

**MINUTES OF THE GOAL SETTING MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, September 12, 2023
9:00 a.m.**

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

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

Staff: Shannon Bush, Darren Nichols, Community Development; Tomi Douglas, Jesse Ott, Natural Areas, Parks & Events; Cory Grogan, JonnaVe Stokes, Public Information; Amanda Makepeace, BOC Staff; Rachel McEneny, incoming County Administrator; Erika Milo, BOC Recorder; James Morales, Records & Elections; Jodi Robin, District Attorney's Office; Sarah Siddiqui, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion; Matt Wetherell, Juvenile Department

Guests: Bill Kughn, Eileen Stark, Andy Sterling, residents; Alex Powers, Mid-Valley Media; Michael Skipper, CFM Advocates

**1. Opening:
1. Call to Order**

Chair Malone called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

**2. Introductions
3. Announcements**

No announcements were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

The following item was added to the agenda:

**3.7 Potential Delegation of Authority for Child Abuse
Multidisciplinary Intervention (CAMI) Grant Application – Xanthippe
Augerot, Commissioner**

The following changes were made to the agenda:

Item 3.7 was renumbered as **Item 3.8**
Item 3.8 was renumbered as **Item 3.9**

3. Discussion Topics

**3.1 Strategic Communications Update – Cory Grogan, Public Information
Officer**

Grogan explained that staff are working to make Proclamations more meaningful. On October 3, 2023, a public celebration will be held in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, followed by reading the Proclamation. Staff from Casa Latinos Unidos may read the Proclamation in Spanish. Grogan invited the Board to speak at the gathering.

The Board favored participating in the celebration.

Grogan provided a strategic communications update from August 2023 to the present (see packet). Highlights include:

- A successful advertising campaign for the Benton County Fair.
- Ongoing advertisements about wildfire awareness.
- A booth and sponsorship at the Corvallis Fall Festival on September 23-24, 2023.
- Publications including the Biennial Report, updated Historic Driving Tour, flood information in Spanish, and a Riparian Resources guide. Copies of the report will be sent to the Board, departments, and building lobbies.
- Staff plain language trainings.

Augerot suggested issuing a survey to gauge interest in an audio file version of the Tour, and mentioned a local service that distributes flyers.

Grogan to follow up on that service for County publications. Once the Board approves the Media Policy, staff will develop a Media Relations Plan, a Key Stakeholder Communication Plan, and a Crisis Communications Plan as part of a Comprehensive Strategic Communications Plan.

The Kalapuya Building branding update starts September 26, 2023. A web specialist will be hired to provide oversight, support, and training for the new County website. A photograph and video archive and a style guide will be available for staff use. Siddiqui and staff from Communications and Information Technology will ensure website accessibility.

Augerot mentioned comments from the visually impaired community that all web images need captions. Website accessibility is a high priority.

Grogan presented the 2023 Quarter Two analytics report (see packet). Current communication goals: 1. Get the right information to the right people at the right time. 2. Highlight Benton County's work in the community through the 2040 Thriving Community Initiatives. Community members are interacting much less with the County email list-serv, possibly due to summer activities. Website traffic from social media is up over Quarter One. The top County platform is Facebook. Staff seek to reach a wider demographic.

Although engagement with social media is usually low (1-3%) in general, the drop in email subscribers is concerning. The email open rate has decreased considerably, even among employees. Staff will evaluate content and are open to suggestions. Paid advertising shows good return on investment. Earned media from sharing information with news media partners is extremely important.

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 10:08 a.m. and reconvened at 10:13 a.m.

3.2 *Federal Legislative Debrief – Rick Crager, Interim County Administrator; Michael Skipper, CFM Advocates

Skipper reported on Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Federal lobbying and the FY 2024 appropriations process (see exhibit 1). Benton County submitted seven requests in 2023; three were funded with a total of \$3 million: rural water and sewer infrastructure improvements, the Monroe Health Center, and regional Public Safety radio infrastructure. Benton did not receive funding for the Jackson-Frazier Wetland Boardwalk replacement, the Benton County Fairgrounds exhibit hall, or the Southwest 53rd Street overpass. A \$19.6 million grant request to the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) for the overpass is still pending. No funding is final until Congress passes the funding package, hopefully by December 30, 2024. FY 2023 funding expires September 30, 2023. A short-term funding extension is expected, but a government shutdown could happen first.

CFM Advocates will continue to work on funding for the overpass, historic Courthouse (HCH), rural water infrastructure, and more. Many new Federal grant programs have been created. CFM will also start work on the 2024 Federal agenda. In October 2023, Skipper will meet with County department heads and staff to develop a new list of priority projects. Skipper encouraged the County to resubmit the boardwalk and exhibit hall projects through the 2024 earmark process. USDOT does not have a grant program for small transportation requests. There is not a program that aligns perfectly with the exhibit hall project, and the cost is high for an earmark (the County requested \$5 million, while earmarks are usually a maximum of \$3 million).

