Board of Commissioners

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, May 6, 2025, 9:00 AM

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

Elected Official: Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff

Staff: Rachel Bulder, Maura Kwiatkowski, Board Staff; John DeVaney, Sheriff's Office; April Holland, Scott Kruger, Lacey Mollel, John Pegg, Damien Sands, Rebecca Taylor, Health Services; Toby Lewis, Community Development; Sean McGuire, Sustainability; Erika Milo, Board Recorder; Jo Missler, Tammy Webb, Human Services; Gary Stockhoff, Public Works; Anne Thwaits, Public Information Officer

Guests: Lily Bender, Christopher Jacobs, Corvallis-Benton Economic Development Office; John Harris, Horsepower Productions; Brigetta Olson, City of Corvallis

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Wyse called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM, and introductions were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

The following items were added to the agenda:

9.5 Letter of Support for Capital Funding for the Osborn Aquatic Center – Gabe Shepherd, Commissioner

10.1 Potential Transient Lodging Tax Reallocation – Pat Malone, Vice Chair

10.2 Upcoming Transportation Operation and Maintenance Bill – Pat Malone, Vice Chair

3. Announcements

No announcements were made.

4. Proclamations

4.1 Proclaiming May 18 through 24, 2025 as Public Works Week, Proclamation #P2025-013 – Gary Stockhoff, Director, Public Works

Stockhoff read the Proclamation aloud.

MOTION: Malone moved to adopt Proclamation #P2025-013, Proclaiming May 18-24, 2025 as Public Works Week. Shepherd seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

4.2 Proclaiming May 2025 as Mental Health Awareness Month, Proclamation #P2025-011– Damien Sands, Director, Behavioral Health Division

Sands read the Proclamation aloud. Sands highlighted the new Benton County Crisis Center, a voluntary drop-in treatment center for individuals experiencing mental health crises. Help is available by calling or texting 988 or chatting at 988lifeline.org.

Shepherd thanked Sands for highlighting the resources available to address this important issue.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to adopt Proclamation #P2025-011, Proclaiming May 2025 as Mental Health Awareness Month. Malone seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

5. Comments from the Public

No comments were offered.

6. Consent Calendar

6.1 Approval of the April 23, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes

6.2 Approval of the July 2, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes

6.3 Approval of the March 31, 2025 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes

6.4 Approval of the April 21, 2025 Board of Commissioners/Albany Mayor and Council Joint Meeting Minutes

6.5 Letter of Support for Alyrica Networks Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Application

6.6 Order #D2025-051, Appointment to the Willamette Criminal Justice Council

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the Consent Calendar of May 6, 2025. Shepherd seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Malone thanked Milo for considerable efforts to keep the minutes up to date.

Wyse also thanked Kwiatkowski and Bulder for contributing.

7. Work Session

7.1 Corvallis-Benton County Economic Development Office (CBEDO) Third Quarter Update – Christopher Jacobs, Economic Development Manager, Lily Bender, Economic Development Officer, Corvallis-Benton Economic Development Office

Jacobs reported that CBEDO updated its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis based on feedback from the Economic Development Coalition to include tariff policies and loss of Federally funded jobs as 'emerging threats.' In Fiscal Year 2024, commercial and industrial property taxes increased 4.61% year over year. An increase over 3% means there has been new construction and added value beyond what is allowed by Ballot Measures 5 and 50, a positive sign. CBEDO has launched the County-wide Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program, and expects an application soon. CBEDO has made progress on the Airport Industrial Park (AIP) annexation project and will issue a survey on the topic soon.

For CBEDO's business retention and expansion program, Jacobs examined Benton County businesses by number of employees. Out of 4,625 businesses, 86.7% have nine or fewer employees, while 43.15% have one or fewer employees ('no employees' indicates an owner-operated business). The City of Corvallis metropolitan statistical area has 37% government employees as a percentage of non-farm labor, the highest number statewide, so recent Federal policy changes may disproportionately impact employment figures. Preliminary data from January 2025 indicate that unemployment rose to 4.3%, the highest since July 2021. Oregon State University staff comprise the bulk of government employees in Corvallis.

Last quarter, CBEDO staff carried out 47 business retention and expansion visits with County businesses. About 25% of those visits concerned the Business Right-of-Way (BROW) outdoor dining program. Other topics included routine check-ins, site selection inquiries, incentive requests, business expansion, and infrastructure. Jacobs shared month-by-month site selection leads referred from Business Oregon [see packet p. 74]. CBEDO responded to five leads based on eligibility.

