



Board of Commissioners

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MAY 20, 2025

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

Excused: Nancy Wyse, Chair

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

Staff: Erika Milo, Board Recorder; Ana Baker, Jennifer Brown, Sean McGuire, Sustainability; Rachel Bulder, Maura Kwiatkowski, Board Staff; Morgan Driggs, Petra Schuetz, Community Development; Gary Stockhoff, Public Works; Anne Thwaits, Public Information Officer

Guests: John Harris, Horsepower Productions; Autumn Peterson, Historic Resources Commission; Brad Dennis, Scott Ramsey, Residents; Patrick Wingard, Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Vice Chair Malone called the meeting to order at 9 AM, and introductions were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

The following items were added under 9. Other:

- 9.1 Letter of Support for Alsea School District's Community Oriented Policing Services Grant Application – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator
- 9.2 Letter to Congressional Transportation Committee in Support of Continued Federal Funding for Rail Safety and Grade Crossing Programs – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

3. Announcements

No announcements were made.

4. Proclamation

4.1 Proclaiming May 2025 as Historic Preservation Month in Benton County, Proclamation No. P2025-017 – Autumn Peterson, Chair, Historic Resources Commission; Morgan Driggs, Community Development

Peterson read the Proclamation aloud.

Driggs shared the Historic Resources Month Tour and Event Schedule. Benton County celebrates Historic Preservation Month to affirm the County's commitment to preserving those resources. Driggs noted that none of the events would be possible without the dedication of community members. All scheduled events are posted on the Historic Resources Commission website, and there is a scannable QR code on the County's events page.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to proclaim May 2025 as Historic Preservation Month and to adopt Proclamation No. P2025-017. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 2-0.

{Exhibit 1: Historic Resources Month Tour and Event Schedule}

5. *Comments from the Public

*Scott Ramsey, Philomath Resident, described the efforts of the nonprofit College of Philomath Community Corporation to maintain and restore the historic College of Philomath building for community use. Ramsey requested a letter of support from the Board to use when applying for grants.

Malone praised Ramsey's persistence in maintaining the building over a long period and suggested that Ramsey work with Kwiatkowski to provide a draft letter for the Board's consideration.

Responding to a question from Shepherd, Ramsey requested the letter as soon as possible to include with a pending grant application. A general letter of support, rather than a grant-specific one, would be ideal.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to direct staff to work with Ramsey to provide a draft letter for Board approval. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 2-0.

{Exhibit 2: College of Philomath History Page 0002}

{Exhibit 3: College of Philomath National Register of Historic Places Form Draft}

{Exhibit 4: College of Philomath 2023 News Article Twenty Years Later}

{Exhibit 5: College of Philomath Presentation and News Article}

Brad Dennis, Chair, North Albany Neighborhood Association (NANA), described growth in the group to 320 members, largely due to increased community concern about transportation and traffic issues in the area. The concerns involve several Benton County roads, including Northwest Springhill Drive, Northwest Quarry Road, and Northwest Scenic Drive. NANA's transportation subcommittee is eager to work with Benton County regarding these concerns. Dennis' goal is to also get cooperation from the Oregon Department of Transportation and other relevant agencies.

Malone and Shepherd asked to be added to the distribution list to receive the NANA newsletter.

6. Work Session

6.1 Update on Benton County Facilities - Gary Stockhoff, Public Works Director

Stockhoff reported construction of the new Courthouse is well underway and thanked all who participated in the recent groundbreaking. The first concrete pour is scheduled for May 21. Work is currently about one week ahead of schedule, which benefits the project budget.

Regarding the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), 10 comments were received on May 19 from the City of Corvallis regarding site conditions. Most comments require only minor clarification. Corvallis has also issued official addresses for the buildings; the Courthouse address is 1080 NE Carson, and the EOC is 1040 NE Carson.

