



Board of Commissioners

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**MINUTES OF THE GOAL-SETTING MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JANUARY 13, 2026**

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

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

Staff: Rachel Bulder, Maura Kwiatkowski, Board Staff; Cory Grogan, Anne Thwaits, Public Information Officers; Laurel Byer, Gary Stockhoff, Public Works; Shannon Bozigar, Community Development; Sean McGuire, Sustainability

Guests: Zack Reeves, CFM Advocates; John Bosket, DKS Associates

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Malone convened the meeting at 9:01 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 State Legislative 2026 Preview and Priorities – Zack Reeves, CFM Advocates; Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator

Crager stated the Legislative short session for Oregon will begin in February and to prepare for that, Reeves will provide a preview to the Board.

Short sessions, which were approved by voters in 2010, are used to balance the biennial budget, but legislators also use short sessions as an opportunity to pass legislation. Approximately 300 bills are expected to be introduced. Reeves discussed the special session in 2025, which took place after the failure to pass House Bill 2025. The Legislature passed House Bill 3991 with one Republican vote. The bill includes a six-cent gas tax increase, a payroll tax increase, a few registration fee increases, additional fee increases, and a few changes to the highway cost allocation study. Reeves stated that House Bill 3991 was widely unpopular with a portion of Oregon's population, thus beginning a citizen-driven petition to collect signatures to add parts of the bill to the ballot. The petition was successful, and that measure as of now, will be on the ballot. At last week's Oregon Transportation Forum, Governor Kotek called for a repeal of House Bill 3991 entirely. Reeves stated that House Bill 3991 and the tax disconnect will be the most important topics for the upcoming session.

Reeves discussed budget challenges, including the \$800 million impact of H.R. 1 to the General Fund. The revenue forecast on February 4 will provide legislators with final budget numbers to determine how much needs to be cut from the budget. Reeves discussed session themes, including federal tax disconnect, federal-level immigration response, economic development, and housing. Reeves stated that although tax cuts are popular with citizens, the State is in need of the additional revenue to pay for existing programs and services.

There will be numerous bills focused on immigration; however, the State has limited tools to respond to federal action on immigration.

Governor Kotek's Prosperity Council is beginning its work and will have proposals regarding economic development and affordability; housing related bills are expected at the short session.

Reeves discussed Benton County specific issues, including the Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) and County Assessment Function Funding Assistance (CAFFA) reform. Reeves stated that CFM lobbyists will not be advocating for funding any county-level projects, but will proactively work on changes to TLT. The proposal is to change the 70/30 TLT proportion to 60/40; 60 percent of TLT would go toward the general fund of cities and counties and 40 percent would go toward direct marketing organizations for tourism. Reeves stated that CAFFA reform was unlikely to pass during this session, but it had made significant progress in 2025.

Crager believed CAFFA reform will be important for many counties, adding that the funding will pay for appraisers; and when appraisals are being done, that can impact County revenue. Crager stated that Benton County has a backlog of properties that can qualify for reassessment.

Reeves stated that CAFFA has been viewed skeptically by other entities such as school districts, cities, and fire districts, because the reform does request those entities contribute slightly more to pay for additional assessors.

Crager discussed additional Benton County-related issues, including operational challenges within Behavioral Health and the ability to collect State funding that is crucial to fill the operational void at the Crisis Center. That issue has been discussed at the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), as it affects certain counties in Oregon. Crager added housing as a topic, specifically the funding gap for Benton County shelters.

Wyse asked Reeves if TLT applied to both counties and cities. Reeves confirmed.

Wyse asked about jurisdictions that are grandfathered in and whether they can maintain their current rate. Reeves confirmed.

Shepherd added that TLT changes would allow jurisdictions to change anything after 2003, but not prior to 2003.

Malone asked how close TLT came to passage during the 2025 legislative session.

Reeves stated it passed the House with 31 votes, but it did not receive a vote in the Senate due to political-related issues happening during the end of the session.

Wyse asked about Senate Bill 100.

Reeves discussed challenges regarding Senate Bill 100; there is general consensus the current system should be updated, but not many can agree on how that should be done. Reeves believed there will be an effort to work on it and it will involve input from counties. Reeves mentioned the 2026 gubernatorial election and stated a repeal of House Bill 3115 will be on the ballot. House Bill 3115 limited the ability for cities to remove individuals camping in public spaces. Grants Pass challenged that bill in the United States Supreme Court and won the case. The popularity of House Bill 3115 varies by jurisdiction. Reeves reviewed the short session schedule, which is constitutionally restricted to 35 days.

