



**MINUTES OF THE GOAL-SETTING MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 10, 2024**

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

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

Staff: Shannon Bush, Bailey Payne, Petra Schuetz, James Wright, Community Development; Marriah De La Vega, Maura Kwiatkowski, Amanda Makepeace, Board Staff; Adam Loerts, Information Technology; Tracy Martineau, Jo Missler, Regan Orsborn, Human Resources; Erika Milo, Board Recorder; Jesse Ott, Natural Areas, Parks, and Events

Guests: Joseph Franell, Rural Prosperity Partners; Christopher Jacobs, Economic Development Office; Alex Powers; Andrew Brown; Bernie Cummings

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Vice Chair Wyse called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Vice Chair Wyse chaired the in-person meeting; Chair Augerot attended the meeting virtually.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

Item 3.4 was removed from the agenda. Executive Session was added to the agenda.

3. Discussion Topics

3.1 Discussion Regarding a Resolution to Establish the Enterprise Zone School Support Fee Rate — Christopher Jacobs, Corvallis-Benton Economic Development Office

Jacobs advised the Board that new State legislation regarding Enterprise Zone School (EVS) Support provides for a fee rate of between 15 and 30 percent. The Corvallis School District (CSD) informed Jacobs it would like a resolution adopted consistent with the new legislation and to establish a fee at the minimum 15 percent. After September 23, if a resolution establishing a fee rate is not passed, the County cannot provide tax exemptions in the fourth or fifth years, which are critical for businesses that receive the exemptions. Jacobs stated that Enterprise Zones are one of the few economic development tools offered by the State of Oregon that can be utilized by local governments. The tool is used to incentivize new business investments by evading all local property taxes that are associated with an expansion or new construction over a fixed number of years. The County currently has two enterprise tax

exemptions approved for five years; those would not be affected by a resolution, but any new tax exemptions offered to the Enterprise Zone would be. It is a fee that is paid by the businesses in years four and five; and if the County passes a resolution, 15% of total tax exemption would be paid by the participating businesses to the local school district. The guidance Jacobs received indicates the possibility that school support fees will not increase the local school district budgets. Fees must be included as local revenue and school funding formula and in many scenarios will be reduced by State School Fund distributions. Jacobs believes the EZS is shifting the burden of responsibility for how schools are funded, and the primary benefactor is the State.

Malone asked if the fee itself will not create a financial difference for school funding, rather a difference in the source of funding.

Jacobs confirmed and expressed support for CSD's choice of the minimum required rate, which Jacobs believed will help businesses that need the tax exemptions in order to grow the County's long-term tax base. Jacobs stated the Philomath Enterprise Zone still needs to confirm its tax rate with the Economic Development Office.

Malone asked if the Philomath School District will also be affected by the EZS.

Crager confirmed, stating it is new legislation that became recently available.

Jacobs stated House Bill (HB) 2009 was passed in 2023, became a part of ORS 285C.067, and took effect in 2024.

Malone asked if the League of Oregon Counties (LOC) has given guidance for the local school districts.

Jacobs stated the LOC provided the context that was shared regarding how school district budgets might be affected, but there were no recommendations to school districts regarding percentages of rates.

Wyse asked if a resolution needs to be passed by September 23, 2024 for Philomath.

Jacobs confirmed; if it is not passed, Philomath will not qualify for a tax exemption.

Wyse asked if Philomath will be added to the resolution.

Jacobs said if the Economic Development Office can negotiate an acceptable rate, Philomath could be added.

3.2 Fairgrounds Strategic Plan Update – Jesse Ott, Natural Areas, Parks, and Events

Ott shared the preferred layout map from the Master Plan; a few projects have completed, while others are ongoing. Ott and Fairgrounds Manager Jennifer Martin

have a tour of the Fairgrounds with Business Oregon to celebrate the grant awarded to Benton County that provided funding to build a storage building, which is listed as Building 9 on the map. The goal was to use the funding amount of \$222,000 to build a new storage unit and upgrade the 4-H barn. Due to an increase in project costs, a majority of the funding went toward building the storage unit, with a small amount of funding remaining to begin work on the 4-H barn's roof. During the Master Plan study, the 4-H barn was reviewed as a potential rental facility for events such as barn dances or banquets. Ott stated the main difference with the preferred layout compared to the current Fairground's layout is the proposed expansions on Building 3. The expansion plan includes transforming the dirt floor arena into an exhibit hall with breakout rooms, adding new restrooms, and upgrading the HVAC. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was originally considered for the Fairgrounds, but that building was moved to the New Courthouse campus. Ott stated that if the County could acquire Building 14, which is located in the field behind the Fairgrounds, it could house the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Services.