Stockhoff reported there was an issue related to Pacific Power getting power through the site. The power line went down the old driveway to the clubhouse. It was important to ensure the resident's power situation was appropriate, so the power line is being relocated to the north side along the property line. An easement was required. County representatives are meeting onsite May 21 with Pacific Power to have the power switched over and the line through the middle of the building removed.

Plans for the EOC will be submitted for County review in the next 30 days.

McEneny asked about the go-live status of the project dashboards.

Stockhoff displayed a sample dashboard and indicated the dashboards will be available to the public. The dashboards mirror the monthly updates the Board has been receiving and will include photographs and videos and will be online for approximately 18 months. Dashboard launch is currently scheduled for June 1.

Shepherd reported a plan to work on securing a fourth judge for the Courthouse. This addition requires an act of the State Legislature and would be no earlier than 2027.

Stockhoff indicated the County is still waiting for the Phase 1 agreement with the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) so that funds advanced by the County can be reimbursed. Counsel indicated there has been no movement by OJD on the agreement.

Malone asked for confirmation the project budget is formed and that there should not be any major changes, especially when OJD provides their half of the Courthouse funding.

Stockhoff responded yes, there are guaranteed maximum price contracts for the construction of both buildings. Contractor Hoffman was aggressive about obtaining price quotes and placing orders before tariff impacts, particularly on steel, which was a significant savings.

7. Old Business

7.1 *Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Action Plan Update – Jennifer Brown, Sustainability Coordinator; Sean McGuire, Sustainability Coordinator; Ana Baker, Climate Action Intern

McGuire introduced the annual presentation of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory and Climate Action Plan update. The Board did not receive a presentation in 2024 because the utility use tracker was being reconfigured by Information Technology.

McGuire reminded the Board of the goal adopted by resolution in 2020: Benton County government will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% of 2010 levels by 2030 and be net-zero by 2050. McGuire indicated the inputs used to calculate GHG are utilities, refrigerants, and employee commute, as well as two new inputs: County business travel and reimbursed mileage.

McGuire explained the formula for calculating net emissions. Net emissions are currently down 300 tons from 2022, which is very positive. However, it is only halfway to the 2030 goal.

McGuire discussed the inputs and their trends. Electricity and natural gas are decreasing, which is significant given that the number of County facilities has increased. Fleet is increasing, commuting is decreasing. The major sources of GHG emissions are employee commutes, electricity, and fleet.

McGuire indicated the two electricity sources are Pacific Power (2 million kilowatts) and Consumers Power (430,000 kilowatts). Reduction of Pacific Power use is a primary focus. The County obtains 149 tons of energy from solar generation and purchases 335 tons. The spike in 2022 resulted from Pacific Power ending its two-for-one arrangement.

Fleet fuel use is increasing; it has gone up steadily since the pandemic. Fuel use needs to be addressed in a fleet plan. Natural gas has decreased due to new equipment installed at the Law Enforcement Building and other facilities. Over the last year, the number of employees driving to work increased somewhat; all other inputs were relatively constant. The number of miles by people reporting driving electric cars increased from 45,000 miles in 2023 to 110,000 miles. The calculation industry standard for electric cars is 100 miles per gallon, which is the 80-ton reduction.

Several years ago, Sustainability staff worked with Natural Areas, Parks, and Events Director Jesse Ott, using King County, Washington methodology, to arrive at a very conservative number (52 tons annually) of carbon capture on County lands. McGuire noted the third-party certification of this is not currently feasible due to limitations on funding and staff capacity.

Malone asked about estimates for individual sites and communicating the estimates to County land users.

McGuire responded there is nothing currently per individual site, but producing signage showing the estimates could be discussed with Ott.

McGuire advised the Board that, unfortunately, this is likely the last year that GHG emissions will decrease for a while. The County is adding facilities: the Barbara Ross Building, the 24/7 Crisis Center, the new Courthouse, and the new EOC. Also, additional staff are being added to the Crisis Center; and in 2010, the County's facility portfolio did not include the Sunset Building. The County is nearing maximum efficiency at many of its facilities (LED lighting in all facilities, for example).

