



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, September 17, 2024
9:00 AM**

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: Shannon Bush, Toby Lewis, Bailey Payne, Petra Schuetz, James Wright, Community Development; Chelsea Chytka, Emergency Management; Maura Kwiatkowski, BOC Staff; Sean McGuire, Sustainability; Erika Milo, BOC Recorder; Shea Steingass, Public Works; Anne Thwaits, Public Information Officer

Guests: Autumn Carter, NEX Strategies LLC; Steve Clark, Julie Manning, Civic Campus Community Engagement Task Force; John Harris, Horsepower Productions; Christopher Jacobs, Corvallis-Benton Economic Development Office; Stephanie Miller, Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence

1. Opening and Introductions

Chair Augerot called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM, and introductions were made.

2. Review & Approve Agenda

The following item was added to the agenda:

7.1 Contribution to Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV) Fundraising Breakfast – Xanthippe Augerot, Board Chair

3. Proclamation

3.1 Proclaiming September as National Preparedness Month in Benton County, Proclamation No. P2024-019 – Chelsea Chytka, Emergency Management Coordinator, Benton County

Chytka read Proclamation #P2024-019 aloud.

Responding to a question from Augerot, Chytka stated that the Preparedness Fair and Chili Cook Off had a great turnout. The event is a good way for State and local organizations to come together.

MOTION: Malone moved to proclaim September as National Preparedness Month in Benton County, Proclamation #P2024-019. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

4. Comments from the Public

No comments were offered.

5. Work Session

5.1 Civic Campus Community Engagement (CCCE) Task Force Update – Steve Clark, Julie Manning, CCCE Task Force Co-chairs

Clark stated the CCCE Task Force was created in spring 2024 to gather community input on values and goals for City of Corvallis downtown and concepts to improve the downtown Civic Campus along Madison Avenue. The Task Force also asked the Corvallis City Council to inform the community and evaluate goals for the City and City Hall. Several years ago, the City Council participated in a third-party evaluation of numerous facilities including City Hall and the Law Enforcement Building shared by the Corvallis Police Department and the Benton County Sheriff's Office. The Task Force conducted community engagement through public meetings and an online quantitative survey with 961 participants. The resulting data will be collected by the end of September 2024.

Clark explained that approximately 30 to 40 percent of study participants report 'strong confusion' about differentiating City Hall from the Benton County Courthouse. Many respondents think the Courthouse is City Hall. Community members want a service center inside City Hall, greater transparency, and improved accessibility in the building. Many participants believe City Hall should stay downtown. Many support Law Enforcement services and recognize the limitations of the current Jail and Law Enforcement Building. Respondents associate downtown with parking issues and public safety issues. The Task Force will bring a final report on survey findings to the Board. Next, the Task Force will provide recommendations to the City Council on October 21, 2024. Afterwards, the Task Force will report to the community.

Manning added that the term 'Civic Campus' (used in the survey) includes the Annex west of City Hall, the Municipal Court Building, and the Madison Avenue Building.

Malone asked Manning and Clark to provide details to the public about a new correctional facility.

Wyse asked if the full results of the survey will be shared.

Manning confirmed. The summary of the online survey, all participants' comments, and the in-person meetings are available on the City's website:

<https://www.corvallisoregon.gov/mc/page/civic-campus-task-force-launches-public-input-survey>

Wyse took the survey but did not see a question asking whether updating the Civic Campus was a priority. Wyse asked whether the comments provided insight on that topic.

Manning replied that participants frequently commented on the Civic Campus. Corvallis sought community feedback on a 2021 City-owned facilities assessment which showed that addressing City Hall was a highly rated priority.

Clark stated the Task Force has used technology to assess public input; findings reveal a strong interest in improving downtown Corvallis and keeping City administrative facilities there. However, some community members emphasize improved parking, public infrastructure, safety, and housing, and say this must be addressed before municipal structures.

McEneny asked how the survey was distributed and how the Task Force viewed the outcome.

Clark stated the online survey was promoted at community meetings, the farmers market, public engagement sessions, and on the City facilities website, social media, and water bills.

Manning noted the survey was a self-selected sample. A Spanish language version of the survey and printed copies in both languages were provided.

Augerot asked whether survey responses showed strong support or opposition.

Clark will return with a complete analysis of the data, including trends. Both the Task Force and the outreach consisted of a diverse representation of the community.

