

MINUTES
2026 WCJC - Executive Committee Meeting
April 22, 2026 at 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Gabe Shepherd, Chair; Jason Harvey, Vice Chair; Ryan Joslin, District Attorney; Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff; Joel Pickerd, Sheriff's Office; April Holland, Health Services; Rick Crager, Board of Commissioners Office; Keri Smith, Benton County Circuit Court; Jay Hughes; Fred Edwards; Luis Maciel, Oregon Youth Authority; Derik Hering, Juvenile Services

Guests: Zack Reeves, CFM Advocates; Scott Smith; Shelby Shulpe

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Shepherd called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes for the February 25, 2026 Full Council Meeting
Removed from the agenda**

The approval of the February 25, 2026 Full Council meeting minutes was moved to the next Full Council meeting on May 27 to be voted on.

**3. Legislative Updates Regarding Criminal Justice – Zack Reeves, CFM
Advocates**

Democrats hold a supermajority in both chambers; however, Oregon requires a two-thirds majority present on the floor to conduct business. Democrats have not met the two-thirds requirement in either chamber, thus requiring at least two Republicans present to provide quorum for the House and the Senate. Oregon voters passed a ballot measure approximately two years ago that limits the number of unexcused absences each legislator can have to 10 each session before becoming ineligible to run for reelection. Short sessions, limited to 35 days, were created in 2010 to balance the biennial budget that is crafted during the long session in odd number years. Since its inception, the short session has been more commonly used to pass bills at a quicker rate due to the shortened timeline. Those bills can then be reexamined during the long session.

Reeves stated the predominant issue of the 2026 short session was the management of budget challenges tied to federal tax changes. The actual amount of cuts made were less than originally expected. Lawmakers passed Senate Bill 1507, which disconnected the State from a number of federal tax changes. This saved the State approximately \$300 million in tax revenue that would have been lost from changes in the federal tax code. Balancing the budget relied on: holding positions vacant, reducing agency spending, and shifting and backfilling existing funds.

Reeves reviewed items regarding public safety that were discussed and voted on during the 2026 short session. Senate Bill (SB) 1516 dealt with regulating the use of automatic license plate readers. There is concern about the potential use of data collected from the license plate readers being shared with federal immigration authorities. SB 1516 was negotiated during the session to become implementable by local public safety agencies, and reasonable with data type and storage requirements. The excluded uses of the data collected include anything contrary to Oregon Shield Law and additional demographic data is not allowed to be shared. SB 1570 requires hospitals to create policies for protocols when law enforcement is involved; it is a response to federal law enforcement presence in healthcare facilities. SB 1537 has been considered over several sessions; it relates to a new category of crime for threats made to public officials. The bill has not yet moved forward, but will likely return in 2027. House Bill (HB) 4148 passed, which changes the allocation of locally collected transient lodging taxes from 70/30 to 50/50; the additional funds to local governments will be spent on responses to tourism in communities.

The 2027 session will begin in approximately nine months. Issues that will potentially be discussed in 2027 include: Cryptocurrency kiosk regulation or prohibition, peer support confidentiality legislation fix, drone use expansion, and an additional Benton County Circuit Judge position. Reeves believed that the judicial positions are usually added on an as-need basis based on case volume. State agencies are currently compiling their ideal budgets for the 2027-29 biennium, then sending it to the Governor. The Governor then packages all of the agency requested budgets into a Governor's requested budget that is released in December to mark the beginning of the budget discussions. The Chief Justices' recommended budget is considered a more low-profile document, but it is where the court positions are housed. The Chief Justice will submit the budget package to the legislator, who then crafts the budget for the Judicial Branch. Reeves stated if WCJC is interested in advocating for an additional judge in Benton County, the advocacy process should begin with the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) sooner rather than later.

Shepherd stated the addition of a fourth judge in Benton County is an item WCJC discussed in 2025; Circuit Court judges have expressed interest in the idea as well. Shepherd asked K. Smith about the feasibility to advocate for a fourth judge given that the County may have 3.5 FTE in judges when Judge Demarest transitions into a senior judge position to administer the Adult Treatment Court program.

K. Smith does not know what FTE Judge Demarest will have after the end of the year; that information will need to be confirmed. K. Smith believes the County has a need for

a fourth judge, but suggested Shepherd reach out to Judge Donohue regarding the specifics.

Shepherd agreed.

Van Arsdall expressed a concern that if the County obtains a fourth judge, the jail will need to become a priority to accommodate for an increased processing rate.

Joslin agreed that there needs to be a fourth judge and a new correctional facility. Best case scenario, the new facility would happen a few years after the addition of a fourth judge.

Shepherd is not confident the bid for a fourth judge will succeed, but beginning the planning process now will assist later on as the process moves forward.

Hughes confirmed support if there is a request for a fourth judge.

Shepherd suggested meeting with Reeves and Harvey to strategize and then report back to WCJC.

Joslin offered court data reports to assist with the process.

Harvey asked about the concerns regarding drone use.

Reeves stated there were concerns regarding the use of drones for immigration purposes.

The Sheriff's Office has two drone groups: Patrol and Search and Rescue; the groups have differing rules on drone usage. Van Arsdall discussed the importance of drone usage as an asset to the Sheriff's Department and offered to provide Reeves with more information regarding how the Sheriff's Office drones are used.

4. Other

Shepherd reviewed the 2026 WCJC agenda schedule with the committee.

5. Adjournment

Chair Shepherd adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.



Gabe Shepherd, Chair