Staff participated in many regional workshops this quarter [see packet p. 75] and hosted the second annual Business Resiliency Workshop, which helps businesses prepare for natural disasters. The Downtown Corvallis Organization applied for a $400,000 Affiliated Main Street grant for downtown revitalization. The application moved to the next tier, and results should be released later in May 2025. CBEDO staff helped prepare the application. CBEDO awarded a $10,000 downtown revolving loan program to support a new business, Misogi Sauna. All Food Hub grant recipients reported on time and are on track, with two undergoing a development review for their downtown locations. CBEDO will continue to disperse those funds.

Jacobs reviewed CBEDO priorities for the next five months, which include firming up some Philomath economic development contacts and documenting those sites so that CBEDO can properly market the opportunities. To codify the BROW program, CBEDO will submit an ordinance amendment for commercial use of a public right-of-way. CBEDO has issued a Request for Proposals for a Tax Increment Financing consultant. In May 2025, the AIP annexation will be submitted, and CBEDO will release additional South Corvallis urban renewal revolving loan and grant programs. In June 2025, CBEDO will work on Corvallis industrial code adjustments, bringing the current seven industrial zoning districts down to about three. In July 2025, CBEDO will acquire modern business retention and expansion software. By August 2025, CBEDO will close out the South Corvallis Food Hub program and develop a more robust economic development marketing plan.

Responding to a question from Shepherd, Jacobs replied that CBEDO would be happy to facilitate Multi-unit Property Tax Exemptions for cities such as Philomath or Adair Village, but communities have not expressed interest yet.

Shepherd asked if BROW was now an annual program, or whether the City Council must adopt it each time.

Jacobs replied that the council must adopt and codify the Ordinance each time. The draft Ordinance has been under internal review; CBEDO will submit it as soon as possible.

Shepherd noted that childcare is an economic development necessity for people who work, but grows more expensive over time and consumes a large portion of a worker’s salary. Shepherd had sent Jacobs an article about a county that provided startup grants to incentivize some childcare businesses. Shepherd asked Jacobs to share average childcare costs in Benton County.

Jacobs replied that according to State data, there are 56 licensed childcare facilities in Benton County, comprised of 31 certified centers, 13 certified family and 12 registered family businesses. The level of registration or certification corresponds to how many children may be cared for at a facility. According to the Benton County Community Health Improvement Planning Process, the cost of full-day childcare in 2018 was

$13,100 per year. A 2022 market price study found variation depending on type of center, with these costs per month:

- Small home-based care cost $980 per month for infants, $835 for toddlers, $835 for preschool-aged children, and $725 for school-aged children.
- Childcare centers cost $1,417 for infants, $1,344 for toddlers, $1,035 for preschoolers, and $370 for school-aged children.
- Large home-based care cost $1,500 for infants, $1,448 for toddlers, $1,238 for preschoolers, and $1,000 for school-aged children.

Shepherd observed this meant around 1,000 childcare spots for a county of 100,000 people, not including commuters who work in Benton County but reside elsewhere. Shepherd expressed interest in further discussing ways to improve childcare availability and incentivize small start-up childcare businesses.

Jacobs noted that CBEDO has distributed information about State programs, and some childcare facilities have accessed that funding. Bender has taken the lead on that area.

Bender shared that the Linn-Benton Small Business Development Center runs a Childcare Business Accelerator Program for Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties. The program helps businesses that want to become licensed or increase licensure level. At the end of the program, the participating business owner receives seed or renovation funding for additional facilities or improvements.

Malone asked whether Benton County still had a role in the AIP planning process.

Jacobs replied that annexation would simplify the overlap between Benton County Code and the AIP Master Plan, bringing the AIP under a single code, after which the County would no longer be involved in AIP zoning.

Malone asked whether CBEDO promoted the Benton County Fairgrounds commercial kitchen as a resource for food businesses.

Jacobs replied that CBEDO has referred many businesses to the Fairgrounds kitchen, but most vendors want a kitchen closer to where the food is sold, so the kitchen is mainly used by caterers. Also, Jacobs had heard some negative comments from business owners about the cost of renting the Fairgrounds facility.

Responding to a question from McEneny, Jacobs replied he was not involved in the task force on reimagining downtown Corvallis. The process is currently driven by elected officials.

