

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, September 3, 2024, 9:00 a.m.**

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

**Elected
Official:** Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff

Staff: Eric Bowling, April Holland, Damien Sands, Health Services; Laurel Byer, Paul Wallsinger, Public Works; Maura Kwiatkowski, Board Staff; Jennifer Martin, Jesse Ott, Natural Areas, Parks, and Events; Sean McGuire, Sustainability; Erika Milo, Board Recorder; Lacey Mollel, Christine Mosbaugh, Community Health Centers; Debbie Sessions, Financial Services; Matt Wetherell, Juvenile Services

Guests: John Harris, Horsepower Productions; Ryan Vogt, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments

1. Opening

1. Call to Order

Chair Augerot called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Introductions

2. Review and Approve Agenda

The following item was added to the agenda as **Item 10:**

Executive Session under ORS 192.660[2][d] – Labor Negotiations

3. Proclamations

3.1 Proclaiming September 2024 as National Suicide Prevention Month in Benton County, Proclamation P2024-017 – Eric Bowling, Health Services

Bowling read the Proclamation aloud.

MOTION: Malone moved to adopt Proclamation #P2024-017, proclaiming September 2024 as National Suicide Prevention Month in Benton County. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

4. Comments from the Public

No comments were offered.

5. Work Session

5.1 Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments Update – Ryan Vogt, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (COG)

Vogt thanked the Board for the Suicide Prevention Proclamation. COG delivers Veterans Services programs in Benton County; suicide occurs at a much higher rate in the veteran community than the community at large. The annual Linn-Benton Veterans' Resource Fair will be held on September 12, 2024 at the Linn County Fairgrounds. The Resource Fair helps connect veterans experiencing housing instability to a variety of resources, services, and safety and security items.

Vogt previously updated the Board on COG's ongoing partnership with Community Services Consortium (CSC). This long-term conversation examines how the two organizations, which serve many of the same vulnerable populations, could operate more closely, reducing barriers for those populations. Over the last four years, the two organizations have implemented administrative efficiencies, including dual contracting and some cohousing in the Corvallis Office. This means more funding is available for services. Also, both Boards plan to move forward with a single executive director over both agencies. Within the next four-to-six months, there should be considerable movement on that process.

The Oregon Department of Health Services (ODHS) is another COG partner with overlapping consumers. In early August 2024, ODHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht met with local ODHS staff and COG about how to better serve consumers. ODHS leadership is visiting communities to see the effects of policies, particularly in Linn and Benton Counties due to their strong partnership. COG's Area Agency on Aging Office involves a conversation that is unique to the region. Pakseresht also spent time with Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center Director Alison Hobgood and was moved by the work happening there.

Vogt reported that COG had previously taken a leadership role in coordinating the broadband study across a three-county area including Benton County. Now COG is reducing its participation, and individual task forces will continue to prioritize projects and seek grants to partner with internet service providers for service to unserved and underserved areas. The consultant that did the mapping work has a few months left on the contract. Vogt asked whether the Board would like County staff to meet with the consultants for one last handoff.

Augerot indicated the Board would discuss the issue with County Information Technology (IT) staff at the Board's September Goal-setting Meeting. Augerot was eager to learn what projects might be emerging in this geographical area.

Vogt offered to participate in a closeout/handoff meeting.

Malone would prefer a handoff meeting.

Augerot indicated IT Director Adam Loerts would assist. Augerot noted CSC held a productive all-staff meeting in August 2024, and much of the COG leadership attended, a sign of an increasingly close relationship between the two organizations.

McEneny requested additional details on economic development and transportation grants COG is working on with some regional city managers.

As a former economic development director, Vogt heard about community needs where COG did not supply sufficient services. A frequent comment was that many of the agencies served lack capacity to seek grants, so Vogt developed a grant-writing program. Susan Peterson is now the COG grant writer and is doing great work. Peterson pursued Safe Streets for All grants for Lincoln and Linn Counties, with components in Benton. Both grants would support large-scale traffic pattern studies, prioritizing locations where fatalities occur. Funding would be outside of COG's usual transportation funds, a potential opportunity for additional funds for higher priority safety projects that do not make it into the Oregon Department of Transportation's pipeline. Because of COG's limited resources, the organization also submitted the grant application for Lincoln County. Peterson also identified a grant for City of Sweet Home generators and is visiting all communities to compile a needs list and bundle emerging projects. Some grants will apply to multiple communities.

