

## MINUTES

### BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

#### Community Development, Natural Areas, Parks & Events and Public Works Directors

October 8, 2025

9:00 a.m.

**Present:** Nancy Wyse, Commissioner; Pat Malone, Commissioner; Gabe Shepherd, Commissioner; Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator; Jesse Ott, Natural Areas, Parks and Events; Gary Stockhoff, Public Works; Jennifer Ficek, Public Works; Anne Thwaites, Public Information Officer

**Excused:** N/A

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes: July 9, 2025.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Wyse called for a motion to approve July 9, 2025, minutes. Commissioner Shepherd moved to approve. Commissioner Malone seconded the motion, which carried **3-0**.

2. Natural Areas, Parks, and Event, Jesse Ott

#### 2.1 Historic Courthouse Reuse

Ongoing collaboration among Public Works, the Historic Courthouse Preservation Committee, and the Historic Resources Commission on a reuse feasibility study for the Historic Courthouse. The \$30,000 study will be funded by the Louisa B. DeBosch Fund, with a pending Oregon Heritage Grant application that could cover half the cost.

Artspace, a national nonprofit specializing in creative reuse of historic buildings, will lead the six- to eight-month study, which includes community engagement, public meetings, and financial analysis. Ott emphasized that repurposing the courthouse will require public-private partnerships and long-term planning. Commissioners expressed strong support and appreciation for staff coordination and project leadership.

## 2.2 McBee Campground

Logging has begun to create access lanes at McBee Campground, with timber being milled to offset costs. Unsafe structures have been removed, and salvaged 1950s lumber and picnic tables will be reused in new construction. Upcoming work includes road and drainage improvements and site layout adjustments based on winter water flow.

The County received a \$645,000 Oregon State Parks grant, with in-kind match from the Hull-Oaks land donation. Approximately \$80,000 has been spent on studies and design. Commissioners noted the quality of the design work, which features a classic wood-and-stone aesthetic, and supported continued coordination with the Bureau of Land Management and Partnership for Linn and Benton Counties. Future plans include a connector trail to BLM's Fall Creek area pending funding.

## 2.3 Outdoor Recreation and Upcoming Events

**Pride Celebration** – Successfully hosted at the Benton County Fairgrounds the previous weekend.

**County Fair Volunteer Appreciation Dinner** – Scheduled for **October 14 at 6 p.m.** in the Fairgrounds Auditorium. The event includes dinner, volunteer awards, and fundraising activities such as a dessert dash.

**Bazelle Family Mushroom Day** – A popular annual event held in partnership with Oregon State University, City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation, and the Corvallis Environmental Center. This year's event includes new shuttle service from Avery Park to improve accessibility for participants who cannot easily travel to Kings Valley. The event is focus on education, local ecology, and culinary uses of mushrooms, emphasizing its family-friendly atmosphere and avoidance of psychedelic themes.

**Benton County Outdoor Adventures** youth camp, a week-long summer program for ages 8–12 offered through Corvallis Parks and Recreation. The camp continues to be highly popular with long waitlists, and staff are exploring options to add a **spring break session**. Ott noted that many families seek affordable local activities during spring break, and staff will evaluate capacity and costs before moving forward.

## 2.4 Miscellaneous Updates

The Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk project is on hold pending additional funding. The team is reviewing alternative construction methods that could reduce costs by up to 50% while maintaining a 30–50-year lifespan. The

County holds a \$1.2 million Oregon State Parks grant, currently extended, and may reapply for additional funds in the next cycle. Commissioners supported pursuing cost-saving design revisions with the goal of constructing during a future dry season.

### 3. Public Works, Gary Stockhoff

#### 3.1 Courthouse, DA, and EOC

The latest project dashboard and drone footage show steady progress on courthouse steel framing, with concrete deck pours scheduled next. The EOC's pre-engineered metal building has arrived, and framing will begin within the next few weeks, lasting about five weeks.