Malone asked if that was common practice in other counties.

Ott confirmed, adding that level of collaboration is preferred with the 4-H leads and managers Ott spoke with. Ott discussed another major feature, which is a grand entry way to add a flow to the Fairgrounds layout.

Malone agreed with the idea to utilize the extra space Building 14 could provide for OSU Extension Services.

Ott agreed. Benton County services the OSU trail across from 53rd Street and the parking area for the Midge Cramer path. This not only serves the Fairgrounds, but also the community members who utilize those trails that are connected to a larger trail system. Ott considered the parking lot, along with Building 14, to be important and valuable space. Ott added that a marquee sign is expected to be installed in approximately one to two months.

Malone asked if the new sign will be the same size.

Ott confirmed and it will have the same frame, the interior was replaced. The old sign was approximately 11 years old.

Wyse asked if the new sign had to be paid in full or if there was a discount.

Ott stated that receiving a discount would have been a challenge. The Fairgrounds had contacted Information Technology (IT) to assist with the sign when it began to fail. Replacement parts were not available for purchase and the failing sign did not qualify for a refund. An important aspect of the Request for Proposals was to find a sign that would be longer-lasting than the one being replaced.

Ott provided a summary of NAPE's recently completed projects. NAPE's office was relocated to the Carriage House for \$10,000; the project was originally budgeted for \$75,000. The pony barns were converted to Recreational Vehicle (RV) storage space; this project was completed for \$6,765 in Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds, and it will generate approximately \$16,000 plus annually. The Solar Building was enclosed for \$45,484 in CIP funds and that building generates approximately \$20,000 annually. One of the projects on the Master Plan is to add a restroom facility, which will be a permitting challenge if the facility is connected to a building, but the facility could be free-standing. The commercial kitchen was completed for \$221,000 in Economic Development funds through CIP. The goal to utilize the kitchen more is ongoing; there is interest, and Ott has met with various groups such as the City of Corvallis and Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC). Additionally, NAPE is applying for a few grants and working on solutions to maximize use of the kitchen. There has been a 20% increase in kitchen use in 2024.

Ott discussed projects in process, including the new Storage Building funded for \$177,777 through the Business Oregon grant. The Benton Barn upgrades are beginning and costs \$100,000, which is also funded through the Business Oregon grant. The Auditorium Closet costs \$35,000, and funding for that project was through the Oregon Preferred Worker Program.

Ott provided estimates for the Exhibit Hall and the Covered Arena and restroom. The plans were originally developed five years ago and since then, prices have increased. The Arena project can range from \$11 million to \$17 million depending on the upgrades. The Outdoor Arena is a popular facility; but since it is outside, it has drainage issues, which make it unusable for a majority of the year. There was a plan to add an open-sided cover to allow year-round equestrian use.

Malone mentioned that a portion of the Outdoor Arena plan included fundraising.

Ott stated that fundraising has been difficult. The basis of the Master Plan was on maximizing the property use and value to benefit Benton County residents and visitors, taking into consideration economic viability and livability in the region, including historic, cultural, and recreational value. An Economic Feasibility Study was conducted in the Master Plan, and within the plan it was concluded that due to the access to existing large horse centers in the surrounding area, along with quality and pricing, it would be difficult for Benton County Fairgrounds to compete. Ott noted that Benton County has a dedicated equestrian community, but it would be challenging to compete for travelling large horse shows.

Malone asked about the cost estimate to improve the drainage issues at the Outdoor Arena.

Ott stated the estimate is \$20,000 or less to improve tile drainage. Another study was done for the Exhibition Hall, and the data provided that the similar facilities in Eugene did not compete directly with Benton County facilities; however, Linn County's facility

did complete. Benton County's Exhibition Hall would be more competitive in terms of being used as a small, concert-type venue.

Malone referenced page 73 of the meeting packet.

Ott described the quadrants that show the Fairgrounds' ability to compete anywhere that intersects with demand is where the County would be the most successful: fairs, festivals, banquets, and receptions.

Malone asked if the Exhibit Hall could be utilized for those events.

Ott confirmed. It would be more difficult to compete for conferences and horse shows. One reason the Fairgrounds is less competitive to attract more conferences is its location being too far from many hotels and other forms of economic activity. Ott discussed the viability of using the Exhibition Hall as a concert venue; although concert promoters would prefer a venue that does not have a dirt floor.

Additional projects that are a part of the Master Plan include: building a new Livestock Pavilion, new Entry Plaza, removal of two livestock sheds, and the Benton Barn renovation. Ott discussed the popularity of the RV storage.