5.2 Benton County Fair Report – Jesse Ott, Jennifer Martin; Natural Areas, Parks, and Events

Ott reported an overall successful Fair; attendance numbers were up. In 2023, staff worked to change Wednesday into a family-oriented day with free family admission. Staff began conversations with Corvallis Parks and Recreation about the annual Benton County Outdoor Adventures event before the Fair to have a camp if there is a need. Discussions will continue for 2025.

Temperatures were high on Senior Day, and attendance decreased about 20% from last year. Open hours were increased. This was the first night of the National Pro Rodeo Association-sanctioned rodeo, and attendance was high. Bingo and the ice cream social were very popular, with good feedback about the prizes.

Wednesday was the start of the All-Girls Rodeo; all rodeos continue to be popular. Staff and the Fair Board have discussed changes for Thursday, which had great acts but lower attendance. Typically, the Fair does very well on Friday and Saturday. It may be beneficial for Thursday to be more focused on local, cultural showcases that appeal to a different

attendee group. Friday night was rock night, and was very successful. The stage area was full. Revenue from ticket sales and parking was high. Much of the ticketing was contracted out this year, since some of the larger service organizations could no longer support the operation. Financial Services (FS) was pleased to have a trusted partner providing tracking and reports, which reduced the burden on FS and IT staff. Ott expressed appreciation to all the departments that provided support: IT, FS, Human Resources, Public Works, Environmental Health, and Health Services; the Fair is a Countywide effort. Rodeo Queen Naomi Bailey helped promote the Fair. Advertising was another major success thanks to the Public Information Officer and Communications team. Less was spent this year on advertising than in some previous years, but reach was broader – up to 330,000 community members on some pieces. The auction and 4-H dinners went well; revenue exceeded \$1 million, and many participants appreciated the time change.

Martin added that a post-Fair survey collected many positive comments about the rodeo and rides. Attendees always want more food and walking acts, although more positive comments about these were received than ever before. The 2025 Fair will include some of the walking acts from this year, plus new acts. Many people enjoy the animal and art exhibits and concerts.

Ott reported that the survey on Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, and X also received some concerning feedback about surfacing that caused accessibility issues. Staff will work to improve conditions. Suggestions also included adding Sunday hours, although Ott is concerned the County does not have the capacity. The 4-H Program children and families do a great deal of work, and the Fair is a major event for them. The Oregon Fairs Association annual meeting at the State Fair was productive for staff and helpful in connecting with vendors.

Malone asked Ott to provide examples of changes planned for next year's Fair.

Ott noted that Wednesday was successful and will be expanded next year. Schools will be incorporated more, and Family Day promotion will increase; staff will encourage more service providers to participate. There is potential to move open class somewhat. There is an opportunity to increase auditorium use; the air conditioning and commercial kitchen have been very popular. Ott would also like to increase promotion of sustainability efforts.

Malone asked about the impact of the Fire Marshal's requirement for fewer camping spaces.

Ott replied it was initially a significant problem, but staff collaborated with 4-H families and made the change work. Ott thanked County Safety Officer Ray Woottakewahbitty, who was onsite. Safety is the primary concern. Ott will seek more space for next year.

Martin reported 79 recreational vehicles last year and 42 this year. Last year there were 32 tents, this year 97. It was a dramatic change, but everyone adjusted well. There was no significant pushback when the changes were announced. The Fire Marshal conducted two inspections.

Augerot supported the idea of increasing integration between 4-H families and traditional Fair family and rodeo activities with community cultural resources to showcase the diversity of the community.

5.3 Benton County Facilities Update – Paul Wallsinger, Public Works

Wallsinger reported a great deal of progress on the new Courthouse; securing the land use permit presented some obstacles, but those are beginning to resolve. Public Works Director Gary Stockhoff has done an incredible job working on the Historic Swick House issue; an agreement is expected soon. The next challenge will be to record the plat and obtain the land use permit from the City of Corvallis. The start of the rainy season may cause some delays, but the contractor teams are developing mitigation plans.

Developmental design for the Emergency Operations Center is complete and has been accepted by users. Preparation of construction documents has begun.