5.2 *Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV) Program Update – Stephanie Miller, CARDV Executive Director

Miller explained CARDV was founded in 1981. Trained advocates provide services to those affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, and stalking. Miller described CARDV's unique 24-hour crisis hotline and its two confidential shelters, supplemented by motel stays. CARDV provides legal advocacy and financial assistance, which can lower the barriers to safe housing by providing security deposits, first month's rent, car repairs, relocation costs, and/or income to enter permanent housing. CARDV also provides sexual response coordination in partnership with Sarah's Place, as well as response to Law Enforcement calls, support groups, and outreach to schools and other organizations. CARDV provided over 7,800 services

during Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), mainly through the hotline. Linn County received the most services, while Benton received the second most.

Miller presented types of victimization among CARDV clients, with domestic violence comprising 80%. Miller also discussed CARDV shelter demographics, and FY24 revenue sources and expenses. CARDV's Annual Safe Families Breakfast and Benefit will occur on October 1, 2024 at the CH2M Hill Alumni Center; CARDV is requesting event sponsorships. CARDV's new website will launch on September 30, 2024 in English, Spanish, and other languages.

Augerot asked about CARDV applicant demographics.

Miller stated that as with Corvallis demographics, a majority are White; the second largest group is Hispanic. Sixty-eight percent of CARDV's funding is governmental; a 40-45% reduction in Federal funding is anticipated. CARDV is working closely with the Congressional delegation. CARDV partners include Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, Community Services Consortium, Benton County Law Enforcement, and Corvallis. CARDV also partners with other safe shelters in Marion County and the City of Bend for individuals who cannot stay at a local shelter due to safety concerns. CARDV's outreach program helps spread awareness that sexual and domestic violence affects all gender identities.

Augerot asked how other organizations support CARDV's work.

Miller replied that in early 2023, CARDV purchased a home in Linn County with a Community Development Block Grant through the City of Albany. CARDV is currently fundraising to staff that location, and hopes to shelter individuals for stays up to two years. Miller requested that community members in Linn or Benton County contact CARDV about leads on other partnerships.

{Exhibit 1: Corrected CARDV Presentation}

5.3 Enterprise Permitting Systems Project Report – Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator; Autumn Carter, Managing Partner, NEX Strategies LLC

Crager explained that an initiative to create a more robust, County-wide enterprise permitting system was presented during the 2023-2025 Biennium Budget discussions. Carter, the consultant for this project, has helped the County unite multiple departments to develop the goals for the Enterprise Permitting Systems Project. The goal is a "one-stop-shop" system that is clear, connected, and consistent. Thus far, the County has spent \$50,000 of the \$100,000 allocated.

Carter explained that NEX Strategies worked with Benton County directors and staff on a three-phase approach to map the creation and implementation of a permitting system. This focused on immediate improvements and preparing the County to implement a more unified experience over a period of time. This effort will make permitting and licensing more user-friendly for residents, business and staff, and improve inter-

departmental communication. The County's current system is inconsistent and inefficient. NEX Strategies will provide a comprehensive assessment, a one-stop permitting definition, and an evaluation.

County departments share many challenges, yet staff are often siloed. Effectiveness depends on the interaction of people, process, information, and technology. Relationships play both a positive and negative role in operations. For example, there is trust and communication between people who have established a working relationship. Alternatively, customers or new employees had difficulty learning who to contact for assistance. County technology and information is currently scattered and fragmented, creating accessibility issues. The County website reflects these challenges; for instance, permit and licensing information is organized by department, not by function. The lack of system integration and standardization makes it difficult for staff to provide consistent customer support.

Customer feedback included complaints about the convoluted website, communications breakdowns, and slow processes. Customers would prefer online status updates about their submissions. Higher customer satisfaction correlated with familiarity, speed, or simplicity, and with transactions that involved only one department.

Carter shared a plan for the County to achieve stronger collaboration in six to nine months, a unified user experience in 12 to 18 months, and an integrated system in 18 to 24 months. The system will also help control costs and conserve resources. Implementation Phase One (October 2024-June 2025) will standardize processes and train staff across departments. Phase Two (begins early 2025) will create a unified user experience in person and online, and Phase Three (approximately mid-2025 to 2026) is a fully integrated system where customers can apply for all County licenses, permits, and reservations online, as well as in person or by telephone.

Malone agreed that inconsistencies in the current system do not benefit customers or staff. Consistency builds trust and should be the goal.