Next steps for GHG inventory include attempting to quantify estimated emissions from purchasing and consumption. Another action is to consider the GHG inventory for the entire county, not just County government. The City of Corvallis counterpart did a similar analysis for the entire City. Baker is currently working with the Corvallis intern to capture Scope 1 and Scope 2 as a starting point.

The County also needs to prioritize future planning for fleet and facilities and to revisit the GHG emissions reduction goal going forward. Staff would like to come back to the Board in the fall with more information to receive Board direction on how to proceed when the next Sustainability intern begins work.

Malone noted that in order to do fair comparisons, the square footage of County facilities should be included to see that progress is being made. There are good stories and quality data for the Public Information Officer (PIO) to share with the community. A significant future challenge is how to meet goals when square footage continues to increase.

McGuire noted the inventory has evolved tremendously but agreed an in-depth facility analysis is needed. In the past, the calculations included tons per FTE (fulltime equivalents) and per square foot. The data is currently skewed due to some empty spaces and staff shifting among facilities. Once those settle, a more accurate picture will be available.

Shepherd noted that the County is growing and that is not accounted for in the numbers, so the amount of CO₂ (carbon dioxide) from commuting does not account for the 200-plus increase in employees during that time. Shepherd agreed with Malone that in order to accurately assess how well the County is doing as an organization, a rate is needed, something closer to per employee, as opposed to mass carbon emissions. The County needs to grow to serve the community. How can we accurately assess how the County is doing compared to 2010 levels in a way that does not penalize the County for growth in service provision?

McGuire noted that staff will return to the Board in the fall with that information and identify how it can be accounted for in next year's report.

Malone asked the PIO to focus messaging on the positive results of the solar panels and other areas of positive progress.

Brown provided the Climate Action Plan (CAP) update. The CAP is iterative; it was first developed in 2018 and revised in 2021. It is a compilation of actions to mitigate for each source of County emissions and is used to create a roadmap toward the goal. The County contracted with a consultant in 2021 and looked at emissions and the CAP. Things have changed, including more buildings and more staff.

For each source, there are specific objectives; for each objective, specific strategies; and for each strategy there are potential actions. Brown reviewed the accomplishments for the different objectives. For fleet and fuel: ongoing preventive maintenance and a fleet replacement program to keep fleet as efficient as possible. The County fleet now includes 13 hybrids (just under 10 percent of the fleet) and one electric pickup truck. Electric buses will be coming online and will have charging stations at the Sunset Building; hopefully followed by Kalapuya and the Avery and Health Services Buildings. Fleet policy, procedures, and a manual are being developed and will be presented to the Board within the next year. Work is also being done to reduce fleet miles driven; each department receives an annual review of their miles driven by vehicle. Virtual meetings have been a significant contributor to the reduction of fleet driving.

The objective of the employee commute survey is to reduce commute drive miles. A telework policy was adopted in 2023, and the Resource Efficiency Committee is developing strategies to reduce employee commute miles.

The energy objective is to reduce energy consumption, and progress includes Countywide transition to LED lighting, HVAC upgrades and replacements, and roof replacements to make County buildings as efficient as possible. The transition to renewable energy includes solar arrays, Blue Sky purchases, an Oregon Community Solar Program (OCSP) subscription for meters at specific buildings (Kalapuya, Avery, Sunset, and Health Services). OCSP builds the solar program, and the County receives a small payment. (The program is not yet online.) There is a solar installation at the Fairgrounds, but the solar energy generated there is offsetting the Consumers Power (clean energy) side; it needs to offset the Pacific Power side.