Malone mentioned the popularity of the RV storage could change with the addition of a RV storage facility in Philomath.

Ott stated when the Master Plan was created in 2019, the Philomath facility was not public information and it could have an effect on the Master Plan because the Philomath facility will have 175 units for RV storage and more amenities. Ott discussed the amount of business the Fairgrounds RV storage facility receives during OSU football games and other event weekends.

Ott discussed the idea of buying or building a permanent stage instead of renting one.

Wyse mentioned amphitheater style setup.

Ott responded that Bruce Starker Arts Park has one and OSU has a few amphitheater stages, or the Whiteside Theatre. Ott stated that many promoters would consider booking the space for concerts that would otherwise book in Eugene.

Malone asked about the cost for a permanent stage.

Ott stated approximately \$100,000-plus for a mobile stage unit and a permanent structure would cost more.

Wyse asked what the OSU Extension building is used for year-round.

Ott stated that OSU Extension Services is currently operating from the Sunset Building, and the idea is to locate all of the operations at the Fairgrounds. Examples of programs OSU Extension provides include Willamette Valley Tourism, 4-H, and Master Gardeners.

Malone mentioned OSU Extension has some funding; approximately 10% of the actual cost.

Ott stated the Fairgrounds has been fiscally conservative to prepare for the land acquisition.

In regard to funding, the more expensive items, such as the Exhibition Hall on the Master Plan, have been unsuccessful in last few legislative sessions, but there is still possibility in the future. The smaller projects on the Master Plan could be funded through an assortment of County funds that may be eligible for gap funding; the Transient Lodging Tax (TLT), CIP, America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) interest earnings, and the Local Assistance and Travel Consistency Fund. Ott stated that TLT is likely the easiest to access, and there are opportunities to pursue lottery-backed bonds or a dedicated General Fund appropriation. Business Oregon has been collaborating with the County; the Fairgrounds received a \$94,000 assistance grant from Business Oregon because it is viewed as an economic driver. Ott plans to attend a Business Oregon economic meeting where public-private partnerships and connections are discussed; Ott will discuss the Historic Courthouse and the Fairgrounds at the event.

McEneny asked if Ott had applied for the \$94,000 grant that was awarded.

Ott confirmed.

Ott discussed community support and fundraiser opportunities for the Fairgrounds, and the Benton County Fair Foundation. The most important decision is the timing for when a concrete floor is installed at the Exhibition Hall; but once that is installed, it eliminates a winter riding option for many equestrians. That will not be an issue once a roof is installed for the outdoor arena.

Augerot discussed prioritization and strategy in terms of what projects are the most economically beneficial to the County. Augerot is interested in adding a permanent stage to extend its use and mentioned potential concerns from neighbors of the Fairgrounds.

Ott responded that the HVAC in the Arena Building was the most appealing project and would make a difference for the Fair and other events, even if it was done before the floor project. Ott believes that converting the Exhibition Hall is the greatest economic driver for the County.

Wyse was interested in the revenue produced from the RV facility and the option to create more RV storage space pending the outcome of the Philomath RV storage unit project. Wyse asked if the revenue from the RV facility could be used to fund the land acquisition.

Ott agreed with the popularity of the RV storage facility and believes it will continue to be successful.

McEneny asked if there are any barriers to increase the usage of the commercial kitchen and if people are charged a fee to use the space.

Ott confirmed there is a fee to use the kitchen, and staff is working with the Fair Board to bring a proposed fee structure for the commercial kitchen to Board of Commissioners. The greatest barrier is the kitchen shares the same space as the event building, which can create conflict with renting the spaces separately. Solutions to that issue are being discussed, such as navigating a schedule for the kitchen space.

Crager believed there are additional possibilities to explore if the plan to renovate the Exhibition Hall moves forward. Crager discussed the dedicated resources the Fairgrounds has access to such as the accumulated TLT and enterprise funds that could be pledged against the proposed debt. Crager suggested Ott research what other counties do in regard to debt issuance in relation to enterprise activities. Crager is not aware of any grant or award that would fund one of the larger projects in the Master Plan.

McEneny asked Crager about the current capital plan and capacity.

Crager was not suggesting beginning the larger projects immediately but to begin the analysis and financing process to understand what is needed to accomplish the Master Plan.

Wyse acknowledged a balance between staff capacity and being prepared.

Malone asked if the HVAC system could be added before the flooring was installed.

Ott believes so, as long as the system installed could handle the dust.

Malone mentioned the Benton County Fair appears to have fewer exhibitors than before. The data collected for the Master Plan is from 2019; Malone asked if it made sense to utilize Markin for updated data.