8. Old Business

8.1 In the Matter of the Second Reading and Adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-0325, Amending the Corvallis Comprehensive Plan Map (city file no. CPA-2023-02) and Amending the Benton County Zoning Map

(County File No. LU-24-006) – Toby Lewis, Senior Planner, Community Development

Lewis explained that the Ordinance acknowledges amendment of the Corvallis Comprehensive Plan Map from residential low density to mixed-use commercial zoning, and amendment of the Benton County Zoning Map from urban residential to urban commercial zoning. The property is located at 5840 Northwest Highway 99. The first reading was held on April 15, 2025. Lewis noted an error under the item description [packet page 87], which states that the effective date is June 16, 2025; in fact, the effective date is June 5, 2025. The Corvallis Ordinance took effect April 17, 2025.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to conduct the second reading of and adopt Ordinance #2025-0325, amending the Corvallis Comprehensive Plan Map and amending the Benton County Zoning Map. Malone seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Counsel read the Ordinance aloud (short title).

9. New Business

9.1 1115 Waiver Capacity Building Funding for Medical Services in the Benton County Jail – Lacey Mollel, Executive Director, Community Health Centers; Sheriff Jef Van Arsdall, Corrections Captain John DeVaney, Benton County Sheriff's Office

Van Arsdall noted the Waiver was important to all correctional facilities in the state, allowing adults-in-custody (AIC) to remain covered by the Oregon Health Plan (OHP).

Mollel explained the County has Federal funding through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for a quality improvement project for justice-involved populations. Just after the County submitted the HRSA application, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) received approval for the 1115 Waiver, which provides ways to support individuals re-entering the community from incarceration. Mollel provided an overview of Medicaid, which covers about 92 million people nationwide. Oregon Medicaid, called OHP, covers about 1.48 million people in Oregon, or about one in three Oregonians.

The Medicaid 1115 Waiver allows each State to apply to the Medicare/Medicaid centers to provide medical services that are not normally reimbursed, allowing jurisdictions to use Medicaid funds more creatively to impact health outcomes and test programs that cover more people or different types of services. Oregon has been operating under an 1115 Waiver since 1994. Since then, in the most recent waiver application process, OHA has been able to cover people for more health-related service needs. The current waiver expires September 30, 2027. However, starting January 1, 2026, benefits for people in an incarceral setting will be continuous.

DeVaney added that currently, when a person with OHP insurance enters custody, the benefits stop, so the County incurs the ensuing healthcare costs. Now, benefits continue for the first 90 days in custody, and when the person nears discharge, staff can simply send an application 90 days before release to restart the person's OHP benefits.

Mollel shared that the Waiver does not end the statutory requirement of County carceral settings to provide healthcare for acute and urgent medical needs, but allows preventative healthcare and addressing chronic illnesses, which helps alleviate re-entry barriers. The goal is to provide services as part of the January 1, 2026 cohort. Services will be reimbursable at least through December 2027 under the current Waiver. The Benton County Jail is considered short-stay.

Devaney added that Benton County's average stay is 10 days, so most AICs do not lose health coverage. Jail staff currently partner with the Benton Community Health Clinics (CHCs) to support the on-site doctor and psychologist, but those expenses will now be reimbursable through OHP. Since the County Jail facility is small, DeVaney hoped this continuity of care would allow individuals to continue services with the same doctor when leaving custody, and so be less likely to return to custody. Benton County also received a grant for treating Jail Medicaid Opioid Misuse Disorder, which hopefully will reduce the AIC recidivism rate.

Mollel stated that carceral facilities had to choose whether to participate in the capacity-building funds opportunity. All facilities had to meet Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act requirements. The County should be able to start billing for those services in January 2025. Starting 30 days before an AIC's release from Benton County Jail, a health and Behavioral Health screening process begins, which allows the County to provide case management and post-release care coordination. Staff would like to apply for around $833,000 for providers, of which 50% is funded in kind. This would purchase a medication storage unit for the Jail, add case management support through social workers and nurses, and continue to support substance use disorder treatment in the Jail and during community re-entry.

Devaney shared that for first time, nurses at the Jail will have an electronic health record, the same one currently used by the CHCs, which will improve continuity of care. This also enables the required medical billing.

Mollel added that recruitment for the first provider has begun. The request also includes funds for education, so the Re-entry Services Team can be trained in best practices.

Malone asked whether there would still be gaps in care after this funding was received.

Mollel replied that the gap that staff see and that HRSA commented on is availability of an immediate access provider. It is hard to find an opening for a new patient appointment. The first two weeks after leaving incarceration are the most dangerous time for increased risk of recidivism, overdose, or death. Staff's goal is to have providers available so everyone leaving custody has a medical appointment within two business days, as well as medications.