Wyse stated the Board had heard staff and community member comment about inconsistency and delays in the process, and agreed that consistency and setting clear expectations for the public will help improve the community.

Augerot suggested adding accuracy to the unified system goals, and praised the idea of cross-trained system navigators. Augerot asked about the role of the datalink.

Crager replied the datalink is part of the solution and is incorporated in the plan. The datalink will gather more accurate data and help unify and resolve multiple parallel systems.

Carter concurred that accuracy is a key component, and suggested the County begin with the report's immediate, achievable goals. This could include internal improvements, such as cross-department staff training. External improvements will arise from the internal changes. Data preparation is a necessary element. The report also

recommends co-locating all services in one building and including a feature such as an information kiosk for community members.

Chair Augerot recessed the meeting at 10:29 AM and reconvened at 10:38 AM.

5.4 *Sustainable Materials Management Plan (SMMP) Task Force Update
– Sean McGuire, Sustainability Coordinator; Bailey Payne, Solid Waste Coordinator, Community Development

McGuire provided an update on the SMMP Task Force's activities. The Task Force has contacted 12 other Counties in the northwestern Oregon region [see presentation] about being involved in the project. Although Clatsop and Columbia Counties showed interest, both use Recology for waste disposal, and thus have minimal connection to the project. The team has contacted all of the identified solid waste and recycling experts, and is working on a waste management map and an analysis of the benefits and opportunities of an improved materials management system in the region. The team meets weekly with consultant Resource Recycling Systems (RRS), which is involved with the statewide Recycling Modernization Act. Consultant Liz Start will be the group's third-party facilitator.

Wyse asked whether Start was familiar with past projects such as Benton County Talks Trash (BCTT), and whether Start knew what to expect in terms of community engagement and input.

McGuire replied that Start was familiar with past engagement, Coffin Butte Landfill (CBL), and the overall waste management system. McGuire provided an updated version of packet page 54 [Exhibit 2]. The team will meet with Tillamook County Commissioner Erin Skaar to develop a membership plan for 20-25 participants. Project funding ends around June 2025. McGuire listed Counties and elected officials who have confirmed interest in being involved, along with relevant groups, associations, and constituencies. A significant challenge will be clarifying the difference between waste management and materials management, both of which need to be examined. Other participants may include past BCTT members such as Katherine Duvall, an Oregon Environmental Caucus staffer; John Deuel from Oregon State University (OSU) Solid Waste; Marion County Environmental Services Manager Brian May; and Linn County Environment and Public Health Manager Shane Sanderson. This will ensure continuity between past and current discussions.

McEneny emphasized the initiative was about regional waste management, not just CBL.

McGuire agreed, noting that opinion was split on whether to include the private sector; some haulers are innovators, but not all. The intent is to focus on local governments and explore why cities and counties have disconnected individual hauling agreements, and sometimes do not communicate with each other about hauling agreements and waste. McGuire suggested inserting collaborative language in all future hauling agreements in the region.

Augerot shared that Polk County Commissioner Jeremy Gordon had expressed interest in being involved, and had recommended Commissioner Craig Pope as the point of contact. Augerot recommended more Task Force representation in equity and environment justice and including a Portland Metro area representative experienced with navigating the political side of environmental solutions. While the initiative concerns more than CBL, local representation is also needed, such as members of Valley Neighbors for Environmental Quality, the Sustainability Coalition, Linn-Benton Health Equity Alliance, and/or Beyond Toxics.

Malone observed that 100% of Tillamook County's waste goes to CBL, so the Task Force should include a Tillamook representative, or a person who could represent both Tillamook and Lincoln Counties. It is also important to include one or two State elected officials who could provide feedback about the effects of proposed legislation.

McGuire noted that Tillamook's staff person had interest but lacked capacity, so the team hopes to involve a Tillamook County Commissioner. The team is also working to recruit a participant from the State to represent Yamhill County and surrounding areas.

Augerot noted the need to keep congressional staff in the loop through the SMMP mailing list. The SMMP Kickoff Summit event has changed from evening to a longer daytime event.

McGuire shared the event will be largely informational, including a history of BCTT, case studies, and an RRS discussion of the two deliverables. McGuire emphasized the need for systemic change in waste management. McGuire shared a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) [packet page 57] from community members and invited the Board to add other questions they had received.

Augerot felt the list captured the primary concerns.

Wyse suggested rephrasing 'Why should I care about this?' to 'Why is this important to our community?'

