



Board of Commissioners

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**MINUTES OF THE GOAL-SETTING MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DECEMBER 9, 2025**

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

Elected Officials: Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff; Ryan Joslin, District Attorney

Staff: Rachel Bulder, Maura Kwiatkowski, Board Staff; Carly Fredericks, Communications Coordinator; Cory Grogan, Anne Thwaites, Public Information Officers; Amanda Garcia, Sara Hartstein, April Holland, Health Services

Guests: Michael Skipper, CFM Advocates

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Wyse convened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and introductions were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

3. Announcements

No announcements were made.

4. Work Session

4.1 *Federal Legislative Update and 2026 Preview – Michael Skipper, Senior Vice President for Federal Affairs, CFM Advocates

Skipper reviewed recent projects that Benton County successfully secured funding for, including Rural Wastewater, the Monroe Health Center, and Regional Public Safety Radio Infrastructure. In 2025, many federally-funded grant programs were cancelled or

delayed, and the full-year continuing resolution Congress passed delayed the appropriation process. All the projects put forward for Benton County in Fiscal Year 2025 were eliminated by the year-long continuing resolution; the goal for Fiscal Year 2026 was to resubmit the same projects from 2025. Skipper stated the appropriations process appears to have resumed progress. Skipper provided a Federal-level update. The government shutdown ended, Republicans are expected to release a version of their own healthcare bill to vote on, and there are bipartisan proposals that are increasing in popularity. There is a possibility Congress will let the insurance subsidies expire, which will cause healthcare premiums to increase significantly. Skipper believed Congress will pass regular appropriations or a short-term resolution to avoid another government shutdown. Skipper discussed a number of Executive Branch actions that are being contested by cities, counties, states, and other entities. The Supreme Court is expected to rule on a number of these contested actions, such as sanctuary jurisdictions and tariffs. Skipper shared a 2026 outlook. Skipper believed that many counties, including Benton County, will face a number of challenges, but few potential Federal level opportunities. For example, many of the new programs that were authorized and funded under the bipartisan infrastructure law are in their final rounds of guaranteed funding. Skipper stated that 2026 is likely the final year to push for infrastructure funding. In addition to the Surface Transportation reauthorization package, the Farm Bill is due for reauthorization in 2026, and counties will advocate to ensure the bill reflects investments in rural development, forest management, and relevant nutrition programs. Skipper discussed bipartisan progress on the National Environmental Policy Act and environmental permitting reform; if passed, this will change the building process on public lands. Republicans have considered a second reconciliation package, but there is no consensus on what would be included in this package, because a majority of priorities were included in the previous package. Skipper stated that both parties are focused on the 2026 election cycle. Several states have decided on mid-decade redistricting, but it is too early to gauge the impacts.

Malone asked when the court case against imposed tariffs will likely receive a decision.

Skipper did not have information regarding the Supreme Court's timeline for a decision.

Malone discussed the Federal Government returning the Coast Guard helicopter to its location in Newport; however, Representative Gombert is not confident that a resolution has been reached. Additionally, local businesses in Newport have been contacted in regard to resources such as water that could benefit a rumored U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility.

Skipper did not have additional information regarding a potential ICE facility in Newport.

Malone asked if there were opportunities in 2026 for County projects that were previously rejected for funding.

Skipper confirmed and believed there will be many opportunities for programs in rural communities, including projects involving renewable energy infrastructure.

McEneny discussed the Farm Bill and the importance for the community to access all relevant opportunities. McEneny asked if Skipper had additional information regarding subsidies for the timber industry, because that industry is impacted by tariffs imposed by the current Administration.

Skipper will follow up with relevant information.

McEneny asked if the Federal-level changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will cause individuals who cannot afford their new healthcare plans to lose coverage from their plans.

Skipper confirmed.

McEneny asked where County staff and community members can access the most accurate information regarding healthcare.

Skipper will add the Commissioners to the mailing list that CFM provides it healthcare clients. Skipper stated if the enhanced subsidies do not pass, many people will likely be taken off their health insurance.

Holland discussed potential changes to subsidies with ACA and Medicaid changes; as funding decreases, the need will increase, and the Health Department will need to leverage all potential opportunities. Health misinformation can lead to an increase in infectious disease outbreaks. Holland stated that the community will benefit from an accurate Public Health communication plan.

McEneny mentioned that the Farm Bill addresses rural healthcare infrastructure and believed there would be funding structure opportunities for the County's Community Health Centers.

Shepherd mentioned the possibility of significant changes to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that could affect those on subsidized housing. Shepherd is wary that changes regarding housing affordability will be reconsidered. Shepherd added that Oregon departed from providing rental assistance toward transitional housing. Shepherd asked if Skipper had any insight on what HUD is working toward.

Skipper stated the plans for HUD were indeterminate. Skipper added that the appropriations process through Congress is the most direct way to delay any major changes in programs.

Malone stated H.R. 1 will have approximately a \$1 billion impact to Oregon's revenue, because the state is tied to the Federal tax structure. Benton County is approximately \$1 million short of completing the Monroe Health Clinic project. Malone mentioned the State's deficit in shelter funding and asked about potential Federal-level funding opportunities.