Crager asked when bills drafts will be available.

Reeves stated January 16 is the deadline for legislators to introduce bills and have them filed as pre-session bills by the Chief Clerk's Office in both chambers. Although the bills will be in the system by January 19, they will not be available until January 28 at the earliest.

Shepherd discussed TLT, stating it was voted on in the House, but it did not receive votes in the Senate. Shepherd received feedback that encouraged electeds to express their support on TLT reform to State Senators.

Malone asked if expressing support needed to be formalized by a Board vote.

Crager suggested waiting to formalize support until when the TLT Bill is released.

The Board confirmed support.

Malone asked about a proposal regarding the utilization of alternative funding for the Oregon Department of Transportation's backlog.

Reeves could not provide information regarding that question but believed the 2027 session would work on the Transportation Bill.

Shepherd discussed an item regarding language corrections to a policy within the Oregon Government Ethics Commission that the Governance, Revenue, and Economic Development Steering Committee was working on.

Malone asked for clarification regarding the budget and H.R. 1.

Reeves stated there has been discussion to not connect in some areas with the Federal tax code due to significant changes within the code.

4.2 Safe Streets and Roads for All: Safety Action Plan Status Update – Laurel Byer, Engineer and Survey Manager, Public Works; John Bosket, DKS Associates

Byer stated that staff is currently finalizing the Transportation Safety Action Plan (TSAP) to bring to the Board in March 2026 for final approval.

Bosket stated the grant program for TSAP requires a documentation of leadership commitment to the project, including a governing body publicly committed to an eventual goal of zero roadway fatalities and serious injuries. Bosket stated the TSAP vision statement and grant requirements were also discussed with the project's task force. Bosket provided feedback from the task force, including support for the Vision Zero goal, a target date, an inter-milestone date of 2040, and an alignment with the City of Corvallis' vision statement. Lastly, the task force recommended that the realities of funding and staff resources be acknowledged and to potentially refer to the 'vision statement' as a 'goal.'

Byer mentioned during the previous meeting in which TSAP was discussed with the Board there was expressed interest in what Corvallis planned to use for a vision statement.

Bosket shared the City's draft vision statement; Corvallis used similar language that the City of Portland used in their Vision Zero plan. Bosket discussed the vision statement the Board agreed on in 2025 and shared a new recommendation for a vision statement that does not include an inter-milestone. Bosket shared an example statement that would more closely align with the City of Corvallis' draft vision statement. Bosket mentioned there were risks of not receiving the grant award if an application adopts a vision statement that did not reflect a strong commitment.

Wyse expressed preference for the drafted vision statement that was proposed in February 2025, which included an option for inter-milestone language. Wyse was in agreement to using the term 'goal' instead of 'vision statement' and wanted the incorporation of more direct language. Wyse stated that Benton County's vision statement did not need to align with the City of Corvallis vision statement.

Shepherd agreed with Wyse. Shepherd requested the term 'move towards' was replaced by the word 'eliminate' to affirm the use of direct language in the County's goal in the draft statement. Shepherd was in favor of incorporating a project check-in.

Malone preferred eliminating the 2035 inter-milestone goal because there has been an increased trend in fatalities and serious injuries compared to a few years prior.

Bosket confirmed that trend was accurate.

Malone discussed potential factors that could contribute to the increase in roadside fatalities and injuries. Malone agreed with the proposal to eliminate fatalities and roadside injuries by 2040 and preferred setting goals that could be achieved. Malone expressed a preference for the City of Corvallis to have similar goals with the County, considering the two jurisdictions share a number of roads, but did not believe the County should wait for the City to set its goals before proceeding with its own.

Byer stated that Benton County's TSAP will focus only on County-owned roads. The County will share its analysis with the State, but the County cannot control how the State spends its funding on State-owned roads within Benton County.

Wyse asked how the County will receive its grant funding.

Byer stated the County is required to fund in advance and is then reimbursed through requests to the Federal government. Byer is planning to apply for implementation grant funding.

Wyse asked if any portion of the TSAP funding can be allocated toward alcohol and drug use education within the category of road safety.

