



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS JOINT MEETING WITH
CITY OF ALBANY MAYOR AND COUNCIL
Tuesday, April 21, 2025, 4:00 PM**

**Benton
County**

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

**City of
Albany**

Present: Alex Johnson II, Mayor; Steph Newton-Azorr, Council President; Michael Thomson, City Councilor; Jackie Montague, City Councilor; Carolyn McLeod, City Councilor; Ramycia McGhee, City Councilor; Marilyn Smith, City Councilor; Peter Troedsson, City Manager; Kayla Barber-Perrotta, Deputy City Manager

**Benton
Staff:**

Rachel Bulder, Recorder; Maura Kwiatkowski, Board Staff; Carly Fredericks, Communications Coordinator; Anne Thwaits, Public Information Officer; Gary Stockhoff, Public Works Director; Laurel Byer, County Engineer

**Albany
Staff:**

Matthew Ruettgers, Community Development Director; Chris Bailey, Public Works Director; Chris Labelle, Fire Chief; Jeanna Yeager, Finance Director; Buck Pearce, Police Captain

1. Call to Order

Chair Wyse called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

3. Announcements

Wyse announced that on April 23, 2025 at 2:30 PM there would be a tree planting event at North Albany Park.

4. Work Session

4.1 City of Albany Urban Growth Boundary – Matthew Ruetters, Albany Community Development Director

Ruetters explained in terms of Benton County land, there was limited urban fringe, which is the space between city limits and an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

Wyse and Ruetters discussed the City of Albany's (Albany; the City) UGB. Ruetters added that within Linn County, Albany has approximately 2,000 acres in urban fringe. Due to Albany's existing urban fringe land, expanding the City's UGB would be difficult.

Shepherd asked if infill was still happening in the North Albany sector.

Ruetters confirmed North Albany still had vacant lots. Ruetters discussed the details on housing projects in North Albany, along with land available for development. A large portion of North Albany is zoned residential; and when a City plan was done in 2009 to add commercial space in North Albany neighborhoods, the community had rejected the plan. Ruetters added the presence of wetlands adds additional costs (\$120,000 per acre) to development for wetland mitigation.

Ruetters discussed Albany's compliance with mandates from the State of Oregon (Oregon; the State), including climate friendly areas and zoning.

4.2 Highway 20 Improvements and Corvallis/Albany Bike Path – Laurel Byer, Benton County Engineer; Chris Bailey, Albany Public Works Director

Byer provided an update on the recent construction of a portion of the bike path, along with having acquired a grant from the State of Oregon for another portion of the path. Key issues discussed included property owner participation and getting over or under Highway 20 at the Scenic Drive intersection of the path. Benton County is working with a consultant, Parametrics, on the project. The North Albany portion of the project is on hold, but an alignment study is underway to assist with path connection questions and concerns.

Newton-Azorr and Byer discussed portions of Highway 20 and North Albany that are unsafe for cyclists.

Malone and Byer discussed options for connecting the bike path from Highway 20 to downtown Albany. Construction funding is still available for the North Albany section of the bike path, although funding will vary depending on where the bike path is constructed.

Johnson II asked if there was a timeline for using the funding.

Byer said there are two years left on funding and indicated a reapplication for an extension is available.

Bailey discussed the Corridor Study along Highway 20 done by Albany and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). Albany is working with ODOT to obtain funding for a group of projects, including a designated biking area along the Lyon Bridge and a protected intersection. Bailey described the concept of connecting the bike path from the bridge, continuing down Springhill Drive and potentially connecting over to Hickory Street.

Newton-Azorr discussed the difficulties of walking to North Albany from downtown Albany.

Wyse noted the difficulties in the project due to construction needing to be done in segments.

4.3 Road Transfer Update – Chris Bailey, Albany Public Works Director

Bailey discussed the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between Benton County and Albany regarding road jurisdiction and transfers in North Albany. Before the roads are transferred to governing bodies, there are projects that need to be completed, such as the Gibson Hill Road transfer. Bailey listed roads that have not transferred to the City that have brought in concern from the community, such as Quarry Road, portions of Crocker Road, and Springhill Drive.

Newton-Azorr and Bailey discussed City standards for roads, including sidewalks. Although sidewalks are in the requirements, it is not always feasible to include them when negotiating road improvements.

Ruettgers and Bailey discussed Crocker Road. Significant congestion brought in a traffic signal, and parts of the road have sidewalks; other parts do not. Bailey added there is confusion with community members regarding whether Benton County or Albany is responsible for certain development projects.

Thomson used Crocker Road as an example, asking if certain road issues will eventually become the City of Albany's responsibility.

Bailey confirmed Crocker Road is owned by Benton County, and within IGA renegotiations, Benton County should bring the road up to City standards before the transfer is accepted.

Thomson requested clarification about whether Crocker Road would have the same outcome as Gibson Hill Road during a transfer.

Bailey explained how that scenario was not similar to Crocker Road.

Shepherd discussed the feasibility and equitability of County road maintenance and then the transfer of those roads to Albany. Shepherd added that regardless of who is responsible for the roads in question, walkability should be priority for both Benton County and the City of Albany.

4.4 Road Safety – Laurel Byer, Benton County Engineer

Byer provided an update on road and transportation safety. Byer and Ruettgers recently attended a meeting with the North Albany Neighborhood Association, heard community concerns, and requested feedback. Byer explained high injury networks along corridors or intersections throughout the County that experience higher rates of accidents. Byer stated an important piece of data that is not recorded are close-calls and near misses for crashes, thus gathering community opinions on areas of concern is important. An online open house is available until April 27, 2025, which allows community members to report road safety concerns to the County. Byer mentioned an additional set of open houses in Fall 2025 for additional projects before the County asks the Federal government for implementation funding. Byer stated there was potential for the County to apply for Safe Routes to School grant funding to install a rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RFB) to enhance safety for road crossing on Quarry Road.