DeVaney added that case management would be the biggest part of the project. Mollel talked to a local non-profit partner about providing peer support, which increases the rate of post-custody appointment attendance.

Responding to a question from Malone, Mollel replied that the waiver did not require local match funds; these are all capacity-building funds.

Malone asked whether staff planned to reapply at the next funding opportunity.

Mollel confirmed, although the Federal government may change whether 1115 Waivers are allowed.

DeVaney added that his understanding from the Jail-Based Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Grant Program is that this grant will continue; the program wants data on the types of medications Benton County administers. The County wants to provide Sublocade [buprenorphine extended-release] shots for opioid abusers; the shots are expensive, but data shows that if the person receives a series of five shots, they often will not return to using opioids, which can greatly benefit the community.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to approve the intent to apply for the 1115 Waiver Grant Capacity-Building Funding for medical services in the BC Jail. Malone seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0**.

Chair Wyse recessed the meeting at 10:08 AM and reconvened at 10:19 AM.

9.2 Order #D2025-050, Establishing an Appeal Fee and Hearing Officer and Authorizing the Health Department Director to Establish a Hearing Procedure – John Pegg, Program Coordinator, Tobacco Retail License Program; Scott Kruger, Program Manager, Environmental Health Program; Health Services

Pegg explained that the Order outlines the appeals process for Benton County Code Chapter 17. Pegg provided a history of the Tobacco Retail Licensing Program (TRLP), which allows the County to track where tobacco is sold and ensure that retailers comply with local, State, and Federal laws. Since 2021, Oregon law has required all tobacco retailers to hold a tobacco license. To retain local governance, Benton County jurisdictions (including Adair Village, Philomath, Corvallis, Monroe, and unincorporated areas) united under a single TRLP administered by County Health Services. County tobacco retail inspections began in 2023, and found at least one compliance inspection and one minimum legal age sales inspection that year. In May 2023, the County found eight minimum legal age sales violations. In the 2023-24 license period, there were seven violations, one of which was a second violation. During the 2025 license year to date, despite Pegg's outreach work, the County has found 11 violations, of which two were a second violation. This shows the importance of building out the appeals process; second and subsequent violations incur suspension or revocation of a license. This Order includes a minimal appeal fee of $50 to challenge suspensions or revocations of a tobacco license pursuant to BCC 17.060, and specifies that the County Administrative Office or designee shall act as a hearings officer. The Order will allow the Health Services Director to develop and implement an appeals hearing procedure. The Order adds a provision the appeals hearing procedure need not include an in-person hearing, but may be a review of evidence submitted by parties to the appeal.

Shepherd asked whether the City of Albany was coordinating with Linn County on this matter.

Pegg replied that in the 2022 code update, the North Albany area stayed with Albany, whose TRLP is administered under the Oregon Department of Revenue. Benton is one of four counties in the state that retained local administration of tobacco licensing. Benton has stronger restrictions than some other counties.

Shepherd requested an example of a violation.

Pegg gave the example of a retailer with illegal packaging and display of tobacco products. In those cases, it is easy to work with the retailer on a remediation plan, so the retailer usually does not incur a fine. Violation under minimum sales age is where a person aged 18-20 enters the retail establishment and shows state-issued identification, to ensure the retailer is checking cards. These are cases where an underage person showed identification but the retailer knowingly sold them tobacco. Chapter 17 mentions an escalating civil penalty: the first offense is a $1,000 fine, and the second offense is a $2,000 fine and a 45-day suspension.

Counsel noted that under Order Section 2, ‘County Administrative Office’ should read ‘County Administrator.’

MOTION: Malone moved to adopt Order #D2025-050, Establishing an Appeal Fee and Hearing Officer and Authorizing the Health Department Director to Establish a Hearing Procedure, with the following change: under Section 2, change ‘County Administrative Office’ to ‘County Administrator.’ Shepherd seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

9.3 Approval of City of Corvallis/Benton County Amended and Restated Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for Collaborative Housing Project(s) – Rebecca Taylor, Coordinated Homeless Response Office Manager, April Holland, Director, Health Services; Brigetta Olson, Housing and Neighborhood Services Manager, City of Corvallis