Byer confirmed there will be public and educational outreach. The project plan identified the ability to expand upon existing programs and utilizing ODOT's already established safety programs. Byer would like to work with the local school districts on a driver's education program for all of the high schools.

Bosket confirmed that TSAP covers infrastructure, education, and enforcement.

Crager asked if work groups are being used to establish and strategize TSAP's priorities.

Bosket stated that the County is required to establish a task force to implement TSAP, which can include project prioritization and annual performance reporting.

Crager mentioned that TSAP is an ideal example of a project and County goal that can be measured utilizing the County dashboard, which is a different project County leadership is working on.

Malone discussed a school zone safety related project that either the City of Eugene or Lane County had worked on. Malone noted instances when community members had requested speed limits to be lowered in certain areas, but ODOT is responsible for setting the speed limits. Malone mentioned that in Portland, residential areas changed speed limits from 25 mph to 20 mph and asked if it was only the City of Portland that could make that change.

Bosket confirmed that any city can lower the posted speed limits in residential neighborhoods where it is a 25 zone to 20; but there are many costs associated with making those changes, and they can be difficult to implement.

Malone asked about the level of implementation Portland had done.

Bosket was not aware of the strategies used for implementation.

Malone agreed with Wyse on using the word 'goal' instead of 'vision statement'.

MOTION: Wyse moved to direct staff that the preferred language for a vision statement for the Transportation Safety Action Plan is 'Benton County's goal is to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities on county roads by 2040 and achieve a 50% reduction by 2035.' Shepherd seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 10:24 a.m. and reconvened at 10:36 a.m.

4.3 Status Report on the Benton Believes Comprehensive Plan Update –
Shannon Bozigar, Program Coordinator; Gary Stockhoff, Interim Director,
Community Development

Crager stated the forecasted budget for the Comprehensive Plan was \$350,000, but the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) had awarded the County only \$50,000; this was not anticipated.

Bozigar stated that due to unforeseen factors, the Voluntary Periodic Review (VPR) process had been delayed. The pivot is a change in the strategy and the project will still be accomplished, but on a different timeline. Bozigar added that the public engagement element in the project is on pause pending the availability of additional funding. Bozigar requested guidance from the Board regarding engagement in project research, such as data collection that will inform the decisions and information provided to the public. That work can be done with a contractor over several months and will not require public engagement. Bozigar suggested the most ideal strategy will be focusing on the economic development opportunities aspect of the project. This pivot is in alignment with DLCD's highest priority for the current budget cycle. Bozigar discussed alternative opportunities, such as marketing and a community engagement campaign, which the County would ideally engage a consultant for. Bozigar added that many of the project variables are dependent on staffing and resources.

Crager discussed the importance of utilizing County resources and staff capacity efficiently. Crager is monitoring the Community Development Department's budget closely and mentioned the County has escalated the recruitment for the Community Development Director to ensure the department receives the necessary level of leadership and workload assistance.

Stockhoff stated the pivot in the project timeline will allow staff the opportunity to evaluate the department's budget challenges and opportunities while continuing to make progress on the project. In addition to the Community Development Director recruitment, an Assistant/Associate Planner position is open to applications.

Shepherd stated that although the project timeline had changed, the County will still request community input. Shepherd mentioned a Countywide interest in additional projects that could be tied into the Comprehensive Plan.

Crager proposed the Board discuss smaller projects that can be accomplished with the current funding and code change at a future Goal-setting meeting.

Malone asked if VPR was originally set to take approximately 12 to 18 months.

Bozigar stated the funding from the State for the VPR process had timeline requirements, but the project pivot will allow staff to engage in the bulk of the work before the VPR timeline begins.

Malone asked how many other counties applied for VPR funding.

Bozigar believed only Benton County applied for VPR, whereas other jurisdictions applied for generic technical assistance funding.

Malone asked if Benton County was positioned as a priority to receive additional funding, if any becomes available, due to participation in the first phase of VPR.

Bozigar confirmed and discussed the level of flexibility DLCD offers.

Shepherd asked if Community Development staff had received information regarding the Southern Willamette Valley Innovation Corridor. Shepherd stated it is a new initiative between Oregon State University and the University of Oregon. The initiative would discuss the possibility for infrastructure and industrial development along the Highway 99 corridor.

