

MINUTES

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

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

March 11, 2026

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.Call to Order and Introductions. The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m.
- 2.Review and Approve Agenda
- 3.Announcements: None
- 4.Approval of Minutes: October 8, 2025 will be postponed until the next department head meeting to allow more time for review.
5. Natural Areas, Parks, and Event, Jesse Ott

5.1 Historic Courthouse Update

Staff provided an update on the Historic Courthouse project. The Courthouse Preservation Committee is exploring a public-private partnership model and continuing feasibility work with a consultant. Estimated costs to maintain the building range from \$60,000 to \$180,000 annually. The seismic retrofit continues to be a financial concern.

Staff are developing a list of feasibility consultants and will bring the matter before the Board for direction.

Commissioner Malone noted that this has been an ongoing discussion and that it is nearing time to make decisions.

Commissioner Wyse asked whether the Corvallis Historic Preservation organization has been involved. Jesse stated they have not yet reached out to them.

Commissioner Shepherd expressed interest in a public-private partnership model, but stated he is not interested in a housing option due to renovation needs and land use limitations. He added that the jail portion of the building will need to be addressed to make the property more attractive to potential renters.

5.2 McBee Campground Update

The campground layout is complete and staff are working on groundskeeping. Work is currently underway on restrooms, signage, benches, and conditional use permit requirements.

Staff are also working with Monroe Fire on a wildfire mitigation plan. The project remains within budget, though upcoming fire prevention expenses, such as fire rings, are anticipated.

The existing shelter will need to be replaced, and additional funding will be required.

Commissioner Malone asked when the campground would open for camping. Jesse stated that the anticipated opening is Spring 2027.

Commissioner Wyse asked about updates regarding clear cutting. Jesse stated there have been no updates from BLM.

Commissioner Malone asked about the cost of replacing the long table shelter. Jesse estimated the cost at approximately \$200,000.

5.3 Jackson Frazier Wetland Boardwalk-

Engineering work has been completed to decrease total cost and funding requests have been submitted.

Restoration work and seed collection are planned for the summer, with community involvement opportunities.

The Community Paths project is ongoing in coordination with County Engineering and ODOT.

Commissioner Malone asked whether the trail has been designed. Jesse stated we are delivering a 30% design on the trail.

5.4 Fairgrounds Update

The Fairgrounds are currently in a busy rental season, with rentals increasing 10–15% compared to the past four years. Natural Areas, Parks, and Events (NAPE) has increased outreach to potential renters.

Commissioner Shepherd asked about Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) promotion funding. Jesse stated the funding is tied to the Fairgrounds Master Plan, which includes potential projects such as converting horse stalls to RV storage, solar installations, and summer event programming. These funds are primarily intended for master plan facility upgrades.

Upcoming events include:

- Ramadan Celebration
- Animal Control Conference with Benton County Sheriff's Office
- Bike Rides Northwest – Bike Oregon

Bike Rides Northwest provided a \$2,000 donation to NAPE.

Commissioner Malone asked about revisiting the Fairgrounds Master Plan and updating the 2019 market study. Jesse stated staff would like to complete the first year of the biennium before pursuing a new feasibility study.

6. Public Works

6.1 Courthouse, District Attorney, and Emergency Operations Center

Construction is progressing well, with work on interior walls starting. Work on the parking lot, curbs, and gutters is expected to begin sooner than originally planned.

A planning meeting is scheduled to discuss furniture selection. Staff are also working on the timeline for moving into the building. Keys are expected January 21, 2027.

The sewer connection is scheduled for July.

6.2 Alpine and Alsea Sewer Project and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Grant

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requested an additional site evaluation. That has been completed and showed no historical or resource impacts. The EPA representative expects grant funds to be released around June, with the project anticipated to begin in July.

6.3 Innovation Mobility Program Grant

The rural shuttle study has begun, and the Notice to Proceed was sent to the consultant.

If the study demonstrates feasibility, the rural shuttle could be included as a project in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Plan for 27/29.

6.4 Electric Vehicle Grant – Buses and Chargers

The County has received the ODOT agreement, allowing vehicles to be ordered. Delivery of the vehicles is expected to take approximately one year.

Chargers will be installed at the Sunset facility, along with security fencing and gates, which are funded through the current STIF Plan. The chargers at Sunset will be for County buses only.

Commissioner Malone asked how long it would take to coordinate power and charger installation. Gary stated the goal is to complete charger installation by the end of the year.

6.5 Benton Area Transportation (BAT) Program Coordinator and Implementation Status

A new BAT Program Coordinator, Maya O'Neal, will begin April 1. She has significant experience in transit and public works.

Commissioner Malone asked whether this is a new position. Gary explained that the position was previously funded by the County but housed with the City. The County has now brought the position into Public Works, eliminating that layer of separation.

Work on the BAT implementation plan is ongoing, with meetings being held with various implementation team members. Staff hope to have a draft implementation plan by the end of the year.

If the County moves forward with an in-house transit model, the target start date would be January 1, 2028.

6.6 Miscellaneous Updates

- **99 Vine Rider statistics:** Ridership for the Benton County and South route is higher than Benton County and North. Current funding runs out in June, and discussions will be needed on how to continue funding the route.
- **Recruitments:** Positions open for a Civil Engineering Associate and Water Quality staff.
- **Fuel Tub Project (formerly Blast Wall):** Plans are complete and the project is expected to go out to bid within two months.
- **Alsea Rural Clinic:** Renderings and plans have been submitted to USDA, and materials have been provided to the Health Department for coordination.
- **STIF Advisory Committee:** Planning for the 2027-2029 STIF Plan will begin this summer

7. Community Development

7.1 Personnel Updates

An Associate Planner will begin April 1, 2026. The Community Development Director recruitment process is continuing.

7.2 Comprehensive Plan Status Update

Shannon is working with Patrick Wingard from Department of Land Conservation and Development and preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the economic analysis.

7.3 Open Space Designation Request Discussion

The Greenbelt Land Trust is seeking an open space designation for a property for tax purposes. This request has been in progress for some time. Staff indicated there appears to be a path forward and hope to have it resolved soon.

7.4 Solid Waste

Bailey will meet with the DSAC later this month and will present annual reports and community concerns. The topic is expected to come before the Board in April.

7.5 Development Code Changes

Staff have developed a schedule for upcoming meetings over the next several months. Proposed changes are expected to come before the Board in late summer or early fall so they can be formally codified.

7.6 Permit Activity in Building and Planning

Permit activity has increased. The new Building Official, Jason, was contacted by the City of Cottage Grove regarding potential contracted lower-level planning review services that are helping support the Building Reserve Fund.

7.7 Miscellaneous Updates

None.

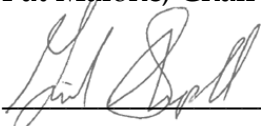
8. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.



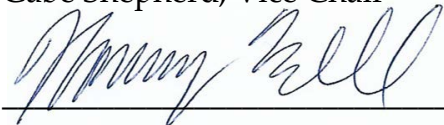
Pat Malone, Chair

date



Gabe Shepherd, Vice Chair

date



Nancy Wyse, Commissioner

date