Two drainage structures—crossing Highway 20 and Garfield Creek—are being completed ahead of the in-water work deadline. A bore under a wetland encountered an obstruction and will be corrected in July 2026; provisions for this are included in the contract.

Project finances remain stable, with contingencies in place. The County received its first reimbursement from the Oregon Judicial Department for land acquisition. Power connection delays continue due to utility staffing shortages and design changes requiring underground installation, though coordination with Astound for fiber service is progressing.

The project remains **on schedule and within budget**, and the Board commended Hoffman Construction for its effective coordination and professionalism.

#### 3.2 Alpine and Alsea Sewer Project/EPA Grant

Design plans are approximately 80% complete and under review. Cost estimates are below the remaining EPA grant funds. Staff are considering using any unspent funds for a permanent generator at the LC site, pending final project costs. The project is awaiting completion of the EPA's NEPA review and tribal consultation process. Bidding is anticipated in spring 2026.

#### 3.3 Innovation Mobility Program Grant

The County received a \$90,000 ODOT Innovation Mobility Grant to study a rural shuttle service. The RFP/RFQ process to hire a consultant is underway. Public engagement will be a key component of the study. The goal is to assess feasibility, costs, and potential routes—such as service to Kings Valley and Alsea on alternating days. ODOT's staffing changes are causing minor administrative delays.

### 3.4 CIP

The CIP Committee, with Commissioner Malone representing the Board, met recently. With approximately \$1 million available this biennium, project requests were kept modest, mostly in the \$30,000–\$40,000 range.

Total approved projects amount to \$995,000, with \$4,000 in reserve for contingencies. Unfunded projects, including courthouse roof replacement and LED painting, were deferred due to cost. The generator repair at Avery Facility (\$30,000) was added following a recent malfunction.

The CIP process continues to emphasize shovel-ready projects, avoiding carryovers. Public Works' new finance analyst, Allie, will assist in managing the CIP program and ensuring accountability.

### 3.5 Road Manager Recruitment

The County Road Manager recently retired; interviews for a replacement are scheduled this week, including two internal candidates.

### 3.6 Miscellaneous Updates

#### **Electric Vehicle (EV) and Charging Station Grant**

Progress on the federally funded EV and charging station grant has slowed due to scope changes and FTA processing delays. The County now seeks funding for six EVs and four (seven total plug) charging stations at the Sunset Facility. Coordination with ODOT continues, though staff turnover at the state level has caused delays.

Security enhancements at the Sunset Facility remain a priority, including potential fencing and gated access. Staff will revisit an earlier plan and explore phased implementation, possibly with assistance from inmate work crews.

#### **Avery Fuel Tank Tub Replacement**

An engineering firm has been selected to design the replacement (\$35,000). The County will wait to construct until the adjacent housing project progresses, to align permitting and construction schedules. The Board reiterated the importance of readiness to meet future project timelines.

#### **Cardwell Curve Project**

Designs are expected to be finalized within a week, with bidding to follow. Construction is anticipated to begin by late October, weather permitting.

#### **Country Club Road and 53rd Street Roundabout Project**

The upcoming 2026 roundabout construction at Country Club and 53rd will

require a two- to three-month road closure. Staff will conduct extensive public outreach, led by project managers Ian and Laurel, to inform residents and businesses.

Current sewer-related closures on Country Club have caused community frustration, particularly from Fitness Over 50 patrons and nearby businesses. Commissioners discussed lessons learned for future traffic management and communication.

Night construction was raised as a possible mitigation measure, though cost, safety, and city noise ordinances may limit feasibility.

### **Highway 99 Transit Pilot Project (“99 Vine”)**

The long-awaited intercity transit route between Junction City and McMinnville will launch November 10. Operated by Pacific Crest Lines in partnership with Benton and Yamhill Counties, the service will connect to LTD in Junction City and extend north to Hillsboro.

Stops will include downtown Corvallis and other key communities. The pilot will run for approximately eight months using grant funding to evaluate ridership and demand.