Crisis Center construction has begun to rise above ground. Roof installation is on track to begin before the rainy season starts.

Augerot asked about the Monroe Clinic National Environmental Policy Act review.

Wallsinger indicated the final results should be available soon, and staff and the contractor are ready to mobilize.

Malone asked about a timetable for the new Courthouse groundbreaking.

Wallsinger indicated the planned timeframe is near the end of September or the first week of October 2024, but many variables could impact the timing.

5.4 Review of Proposed Resource Naming Policy – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

McEneny stated the existing Resource Naming Policy is vague and provides no formal procedure or process. The proposed revised Policy addresses that. The Policy Oversight Committee has not yet seen the proposed revision, but the Committee meets later this week, so Board feedback will provide guidance.

The proposed procedure for naming County facilities or lands begins when the Board directs the County Administrator (CA) to initiate the naming process, with the Board's thoughts on possible themes, individuals, or groups. The CA will identify a facilitator to conduct the process, who will contact relevant staff, programs, and committees. The Equity Committee, Historic Resources Commission, and others will review suggested names. The facilitator will also capture the views and recommendations of relevant community members and groups. County Communications staff will conduct a community awareness and outreach campaign. Then, the CA will submit three to five names to the Board. The Board may also request additional names. Today's discussion seeks general Board feedback on the proposed updated policy.

Augerot and Malone appreciated the revised process and policy and had no significant comments.

Wyse agreed that the revision is less vague and flexible. Wyse encouraged community members and groups to share opinions with the County.

Augerot noted this discussion did not indicate Board approval, but was simply an opportunity for general Board feedback, and asked McEneny to continue the revision process.

Chair Augerot recessed the meeting at 10:56 a.m. and reconvened at 11:01 a.m.

6. Public Hearing

PH 1 Initiation of Proceedings to Transfer Jurisdiction of a County Road to the City of Albany: Northwest Gibson Hill Road, Order No. D2024-051 – Laurel Byer, Public Works

Staff report

Byer reported on the process to initiate transfer of Northwest Gibson Hill Road to the City of Albany. The County has completed the necessary improvements.

There is also a County-owned property at North Albany Road and Gibson Hill Road that Albany is interested in, likely for road or sewer improvements. The County does not need the property and will probably bring that transfer to the Board in October 2024.

Malone asked whether other County roads in North Albany will receive this treatment.

Byer indicated Northwest Gibson Hill Road is the last of the short-term improvements in this Intergovernmental Agreement. Some long-term transfers may occur, but those will be in conjunction with development. That could include portions of Crocker Lane, Northwest Valley View Drive, Scenic Drive, and Northwest Quarry Road.

Chair Augerot opened the Public Hearing at 11:04 a.m.

Public Comment

No comment was offered.

Chair Augerot closed the Public Hearing at 11:04 a.m.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve Order No. 2024-051 transferring jurisdiction of Northwest Gibson Hill Road (County Road #04910) to the City of Albany, Oregon. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

7. New Business

7.1 *Approval to Apply For New Access Point Funding Grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) – Lacey Mollel, Christine Mosbaugh; Community Health Centers

Mollel indicated the HRSA funding would support new health center delivery sites to expand primary health care for underserved populations. There is significant need in certain geographic areas and medically underserved and low-income uninsured areas. In addition to past funding priority areas, there are three new areas: high-need areas, sparsely populated areas, and Health Center Look-Alike Programs

Site requirements include full-time (40 hours per week) services, a fixed site, and year-round operation, including mental health and substance use services. The performance period begins in June 2025.

HRSA has indicated this process will be highly competitive; nearly 100 Look-Alike programs exist, with two in Oregon. The last opportunity for a New Access Point was 2019, which the County did not apply for. HRSA encouraged everyone to apply this time. Another key element is that Fiscal Year 2025 funding for this program has yet to be approved.

Mosbaugh explained that unmet needs are calculated from health determinants and health status. Benton's unmet need is in east Albany, with an unmet need score of 60.75. Given the lack of access for the uninsured in Albany, Benton County can make a significant impact. Currently, 1,476 people in the greater Albany area receive Benton County services. One goal is to provide new opportunities for people who cannot travel and to reach new patients who are not aware of Benton County services. Albany also has a higher population of Medicaid recipients.