Malone observed that he had mainly received more specific questions than these, but approved of widening the conversation. Malone had no questions to add at that time.

{Exhibit 2: Updated SMMP Report Page}

5.5 Quarterly Floodplain Program Update – Toby Lewis, Community Development

Lewis reported on two current Flood Map Revision projects. The first collects flood hazard data in the Luckiamute Watershed, led by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The data should be finalized and submitted to FEMA with a request for a letter of map revision by the end of 2024. The second project is the Upper Willamette and Alsea Watersheds, which will cover all of Benton County. A flood risk review meeting will occur in winter 2024-25

(not fall 2024 as stated in the presentation). The preliminary map review, where FEMA provides draft maps for public review, will occur in 2026-2027.

Regarding the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and Endangered Species Act (ESA): Lewis and staff met to review and comment on the draft documents on behalf of Benton County as the cooperating agency in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Staff submitted those comments in August 2024. FEMA is still working on the reporting tool for the upcoming ESA requirements. All communities will be required to use the tool to track three floodplain impacts: flood storage, impervious surfaces, and tree quantity and size. According to FEMA, pre-implementation compliance measures are on schedule. Using a mitigation bank to help offset the three floodplain impacts could be an option, but would not necessarily be used as a wetlands mitigation bank. A community that wants to pursue the bank option may need to set up banks for a variety of purposes.

Lewis and staff are examining three options to meet the required measures, which will begin January 1, 2025 and be completed in 2026. Option one: prohibiting all development in a given floodplain, adopting a model ordinance, or reviewing all floodplain development on a permit-by-permit basis and requiring a habitat assessment plan to protect the three functions. Many communities feel the work cannot be completed by the deadline, and are requesting more time, particularly since all three options may require an ordinance adoption. There is also concern that if a community adopts the model ordinance into its code, it is unclear whether Measure 56 notifications would apply, the standards of the model ordinance would meet the clear and objective standards requirements, and what impacts the ordinance would have on housing directors. Staff are still looking into the long-term implementation standards.

Lewis shared maps of the NFIP-ESA Act Integration and Riparian Buffer Zone. Lewis discussed requirements and scenarios for vacant lots in the 100-year flood zone, along with activity mitigation ratios. Benton County Code already has some protections for the required 50-foot riparian buffer, but additional protections will be required for implementation. Areas such as the Marys River and Evergreen Creek floodplain will have higher mitigation protections. Based on FEMA guidance, it may be possible to reduce the buffer in the Alsea River Riparian Buffer Zone. Lewis spoke with the City of Corvallis recently and will continue to partner with other agencies, including Oregon State University, to evaluate the best process for the County.

Community Development is working on web page improvements. The site will be updated annually. The County has been praised by agencies for its collaborative approach with the public. Examples include the Mid-Willamette Valley Flood Map Workshop and the Luckiamute Watershed Flood Map Open House. FEMA is also working on a project to highlight collaboration between FEMA, communities, and residents. Benton County is under consideration for this project; if Benton is selected, Lewis will bring a formal request for Board support.

Malone asked whether expanding the riparian buffer zone from 50 to 170 feet was the likely outcome of the changes.

Lewis replied that is the minimum required distance. The expansion and addition of mitigation requirements is a uniform approach to comply with future ESA requirements. Setback distances are not required to be that wide; however, if the setback is too large, the community is responsible for documenting that. Lewis confirmed that the change would mean 170 feet on each side of a body of water, for a total of 340 feet plus the body of water.

Augerot stated that it is a large change for landowners. Other areas have much larger stream buffers to allow rivers the natural amount of space, but that approach is not popular. Augerot asked about other staff perspectives for or against the ESA requirements.

Lewis discussed how the immediate response to the changes might be negative, but a focus on finding the best fit produces a more positive response. Project timelines are changing, and the pre-implementation compliance measures are an unexpected new development. The majority consensus is that the measures cannot be implemented on that timeframe, but the final measures could be doable.

Responding to a question from Lewis, Augerot recommended that Lewis present the follow-up report at a Goal-Setting Meeting.

5.6 Wildfire Hazard Map Discussion – Board of Commissioners

[Recorder's note: item 6.2 was heard before Item 5.6.]