Ott agreed and stated staff would research the costs associated with collecting new data.

Augerot agreed with Crager's suggestion to consider a TLT-financed debt but would like a phased plan for the Exhibition Hall, along with a strategy to best utilize funding. Additionally, Augerot was interested in changing the Fairgrounds layout, including repaving and traffic flow management.

Ott agreed and mentioned the Oregon State Fair's layout as potential inspiration.

Wyse inquired about the repaving timeline.

Ott stated that Public Works has developed a few estimates that range from low cost to higher cost for improving some of the surfaces.

Malone asked for the current status of the TLT balance for Benton County.

Crager stated the current balance is approximately \$1.1 million available, with five remaining collections for the biennium. By the end of the biennium, Crager is estimating approximately \$2 to \$2.5 million. The quarterly amounts of the TLT continue to be higher than the previous year.

Wyse asked what portion of the TLT Crager's numbers were referencing.

Crager confirmed the amount came from tourism, whereas the remaining amount is distributed to the General Fund.

Vice Chair Wyse recessed the meeting at 10:09 a.m. and reconvened at 10:15 a.m.

3.3 Discussion Regarding Agritourism – Petra Schuetz, James Wright; Community Development

Wright stated the allowance of agritourism is based upon zoning under Benton County's current code. Wineries are allowed within Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zoning and Agricultural Industrial properties. EFU is regulated through State statute 215, which allows agritourism. Benton County's current code for Agricultural Industrial zones does not include an allowance for agritourism, but Community Development is updating its Comprehensive Plan to address the issues that ensure if the County permits agritourism within an Agricultural Industrial zone, it does not result in conflicts with neighboring properties.

Wyse provided an example of a winery that is zoned Agricultural Industrial and, therefore, cannot have a food truck. However, the winery's main competition is zoned EFU and can have a food truck on its premises. Wyse wants to allow the winery that is zoned Agricultural Industrial to have a food truck on its property and asked Community Development the best way to do so.

Schuetz stated the quickest way to make a change would be to rezone the property, but it is an expensive option; and based on how the property was developed, it would

be unlikely it is eligible to revert back to EFU zoning if it does not meet that zoning requirement. Schuetz mentioned that food trucks could potentially be a permitted use within Agricultural Industrial because that zoning is not state regulated. Schuetz asked if the County should undergo a legislative process for one instance of permitted use to change the development code, with the consideration that it benefits a single property. Community Development has undergone a public outreach effort regarding the Comprehensive Plan update with many property owners that have vital interests in agritourism and agriculture. Through that, staff has collected many points of interest and recommendations. Schuetz provided a timeline to the Comprehensive Planning process.

McEneny asked if Community Development recommends that property or business owners wait for the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Schuetz confirmed; Community Development is currently auditing County Code to ensure statutory requirements are met. Staff has identified approximately 20 House and Senate Bills dating back to 2008 that need to be incorporated in Phase 1 of the plan update. Schuetz explained the audit as being a part of the precursor to begin the policy work.

Wyse acknowledged the development process, but the Board had a meeting discussing the ability for all wineries to allow food trucks. Because that allowance is not correct, Wyse asked if the County could expedite the process or allow a temporary code change.

Wright's intention at the previous meeting was to provide a reinterpretation of specific coding within chapter 55 that would then allow for food carts. Wright sent letters to every winery within Benton County explaining the approval process and the path forward toward the allowance of food carts. Wright expressed caution that if the County approved agritourism within Agricultural Industrial zones, there are many properties zoned Agricultural Industrial that would be granted ability to have wineries, concerts, and food carts, which could have adverse impacts.

Wyse asked if it could be specified that only wineries within Agricultural Industrial zoning can have a food truck rather than allowing all properties zoned Agricultural Industrial to have a food truck.

Schuetz agreed it was an option.

Wyse asked if that change could be made temporary at a quicker rate pending the Comprehensive Plan update.

Counsel stated the Board can decide if it is a priority it wishes Planning staff to pursue and can direct staff to make an immediate change. Counsel discussed the unintended consequences of a temporary code change, and evaluating a potential code change through a comprehensive plan assessment allows staff to evaluate the ripple effect.

Additionally, the optics of having one individual's issue be resolved, when others have been waiting for a code update within the Comprehensive Plan update, could be problematic.

Wyse asked if a property owner were to apply for a food truck allowance and were denied, could the property owner appeal the denial to the Planning Commission.

Wright stated a winery undergoes a land use approval process to be established as a winery. The winery would then apply for Agricultural Events, which has to be renewed every five years, with a variation in review criteria dependent on the number of events a winery holds each year. Each allowance for a food truck prompts an Agritourism Event. The EFU properties visit Environmental Health first, then the Planning Department, and both departments cross-reference the information to ensure the property has allowable agritourism events.