Regarding waste, the objective is to reduce landfilled waste. The surplus and reuse program reduces purchases of new and the landfilling of old. Composting, battery recycling, plastic film recycling, water filling stations, dishwashers, and reusable dishes and cutlery for meetings and events all contribute to the reduction of landfilled waste. The Sustainable Materials Management Plan regional conversation will be significant to this objective.

The procurement action is to reduce upstream impacts, and work is being done to finalize the draft sustainable procurement guidelines. Buying guidelines are in place for County Amazon accounts, and sustainability language in Requests for Proposals is being piloted.

Multi-source climate actions include the LEED Gold certification of the Kalapuya Building, the department level CAPs and Checklists, sustainability resources on The BEE, and sustainability orientation for all new employees.

However, the County is still not close to its 2030 goal. If electricity could be removed, more solar added, more offsets and upgrades achieved, and if the OCSP came online, it would remove 1,100 and leave 2,700 emissions this year. However, the goal is 1,670, so it still not be achieved. Reductions must come from the larger use areas (water and waste are too small for significant impact).

Climate Action Plan recommendations include 1) Continuing to Prioritize Climate Action to Reduce Commute Drive Miles, 2) Completion of a Fleet Assessment and Plan, 3) Completion of a Facility Assessment and Plan, and 4) Implementation of a Procurement Policy and Procedures. It is also recommended to expand the scope to include Community Functions and Services and Resiliency and Adaptation Planning.

Malone asked about infrequently used vehicles and whether there is an opportunity to reduce the size of the County fleet and/or transition low mileage vehicles to hybrid or electric vehicles.

Brown indicated there is a great deal of opportunity to do so; the fleet assessment software helps. Also, directors and departments can choose a more efficient vehicle instead of truck, for example.

Malone agreed there is real opportunity. The Board recently received a presentation from PNGC Power regarding their goal to produce renewable natural gas at Coffin Butte Landfill for use by Northwest Natural Gas. Does Northwest Natural have any programs like Blue Sky that the County could access?

McGuire agreed that the PNGC proposal is very positive; but once the natural gas enters the grid, it is difficult to track. McGuire would like to see how the proposal progresses and whether a tracking process could be identified.

{Exhibit 6: Updated Greenhouse Gas and Climate Action Plan Presentation}

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 10:26 AM and reconvened at 10:34 AM.

7. Consent Calendar

- 7.1 Proclaiming May 2025 as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Proclamation No. P2025-016**
- 7.2 Approval of the August 6, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**
- 7.3 Approval of the September 3, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**
- 7.4 Approval of the October 1, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**
- 7.5 Approval of the November 22, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**
- 7.6 Approval of the May 5, 2025 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**
- 7.7 Approval of the May 6, 2025 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**
- 7.8 Letter of Support for Consumers Power, Inc. Internet Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant Application**

MOTION: Shepherd moved to approve the Consent Calendar. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 2-0.

8. New Business

8.1 *Comprehensive Plan Request to Initiate Voluntary Periodic Review – Jennifer Brown, Sustainability Coordinator/Interim Project Manager; Petra Scheutz, Interim Community Development Director; Patrick Wingard, Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development

Brown indicated periodic review is Oregon's process for ensuring comprehensive plans are continually updated and consistent with statewide planning goals in a manner tailored to individual communities. In order to begin the periodic review process, the County must demonstrate need since the last update. Benton County's comprehensive plan was last updated in 2007; and there have been substantial changes impacting economic development, housing, public facilities, and transportation. The 2007 plan is inconsistent with statewide planning goals. The County must show that issues of statewide and regional significance need to be addressed. The County started the process in November 2023 and received grant funding for scoping and preplanning of the Voluntary Periodic Review (VPR) of the Benton County Comprehensive Plan. In 2024, the County contracted with Cascadia Partners to assist with grant-related work.

