health explicitly stated.

Malone expressed a desire to add the essence of the 2040 goals. There has been some good progress toward integrating the goals into the budget process. Malone appreciated the focus on efficiencies; it is a good starting point for budget planning.

Wyse asked about the steps in the budget process after approval of the Priorities document. What other opportunities will the Board have to provide feedback?

Crager indicated this first step helps the department directors understand what is important to the Board. Staff has been identifying the cost to maintain current service levels; after that, there are policy packages. Financial Services will compile all of that information and submit it to the County Administrator and CFO. They review priorities and available funding to develop the best fit. The proposed budget is then submitted to the Budget Committee as the County Administrator's recommendation. The Budget Committee can then make its own decisions, then it goes to the Board of Commissioners. Recommendations are made in February, and the Budget Committee begins meeting in April. The Board will need to evaluate priorities. There may be some things in current service levels the Board does not wish to continue.

Augerot suggested the first bullet in the Priorities document could be adjusted to allow the Board to evaluate current service levels.

Crager noted that when budget priorities are considered, it is also important to look at current service levels; some are more discretionary.

Crager also indicated there are no plans to move away from the way the budget was developed for the 2023-25 biennium, and the 2040 initiative was considered for that budget. There is more work to be done relative to 2040 and its relationship to current service levels.

Wyse expressed a desire to think about some of the County's longer-term, major issues, including healthcare costs and Public Employee Retirement System costs. The County needs to look longer term than a two-year budget, and Wyse supports the development of a strategic plan.

Crager agreed the County needs clear goals and expectations and to identify how progress will be measured. Wyse wants to ensure the foundation is solid and believes the Priorities document achieves that.

Augerot agreed that the document does not call out good governance and transparency. It would be appropriate to include that in the document.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the 2025-27 Budget Priorities defined by the Board per the discussion. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

10. Other*

Augerot advised that the County's National Association of Counties (NACo) 2025 membership renewal and dues invoice had been received. The Board needs to take action on whether to renew the NACo membership and pay the dues.

MOTION: Wyse moved to approve renewal of the County's NACo membership and authorize payment of 2025 dues in the amount of $1,904.00. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

[Exhibit 1]

11. Adjournment

Chair Augerot adjourned the meeting at 11:50 AM.

Nancy Wyse, 2025 Chair	Maura Kwiatkowski, Recorder

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