Wyse asked about the path forward for a property if it is denied.

Schuetz stated it is a Ministerial Review, therefore, there is no appeals process.

Malone expressed a preference for consistency and waiting for the updated Comprehensive Plan. If the Board waits for the Comprehensive Plan, communication to the community on what is being done and who it could impact is essential.

Augerot agreed with Malone. Augerot expressed the desire to help the winery achieve a short-term solution but acknowledged the risk of the unintended consequences in doing so. Augerot stated the appropriate process is within the context of the Comprehensive Plan update that is utilizing community feedback to add a variation in perspective to any code changes. Augerot discussed the amount of staff time and public hearings it would require to remedy the code for two wineries and is not certain that should be prioritized within the Community Development Department.

Wyse agreed but also believed having an applicant wait over a year appeared ineffective. Wyse requested allowing food trucks for wineries zoned Agricultural Industrial be included in the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Schuetz confirmed that Agritourism and EFU land is a reoccurring community priority; along with housing, accessory dwelling units, transportation, and increasing density in unincorporated areas.

Malone stated the Board had voted to move forward with the Comprehensive Plan update using State funding.

Crager believed the process to update County Code will be more seamless once the Comprehensive Plan update was complete.

Schuetz stated after legislative decisions, the statutory requirement is to incorporate the changes into County Code within one year. Schuetz suggested the changes are batched; and on the same date annually, a regimented process is scheduled to incorporate any changes.

Wyse stressed the importance of setting reasonable expectations for community members.

Schuetz alluded to a State level interest in potential changes in agritourism.

Malone discussed changes within agritourism and rural communities.

Wyse asked if Augerot or Crager would reach out to the owners of Cardwell Hill Winery regarding the outcome of the conversation the Board had.

Crager will contact the owners.

3.4 Sustainable Materials Management Plan Task Force Update -
Sean McGuire, Sustainability; Bailey Payne, Community
Development

Wyse removed and rescheduled Item 3.4.

3.5 Broadband Update - Adam Loerts, Information Technology;
Joseph Franell; Rural Prosperity Partners

Franell reviewed the first grant opportunity that would have assisted in adding broadband in Oregon called the Broadband Technical Assistance Program (BTAP). Benton County was part of the application for technical assistance for the plan, but the County did not receive the funding. Additional funds were available in the Oregon Broadband Fund, and Rural Prosperity Partners (RPP) advocated for the funds to be allocated for additional broadband technical assistance grants within Oregon. The legislature was to discuss the topic during an emergency meeting, but it was removed from the agenda, therefore, the funding was not allocated to Benton County. The Broadband Deployment Program (BDP) is an infrastructure grant funded through ARPA. The BDP application opened on March 25 and closed April 25; due to a high demand of applicants, RPP does not expect an outcome until October. Franell discussed difficulties in the distribution of ARPA funding until the legislature corrected the allowable bandwidth of broadband for homes. The ARPA funds need to be expended by December 31, 2026; BDP is working to award the grant funding in order for the broadband infrastructure to be built within a two-year time period. Franell added that permitting can cause delays, especially if Federal lands are involved. Franell shared a map of applications to build broadband infrastructure. Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG) Regional Broadband Priorities partnered with Pioneer Telephone and applied to build 181 miles of fiber infrastructure that would serve 1,625 locations.

Malone stated that Pioneer Telephone has received a significant amount of grant funding and asked how BDP fits into the existing infrastructure.

Franell stated the infrastructure would be built in alternative areas that were not developed with the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund grants Pioneer Telephone had received. The BDP eligibility map excludes any area that has already received Federal funding and the application will fill the gaps where Pioneer Telephone is receiving Federal funding, thus adding the number of homes with fiber infrastructure.

Loerts stated the results of the broadband study showed that Benton County compared to other counties was in ideal standing in regard to broadband infrastructure; the BDP application is a strategic decision to improve broadband in Benton County.

Franell introduced the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, which comes from the Federal Infrastructure Bill. The Federal funding was distributed by the State and is managed at the State level within National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) parameters. Within the Federal rules, states can create their own rules and choose how to administer funding, with NTIA approval. Franell discussed the rules and challenge process, which is set to ensure and maintain the broadband map accuracy and to determine how funding will be distributed. Oregon was the 10th state to get Volume Two of the challenge process approved. The pre-qualification process, which is a requirement to participate in the BEAD program, did not begin on August 21, 2024 as RPP had anticipated. Franell discussed the prequalification process and recommended Benton County begin the process. The State requires BEAD applications to be sent by school district; Franell provided an example on how that worked. One strategy is for a county to lead a BEAD project application and split the work of various Internet Service Providers (ISPs) within a larger school district. There is a Federal mandate that a solution is made for every unserved and underserved location in Oregon and BEAD can contribute to that plan. RRP expects multiple rounds of applications because some areas in Oregon might not provide an application at first. Franell estimated prequalification opening up in the near future.