Bozigar confirmed that Community Development staff are aware and have spoken to Patrick Wingard from DLCD about it. Although it is a separate project from the County's Comprehensive Plan Update, there will be a required level of coordination between the two entities.

Shepherd preferred speaking to the Southern Willamette Valley Innovation Corridor group before completing a separate process for zoning and codes changes.

Malone asked if the effort to reduce greenhouse gases is being considered during discussions regarding economic development.

Bozigar confirmed and stated that one of the possibilities staff discussed was identifying different ways to approach land use changes in the County to combat greenhouse gas emissions; this was another of DLCD's priorities.

Malone asked if staff had identified examples of projects that could be achieved with the current resources and capacity.

Crager stated staff will engage in discussions regarding where to identify the projects outside of the VPR scope.

4.4 Discussion Regarding the Alsea Health Center – Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator

Crager discussed the original proposal the Alsea Community Action Collaborative (ACAC) presented to the Board for the County to return the deed to the Alsea Health Center property to ACAC. The County is required to adhere to rules within State Statute when returning a County-owned property. The rules specify that a property can only be given to a qualified nonprofit; and it can only be used for three purposes, including childcare, housing, or social services. These constraints only apply if a property is gifted, not sold. Additionally, the giving entity is required to hold security interest in the property; the law suggests a 20-year timeframe to ensure the property is maintained to be utilized the way it was described. If it is not, the property is returned to the County. Crager expressed concern regarding the potential outcome the property is returned to the County and then becomes a maintenance burden.

Crager confirmed that ACAC is a qualified nonprofit and that their proposal meets the three purposes the property could be used for. Crager reviewed ACAC's proposal to ensure the property could be maintained by ACAC in compliance with the requirements of a gifted property. Crager expressed concern regarding the necessity for ACAC to secure enough funding to maintain operations.

Crager countered ACAC's original proposal and suggested the County could consider giving ACAC a no-cost lease for the property; the County would still own the property, but ACAC would not pay the County to use the facility. After a period of time, once the County has better assurance regarding the asset and ACAC has made progress in their service plan, the County could give ACAC the facility. Crager stated that ACAC's Board had voted to not accept the proposal. However, ACAC scheduled a Town Hall meeting to discuss their decision with Alsea community members.

Crager provided all the potential options to the Board in the agenda packet. One of the options that has not been discussed previously is to sell the property, which the Board has the authority to do as long as the property is not needed by the County. The Board can choose to set the terms of the sale of the property.

Alternatively, if the Board were to relinquish the deed to ACAC, there are provisions that enable the County to waive the security rights of the property if it is in the best interest of the public. This would ensure the property is not returned to the County if the entity gifted the property could not maintain the property to the required terms. Crager requested additional time to explore that option's feasibility with County Counsel. Crager recommended the Board wait for the results of ACAC's town hall meeting before making a decision.

Wyse believed it was in the best interest of the Alsea community to allow ACAC to operate the property, which could be used as an argument to justify Option 4. Wyse asked if ACAC provided a reason why they declined the initial offer from the County.

Crager responded that ACAC did not like the no-cost lease option because there was concern that ACAC would not qualify for a portion of the targeted grant funding because it requires the applicant to be the owner of the property for in which funding is sought. Additionally, ACAC cannot make certain changes to the property if it is owned by the County. Crager stated the County could provide some flexibility in the building changes issue, but the grant funding aspect would be an issue.

Malone expressed a preference to deeding the property to a government body, which Alsea does not have, instead of a recently formed group. Malone was also concerned that ACAC had not secured enough funding to maintain operations of the building.

Crager believed the Alsea town hall will generate additional input from the community for the Board to consider. Crager acknowledged ACAC had demonstrated success in securing grant funding, but believed the County required more assurances that ACAC could maintain a sustainable level of cash flow to ensure the building's continued operations.

Shepherd met with Crossroads representative, Michael Couch, who is working with ACAC. Couch stated that ACAC had secured a significant amount of funding and applied for many different types of grant funding. If the community of Alsea is not interested in the County's no-cost lease offer, Shepherd supported Option 4, which allows the County to waive its security interest and deed the building to ACAC. Shepherd preferred the County have a first right of refusal added to any of the options, if possible.

Wyse asked if the County could continue to collect funds through the Alsea Human Services County Service District for ACAC to utilize toward the medical operations of the building. Crager confirmed.