Augerot favored re-submitting both projects. The exhibit hall needs a compelling vision to interest State and Federal legislators. Other important projects include Children & Families Behavioral Health facilities needs, the Homelessness Navigation Center (HNC), and the HCH. Another need is Housing and Urban Development (HUD) policy changes about housing vouchers. The number of vouchers provided to Linn-Benton Housing Authority has not increased in a long time.

Skipper noted that HUD is a potential policy item for the 2024 Federal agenda. Skipper believed the Congressional delegation would be interested in supporting the HNC. The Federal grant program Save America's Treasures could apply to the HCH, but the maximum grant is \$750,000. Several Federal sources are available for the HCH seismic retrofit.

Malone favored prioritizing the HCH, as well as the boardwalk and the bridge.

Wyse concurred with Augerot's and Malone's priorities. Homelessness is a top community concern.

Skipper noted it might be advantageous if a non-profit service provider, rather than the County, submitted the HNC application.

Regarding the HNC, Wyse encouraged everyone to leverage the County's partnership with the City of Corvallis.

Augerot concurred, and noted that many partners are interested in the boardwalk and should be involved when the County presents that project to the delegation.

Skipper shared that if Congress passes the funding package in December 2023, the County would probably receive the funds in May-June 2024.

Malone noted that Emergency Operations Center funds from Senator Ron Wyden must be committed by May 2024.

{Exhibit 1: CFM Presentation}

3.3 Collaborative Permitting Project – *Darren Nichols, Community Development; Rick Crager, Interim County Administrator*

Crager explained that the Community Development permitting system is one of the larger requests in the 2023-25 biennial budget. The system could be used County-wide, so all departments need to join the discussion. The current budget allows \$100,000 for pre-planning; next, staff will to seek a facilitated contract for service.

Nichols explained that Community Development must draw information from many different sources, which can be difficult to coordinate. Other departments have similar challenges. Community Development processes about 2,000 permits per year, about one-third of which require two or more hours of staff review. This totals about \$130,000 per year in labor costs. A permitting package would:

- Provide better access to high-quality information for staff and customers.
- Increase efficiency, consistency, and transparency by consolidating information sources.
- Provide return on investment in about two to three years.
- Support staff recruitment, retention, and best practices.
- Help Benton County coordinate with the City of Corvallis. The current City and County systems cannot interface. Nichols was in discussions with Corvallis Community Development Director Paul Bilotta and team, who are interested and might be willing to make a shared investment.
- Improve reporting to the Board.
- Increase e-readiness, allowing the County to use emerging tools such as electronic plan review, electronic inspection reports, and remote perspective.

Nichols recommended hiring a third party to convene the conversation about needs, then assessing which type of system would meet those needs.

Crager added there are opportunities for connectivity between departments. The project involves an important Information Technology (IT) component.

Augerot expressed strong interest in such a system. Regular metrics would help the Board and Budget Committee evaluate County progress.

Malone and Wyse also expressed support for the project.

Nichols shared that the dialogue phase is expected to take about six months. The third phase is to collect all documents in one place, which IT has already begun. Phase four is to purchase the system, which incurs most of the cost.

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 11:17 a.m. and reconvened at 11:22 a.m.

3.4 Exotic Animal Ordinance (EAO) – *Tomi Douglas, Jesse Ott; Natural Areas, Parks, and Events*

Douglas explained that many community members felt the EAO as approved did not accomplish their intentions. Staff have engaged in many conversations on this issue with the United States Department of Agriculture, County Counsel, the Oregon State Veterinarian, and others.

Augerot stated she stood by the intent of the original EAO: to preclude traveling animal-based exhibits or circuses that involve extensive travel for wild and exotic animals for the purpose of entertainment, because of the inherent cruelty to such animals. It was never the Board's intention to interfere with 4-H or rodeo activities; the inclusion of horses in the ban was an oversight. Augerot favored retaining the EAO with its core value of prohibiting animal acts that mistreat animals, but modifying the EAO to be more functional and workable.

Wyse wished to retain the original intent and spirit of the current EAO, but in a way that is more workable and understandable for staff and the public.

Malone expressed concern about the current EAO, which has caused considerable problems. Malone favored reconvening the past work group and adopting a new Ordinance.

Wyse commented her main concern with the current EAO is that the County Animal Control Officer (ACO) does not have the expertise or capacity to enforce it.

Augerot expressed concern that none of the original EAO advocates were included in the work group; any new process should include that community and Fair Board members. A significant part of the community feels very strongly about mistreatment of animals in traveling exhibits. A modified Ordinance could achieve both objectives by incorporating plain language, clear processes, clearer communications, and advance discussion with community members. Augerot agreed with Wyse that the ACO lacks the necessary expertise. State and Federal governments do little enforcement in this area. The Board just wants to share its values on animal treatment.

Douglas noted that simply not booking circuses will cover many of the concerns. Other solutions could include funding enforcement training, establishing a trained animal welfare officer, and/or a community hotline to report concerns.

Van Arsdall stated a willingness to provide relevant training to ACO Erica O'Neill, but noted that O'Neill does not have time or opportunity to commit resources for investigations.

Augerot suggested forming another work group, including the original proponents of this EAO, to clarify the goal and how to achieve it. Augerot was uncomfortable with the current situation.