Taylor explained that the revised IGA shows progress between the City of Corvallis and Benton County in joint response to Governor Gina Kotek’s declaration of an emergency on homelessness. The packet contains an amended IGA that was originally established around a specific property where the City looked to the County's Coordinated Homeless Response Office (CHRO) to coordinate local response. The County established a rental assistance and housing program with wraparound services. This inspired the City to look for and fund housing units for unhoused people seeking services through the CHRO Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (FHSP). Since the original IGA on the Northwest Van Buren Avenue property, relations with service providers and diverse clients have evolved dramatically, so staff are exploring ways to provide housing outside of private fair market rent. When the City acquired a new property that could serve as a shared housing unit, the existing IGA was amended to account for the addition. County staff realized it would be difficult to create one IGA to address all the service models and payment structures necessary to coordinate with the City. The Corvallis City Council approved the revised IGA last night. The IGA gives assurances to both parties to continue to seek investments, the County from a services perspective, the City from a capital perspective, and to be able to work on individual sites for contracts.

Olson highlighted Benton's partnership with Corvallis, community partners, and organizations. Now there are two City-owned properties. The County and partners will offer direct support, not the City. Corvallis intends to have contracts and leases tied to both properties. Future contracts will specify terms.

Malone asked whether the Board would vote to approve an overall agreement, and whether the two current properties would have individual agreements.

Taylor confirmed.

Malone asked whether a separate operating agreement would be the model in future.

Taylor confirmed.

Malone asked about the timetable to open the Van Buren property and the Northwest Harrison Boulevard property.

Olson replied that the Van Buren property would hopefully open in late summer 2025; a Request For Proposals for the construction will be released soon. The Harrison property is undergoing some minor rehabilitation, and also has two tenants who have protections under the Uniform Relocation Act, so staff are sorting that out.

Taylor added that the City invited Benton FHSP Program Coordinator Penny Belyeu to comment on the lower level design, to ensure it addresses residents' unique needs.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to approve the City of Corvallis/Benton County amended and restated IGA for collaborative housing projects, and to authorize the Health Director to approve non-substantive changes to the agreement without additional Board approval. Malone seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

9.4 Ratification of a Letter of Agreement between Benton County and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 2064 Regarding the Benton County Crisis Center – April Holland, Health Services Director; Tammy Webb, Assistant Director, Jo Missler, Senior Analyst; Human Resources

Holland explained that in February 2025, the County began bargaining for Crisis Center staff. Highlights of the agreement include:

- Shift pay differentials for swing shifts (9%) and overnight shifts (12%).
- Stipend for changes to shift assignments.
- Holiday pay.
- One-time incentive pay for recruitment and transition to the new facility.

Shepherd asked whether the $4,000 recruitment incentive would be available for staff moving from the Humphrey Hoyer Building to the Crisis Center, or whether it only applied to new hires.

Holland replied the incentive was for existing Crisis Center health staff moving to a new operational situation, and for new hires through December 26, 2025. The incentive covers the onboarding and initial transition period only.

Responding to a question from Shepherd about retention of employees who receive the bonus, Webb replied there is a requirement that the person complete the six-month probationary/ transitional period before receiving the bonus, but for current staff, the bonus is immediate. Human Resources staff are finalizing position descriptions and hope to start recruiting early next week. The incentive language will be included in that recruitment.

Holland commented that the County will also recruit in phases depending on the level of need at opening versus the need when certain services begin. The County will not hire 27 staff all at once, but in batches of five to ten.

Webb noted the County has had difficulty recruiting Qualified Mental Health Professionals in general, so continuous recruitment for those positions is likely.

Holland shared that after some construction procurement delays, existing staff will move in to the facility in early July 2025, followed by the first daytime staff in August 2025, and will expand into swing shift and beyond in fall 2025.

MOTION: Malone moved to ratify the letter of agreement with AFSCME regarding the Benton County Crisis Center. Shepherd seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

9.5 Letter of Support for Capital Funding for the Osborn Aquatic Center – Gabe Shepherd, Commissioner

Shepherd explained that Oregon Senator Sara Gelser-Blouin is pursuing around $5 million for emergency repairs to the Osborn Aquatic Center in Corvallis, a joint operation between the City of Corvallis and the Corvallis School District. Funding would come from Senate Bill 5531, the capital construction bill. The amendment number is not known yet. Gelser-Blouin is coordinating testimonials from people who are passionate about ensuring the Osborn Aquatic Center is a functional facility. Shepherd wrote a draft letter of support which explains that this is not deferred maintenance, but an emergency need, and shows how communities across Benton County use this facility.