### **Building Maintenance**

Commissioners noted humidity and odor issues following recent carpet cleaning in the County building, likely due to late scheduling and HVAC shutdown over the weekend. Staff will ensure future cleanings occur earlier with air conditioning left running to facilitate drying.

## **4. Community Development, Gary Stockhoff**

### **4.1 Coffin Butte**

The Board of Commissioners (BOC) team has finalized logistical arrangements for upcoming meetings regarding Coffin Butte. Planning Commission (PC) meetings have concluded with the adoption of all minutes. The process is progressing smoothly, and staff feel confident in the current setup.

### **4.2 State Planning Grant-Comp Plan**

The voluntary periodic review process for the county’s Comprehensive Plan is underway. Shannon has gathered necessary information for the grant application, in coordination with Patrick Wingard at DLCD. Initial meetings had strong attendance and provided foundational input. Once the grant is approved, outreach and the formation of a comprehensive plan team—including planning officials, other planners, and a consultant—will follow.

An RFP will be issued to hire the consultant, with Shannon assisting in scheduling and background preparation. This will be a long-term process critical to county planning efforts.

#### 4.3 FEMA Floodplain

A county letter was ratified regarding FEMA floodplain requirements. While some elements may be complex and potentially concerning for developers, county staff are confident in their ability to adapt and comply. Mayor input has been helpful in clarifying confusing aspects. Legal review may be necessary in the future, as other counties have faced litigation on similar issues.

#### 4.4 Solid Waste

**Annual Reports & Rate Adjustments:** Republic Services' annual report for Coffin Butte was delayed; staff are coordinating to produce a two-year report by February. Rate adjustments originally planned for last spring were also postponed and will be addressed concurrently.

**Sustainable Materials Management Plan (SMMP):** Benton County has applied to participate in the state's new task force, aiming to continue the work from the previous SMMP. Staff from Benton County, including Bailey Payne, are actively engaged to ensure continuity. Field visits, including tours of regional facilities, have informed planning for future solid waste management alternatives.

**Regional Comparisons:** Current county recovery rates for recycling and reuse are approximately 32%, ranking 8th statewide, below Marion County (~50%). Infrastructure limitations contribute to these results, with future efforts focusing on improved material separation and leveraging regional facilities.

#### 4.5 Enterprise Permitting

Phase 1 of the Enterprise Permitting project is complete. Efforts have focused on improving the customer experience by creating a "navigator" tool to guide residents to the appropriate departments, rather than developing a fully new system. Beta testing is ongoing, and initial results are promising. The project aims to reduce staff time spent redirecting customers while improving accessibility and efficiency.

#### 4.6 Personnel

Vacant positions include a Permit Technician and Assistant Planner. Hiring for these roles has been temporarily paused to align with the incoming Community Development Director.

A funded Stormwater / Water Quality position is also on hold; current work is being performed using GIS support from an intern. Delays are intended to manage the department budget conservatively and maintain flexibility in staffing.

Director interviews are ongoing. Staff remain optimistic and will provide updates on the post-interview process by the end of the week. Interim leadership by Gary Stockhoff has been instrumental in maintaining operations.

The county-wide vacancy factor is being monitored, with the current goal to balance staffing needs with budget reserves. Commissioners requested future updates on vacancy factor mechanics and departmental impacts. The Stormwater position will remain on hold for budgetary prudence.

#### 4.7 Miscellaneous Updates

The Citizen Budget Committee convened to review elected officials' salaries. Commissioners will be briefed on outcomes.

Benton County is participating in an Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) work group focused on emergency shelters and potential state-level support. Staff will keep all three commissioners informed regarding advocacy and next steps.

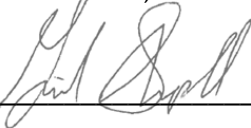
#### 5. Other

#### 6. Adjournment.

Chair Wyse adjourned the meeting at 11:57 AM.



Pat Malone, Chair                      date



Gabe Shepherd, Vice Chair                      date



Nancy Wyse, Commissioner                      date