Wyse was comfortable amending this EAO or creating a different one, as long as the intent to prevent traveling animal shows remained the same. Another work group might not provide more information. Instead, staff could work on a draft, then request public comment.

Augerot felt Wyse's suggestion was workable, as long as the process was clearly communicated to the community.

Malone favored staff developing recommendations rather than forming another work group. Malone would prefer to draft a new EAO that is short and clean.

Augerot preferred to modify the original EAO, but expressed trust in staff's efforts.

Douglas offered to draft both a modified EAO and a new Ordinance.

3.5 *Parks Board Update on Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk Effort – Tomi Douglas, Jesse Ott, Natural Areas, Parks, and Events; David Smith, Parks Advisory Board

Smith read a report (exhibit 2) on efforts to replace the decayed Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk with an improved, durable, fully accessible boardwalk. In 2021, Natural Areas, Parks & Events (NAPE) estimated replacement cost at \$1.2 million, but the estimate was made without engineering specifications. In 2022, NAPE received a \$600,000 Oregon Parks 50% matching grant towards replacement. NAPE would contribute the \$600,000 match, and the Alliance for Recreation and Natural Areas (AFRANA) would raise any remaining funds. However, by March 2023, the replacement cost estimate rose to \$2.7 million (including 7% inflation and 20% contingency), producing a target AFRANA could not meet. Public Works lacked capacity to provide engineering support at that time. In 2023, AFRANA withdrew its support for boardwalk demolition. Now NAPE is working on a technical design in order to award contracts in spring 2025. Meeting this schedule is essential to maintain grant eligibility. For the project to succeed, Public Works must have capacity for engineering support.

Ott described two options:

- The County could return the grant and reapply with adjusted numbers. Oregon State Parks ranked this project number one in the state, and has more funds now, so the project would probably rank high again. So far, the County has only spent Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds, not grant funds. The cap for a grant request is \$3 million, so Benton could request more than \$600,000 this time.
- The County could request four six-month extensions of the current grant, to 2027. This would provide two more years of CIP sessions, other grant possibilities, and fundraising.

Augerot noted the project would also be eligible for an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife County Opportunity grant. Augerot believed the County could receive more funding from the legislative process, but not on this schedule, and recommended continuing to work with Benton Community Foundation to approach community donors.

Wyse added that she and Malone spoke to all Benton's Congressional delegates about the project, and will continue to request funds.

Smith requested direction. Staff capacity is limited. NAPE will finish the technical design, which will help with fundraising. Staff need to work closely with potential suppliers, but keeping momentum is difficult without a timeline for construction. Smith

asked about other financing opportunities to advance the project in 2024, such as a bridge loan.

Ott noted the next grant application is due January 2024. Recipients would not be notified until June 2024 at the earliest.

Augerot felt that with the extant boardwalk's condition worsening and costs rising, it might be best to return the grant and reapply. That would allow time to pursue alternative funding.

Crager and Malone favored reapplying. Malone noted that Skipper (CFM Advocates) might have suggestions of which legislators to approach.

Smith shared that Udell Engineering-Land Surveying and Structural Engineer Dave Conklin will provide all bid specifications within months. Draft Requests for Proposals should be available by Thanksgiving, to be issued on January 1, 2024.

Ott noted that all construction permits have been secured and will last for at least five years.

Augerot noted the project would have to pause in 2024 if the County reapplies for the grant. Applying for the extensions is risky, and the project probably needs funding sooner. The County should finish the design work before applying.

Malone concurred.

Smith added that the engineering is being funded by AFRANA donations, not Benton County. Vendors are anxious to know the project timeframe.

The Board affirmed support for the original replacement project as envisioned, rather than a reduced-scope project.

Smith explained that AFRANA fundraising has been suspended. AFRANA probably cannot raise more than \$.5 million, including the \$200-300,000 that has already been contributed.

Augerot suggested enlisting the Board and the County's contracted grant writer to help pursue private donor/foundation funds, especially given the science education and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion aspects of the boardwalk.

{Exhibit 2: Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk Report}

3.6 Approval of Annual Membership Renewal Notice from Albany Chamber of Commerce – *Benton County Commissioners*

Augerot shared that the benefit of membership is discounted event attendance.

MOTION: Augerot moved to approve the Board's membership in the Albany Chamber of Commerce. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Malone suggested asking City of Albany Mayor Alex Johnson II about which events the Board should prioritize attending. Augerot to follow up.

**3.7 Potential Delegation of Authority for Child Abuse
Multidisciplinary Intervention (CAMI) Grant Application – Xanthippe
Augerot, Commissioner**

Augerot explained that the District Attorney's Office (DAO) is applying for a routine CAMI grant from the Department of Justice (DOJ), which now requires a Board Letter of Authorization for the District Attorney to sign the application.

Crager added that the DAO liaison had prepared a potential letter and the grant is included in the adopted budget.

Wyse stated her policy is not to vote on items that were not in the agenda and that she does not have information on. Wyse asked if the request was in writing.

Augerot replied the request was not in writing; this was a late item, but Counsel reviewed it.

