



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Goal-Setting Work Session

February 16, 2023

9:00 a.m.

Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/92553978493?pwd=alB4bDh5c3JOY3JXWHhlTnpTSTkyQT09%2C2%A0Meeting>

Present: **Pat Malone**, Chair; **Xanthippe Augerot**, Commissioner; **Nancy Wyse**, Commissioner; **Vance Croney**, County Counsel; **Joe Kerby**, County Administrator

Staff: **Julie Arena**, HOPE Coordinator; **Laurel Byer**, **Darren Nichols**, Community Development; **Rick Crager**, Finance; **Cory Grogan**, Public Information Officer; **April Holland**, **Sara Hartstein**, **Suzanne Hoffman**, **Kailee Olson**, Health; **Amanda Makepeace**, BOC staff; **Sean McGuire**, Sustainability; **Erika Milo**, Board Recorder; **Jesse Ott**, Natural Areas, Parks & Events; **Gary Stockhoff**, Public Works; **Jef Van Arsdall**, Sheriff

Guests: **Paul Bilotta**, **Brigetta Olson**, **Mark Shepard**, City of Corvallis; **Val Hoyle**, US House of Representatives; **Hyatt Lytle**, **Paul Shaffer**, Corvallis City Council; **Vanessa Cornwall**, **Marissa Sandgren**, **Dan Whelan**, Hoyle staff; **Charles Maughan**, Corvallis Mayor; **Laura Parsons**, City of Port Townsend; **Dan Rosenberg**, resident; **Steve Starceovich**, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife; **Rob Upson**, Mid-Valley Bicycle Club

1. Opening
1. Call to Order

Chair Malone called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

2. Introductions
3. Announcements

No announcements were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

3. Discussion Topics

3.1 *Oak Creek Drive Edge Line Striping Configuration – Laurel Byer, Benton County Engineer

Byer explained that edge lanes are delineated lanes for cars and bicycles to share a road, intended to be used on roads with low volumes and low speeds. White dotted lines are added to road shoulders; cars drive down the middle of the road, and if another car approaches, the cars move

onto the shoulder, then back. The shoulder is used as a de facto bicycle lane. The Federal Highway Association (FHA) has approved ELRs as an experimental treatment. Currently, jurisdictions apply to the FHA, which gives interim approval to apply these treatments; then anyone can use the treatment until it is formally adopted into the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The County is working with the striping/sign foreman to ensure compliance with the manual. Pros of ELRs: reduce speeds and crashes, avoid high cost of road widening, have a long history of success in Europe. Cons: ELRs are experimental, not meant for high speed/volume, require sight distance and outreach/education, and potentially increase maintenance costs. The FHA is no longer accepting new ELR requests, but that may mean the FHA has enough data to include ELRs in the MUTCD, or is working to create standards.

Staff feel that this section of Oak Creek Drive is a good candidate for an ELR, but at this time, using ELRs would open the County to liability because the treatment is not approved. Byer reviewed the draft MUTCD, which did not include ELRs. The Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) requires the MUTCD to be updated by May 2023. According to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), there is currently no path to install ELRs, but the National Traffic Control Device Committee (NTCDC) is working with the Bicycle Technical Committee (BCT) on design standards. If those bodies cannot reach agreement, there will still probably be an interim approval at some point. The IIJA also requires the MUTCD to update safety features every four years; the last update was in 2009.

Stockhoff added that re-striping is usually done during a surface treatment of the road. In future, this section of Oak Creek Drive will undergo surface treatment and could be restriped at that time, if allowed.

Wyse requested more background on the topic.

Byer explained that staff have been working with Oak Creek Drive neighbors for several years on speed and access. The road ends in an Oregon State University forest trailhead. The County installed bollards to limit parking and increase sight distance, and placed “share the road” signs. The community requested that the County explore ELRs.

Kerby added that resident Dan Rosenberg presented information in August 2022 and communicated with Malone on this topic; Malone requested a broader discussion.

Malone noted that an ELR is a potential solution to a problem that occurs in summer. Due to inadequate parking, visitors park randomly, walk and cycle on the road, creating problems for residents. If an ELR could not be used, Malone was open to other suggestions.

Byer explained that the bicycle portion of the MUTCD updates may include recommendations for interim use. The County removed the centerline on the section of road, so it functions like an ELR, but there is no buffer for bicyclists/pedestrians. The County has installed signage and done considerable design and outreach to improve the situation, but some neighbors are not satisfied.

Malone asked if this section of road would be widened.

Byer replied that is another option, but is much more expensive. An ODOT staffer opined that even if ELRs are not included in the MUTCD update, ELRs might receive interim approval.

Stockhoff emphasized the possibility of litigation in case of an accident attributed to wrong signage/stripping. Once guidance is available, the County can consider implementing ELRs as part of the annual pavement maintenance program.

Malone suggested getting information from the City of Port Townsend on how ELRs were implemented there.