Skipper stated there were some opportunities, but they will be difficult to access. Skipper suggested Benton County focus on State opportunities or the Congressionally directed funding process; there are not many grants geared toward shelter funding.

4.2 Local Public Health Modernization Planning – Sara Hartstein, Public Health Division Director; Amanda Garcia, Quality Improvement Coordinator

Hartstein stated that modernization planning was not a new concept, rather the standard of what every local government should be doing in public health. The effort launched in 2015 to ensure every community in Oregon received access to a core set of healthcare services. In Oregon, the framework was developed to be governmental public health, but it has since grown to include tribal health departments and community-based organizations. Hartstein described the resource limitations, challenges, and outcomes from gaps in addressing health equity. Over one third of Oregon communities had limited capacity for the foundational public health functions and there was significant progress in closing the gap. This led Oregon to develop a statewide framework for programs that included communicable disease control, prevention and health promotion, environmental health, and access to clinical preventable services. Oregon developed a Public Health Modernization Manual; Harstein shared examples from the manual. Hartstein reviewed Oregon's proposed phases for foundational programs, Benton County is currently in Phase 1, which is Communicable Disease Control and Environmental Health. The County has used funding toward the Communicable Disease Manager position, Client Health Adaptation Planning, domestic well water testing, and foundational capabilities such as communications. Hartstein added that Benton County is aligned with the Foundational Public Health Services National framework. During the 2013-2015 biennium, the Oregon legislature passed a bill to implement a task force to review what foundational services should look like in Oregon. The task force recommended that Oregon adapt from the National framework; and the following biennium, the recommendations were codified and developed into a manual. The Cost in Capacity Assessment estimated that Oregon required an additional \$210 million per biennium to implement everything in the manual. The County did not receive additional Public Health Modernization funding for the 2025-27 biennium due to the budget landscape. Harstein shared a graph that detailed the funding structure.

Malone asked about funding differences between 2023-25 and 2025-27.

Hartstein stated that for 2025-27, the State withheld \$5 million in Public Health Modernization funding for community based organizations.

Hartstein reviewed accountability metrics. The County had received an additional \$30,000 in modernization funding for meeting its measures; that funding is currently being held to fill any budget gaps for the upcoming fiscal year. The County is required to submit a Local Public Health Modernization Work Plan every biennium for local and regional funding. Hartstein shared the funding metrics for the 2023-25 biennium. The County is participating in an evaluation of accountability metrics at the statewide level. Local governments are discussing methods to maintain the current vaccine rates in Oregon. Hartstein shared the 2025-27 goals for public health, deliverables, work plan, and the Public Health Modernization requirements. Hartstein reviewed the current local Public Health Modernization plan, which the County is required to adopt, implement, monitor, and evaluate. The local plan will be used to inform decision making, support funding opportunities, and identify quality improvement needs.

Wyse asked about the major challenges associated with Public Health Modernization planning.

Hartstein stated funding, the Federal landscape, and misinformation.

Malone stressed the importance of frequent Public Health updates considering the fluidity of the State and Federal budgets. Malone believed a majority of the legislative short-session will be devoted to discussing the \$1 billion budget deficit. Malone asked about methods to ensure the community receives accurate health information.

Harstein stated the Health Department has been trying to amplify information that is sourced from the West Coast Alliance.

Holland added there are opportunities to share certain information with specific groups. Opportunities can be used to add messaging to localize the information and provide context. Holland stressed the importance of presenting accurate health-related information in a non-confrontational way to avoid politicizing facts.

Chair Wyse recessed the meeting at 10:09 a.m. and reconvened at 10:19 a.m.

4.3 2026 Board of Commissioners Calendar – Maura Kwiatkowski, Administrative Services Manager, Board of Commissioners Office

Kwiatkowski acknowledged differences in the 2026 Board Meeting calendar that was provided in the packet, including two proposed evening Board meetings (April 21 and July 21), and indicated Department Head meeting dates had been adjusted to create a

more balanced schedule. Kwiatkowski stated the Corvallis-Benton Joint Work Session proposal was not reflected on the draft 2026 calendar, but it could be discussed.

Wyse stated the Philomath City Council had also requested a joint work session.

Malone requested more information regarding the content that will be discussed at a Corvallis-Benton joint meeting.

Shepherd stated the City of Corvallis wanted to discuss funding for housing, the Coordinated Homeless Response Office, and the dedicated funds for homelessness from the local option levy. The City would like to discuss how and where the levy funding will be spent.

Kwiatkowski asked if the Board had any immediate changes it would like to make to the proposed schedule.

Shepherd asked if the two Legislative Breakfast meetings had been scheduled.

Kwiatkowski confirmed.

Shepherd preferred the Corvallis-Benton Joint Meeting be scheduled during the first quarter of 2026.

4.4 2026 Board of Commissioners Committee Assignments – Maura Kwiatkowski, Administrative Services Manager, Board of Commissioners Office

Kwiatkowski noted that Shepherd is the 2026 Chair for the Willamette Criminal Justice Council (WCJC).