Malone asked for clarification regarding the coordination between the various programs and stated the importance that the programs harmonize in one comprehensive package.

Franell stated the Broadband Advisory Council for the legislature wanted to ensure accurate broadband maps before funding was spent. That type of map is always changing due to ongoing infrastructure projects, which has resulted in the challenge process for BDP and BEAD. Franell added that BDP grants will be awarded before BEAD grants and an area will not be awarded for a grant twice.

Malone appreciated the detail used to avoid overlap in the broadband programs.

Franell stated the estimates to solve the lack of broadband infrastructure for the State of Oregon costs more than the total amount both BDP and BEAD programs are awarding. Franell discussed the importance of resilient infrastructure. For example, eastern counties are at risk of losing all forms of communication in the event of a wildfire. Franell stated that Benton County can negotiate with ISPs on the type of infrastructure the County wants built. One of BEAD's requirements states an ISP must have at least 50 letters of support from at least 50% of the government agencies within the school district or the application will not be considered. Benton County's letter will be integral and could ensure the County has access to discussions with ISPs to benefit the community.

Loerts asked when the results of who is awarded during Phase One will be revealed.

Franell responded the prequalification window only allows applicants to prequalify for the program. BEAD is careful to only qualify applicants who have demonstrated experience in similar projects and are in good standing with the State and Federal governments. The 30-day window is to target the companies that qualify within BEAD standards; once applicants are selected, the grant application will open in the fourth quarter.

Loerts mentioned instances when the County did not qualify for similar grant opportunities in the past. Loerts then asked if similar criteria is being applied with BEAD and if Franell thinks Benton County will qualify.

Franell stated that for the Federal government to release the \$688 million in funding to the State, Oregon must have a plan to solve the digital divide for every household in Oregon or it will not receive the funding. Since the State has to solve that issue, funding will need to be awarded to build the infrastructure in the unserved and underserved communities within Benton County; the only reason the County would not be awarded funding is if no one applied in Benton County. The important question is if Pioneer Telephone will be the ISP building all the infrastructure or if Benton County will partner with multiple ISPs.

Loerts asked if Benton County will be awarded enough funding from the program.

Franell responded that the State is currently working through that issue. Oregon does not have enough funding to build fiber infrastructure for everyone, and the State Broadband Office does not know the exact costs yet. Franell discussed the unanswered questions regarding whether infrastructure will have to be built at a lower cost than what the State determines is the highest costing household; whether applicants will have to redo their applications to build to only certain locations, or if the State will find a way to subsidize the work. Franell has engaged in discussions with a representative from Starlink; the company is speaking with the NTIA regarding how Starlink could fit in with building broadband infrastructure. The solution will be hybrid,

meaning fiber will be built in; but since there is not enough funding, licensed or unlicensed fixed wireless and lower Earth satellite services could be added.

Once the infrastructure plan is confirmed, the Oregon Digital Equity Plan will ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to make use of the infrastructure. Grant funding is being used to implement the plan; \$9.9 million for digital equity has been allocated to the State and an additional \$7 million is expected to be available over the next two years. Franell discussed the benefits associated with the plan, including access to telehealth, reducing the cost of travel, e-commerce, and more.

The Affordable Connectivity Plan was a Federal program to subsidized broadband at approximately \$30 a month for low-income families. The program was not re-funded, and approximately \$250,000 Oregon households lost access to the subsidy and some lost the ability to connect to the internet. State Representative Pam Marsh convened a Broadband Affordability Work Group to solve that problem at the State level.

The Oregon Broadband Equity Coalition launched in February 2024; it is a Statewide group of organizations, governments, and ISPs advocating for digital equity.

Franell provided a BEAD timeline; applicants are currently at the gap between the challenge process and the applicant selection, which includes prequalification. RPP expects process Rounds Two and Three to be done in June 2025. Franell discussed additional grant opportunities, such as the ReConnect program from the United States Department of Agriculture. RPP's contract with the County continues through 2024, but RPP expects the project will take an additional one to two years.

Augerot stated that Franell sent the Board an inquiry to the Broadband Action Team (BAT), the role it plays, and whether the County should continue with the team. Augerot asked if that is the contract the County has through OCWCOG to support that entity.