MOTION: Augerot moved that the Board delegate signing authority to the District Attorney for the CAMI grant from the Department of Justice. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 2-1 (Wyse opposed)**.

**3.8 County Administrator Updates – Rick Crager, Interim County
Administrator**

Crager has been reviewing matters with Department heads and updating McEneny. The State seeks agreement on its design for the new Courthouse (NCH). Based on the County's current analysis of square footage, the design is over budget; the State knows that reductions will be necessary. The hope is to begin construction in March 2024. Cost escalation has stabilized somewhat.

Crager and Augerot met with State Representative Dan Rayfield, who was optimistic about State resources to fund the NCH. Later this month the County should have a clearer sense of the State's stance on this preferred model. If the model is over budget and the State still resists more cuts, a different approach may be needed.

Augerot told Rayfield that the Benton County Courthouse agreement will set precedent for the entire Oregon Courthouse Capital Construction and Improvement Fund (OCCCIF) program.

Malone noted that the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) Region Five meeting discussed this topic; many Commissioners agreed the OCCCIF process is too difficult and needs to be redesigned.

Crager observed that even though this is a bond-based source of NCH funding, the County could still ask for a different type of funding. There should be opportunity by January or February 2024. Crisis Center construction will begin soon. The InterCommunity Health Network Coordinated Care Organization may provide some capital support, which would help offset cost escalation and unanticipated

environmental consultant costs. The County will pursue additional State funding for the Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk, and can consider a bridge loan. Part of the Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) could possibly be dedicated to boardwalk debt service; Crager needs to discuss this with Counsel. Staff will start recruitment for the Board's Office Supervisor/ Executive Assistant position when McEneny arrives.

{Exhibit 3: County Administrator Video Log Proposal}

3.9 Commissioner Updates – Benton County Commissioners

Wyse reported that the Board of Forestry is expected to approve the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which has implications for Forest Trust Land counties. Oregon State University Policy Analyst Branden Pursinger estimates Benton's harvestable lands will go down 43%, but since Benton only harvests a small amount per year, the impact on the County will be relatively small. In 2022, revenue was about \$800,000, of which \$135,000 went to Benton County. The special districts and schools that receive the remaining funds will feel more impacts. Governor Tina Kotek's office has asked AOC to set up meetings to discuss what the State could do, whether counties want to resume managing those forests, or want a Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT). Wyse will attend one of those meetings tomorrow.

Augerot stated that implementing the HCP into the Forest Management Plan is critical. This is a smaller issue here since Benton County contains only about 8,000 acres of Forest Trust Lands. A PILT-type arrangement seems good. The County lacks enough expertise to manage those forests, and the location is fairly inaccessible.

Wyse concurred. Wyse attended the AOC Governance, Revenue and Veteran's Steering Committee; many counties were interested in discussing courthouses. Past AOC President George Murdock is reviving a Courthouse Task Force, and Wyse was added to the group.

Augerot shared that a Courthouse Task Force is set up every few years to work with Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) on a funding priority list and review the queue. Benton's main stake is courthouse repairs and sharing the experience of working with OJD. Augerot offered to support Wyse in that role as needed.

Wyse noted that the District Five meeting was well attended, whereas few Commissioners attended the wildfire mapping discussion for Linn, Lane, and Benton Counties.

Malone commented that the draft Wildfire Hazard Map changed from five to three fire danger categories: low, medium, and high. Benton County is rated low; Emergency Manager Bryan Lee says that may not be accurate, and may reduce the County's ability to attract fire prevention grants.

Augerot felt the map makes low estimates, especially considering climate change. However, Benton does have a lower risk level than the rest of Oregon.

Augerot reported having many meetings with community members, including:

- A resident interested in improving transitional housing for individuals emerging from jail and respite care.

- Scott Smith, Restorative Justice Director for Neighbor-to-Neighbor Mediation, who is working on restorative justice programming for Benton County. Augerot would like Smith to present to the Board about this. Some funding might be available during the legislative short session.
- Residents and Dial-a-Bus (DAB) Board members John Gardner and Lorena Reynolds, who expressed frustration about a gap between past Dial-a-Bus (DAB) services and current Benton Area Transit services. Augerot asked Gardner, Reynolds, and staff to specify the service gap. Augerot will probably not be able to respond to DAB Board members' questions until results from the recent service audit are available.
- Thomas H. DeLuca, Dean of OSU College of Forestry, who gave Augerot a tour of the new Peavy Hall built with mass timber.

Augerot shared that a new Corvallis Chamber of Commerce Executive Director will begin work in November 2023. Augerot attended a presentation by MGT Consulting on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) work for Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments and Community Services Consortium. Augerot will provide MGT contact information to Siddiqui regarding a similar assessment for Benton County.

Wyse offered to respond to a letter from resident Anneliese Gast about the Coffin Butte Landfill appeal fee. Wyse attended the City of Monroe first responder event.

Augerot will attend events including the Vina Moses Center benefit, Court-Appointed Special Advocates fundraiser, Leadership Corvallis welcoming reception, and ABC House stakeholders dinner.