Scheutz indicated staff put together a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group of 30 people to develop community outreach strategies. Three workshops were conducted to identify drivers of change, a visioning exercise, and identification of strategies. Four regional meetings were held: Wren, North Benton, South Benton, and Alsea. The public survey was open from March 2 to April 4 in English and Spanish, and 404 responses were received. In response to the question, "What is most important for Benton County to plan for," the top responses were natural disasters and climate change, population and changing demographics, government and funding priorities, economic shifts, technology, and remote work. Staff believe the Comprehensive Plan is falling short in multiple ways. There have been many state and regional changes; predominantly in housing and development, climate and natural hazards, and community engagement and resilience.

Brown indicated that the County is ready to apply for VPR approval and to enter Phase 2. The official request for approval and request for funding will be made to the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) at its June 27 meeting. Upon approval, staff will review and update the public involvement plan; and develop a work program outlining tasks needed to complete. Once approved, the County will begin the multiyear process with community engagement to update the comprehensive plan.

Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) representative Wingard advised the Board that DLCD encourage cities and counties to conduct a VPR. The rules are robust, and funding is not available for the amount of work that needs to be done. Cities and counties apply for technical assistance grants; it is very competitive. Benton County would be a top priority for Wingard's region due to the willingness to do

a VPR and for partnering with neighboring cities. Wingard gave credit to County staff and officials and the community advisory groups. Given changing priorities at the Federal level, this is a bold but important step to ensure Benton County has funding to continue its long-range planning programs.

Malone asked whether the County has been approved to receive State funding.

Schuetz responded, not yet; a letter of support from the Board is required first, and the official request for LCDC support will be made at their June 27 meeting. DLCD will ensure County staff are fully aware of the requirements for the next grant application process.

Wingard indicated other applications will be solicited in August 2025. Board and lead County staff Shannon Bush will be fully aware of the application process. This will be a continuation of the technical assistance received for the 2023-25 biennium. It is not complete until the State Legislature finalizes funding, but DLCD staff are confident given climate change, housing needs, and changing demographics. Only a few other communities in the region are taking on this effort. Wingard indicated that the Legislature understands the VPR's vital role to address longstanding issues.

Shepherd noted that the meeting packet included several slides not in the meeting presentation. One slide discussing the community priority workshops and qualitative data says, "change it - big box stores." Can staff provide more context? Most of the community has been supportive of a lack of big box stores.

Schuetz responded that the slide should say "against big box stores."

Shepherd also noted that the data shows that parks are very highly valued. How many people participated in the priority workshops?

Brown indicated a total of 44 people participated in the four workshops.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to approve the request to initiate a Voluntary Periodic Review and to sign the letter to initiate the Voluntary Periodic Review. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 2-0.

{Exhibit 7: Voluntary Public Review Findings for Comprehensive Plan}

8.2 Designate Management Bargaining Team for Oregon Nurses Association Contract Negotiations – Tracy Martineau, Human Resources Director

Martineau presented a request to the Board to designate and delegate authority to the Management Bargaining Team for contract negotiations with the Oregon Nurses

Association (ONA). The agreement expires June 30, 2025, so it is a very late start for contract negotiations. The County was waiting for the central agency for ONA; ONA has been working on other negotiations in the state. A pre-negotiation meeting last week was held with the County bargaining team and the ONA bargaining team and business representative. The meeting was very positive. ONA indicated that relationships are very important to the team's individuals and the organization; they requested early on that we continue with interest-based bargaining as we have done several times. There is not yet a facilitator for interest-based bargaining, but Martineau and the ONA representative have experience with interest-based bargaining. Several bargaining sessions have been scheduled, and the teams will bargain weekly or biweekly in back-to-back sessions to move quickly. Martineau believes the process is off to a positive start.

Shepherd asked what would happen if elements cannot be worked out in time.

Martineau indicated the ONA contract contains language similar to the AFSCME contract's Evergreen Clause. If agreement is not reached in time, the current contract remains in place. Martineau expressed optimism negotiations can be completed in time.

Malone asked whether the Crisis Center hiring will increase ONA ranks.