Wyse stated that the Commissioners from most eastern Oregon counties are displeased about being rated at a higher risk for wildfire hazards, whereas the Benton Board has concerns that the County was rated too low. The Jackson County Board of Commissioners has asked the Benton County Board to sign on to a letter to Governor Tina Kotek that advocates for overturning Senate Bills 762 and 80.

Augerot was not disposed to support the repeal, as those laws provide considerable funding for wildfire mitigation.

Wyse concurred and felt signing the letter was not the best approach for Benton County at this time.

Malone also opposed a repeal effort.

Augerot agreed to answer the inquiry by email.

Wyse added that the Oregon State University (OSU) staff who worked on the project also attended the Wildfire Hazard Map Meeting. When Commissioners shared concerns, an OSU staff member addressed the concerns convincingly.

Augerot addressed the fear that insurance rates would change due to the re-categorizations. The Wildfire Hazard Map will not be used for insurance rates, and insurance companies have better data.

Wyse noted that the Jackson County letter states some structures are incorrectly labeled on the map.

Augerot commented that the map is probably based on assessment maps from each county, which are challenging to assemble; Benton County cannot afford to update those maps on a regular basis. Another local issue is concern about Coffin Butte Landfill (CBL) as a fire risk. Though CBL is not listed as a hazard on the State map, Benton County can recognize it is a hazard.

Wyse agreed the Board can still acknowledge that it is aware of the risk posed by CBL.

6. New Business

6.1 Albany Area Chamber of Commerce Membership Renewal

Augerot explained that the cost of renewal was \$745, and Benton County has been a member since 2015.

The Board discussed the benefits of renewal.

MOTION: Malone moved to renew Benton County's membership in the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce at a cost of \$745. Augerot noted the cost is budgeted. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0**.

6.2 Adoption of Resolution No. R2024-023 Establishing an Enterprise Zone School Support Fee Rate – Christopher Jacobs, Corvallis-Benton Economic Development Office

Jacobs reported that the Enterprise Zone School Support Fee Rate had been passed by the Corvallis School District, was passed by the Corvallis City Council on September 16, 2024, and was now ready for Board approval.

Responding to a question from Malone, Jacobs described how Enterprise Zones for schools operate. Businesses that receive the tax exemption under the Enterprise Zone Program have an option for a fourth and a fifth year exemption with a set rate of 15%. Schools are responsible for collecting payment from the businesses. Businesses directly funding schools through a portion of their tax exemption (rather than through assessment) is a new approach. Guidance from the League of Oregon Cities speculates that local School District fees may not increase local budgets, as fees must be included as local revenue in school funding formula calculations, and in more cases will be offset by reduced State school fund distributions. The change transfers responsibility from the State to businesses experiencing the benefit of the exemption. School funding might increase slightly, since the legislation imposes only a small administrative burden. Corvallis Public Schools requested a 15% rate, the minimum amount.

Augerot asked if the rate could be changed later.

Jacobs replied that was possible if all the bodies who passed the Resolution were willing, but doubted there would be much interest in doing so.

Malone asked whether the fees collected by a school district might cause the State to reduce the district's funding.

Jacobs confirmed.

McEneny asked whether Jacobs supported the program.

Jacobs shared that any time a benefit of a tax exemption program is diluted, it harms businesses that need the benefit most. Local businesses have struggled to find State incentives that fit. This incentive is one of the few that is widely available, and the new legislation will dilute the benefit.

Augerot acknowledged this legislative mandate is mainly a transfer of responsibility to slightly reduce the State budget.

Wyse asked whether it was better for businesses to pay a 15% tax than potentially lose all tax exemption for years four and five.

Jacobs replied that would be an alternative for businesses that do not want to participate.

MOTION: Malone moved to adopt Resolution #R2024-023 to establish the Enterprise Zone School Support Fee Rate. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0**.

7. Other

7.1 Contribution to the Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV) Fundraising Breakfast – Xanthippe Augerot, Board Chair

Augerot proposed that Benton County contribute \$250 to the CARDV Safe Families Breakfast event.

MOTION: Wyse moved to approve sponsoring CARDV's Safe Families Breakfast on October 1, 2024 at a level of \$250. Malone seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0**.

Augerot shared that the Corvallis Area Resource Event, which connects people in need with local resources, would occur at the Corvallis Public Library on September 17, 2024.

8. Adjournment

Chair Augerot adjourned the meeting at 12:05 PM.



Nancy Wyse, Chair



Erika Milo, Recorder



Rachel Bulder, Board Meeting
Coordinator

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