4. Other

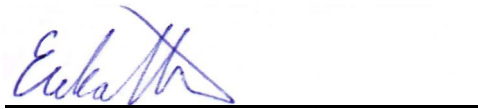
No other business was discussed.

5. Adjournment

Chair Malone adjourned the meeting at 1:47 p.m.



Pat Malone, Chair



Erika Milo, Recorder

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

CFM Federal Affairs

Knowledge
Experience
Results



www.cfmadvocates.com



**Benton
County**
OREGON



CFM Federal Affairs Presentation



- Recent Successes
- FY 2024 Appropriations Process
- Next Steps



2023 Federal Agenda Update

- **Rural Water and Sewer Infrastructure Improvements**

- \$1.16 million for sewer improvements included in draft Senate bill.

- **Monroe Health Center**

- \$1 million included in draft House bill.

- **Regional Public Safety Radio Infrastructure**

- \$963,000 included in draft Senate bill

- Jackson-Frazier Wetland Boardwalk

- Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall

- **SW 53rd Street Railroad Overcrossing**

- \$19.6 million grant request pending.

FY 2024 Appropriations Process

- FY 2023 funding expires September 30.
 - Congress returns from recess this week with just 10 scheduled days of votes before end of federal fiscal year.
 - Republican House and Democratic Senate approximately \$70 billion apart on FY24 spending levels.
- Short-term funding extension expected but government shutdown could happen first.
- Final FY24 spending likely to be finalized in Nov/Dec.

Next Steps

- Grant applications (ongoing)
 - Expected and possible grant applications include SW 53rd Street Overcrossing, Historic Courthouse,
- 2024 Federal Agenda Preparation
 - Evaluate successes and brainstorm new projects.
 - CFM will be meeting with Commissioners, department heads, and staff over the next few weeks and months.
 - Update and prioritize new list of projects.
 - Begin briefing Congressional delegation on 2024 priorities.

CFM Federal Affairs

Knowledge
Experience
Results



www.cfmadvocates.com



**Benton
County**
OREGON

9/12/2023

A report to the Benton County Board of Commissioners regarding the Jackson Frazier Boardwalk project.

Prepared by David Smith, Chair, Park Advisory Board

As I am sure you are aware, but to set context, the Jackson Frazier Boardwalk is a much-loved element in the County Park system. Built in the late 1990s by volunteer labor for unknown cost, the uniquely designed floating boardwalk successfully provides all sorts of people with over a half-mile of easy walking into an otherwise inaccessible landscape. It has been long recognized that the treated wood structure, built without a foundation, had a limited life expectancy. AFRANA, acting on behalf of the Frenkel family that originally built the boardwalk, has been diligently collecting donations for years in anticipation of supporting the boardwalk's replacement when the time came.

That time came in 2021, and NAPE staff initiated a project to replace the boardwalk. They had an intern, did some research, and estimated that \$1.2 million would be enough to build an improved, long-lasting boardwalk. The design concept was to build a durable, vandal-proof, fully ADA-accessible boardwalk that would last 75+ years. NAPE did not want their successors to have to rebuild it again anytime soon. The idea was to do it right for the long-haul. The design was based on a steel piling foundation and cast concrete support structure and decking. This concept was used to apply for a matching grant from Oregon Parks. NAPE estimated it could come up with \$600K and that with the State match, the project would be fully funded. The State agreed, and the Grant was awarded.

This is the scenario NAPE presented to the Park Board in Summer 2022. I personally had little knowledge of the boardwalk project at that time, but understood it's importance, and vigorously encouraged the Park Board members to support the project in order to meet the ambitious timeline of completing a new boardwalk in 2023. We, the Park Board, took this on as a legacy project worthy of our time and financial support. A cooperative plan was devised with AFRANA where NAPE would take responsibility for the technical design and AFRANA would run a fund-raising campaign to meet the need and schedule.

The first questions we asked, in September 2022 (a year ago), were about what we were building and how much it would cost. However, other than the text of the Grant proposal, there was little supporting data. Most of the fundamental steps of project design and budgeting had not been done. NAPE had no engineering drawings of the existing boardwalk, no geotechnical information regarding the wetland soils, no dimensional specifications, and no engineering support. All they had to go on were a few conversations with design-build vendors, a GIS map, and some internet research.

It is a strong testament to the attractiveness of the project and Jesse Ott's powers of persuasion that he was able to win the State award of \$600k with so little supporting data. So late last summer, the Park Advisory Board learned, that between AFRANA, County CIP, NAPE in-kind contributions, and the State grant, \$1.2 million was lined up to rebuild the boardwalk in 2023.

The next questions asked were about structural design and engineering support from County Public Works. NAPE is a small department with no internal engineering or project management staff. The NAPE director at the time, Lynne McKee, had no relevant expertise, so only Deputy Director Jesse Ott and Resource Coordinator Adam Stebbins could work on the project. I was dismayed to learn that Public

Works engineering was not involved. They could not assist because of the work backlog created by the pandemic. All they could offer was a little help with permitting. No design engineering, no drawings, no cost estimating, no project management.

We intended to build a 25,000 square foot structure to last over 50 years in a harsh environment. I have an extensive professional background in capital project design, budgeting, and management. Details matter. A project of this magnitude cannot be successfully planned and executed without engineering support.