Mollel indicated the County has a permanent site address. Staff have invested considerable time seeking space with Albany partners, including InterCommunity Health Network, Samaritan Hospital System, Linn County Public Health, Young Roots, and Family Tree Relief Nursery (FTRN). FTRN was excited about possibly co-locating services in their Albany space, and has worked with the County on a deflection program. FTRN has a long-term lease from Boys and Girls Club. The \$250,000 to \$650,000 award could be used for renovations. HRSA indicated that if different space becomes available after the County applies, the County could apply for a different scope.

Mosbaugh provided context about rural and frontier needs and shared that both Linn and Lincoln are underserved compared to the state as a whole. Much of Benton's work happens across county lines, and staff want to be respectful of regional needs. The CHC Board of Directors is very supportive of this proposal.

Mollel described the staffing model, consisting of one full-time Primary Care Provider, two full-time Mental Health providers, and five full-time support staff in the first year, then another full-time Primary Care Provider in the second year. The Center will serve about 3,000 patients at full capacity and will focus on avoidable Emergency Department visits,

disease prevention, increased primary care utilization, access to behavioral health and addiction services, and improving chronic disease management outcomes.

Augerot agreed it was well worth applying and praised the collaboration that developed this concept. It serves a need and would reduce pressure on existing clinics. Augerot asked if the finances would be separate from Benton County.

Mollet confirmed. The award would be placed under Fund 522 and be operationally separate.

Augerot noted the Benton County community is always concerned about General Fund dollars being used outside the County.

Wyse agreed that community members are concerned about property tax funds going to Albany.

Mollet advised there would be two separate funds: one for all Benton County clinics, and one for all Linn County clinics. These are different types of budgets, which also have supplemental revenue through expansion and New Access Point grants. The County operates at a slight surplus; Benton's clinics in Linn are somewhat leaner in overall operations. The Benton space involves primarily in-kind donations or low-rent situations, which decreases service delivery costs. Any remaining revenue or surplus is transferred to cover the cost of Benton County Health Centers.

Wyse asked how to respond if someone says Benton County should put all its efforts into Benton County, rather than helping Linn.

Mosbaugh pointed to the longstanding relationship. More than 10 years ago, Linn County was not able to open a Federally Qualified Health Center, which presented an opportunity for partnership. The partnership is administered via an agreement with parameters, and the model works well. There is a significant need, and the partnership is beneficial. Linn, Benton, and Lincoln do a great deal regionally and are maintaining that approach because people's lives are connected to jobs and housing.

Malone asked about the application timetable.

Mollet indicated the application is due September 30, 2024, and HRSA will notify recipients on or after June 1, 2025. The County will have about 120 days after that to become operational and initiate services. HRSA indicated a free extension to 18 months is available. HRSA will inform Benton if it receives additional funding.

Malone noted the need to identify a location.

Mollet agreed. In the meantime, staff will work on agreements, job descriptions, and so on. However, another policy package for the budget will also be required on a short timeframe. Staff will meet with the Albany City Council later this month; Albany Mayor Alex Johnson II

would like to hear more about the space issue and determine if other spaces are available in the zip code area.

Malone also asked if FTRN was willing to wait.

Mosbaugh affirmed. A church is currently using the space but does not plan to do so indefinitely.

Mollet noted the space is also used for group meetings and such, and the tenants are unlikely to change that; it is a financial investment.

Responding to a question from Wyse, Mollet indicated that the Community Health Center (CHC) Board approved this action at its August 2024 meeting.

Wyse asked about Look-Alike Clinics.

Mollet explained that a Look-Alike Clinic has gone through the steps to become HRSA-compliant as a CHC, but has not received the Federal designation or award. The health center is functioning as a CHC without the financial incentives of being one. This is sustainable for a limited period of time. It would be very difficult to operate this way without the Federal subsidy.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the submission of the HRSA Access Point New Access Point funding grant application. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

{Exhibit 1: HRSA Presentation}

Chair Augerot recessed at 10:35 a.m. and reconvened at 10:41 a.m.

7.2 Approval of Updated Social Media Policy A114 – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

McEneny highlighted two changes to the new draft version of the Social Media Policy: 1) more updated language and 2) an allowance for some First Amendment rights, such as striking the word ‘profanity.’