Franell confirmed, stating the BAT consists of Benton, Lane, Lincoln, and Linn Counties. The total cost per year is \$80,000 for RPP to facilitate and collaborate; Benton County has contributed \$20,000 per year.

Augerot asked if that team coordinated with ISPs and local government representatives on broadband coverage.

Franell confirmed, stating that many participants believe the meetings should continue; many members want the 2025 meetings to focus on infrastructure and equity.

Malone asked if Benton County is participating effectively.

Franell confirmed that BATs and RPP were involved in amending the legislation regarding the broadband coverage map and the BAT that Benton County is involved in is one of the more effective teams in the State.

Malone asked for an updated Benton County BEAD map.

Franell will send the State BEAD map for Benton County.

Link to State map: <https://register.broadband.oregon.gov/register/bead/map>

{Exhibit 1: Oregon Broadband BEAD Map Email with Screen Capture}

3.6 Proclamations and Events Review – Rachel McEneny, County Administrator; Maura Kwiatkowski, Board of Commissioners Office

McEneny shared a comparison of Board-initiated Proclamations from 2021-2024. McEneny asked the Board for feedback on event priorities, the Public Information Officer's (PIO) budget, what events should have video production added, and what events should be celebrated annually. McEneny mentioned budgetary considerations, because more was spent in 2024 to celebrate the Benton County District Attorney's retirement.

Kwiatkowski noted it is important the Board lists meaningful events and how it would like to celebrate each event. Kwiatkowski mentioned the consideration of contingency funding because staff receive requests from other departments regarding events that those departments do not have the additional resources to commemorate.

Augerot supports adding celebrations to priority proclamations but suggested that three or four events are sponsored by the Board of Commissioners Office and additional events be supported by other departments. The Board should rotate which events are celebrated to highlight different communities and to reflect various community needs.

Wyse agreed, but believed four events was too many. If another department is requesting the Board host an event for on its behalf, that department should be responsible or share responsibility for the budget. Wyse requested input on a reasonable amount before setting a budget limit.

Kwiatkowski responded the suggested budget could be determined by the scope of each event. For example, staff can compare the associated costs of a small breakfast to a luncheon with guest speakers, along with the added costs of using a videographer or providing mementos.

Wyse asked if using a videographer for an event would come from the PIO budget.

McEneny stated the budget source is a continuing discussion within the Board of Commissioners Office. McEneny offered creating a budget line specifically for events.

Malone suggested staff identify the costs of events done in the previous year and discussed the importance of a few events and a rotation schedule for events. For example, do not add too many events in one month, but spread the events throughout the year. Malone agreed on sharing the costs with other departments for requested events and to maintain a rotation in order for different groups to have an equal amount of recognition.

McEneny will return with an annual event calendar proposal and provide recommendations at an upcoming Goal-setting meeting.

4. County Updates

4.1 County Administrator Updates: Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

- The County has hired a limited duration PIO, Anne Thwaites, who will begin on September 16, 2024.
- Busy with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) search; the interview process will happen throughout September.
- The Gallup Poll is in progress; the poll reviews changes that interest County employees and work environment satisfaction.
- Met with Gordon Zimmerman who is the CEO of Citizens' Bank and discussed community engagement.
- Attended a Civic Outreach luncheon at Garland Nursery.
- Met with the Albany City Manager, Peter Troedsson, to discuss shared services opportunities.
- Took a Rural Timber Tour.
- Had a monthly meeting with the City Manager of Philomath, Chris Workman.
- Met with Benton County residents Ken Eklund and Nancy Whitcombe to discuss Coffin Butte Landfill and shared issues.
- Will attend the International County Management Conference as a part of McEneny's continuing education for Professional Organizational Certification.
- Benton County is hosting the Association of Oregon Counties District 5 meeting on September 13, 2024.

4.2 Commissioner Updates: Benton County Commissioners

Commissioner Augerot:

- Met with constituents over the previous few weeks, two of which will require a follow-up. One resident lives in the Polk County section of Kings Valley; the resident was using Benton Area Transit (BAT) services to get to doctor's appointments in Corvallis. According to the BAT service manager, the resident

will not be eligible for BAT services as of October 2024. Crager is looking into alternative options; staff reached out to Chariots that serves Polk and Marion Counties regarding cost coverage, but Chariots declined. Chariots manager recommended the County reach out to the Polk County Board of Commissioners. Augerot spoke with Commissioner Gordon last week regarding the correspondence; Augerot requested a cost estimate of the transportation services that was provided to the resident.