Malone had heard that the request from the State was $4 million, contingent on raising $1 million locally.

Crager just received word that the bill was scheduled for May 9, 2025, and Benton County will also have an opportunity to testify in support of the Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk renovation project.

MOTION: Shepherd moved that the Benton County Board of Commissioners adopt and submit the letter supporting funding for the Osborn Aquatic Center. Malone seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Malone asked if a funding amount should be specified in the letter.

Shepherd proposed that once the bill is amended, the amendment number and requested amount be added to the letter.

Crager also recommended being general when requesting capital construction funds. Crager suggested that staff make the modifications to the letter and add digital signatures; then County legislative consultants CFM Advocates could distribute the letter.

10. Other

10.1 Potential Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) Reallocation – Pat Malone, Commissioner

Malone explained that Oregon House Bill 3402 aims to change the allocation of the TLT; currently, 70% must be used for Economic Development. There is a strong effort to broaden that usage to include Law Enforcement and Public Works efforts that result from hosting tourism.

Shepherd shared that the City of Newport has TLT restrictions related to the number of tourists driving the roads. Newport and Corvallis are both high-tourism communities; in Corvallis, this can also involve Law Enforcement response to incidents at football games. Shepherd expressed strong support for the proposed changes to the TLT, although visitors associations are concerned that the bill will reduce funding for tourism promotion for organizations such as the Albany Visitors Association and Visit Corvallis.

Crager added this is an amendment to broaden the language. Sheriff Van Arsdall will testify in favor of the bill. The County also faces reduction of the road crew program. Staff could prepare a letter if the Board wishes.

MOTION: Malone moved to send a letter of support from the Board of Commissioners to the proponents of House Bill 3402 which would loosen the rule on usage of the 70% of the Transient Lodging Tax that is currently designated for economic development. Shepherd seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

10.2 Upcoming Transportation Operation and Maintenance Bill – Pat Malone, Commissioner

Malone explained that the Oregon House of Representatives is considering a significant piece of legislation to address operation and maintenance of the current roads and bridges system. Every year, Oregon roads are falling behind in maintenance and repair. There may be a bill as early as this week. [Recorder's note: the bill was subsequently numbered House Bill 2025, the Oregon Transportation Reinvestment Package.] In early April 2025, the Joint Committee on Transportation issued a framework that offered about six increased or added funding streams to address these needs. Malone suggested that the Board, and perhaps Law Enforcement and Public Works, send a letter of support for this bill, and copy the letter to Benton County's state senator and state representative, and to Senator Dick Anderson, Representative David Gomberg, and others to be determined. The last large transportation package was passed in 2017, and mainly funded projects, not maintenance and operations.

MOTION: Malone moved that the Board of Commissioners track and support the transportation package that addresses shortfalls in Benton County's operation and maintenance of roads, bridges, and other forms of transportation. Shepherd seconded the motion for discussion.

Shepherd requested more details on the transportation package.

Malone explained that there would be a series of gas tax increases reaching 20 cents per gallon over six years, a 50% increase. Vehicle registration fees would increase. Starting July 2026, electric vehicles will pay tax by mile driven; in 2027, hybrids will be included in that program. In 2028, vehicles that operate at more than 30 miles per gallon will be included in the pay-by-mile program. The package would institute a transaction tax on individuals owning two vehicles, and on existing vehicles, as other states do. Oregon is far behind Washington in terms of subsidizing roads; a study showed the cost by state for a person who drives 9,500 miles per year. The cost in Washington is three times more than Oregon, California is slightly more than that, and the cost in Idaho is two to three times more than Oregon. Oregon residents have grown used to relatively low charges for driving, and roads are in poor condition as a result.

Shepherd asked how the issue of tracking mileage was addressed.

Malone replied the details were not fully worked out yet. There is existing program called OReGO where drivers have a device in their car which tracks mileage. Participants pay per mile, and receive a credit for gas tax paid at the pump. This bill would scale up that program. Part of the concern is that this approach has higher administrative costs than a gas tax.

Shepherd was willing to support Malone’s motion and the other aspects of the bill, but expressed privacy concerns about mileage tracking in vehicles. Shepherd wondered how the State would determine how to implement that program.

Malone commented that car manufacturers already track mileage in all newer vehicles. One option is for manufacturers to share that data with no names attached.

The **MOTION carried 3-0.**

11. Adjournment

Chair Wyse adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Nancy Wyse, Chair

Erika Milo, Recorder

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