Seeing the need, several Park Board members stepped up and worked with NAPE staff to more fully develop the new design criteria and prepare a Class 20 Budget Estimate. AFRANA set out to build a fund-raising campaign, but of course needed to know the gap. It became quickly apparent that \$1.2 million would not be enough, but could it be done for under \$2 million?

NAPE conducted a vigorous effort to develop a budget by hiring consulting engineers, refining the design criteria, and talking with an assortment of suppliers, contractors, and other boardwalk owners. By March 2023, we had developed a Class 20 Budget estimate of \$2.7 million. This was a shock. We had less than half of the needed funding. The AFRANA-led campaign would need to secure another \$1.5 million. They were game to try and worked hard on preparing the campaign, wanting to be well-organized before publicly launching the effort.

At this time, last spring, it was apparent that the first step of the project, demolition and removal of the old boardwalk, would have to slide until after the County Fair due to lack of NAPE manpower. Please recall that NAPE Director McKee had resigned months earlier and no replacement was in place. This new schedule, with completion pushed back to Fall 2024, and the funding gap, were presented to the County commissioners in late March 2023. You all encouraged NAPE to continue.

There were, of course, many, many other important issues in front of the BOC and the County last spring. You don't need me to remind you of the pressures you were under prior to the May election.

NAPE continued to refine the technical design, and work with AFRANA to build the funding campaign. However, AFRANA is a small organization made up of volunteers with little experience in raising funds for capital projects. Although this is a worthy project with many strong selling points, it soon became apparent that the funding target was too big to meet, and AFRANA withdrew its support for demolishing the boardwalk in 2023.

The Park Board agreed. In June, Board leadership met with Jesse Ott and Tomi Douglas to discuss next steps. We decided that a reset of both the project management and funding strategies were necessary. This is a NAPE project that must be lead and driven by NAPE, not volunteers and consultants. AFRANA cannot be the primary fund-raiser. They should not be counted on for more than \$500k. NAPE and the County must find funds elsewhere to fill the gap, or, do a different project.

The Jackson Frazier Boardwalk Replacement Project is now in limbo. NAPE is diligently moving ahead on technical design in order to be ready to place purchase orders this winter with key suppliers for summer 2024 delivery. Holding to this schedule is essential to maintain compliance with the terms of the State grant. Otherwise, we will be in the awkward position of not being able to accept the State funds. To do so will require the County to fill the gap, to find the money.

There must be a way. This project is too important. There are ways. But the County can't keep hoping volunteers will figure it out. County leadership must take charge, and so far, it hasn't.

Why did this happen? What has brought us to this point? It is, quite simply, a failure of fundamental management. The original Grant application should have never been submitted. The NAPE department lacked the ability to properly plan the project, and no one else recognized it or stepped up to help. The time taken to fill the NAPE Director position was unconscionable. Jesse Ott's performance over the past couple years has been amazing. He has accomplished many remarkable things. But he's not superhuman. County leadership did not give Jesse Ott the resources required to be successful on the Jackson Frazier boardwalk project.

Benton County has not emerged well from the pandemic. From my perspective, this administration is still suffering from Long Covid. The disruptions caused by isolation and loss of key personnel are having serious effects on the remaining staff's ability to perform. And on their motivation.

I do not come to this conclusion lightly. I have been observing the inner-workings of Benton County as a volunteer on advisory boards and special committees for nearly 20 years. In my early years, I would frequently remark to others that I was impressed with how efficient and effective the County was at getting things done. I was an enthusiastic supporter of County staff. I could see the various departments working closely together to conduct projects by sharing skills and filling needs. This cooperative culture came from the view that everyone shares in success. The Benton County Team – At Your Service, Every Day.

Not long ago, Public Works, Parks, and Community Development were all housed in the Avery building. The Public Health people were always engaged, because everything is related to Public Health. There was a "culture of cooperation". Managers and key staff knew each other and what they were working on. They were not just colleagues, but friends. It was easy to go across the hall to get help finding answers.

Now, that culture has been damaged. Covid, retirements, relocations, and resignations have changed everything. Relationships have been weakened. People are working in silos – remotely. Key staff positions have been left vacant for way too long. Many feel overworked and under-appreciated. The result is that Parks can't get the help it should have; and did – back in the good old days.

Fixing this culture, rebuilding team spirit, should be a high priority for the new County Executive and this BOC. A good place to start is with how projects are implemented. Leadership needs to encourage managers to work more closely on developing solid project plans and costs. All capital projects need engineering support. Departments must have budget room to request and receive engineering assistance as needed. Public Works must have the capacity to give it.

In spite of a near-total lack of internal engineering support, NAPE is closing in on having a shovel-ready project. We have used 2023 County CIP funds and AFRANA donations to advance the technical design and submit land-use permit applications. We have a Class 20 budget that has been adjusted to \$3.0 million due to inflation, with about \$150k already spent on planning and engineering. We have retained a structural engineer to provide certified construction drawings, and another consulting engineer is finalizing the detailed layout of over 500 deep pilings, 8000 lineal feet of substructure, and 25,000 square feet of special design features to sub-centimeter accuracy. This Final Design will soon be used to write bid specifications and RFPs for the four critical contracts needed to supply the materials and

construct the new boardwalk. All this is on-pace to happen this winter so we can award contracts in the spring and break ground next summer to comply with the terms of the \$600 grant from State Parks.