Rosenberg suggested the engineers in Port Townsend (including Chief Engineer Laura Parsons) and the City of Portland as good resources. Those engineers feel there is more liability in not using ELRs. Rosenberg offered to supply additional information.

Wyse would not favor an ELR until there was official approval.

Augerot supported learning more about ELRs in Port Townsend and Portland.

Malone stressed encouraging people to safely use outdoor recreation and recommended continuing the conversation.

Rosenberg shared that many older or disabled residents no longer feel safe walking on the road.

{Exhibit 1: Oak Creek Drive Executive Summary}

3.2 2040/2023-25 Department Goals/Budget – Joe Kerby, County Administrator; Sean McGuire, Sustainability Coordinator

McGuire explained that all departments were required to develop two to five goals based on Board priorities and community Core Values and Focus Areas. This is the list of goals as of February 10, 2023. Some goals are predicated on funding.

Kerby, Crager, and Hoffman are reviewing all policy option packages (POPs) to consider whether each request attaches to a 2040 Goal and decide what to recommend based on funding availability. Requests total about \$13 million; not all will be funded.

Augerot asked if departments would have a chance to describe the potential cost savings of goals designed to improve efficiency.

Kerby replied that departments can present that information to the Budget Committee. Kerby has asked Crager to develop a more consistent framework for budget discussions.

McGuire reviewed goals from the Board's Office. Once funding is decided, staff will analyze connectivity between goals. McGuire showed how the goals relate to Board priorities and Focus Areas, which show how much the County would spend on each area. Staff also considered which departments can meet these goals at current service levels. Kerby required every department to develop a goal about climate change mitigation or adaptation, which falls under Community Resiliency and Environment & Natural Resources. POPs fall more under Responsible Government, creating efficiency and providing good product to the public.

The Board thanked staff for creating the document and praised the alignment of operations and goals.

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 9:56 a.m. and reconvened at 10:03 a.m.

3.3 Commissioner Updates – *Board of Commissioners*

Augerot reported that the Jeff Merkley town hall went well. Congressperson Val Hoyle also attended. Augerot spoke to a constituent about an issue regarding which office enforces child support after divorce. The District Attorney’s Office did this in the past, but it is now done by the Department of Human Services in Linn County, which is not working well for everyone. Augerot to contact both offices for more information.

Augerot met Chris McQueen of the Corvallis For Refugees (CFR) resettlement program. CFR is a subsidiary of Salem for Refugees, which has a contract with the State Department. An informal network in Corvallis has been doing this work, but it was not linked to the Federal system. Now McQueen is building his network and would like to speak to the Board. The group plans to bring in three families this year and more next year.

Augerot shared that Commissioner Craig Pope of Polk inquired about Benton County Talks Trash. Wyse to contact Pope for further discussion.

A Roseburg city councilor requested Board support for legislation that exempts cities and counties from liability if sponsoring organized camping for unhoused populations. Senator Dick Anderson wants to include this in the Omnibus Bill (House Bill 2001). Shaffer also requested Board support. The Board can discuss it in future and talk to State electeds. Augerot to follow up.

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 10:07 a.m. and reconvened at 10:12 a.m.

3.4 *Meeting with Congressperson Val Hoyle – *Benton County Commissioners and Staff; City of Corvallis Elected Officials and Staff*

Shepard explained that the discussion focused on City of Corvallis-Benton County teamwork on housing and homelessness, from emergency sheltering to improvements in affordable housing.

Olson explained that Corvallis Housing First (CHF) is developing almost 400 units of affordable housing. Developers have layered technical subsidies such as the 4% affordable housing tax credit and State funding . Corvallis has almost \$900,000 in annual resources for affordable housing and houselessness, a \$550,000 Community Development Block Grant, and about \$13,000 from the HOME Investment Partnerships Program. Those tools have not increased in a long time, but costs and interest rates have gone up; Olson advocated for more financial resources for those programs and more Section 8 vouchers.

Bilotta noted that before the pandemic, the homeless response system was fragmented among many non-profits. During the pandemic, the County and Corvallis collaborated at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). When Federal pandemic funding ended, City and County set up these coordinated offices, adding staff capacity and using funds more effectively. When State funding ends, long-term funding is needed, with few good choices locally. It has been valuable for Corvallis to enter the permanent supportive housing market.

Arena added that City-County coordination lightens the load on non-profit organizations. There are more project opportunities that need State and Federal investment. Hoyle’s help is needed for Medicaid, Housing & Urban Development (HUD), and Substance Abuse & Mental Health

Services investments. Exhibit 2 highlights community partner projects, such as CHF's Third Street Commons and the Homelessness Navigation Center (HNC).

Augerot discussed the proposed Crisis Center in downtown Corvallis, which will provide a place for people with mental health crises to go that does not involve the criminal legal system. Augerot thanked Speaker Dan Rayfield and Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden for Crisis Center funding. The Center will be open 24/7 and will house clients overnight or up to 29 days. Doors to open in 2024, with groundbreaking later this year.