At a Social Media Conference a few years ago, Stokes discovered the County Policy did not align with First Amendment rights. The Social Media Work Group supported the changes made in Spring 2022. The revised Policy then went to the Policy Oversight Committee and Law Enforcement. The District Attorney’s Office requested an exception, which was approved. The revised draft Policy was also posted internally for employee comments, some of which were incorporated.

Augerot referenced the following text at the bottom of Policy page 3/packet page 84: “Therefore, its social media presence primarily will be in the form of opt-in, follow, like, et cetera pages where the County does not choose whom followers of the social media

channel.” Augerot requested grammar cleanup of this passage. Also, the Sheriff and District Attorney are elected officials with their own policies in many areas. Augerot asked whether the Board has a role in ensuring those officials also adhere to best practices and First Amendment rights, and whether County staff coordinates policies with these two entities.

Stokes responded County staff do not attend those meetings or updates. Sheriff’s Office (SO) staff attend Social Media Work Group meetings, but District Attorney’s Office staff do not, and Stokes did not have access to those policies.

County Counsel reported a 2022 review of the SO policy, which almost became official County policy, but has not been examined since then. Counsel had not reviewed the District Attorney’s policy.

Augerot expressed interest in knowing whether the Sheriff and District Attorney do cover all bases, since employees of those offices are all County employees. Augerot expressed discomfort that significant County entities might not be coordinating with the County’s overall policy.

Wyse indicated often seeing SO media posts and not seeing anything questionable, but in the future, for consistency, it would make sense that policies align.

Augerot also noted the SO has an issue with long-term social media storage as public record. Augerot did not want the County to incur liability.

Stokes indicated SO staff stay current on best practices and seem to follow County policy. The Board’s Office pays for all County social media, including for the SO and District Attorney’s Office, and all County accounts are protected.

McEneny asked for examples when County Communications staff work with Law Enforcement, such as accidents and emergencies.

Stokes replied that Communications staff are not usually involved in emergency situations unless a Joint Information Center is formed. Health Services, Law Enforcement, and community partners collaborate on joint campaigns such as fire prevention.

McEneny emphasized the importance of synchronizing messages, especially with Law Enforcement. If there is an ongoing investigation, it is not appropriate for the County Public Information Officer to share such information. McEneny asked if the County Communications team would support and assist with messaging on other occasions, such as a highway closure due to an accident.

Stokes indicated no, but if the information is seen, the Communications team does work to push it out.

Augerot expressed a desire to respect those offices and their staff but asked Counsel to comment whether the County is protected from liability. Augerot was pleased that the SO employees participate in the Social Media Work Group.

Counsel indicated the only difference in opinion among the departments is that the SO wanted to be able to remove comments from individuals who commented profanely, negatively, or criticized staff. The SO received some pushback about this; there is a need to maintain public trust and represent credible, lawful deputies and services. It is a philosophical difference, regarding concerns of a community member attacking a deputy or misrepresenting an incident. The SO does not block anyone, so much as “hide” a comment. The storage issue has been resolved.

Malone expressed hope that regular meetings of social media staff continue so the County is speaking with one voice and providing a consistent, coordinated message.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve updates to the Benton County A114 Social Media Policy. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Chair Augerot recessed the meeting at 10:54 a.m. and reconvened at 11:00 a.m.

8. Other

No other business was discussed.

9. Announcements

No announcements were made.

10. Executive Session under ORS 192.660[2][d] – Labor Negotiations

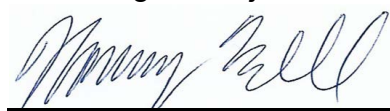
Chair Augerot recessed the regular Board Meeting at 11:05 a.m. and reconvened at 11:10 a.m.

Chair Augerot recessed the regular Board Meeting at 11:10 a.m. and immediately convened the Executive Session under ORS 192.660[2][d] – Labor Negotiations.

Chair Augerot recessed the Executive Session at 11:38 a.m. and immediately reconvened the regular Board Meeting.

11. Adjournment

Chair Augerot adjourned the meeting at 11:38 a.m.



Nancy Wyse, Vice Chair



Erika Milo, Recorder

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. J. Kwiatkowski".

Maura Kwiatkowski, Transcriptionist

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