Wyse did not request any changes to the committee assignments.

Shepherd did not request any changes, but noted the City of Corvallis Urban Renewal Agency Budget Committee should be on Shepherd's assignment list instead of the City of Corvallis Budget Committee. Shepherd is now the Co-chair of the AOC Governance Revenue and Economic Development Steering Committee. Shepherd requested removal of the Natural Resources Steering Committee; that committee is on Malone's assignment list.

McEneny asked about adding the Sustainable Materials Management Plan (SMMP) to the assignment list and if the committee assignments could be added to the County website.

Kwiatkowski agreed on adding the committee assignments to the website; it is being discussed during staff's webpage audit meetings.

The Board agreed.

Shepherd asked if the Mental Health, Addictions, and Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee had resumed meetings.

Holland stated the Committee is on hiatus due to restructuring, but will resume in 2026.

Shepherd asked if United Way could be moved to the 'Other Committees' section.

Malone is no longer on the Linn-Benton Loop Advisory Committee. Malone requested the SMMP be referred to on the assignment list as the Solid Waste Task Force (HB 3794).

Wyse should be listed as an Executive Committee Member for Cascades West Economic Development District instead of the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments.

Shepherd was appointed to the Downtown Vitality Strategic Task Force and is Co-chair of a subcommittee within that task force.

4.5 2026 Proclamations and Board of Commissioners Events – Maura Kwiatkowski, Administrative Services Manager, Board of Commissioners Office

Kwiatkowski suggested reviewing first quarter 2026 proclamations.

Wyse stated the calendar was an useful guide in 2025 and noted the Chair has the ability to be flexible when deciding the Proclamations schedule.

The Board discussed the 2026 first quarter proclamations and will review the second quarter schedule during the Goal-setting meeting in February.

5. New Business

5.1 Corvallis Public Schools Foundation Sponsorship Request: Hands Across Corvallis January 27, 2026 Event – Nancy Wyse, Chair, Board of Commissioners

Wyse discussed the sponsorship request.

Malone asked if the Corvallis Public Schools Foundation has requested sponsorship previously.

Wyse confirmed the Board sponsored \$1,000 in 2025.

Shepherd wants to attend and support the event, but believed the Board should sponsor at \$500 instead of \$1,000.

Malone agreed with sponsoring \$500.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to sponsor the Hands Across Corvallis Breakfast at the \$500 Supporter level. Malone seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

6. County Administrator and Assistant County Administrator Updates

Rachel McEneny, County Administrator:

- Attended the County's Veterans Day Event.
- Attended the AOC Conference.
- Upcoming City Leadership Meeting.
- Upcoming holiday-themed staff parties.
- Ongoing external and internal food drives.
- Active interviews for the Human Resources Director position.
- Recruiting for County Counsel.

7. Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Shepherd:

- Expressed optimism for Samaritan Health Services affiliation with MultiCare out of Washington.
- Attended the AOC Conference.
- Discussed the Corvallis Downtown Vitality Strategy Task Force; it consists of 40 members that are divided into four groups (one executive committee and three subcommittees). Shepherd will update the Board when the task force generates action items.
- Attended an AOC Board meeting as the District Board Alternate.
- Attended Winter's Eve in Downtown Corvallis.
- Attended the Holiday Parade in Downtown Corvallis.
- Discussed the potential ICE Facility in Newport. Shepherd has spoken about the issue with Lincoln County Commissioner Walter Chuck and Newport Mayor Jan Kaplan. Shepherd discussed an upcoming opportunity for Benton County to

express support for Newport and other coastal communities. Malone agreed with providing support.

- Shepherd stated the bylaws of WCJC have changed to make the Commissioner member the permanent Chair of WCJC. Shepherd discussed moving the management of the WCJC meetings to the Board of Commissioners Office.

McEneny commented on the request to manage the WCJC meetings in the Board of Commissioners Office and believed the task could be managed by Board staff.

Kwiatkowski wrote a memorandum regarding governance support for the WCJC and how it can be absorbed by Board staff.

Joslin supported the change.

The Board expressed support.

Shepherd stated the first WCJC meeting in 2026 will be held the last week in January.

Commissioner Malone:

- Discussed the Samaritan Health Services merger with MultiCare.
- Attended the AOC Conference.
- Attended the Corvallis Rotary meeting.
- Attended the Leadership Summit; Malone discussed topics at the Summit.
- Appointed Chair of the Solid Waste Task Force (HB 3794); Malone discussed the task force.
- Met with Representative Ed Diehl.
- Discussed the Transportation package.

Commissioner Wyse:

- Met with Brenda Bateman, Director of the Department of Land Conservation and Development.
- Wyse was reappointed to the Local Officials Advisory Committee.
- Attended the Leadership Summit and provided a summary of the meeting experience.

8. Other

No other business was discussed.

9. Adjournment

Chair Wyse adjourned the meeting at 11:53 a.m.



Nancy Wyse, 2025 Chair



Rachel Bulder, Recorder

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