The project is ready to happen. All we need is your assurance that the funds will be found to pay for it.

The boardwalk in the Jackson Frazier Wetland is a rare gem. At a time when access to nature is vital to public health, it's loss would be unforgivable. The County must find a way to fund the project.

We on the Park Board regard the boardwalk replacement as a legacy project. Building an improved boardwalk capable of providing full, all-season public access to this remarkable place will be an accomplishment worthy of a great deal of civic and government pride. The people of Benton County value their parks, and the Boardwalk is probably the one that most people value the most. It is close to many, accessible to all, and lets us visit a truly wonderful place whenever we want, or need to. NAPE has designed the new boardwalk to last for many years, many decades – maybe even a century with the right care. And I believe it will get plenty of Tender Loving Care because it is so well loved by the people that live closest to it and visit it nearly every day.

“Here, certainly, is a beautiful piece of wildness, a place to teach us about change and how ephemeral nature is, a place to get lost in, a changing fragment of the past, a living museum, classroom and laboratory, a peaceful place where one can take refuge from the hassles of everyday life and gain inspiration, and a place close to the settled landscape where one can celebrate and wonder about the diversity of the natural world. People must tread softly here. We need space to wander with leisure. To sit. To watch. To listen. To learn. “

- Bob Frenkel

Bob Frenkel made that observation 25 years ago when he led the cooperative effort with the volunteers and the County to build the first boardwalk. It would be a terrible shame to lose the boardwalk during your watch.

The boardwalk project is in limbo. We desperately need you, Commissioners, to get involved and lead us to a decision about what to do next. Should we keep pursuing this design in hopes of receiving funding? If so, then what's the schedule? Don't make staff keep investing resources on a shovel-ready project that will never see a shovel. Or should we start over with a new plan? We can cancel the current State grant, then reapply around a new, smaller, more affordable project. Or should we spend on repairs to keep the existing boardwalk serviceable? What nobody wants is to keep spinning our wheels until the boardwalk is condemned.

Rebuilding the Jackson Frazier Boardwalk is something that will make everyone feel good.

It's the "win" that this BOC needs and our citizens deserve. Regardless of what else happens, you will be able to say "at least we saved the boardwalk". Joe Taxpayer will thank you for it.

Do the right thing. Find a way to fund a new boardwalk in 2024. But if that's a bridge-to-far, then please lead us to the answer of what to do instead.

Thank you. I will take questions.



Office: (541) 766-6082

Fax: (541) 766-6893

205 NW 5th St.
Corvallis, OR 97330

co.benton.or.us

Snapshot: County Administrator Travel VLOG - Public Outreach Campaign

Updated: August 30, 2023

Objective

Introduce Rachel McEneny, the new Benton County Administrator, to Benton County employees and community members through an engaging video blog (VLOG) documenting her journey to Oregon.

Themes

- About Rachel
- Why Rachel is Choosing Benton County
- The Journey
- Feedback from the Audience about Benton County
- Promote In-Person Meet-and-Greet Event with Rachel

Participants

- Rachel McEneny
- Cory Grogan
- Rachel's Father
- Yaeger
- John Harris

Equipment

- [VLOG KIT](#)
- [Smartphone gimble](#)
- [SelfieStick](#)
- [Phone mount](#)

Deliverables and Timeline

- **Equipment Info Sent to Rachel**
 - Cory to send equipment information to Rachel (by August 31).
- **Equipment Purchase Decision**
 - Decide whether Benton County will purchase the equipment or if Rachel will buy it personally (by September 20).

- **Commissioners Notification**
 - Cory to inform the Commissioners about the VLOG project (by September 10).
- **Event Coordination**
 - Coordinate with Tracy to gather information about the in-person meet-and-greet event with Rachel (by September 10).
- **Equipment Practice**
 - Rachel to practice using the VLOG Kit (by September 21).
- **Filming Dates: September 23, 25, 27**

Episode 1 - September 23: Leaving New York (Rachel)

- Intro to VLOG
 - Why filming the VLOG
 - Get to know a little bit about me
- Intro to dad and Yaeger
- Film surroundings with gimbal
- About the trip
- Something about Rachel that you should know
- Why coming to Benton County
- Best place to eat in Benton County
- Promote the in-person meet-and-greet event

Episode 2 - September 25 (Rachel)

- Intro
 - Elaborate on why filming the VLOG
 - Perhaps give another reason
- Describe where you are
- Film surroundings with gimbal
- Check in on dad and Yaeger
- Something about Rachel that you should know
- Something you are excited about coming to Benton County
- Best place to hike in Benton County
- Promote the in-person meet-and-greet event

Episode 3 - September 27 (Rachel)

- Intro
 - This is the third and last episode of the video blog of my journey to Benton County from New York. I am filming so you

can get to know me a bit better and to let you know why I am excited to come to Benton County.