Newton-Azorr asked for the online open house website address.

Fredricks gave the address: <https://pw.bentoncountyor.gov/tsap>

Smith asked if there was a possibility for additional federal funding that was already in place for the transportation study.

Byer indicated yes, assuming the Safe Streets and Roads for All program stays active.

Stockhoff discussed the Transportation Safety Action Plan (TSAP). Stockhoff stated that although the current climate for grants is uncertain, it can change, so it is important to carry on the work to apply for grants and funding.

Bailey mentioned a combined grant between Albany and the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG).

Byer added that the current round for Safe Streets and Roads for All had reopened, and there is an active grant period.

4.5 North Albany Housing and Traffic Concerns – Chris Bailey, Albany Public Works Director; Matthew Ruettgers, Albany Community Development Director

Bailey stated the City has received multiple concerns from the North Albany Neighborhood Association over increased traffic and congestion. Bailey confirmed more cars are coming out of North Albany than before and added the belief that part of peak

hours congestion is a result of the City of Corvallis (Corvallis) bridge project, which is diverting some traffic to Highway 20 instead of connecting to Highway 34 from downtown Corvallis. Bailey added Albany was beginning a Transportation Plan Update that will review the entire city system (including North Albany) to determine projects based off of intersection and safety analyses. Bailey discussed the complications Albany faces regarding Highway 20 being an ODOT road, and Springhill Drive being a Benton County road. The City receives many complaints for both areas, but it does not have control over the outcomes regarding congestion.

Bailey stated Albany was analyzing city master plans with new housing rules, including water master plans. A process is done that encompasses many scenarios for possible housing development and transportation.

Ruettgers estimated approximately 500 acres of vacant land in North Albany that has potential for development. A majority of the downtown Albany bridge congestion is attributed to pass-through traffic, not drivers living in or coming out of North Albany. Ruettgers stated that more housing development will eventually happen. East of Springhill Drive has less development potential since there is no public sewer.

Bailey discussed the role public transit plays in transportation planning. Due to underutilization, Albany Transit Service no longer has a route that takes people up to the North Albany Fire Station. Bailey stated that more dense development in North Albany could lead to an extension of public transit. Bailey added that although a stop in North Albany was eliminated, overall, Albany increased transit services by 54 percent.

Ruettgers mentioned approximately 80 percent of housing in Albany was single-dwelling units four years ago. Apartment units have increased on the east side of Albany over the last five years, which has created a demand for more public transit.

Johnson II mentioned there is a plan for 54 townhomes to be built in east Albany.

Shepherd and Bailey discussed fareless public transportation in Albany. There is a Linn-Benton Loop Board, which governs the system that is comprised of representatives from Albany, Corvallis, Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC), and Oregon State University (OSU), but OSU is a non-voting member. Bailey clarified the difference between the Albany Transit System and the Linn-Benton Loop service.

Wyse asked Bailey if there was a best practice method when planning housing development.

Bailey stated Albany does not have dense middle-housing with regard to zoning. Housing needs for Albany were assumed using population growth rate data, which is slightly higher than prior.

Malone discussed the status of Highway 20 safety improvements. Malone has not heard back from Senator Sara Gelser Blouin regarding updates on ODOT's prioritization of the North Albany section of the bike path.

Wyse, Bailey, and Malone discussed the North Albany and downtown Corvallis bridges.

Wyse added that Benton County staff does pass along to ODOT the information they receive regarding Springhill Drive and Scenic Drive.

Byer stated the speed limit was reduced from 55 miles per hour to 45 miles per hour on a section of Scenic Drive.

4.6 Rural Housing and House Bill (HB) 3928

Newton-Azorr stated that HB 3928 is not moving forward.

Shepherd stated a lack of confidence for the future of HB 3928.

Ruettgers, Wyse, and Malone discussed the challenges of rural development and zoning.

4.7 Albany May 2025 Public Safety Levy

Troedsson stated that City staff could not discuss the Public Safety Levy because it is on the upcoming ballot. Elected Officials, however, are permitted to discuss.

Newton-Azorr provided an update on the Public Safety Levy campaign that is endorsed by both the Linn and Benton Democratic parties. Newton-Azorr added that the campaign is a continuation of a levy that has been in place since 2002.

Smith stated the levy pays for approximately 10 percent of the Police Department and Fire Department budgets.

Johnson II and Newton-Azorr discussed the outreach strategy for the levy. Johnson II encouraged others to share levy campaign videos on social media. Johnson II added that City staff cannot promote the campaign, but City staff can share facts regarding it.

Wyse asked what the estimated tax is for community members in Albany that own a single-family home.

Smith stated, for example, it will be approximately \$300 a year for a \$300,000 home. Smith noted the average home price in Albany is slightly over \$400,000.

Johnson II explained the importance of community outreach and voting habits of the senior population. Johnson II clarified that the dollar amount for the levy is not an increase, it is a continuation.

5. Updates

Malone mentioned the upcoming tree planting on April 23, 2025 at North Albany Park and expressed appreciation for Benton County updating the restrooms at the park.

Newton-Azorr mentioned a drainage issue at North Albany Park near the river.

Bailey confirmed the grants for Albany's transit funding have been finalized for the upcoming year. Bailey discussed layoffs at the regional Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), the staff was reduced from 10 to three employees.

6. Adjournment

Chair Wyse and Mayor Johnson II adjourned the meeting at 5:32 PM.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:



Nancy Wyse, Board Chair
Benton County



Rachel Bulder, Recorder
Benton County



Alex Johnson II, Mayor
City of Albany



Erik Glover, Recorder
City of Albany