4.5 *National Association of Counties (NACo) 2026 Legislative Conference Attendance – Pat Malone, Chair, Board of Commissioners

Staff provided the Board a memorandum that detailed the cost estimates to attend upcoming NACo conferences.

McEneny and the Board discussed the 2026 NACo Legislative Conference attendance. Wyse will attend the event, Malone will not attend, and Shepherd requested additional time to decide on attendance.

McEneny asked Kwiatkowski about the Board's budget for travel and conference attendance.

Kwiatkowski stated the Commissioners had \$50,000 remaining until June 30, 2027.

The Board discussed other upcoming conferences.

Wyse planned to attend the Western Interstate Region Conference. Malone and Shepherd do not plan to attend that conference.

Shepherd preferred to attend only one of the NACo conferences in 2026.

Malone did not plan to attend upcoming NACo conferences unless there are specific agenda items that could benefit or advance Benton County by attending.

{Exhibit 1: 2026 Conference Cost Estimates}

5. Consent Calendar

- 5.1 Approval of the October 8, 2024 Board of Commissioners Goal-setting Meeting Minutes**
- 5.2 Approval of the January 14, 2025 Board of Commissioners Goal-setting Meeting Minutes**
- 5.3 Approval of the December 9, 2025 Board of Commissioners Goal-setting Meeting Minutes**

MOTION: Wyse moved to approve the Consent Calendar. Shepherd seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

6. New Business

- 6.1 *Philomath Area Chamber of Commerce Membership Renewal Discussion** – Pat Malone, Chair, Board of Commissioners

MOTION: Wyse moved to renew the Board of Commissioners membership with the Philomath Area Chamber of Commerce. Shepherd seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

Shepherd asked if the Board was interested in attending the Philomath Samaritan Awards.

MOTION: Shepherd moved to sponsor the Philomath Samaritan Awards Dinner at the \$150 level. Wyse seconded the motion, which carried 3-0.

{Exhibit 2: Philomath Samaritan Awards Event Information}

7. County Administrator and Assistant County Administrator Updates

Rachel McEneny, County Administrator:

- Tammy Webb is Benton County's new Human Resources Director.
- Attended the Oregon Business Plan Leadership Summit.
- Attended the Valley City Managers and County Administrator lunch.
- New role as Chair of the Health and Human Services sector for the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC).

Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator:

- The County received National Institute of Corrections Technical Assistance approval, but a plan is not yet in place.
- Will provide a Benton Area Transit discussion at an upcoming Goal-setting meeting.
- Meeting with April Holland and Damien Sands on the Crisis Center to discuss progress, funding challenges, opportunities, and working toward a plan to extend the operational hours of the Crisis Center.

8. Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Shepherd:

- Congratulated the newly elected Corvallis City Council Chair and Co-chair.
- Has been serving as Co-chair of the Downtown Vitality Strategic Task Force's Subcommittee on Environment and Safety.
- Attended Philomath's State of the City.
- Mayor Maughn is hosting Corvallis's annual Town Hall and State of the City on January 27.
- The Northwest Oregon Works Workforce Investment Board will be meeting in Benton County on January 23.
- A teacher from Lincoln Elementary reached out to Shepherd regarding the feasibility of a Benton County facilities tour for students.

Commissioner Wyse:

- Will attend the Philomath Area Chamber of Commerce luncheon.
- Will attend Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Breakfast.
- Will attend Legislative Breakfast remotely.

Commissioner Malone:

- Corvallis Holiday Parade.
- House Bill 3794 established a Solid Waste Task Force in the Willamette Valley and Malone was appointed the Chair of that group. First meeting was held on December 16. Malone discussed a few topics the Task Force will consider.
- Senator Jeff Merkley is holding a Benton County Town Hall at Philomath High School.
- Attended an AOC Transportation and Community Development meeting.

9. Other

9.1 *Association of Counties Event – Board of Commissioners

The Board agreed to move agenda items on the February 10 Goal-setting meeting agenda to either February 3 or February 17 and cancel the February 10 meeting to attend County Day at the State Capitol.

{Exhibit 3: AOC County Day at the Capitol Agenda}

{Exhibit 4: Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda Tracker for the Month of February}

10. Adjournment

Chair Malone adjourned the meeting at 12:32 p.m.



Pat Malone, Chair



Rachel Bulder, Recorder

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