Crager stated staff has worked with OCWCOG and with Community Action to identify any support services that could work for the resident. Crager agreed it is most effective to work with Polk County to share cost coverages; Crager will create a cost estimate of BAT services for the resident.

Malone spoke with Lisa Scherf at the City of Corvallis; Scherf's approximate estimate for a year of services was \$8,000 to \$10,000. The main issue is it takes the BAT driver an entire working day to service this one resident. Due to a lack of drivers and vehicles, an exception was made for a year, but the resident was notified the service was limited duration and ends in October.

Crager is hopeful the County can share the service cost with Polk County or find a more efficient way to provide transportation services.

Malone described the isolated area where the resident lives.

Augerot mentioned that Polk County Commissioners are discussing a potential to add their own service because Polk County is currently reliant on Chariots. Augerot wants to continue discussions and research how to address the resident's transportation for the year.

Malone stated the resident votes in Benton County due to living in the Kings Valley Fire Department District.

- Received a letter from a community member who is a member of one of the unions that would have been involved in the Courthouse construction. Augerot responded to the letter but also sent the inquiry to staff to provide an in-depth answer. Crager and Stockhoff provided an explanation of the situation, and the draft letter is in the Commissioners' email to review before Augerot sends.

Wyse is in agreement with the draft Augerot provided.

- Continues to work with OCWCOG and the Community Services Consortium (CSC) regarding the revised government structure. A memorandum of the proposal will be provided to each Board, and the Boards will have to act upon the memorandum before the restructuring of OCWCOG and CSC.

Commissioner Malone:

- Attended OSU's first football game of the season.
- Discussed the Public Safety Chili Cookoff; Malone acknowledged Sheriff Van Arsdall's community engagement and encouragement of staff to participate. The fundraiser is through the Four Spirits Foundation.
- Met with Philomath City Manager Chris Workman.
- Met the new City Planner for Philomath and Adair Village.
- Attended Donna Schmidt's retirement party from the Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Attended the Timber Tour and saw an onsite timber operation. Malone discussed Starker Forest Inc. and Thompson Timber Company.
- Mentioned a highway/freeway interchange on 99 West and gathered more information on a \$12 million project required by the City of Corvallis because the hospital is expanding. Malone discussed hospital challenges and stated the hospital's business model is not working well.
- Will attend the AOC District 5 meeting.
- Will attend the Board of Directors Legislative Committee meetings.

Wyse received an email regarding the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties (CFTLC) special voluntary dues; the Board voted to not pay the dues.

Augerot responded to the email and informed the CFTLC on the Board's decision.

Commissioner Wyse:

- Will attend a CFTL membership meeting.
- Attended the Timber Tour; Wyse appreciated the partnerships with farms, timber companies, and agriculture.
- Attended the Chili Cookoff Fundraiser.
- Attended the Blackberry Jam event at Heritage Hall in Monroe and toured that facility a few weeks prior; Heritage Hall has community events every Friday.
- Attended the Wildfire Hazard Map Meeting.
- Attended the OSU football game.
- Attended a Community Development staff meeting.
- Will attend the AOC District 5 meeting.
- The Albany Mushroom Festival will be held at Timberland Park on September 22.
- The Kings Valley History Day will be held at Fort Hoskins on October 5.

Crager stated Oregon Governor Tina Kotek's office has contracted with a company that works with small rural districts to help measure their readiness for developing a workforce and affordable housing. The company is interested in Alsea for housing and also potentially expanding its sewer and water capacity to meet development needs. Benton County has met with the team that includes the contractor, Michael Morder, Courtney Flathers, and approximately five other agencies that are a part of the Regional Solutions Team to discuss water and sewer service districts. Wyse and Crager will be in Alsea on September 23. Additionally, Benton County is working with

Alsea and two other small communities on a \$15 million Environmental Protection Agency grant to stand up resiliency hubs for emergency preparedness.

5. Announcements

No announcements were made.

6. Other

No other business was discussed.

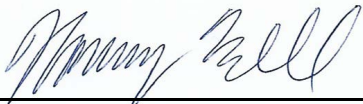
7. Executive Session

Vice Chair Wyse recessed the Board of Commissioners Goal-setting meeting into Executive Session under ORS 192.660 2d and called for a break at 12:37 p.m. The Board entered Executive Session at 12:44 p.m.

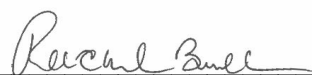
Executive Session adjourned at 1:32 p.m.

8. Adjournment

Vice Chair Wyse adjourned the meeting at 1:32 p.m.



Nancy Wyse, 2025 Chair

Erika Milo, Recorder

Rachel Bulder, Transcriptionist

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