- Describe where you are
 - Film surroundings with gimbal
 - Check in on dad and Yeager
 - Something about Rachel that you should know
 - Something you are excited about coming to Benton County
 - One thing I should know about Benton County
 - Promote the in-person meet-and-greet event
- **Post-Production: Filming Completed withing 48 hours of receiving video**
 - Post the VLOG to YouTube.
 - Share it on social media.
 - **Video Editing and Posting**
 - Cory, JonnaVe, and John Harris to edit and post/share the video.
 - John Harris to develop a VLOG template.
 - **Episode Posting on September 25, 27, and 29 (Cory or JV)**
 - YouTube
 - Benton County Employees' channels
 - Social media channels
 - **Analytics and Evaluation**
 - JV or Cory to pull analytics, including employee views, social media reach, and engagement.

This plan outlines the strategy and timeline for Rachel McEneny's VLOG as part of the public outreach campaign for Benton County, with specific tasks and dates for each phase of the project.

Additional Information

My hope is you will be able to shoot three blogs and send the video within 24 hours of shooting. We could then release the edited version within 48 hours of receiving the video.

You could drop video files on a Google Drive. My ask would be to try and keep any verbal sections to 2 to 5 minutes. Miscellaneous footage of driving, areas shots, Yeager and Dad should be between 15 and 30 seconds (unless dads talking and telling his story of course). Don't feel you have to pan in every shot, simple lock-down shots are great too. We can edit everything together.

For equipment, you may also want to get a selfie stick and a car mount for your phone. Shoot video driving, etc. Benton County can purchase the equipment if you would like.

Here are some shots to get:

- Front door getting ready to leave
- Packed car/truck
- Shots of dad and dog doing stuff
- Get footage of car driving
- Shots of surrounding
- Shots of signs in areas you are at or have been through

Episode 1: Leaving New York

- Intro: Introduce yourself and the blog: I'm Rachel McEneny the new Benton County Administrator, documenting my travel for you to get to know me a bit and share my excitement. A blog on the way to Oregon to show the progress of our trip. Learn about me, meet my dad and dog (shot of dad waving and dog). Say hi dad. (Idea is setting the stage for what to expect on the episodes, "I'll be posting a couple of updates about our journey to Benton County...")
- Excited to come to Benton County because ...
- Say hi dad ...
- Another shot of dog ...
- A little about me ...
- A shot from the road/first stop ...
- I'd like to learn more about Benton County, best place to hike ...
- I'm excited to meet folks in person, join me on _____ for _____
- That's all for my first check-in will be sending another update near our halfway point of the trip
- Thanks for tuning in and we'll be posting another update soon. Say bye dad and Yeager

Episode 2: Somewhere in middle America

- I'm Rachel McEneny the new Benton County Administrator, and this is our second v-log about our journey to Benton County. Checking in from _____ with my dad and dog. Shot of area. We're about halfway(?) to Oregon. What a journey. Can't wait to see the west coast. This is a blog on the way to Oregon to show the progress of our trip and to introduce myself to you. Shot of dog. Say hi dad. (Idea for this episode is more personal about you, dad, Yeager, hobbies, family, what you have been doing on the journey, what you have enjoyed seeing and what you are looking forward to in Benton County, both personally and professionally. I see this as the real "Get to know and introduce Rachel" episode.)" episode
- We really enjoy....
- So far we have seen some really cool things....
- Excited to come to Benton County because ...
- Say hi dad ...
- Another shot of dog ...
- A little about me ...
- A shot from the road ...

- I'd like to learn more about Benton County, best community event...
- I'm excited to meet folks in person, join me on _____ for _____
- That's all for our second installment, will be sending another update as we approach Oregon
- Thanks for tuning in, say bye dad and Yeager

Episode 3: Entering Oregon

Close to arriving, really excited be here, really excited to explore great places to go in Benton County thanks for watching (This is the final episode and should highlight your arrival to Oregon First, then eventually Benton County. What do you see, anything you didn't expect visually, how is your excitement level the closer you get. What does dad think, is Yeager looking excited, etc. Lastly it should be at your final destination to sign off, thank everyone for following and tuning in and let folks know you're excited to meet the community.)

Crossing borders entering Oregon, shots of signs, states, cities b-roll footage, making progress, Oregon and Benton County shots,

- I'm Rachel McEneny the new Benton County Administrator, and this is the third and final installment of our v-log about our journey to Benton County. We're entering Oregon! I'm so excited to be here, it's beautiful. Shots enetering Oregon, things that impress you, shot of dog. Dad, thoughts?
- How has the journey gone.
- Favorite parts, has anticipation been building.
- What's it been like documenting this experience with dad and Yeager
- Excited to come to Benton County because ...
- What do you want to say about the journey dad ...
- Another shot of dog ...
- A shot from the road ...
- I'd like to learn more about Benton County, best place to eat ...
- I'm excited to meet folks in person, join me on _____ for _____
- Thanks for tuning in, any closing thoughts for everyone dad?
- Signoff from Rachel, Dad and Yeager