Martineau was not aware of any ONA members assigned to the Crisis Center. There is a Mental Health nurse in AFSCME, but not in ONA.

Malone asked how many Benton County employees are ONA members.

Martineau indicated there are 17 active ONA employees, with an approximate total of 20 ONA positions in County.

McEneny asked Martineau to update the Board on the upcoming AFSCME training for managers.

Martineau indicated management has been talking with AFSCME and the Labor Management Advisory Committee about interest-based problem solving. An independent facilitator in Oregon could not be located, so Martineau reached out to Janet Gilman, State Conciliator at the Oregon Employment Relations Board, who has been very helpful. McEneny, Crager, Tammy Webb, and Jo Missler will participate in role playing and exercises related to interest-based problem solving. Traditional bargaining is very positional; it is not about why proposals are being made. In interest-based problem-solving, it is about interests and goals; what we hope to achieve. It is focused more on creating win-win.

Staff will bring updates on ONA negotiations to the Board as the process progresses.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to appoint April Holland, Tracy Martineau, Jo Missler, Lacey Mollel, and Tammy Webb to represent the County's interests as the management bargaining team for the Oregon Nurses Association contract negotiations. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 2-0.

9. Other

9.1 *Letter of Support for Alsea School District Community Oriented Policing Services Grant – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

Malone indicated the request is a follow-up to the Board's 2024 letter of support for an Alsea School District Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant for a public address system and locking windows for school safety and violence prevention.

McEneny indicated the request is for the same funding agreement the Board supported last year. The Sheriff also provided a letter of support for this funding. June 18 is the grant submittal deadline, and the School District has requested the letter be completed by June 1.

Van Arsdall reported having submitted a letter of support last year and believed the Board did also. Krista Nieraeth is the Alsea School Superintendent. Van Arsdall expressed appreciation for Nieraeth's efforts and encouraged the Board to support the grant application.

MOTION: Shepherd moved that the Board of Commissioners approve a letter of support for the Alsea School District's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant application. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 2-0.

{Exhibit 8: Alsea School District Grant Support Draft Letter}

9.2 *Letter to Congressional Transportation Committee in Support of Continued Federal Funding for Rail Safety and Grade Crossing Programs – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

Malone indicated that the request was received from Nate Kaplan, State Director of GoRail, to sign onto a letter to Congressional Transportation Committees in support of continued Federal funding for rail safety and grade crossing programs.

McEneny indicated GoRail's advocacy is designed toward continued investment in the freight rail system. GoRail is concerned that funding for rail infrastructure will be cut.

Malone asked whether there was any disadvantage to signing onto the letter.

Shepherd indicated having read the letter and agreed with most of the content but expressed concern that the letter was a rejection of economic re-regulation. Railroads have had some of the least regulation in American history, and that lack of regulation has resulted in a lack of compliance that has caused numerous incidents across the country, including a Corvallis trestle that fell down.

Malone suggested the item could be deferred to the next meeting. Malone also agreed with most of the language and indicated working with larger, nationwide railroads can be difficult. Is there enough benefit for Benton County to sign on? Malone wanted more time to review the details and to consider the pros and cons, as well as to have all three Commissioners present for the item. The next Board meeting is June 10.

Shepherd agreed and noted the Board typically hears from the people who make these requests. Shepherd was not comfortable signing onto the letter without information from the person making the request.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to table the item to the Board's June 10, 2025 Goal-setting Meeting. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 2-0.

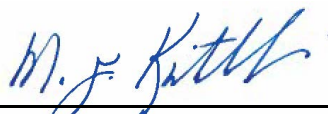
{Exhibit 9: GoRail Transportation Reauthorization Group Letter 2025}

10. Adjournment

Vice Chair Malone adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.


Pat Malone, Vice Chair


Erika Milo, Recorder


Maura Kwiatkowski, Transcriptionist

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