Malone noted the Crisis Center funding is part of Phase I of the Justice Systems Improvement Project, which includes the new Courthouse. Phase 2 is dependent on the May 16, 2023 bond measure and will include a new Correctional Facility, Sheriff's Office, and EOC.

Augerot added that the bond also contributes to the HNC; the new facility will also boost the capacity of the Children & Families program, which is currently has space constraints.

Crager discussed the County's Federal legislative agenda (see packet). Priorities include the HNC and pursuing State funding for the EOC. First priority: Benton will request up to \$2 million in Federal funding for rural water, sewer, and construction projects, primarily in the Communities of Alpine and Alsea. The County will also use of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Second priority: \$1 million for a new Monroe County Health Center building. The County received Federal funding for capital from the Health Resources & Services Administration, but more is needed. Third priority: \$2 million for regional public safety and radio infrastructure. About \$800,000 is needed to restore the Jackson-Frazier Wetland boardwalk. Five million dollars is needed to expand the Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall. The County is using some Transient Lodging Tax for this.

Hoyle recently met the Benton County Sheriff and Corvallis Mayor to discuss priorities such as the 911 system and housing. Hoyle asked about the housing vacancy rate in Corvallis.

Bilotta replied the rate is usually a low 1-2% and was 1.5% as of February 2023.

Hoyle stated that housing and transitional services such as Project Turnkey are absolutely needed. Some unhoused people can be successful in housing with supportive services. There is also a lack of middle income housing; without that, middle income earners take up affordable housing. It is important to expand and build housing at each level without encouraging sprawl. Hoyle advocated for a larger conversation on housing and workforce needs. Labor Commissioner Christina Stevenson is working to expand the pipeline for construction workers. Oregon is at the forefront of having paid supervised training for behavioral health, addictions, mental health, and social work. The bipartisan Infrastructure Act passed; electeds are ensuring those investments come back to communities. Hoyle has the same staff team as prior Congressman Peter DeFazio, so staff can highlight opportunities for Benton and Corvallis.

Maughan noted that Corvallis is seeing more school enrollment from families who live elsewhere, which affects schools and housing.

Hoyle added that also affects the tax base. Businesses cannot fill jobs without housing for workers. The problems must be solved in a holistic way.

Lytle shared that a few years ago, 65% of the Corvallis workforce commuted into the area; the rate is probably higher now.

Hoyle emphasized that the County and Corvallis are doing a great job of coordinating and breaking down the silos.

Augerot shared that Monroe Health Center also serves Lane County residents. Augerot mentioned a concept for manufacturing modular housing, which allows non-traditional construction workers to work indoors and reduces new housing costs. Manufacturers can use a five-year building permit on multiple sites/jobs.

Hoyle noted that many low income homes were lost during the Holiday Farm fire. Oregon Rebuilding Oregon is a program creating modular housing. Saint Vincent de Paul of Lane County is setting up a program for manufactured homes; Hoyle will try to get these recognized by HUD in order to get financing. Homes would be manufactured locally and are less expensive than Federal Emergency Management Agency trailers.

Bilotta noted that several years ago, the Corvallis City Council voted for high-density residential housing, bringing in many units. However, any project that has an Army Corps of Engineers wetland is taking two to three years to get approval. Corvallis has hundreds of units held up by Corps approval processes.

Hoyle replied that her office could apply pressure in that area. Hoyle sits on the Transportation Infrastructure and Natural Resources Committees, as well as the Water Resources Subcommittees of those bodies.

{Exhibit 2: Hoyle Documents}

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

3.5 Visit to 53rd Flats Affordable Housing Apartments, Hunsaker Bike Path, Proximate to the Northwest Corner of SW Country Club Drive and SW Waverly Street, Corvallis

No business was discussed.

3.6 *Emergency Sheltering Update – Suzanne Hoffman, Health Services Director

Malone reconvened the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Hoffman noted that staff will update the Corvallis City Council on this project on February 21, 2023. Staff still await the City Council decision on whether the County will receive a grant for temporary shelter. Hartstein and Holland discussed the following report with service providers, incorporating that feedback. Before COVID-19, shelter and homelessness was a different situation; old constructs are not adequate for today's situation. The current contract fills one part of a gap. Ongoing financial implications need to be addressed; the project is approaching the not-to-exceed limit on the current contract and will be seeking other funding sources.

Hartstein presented on inclement weather sheltering (exhibit 3). The County contracted with Faith Hope and Charity, Incorporated (FHC) to provide emergency hotel weather-based sheltering. The program is triggered by weather (hot or cold) and air quality criteria and is meant for people who cannot access other shelters. Hartstein described host intake at First Christian Church. Clients are accepted on a first come, first serve while prioritizing those most at risk.

FHC provides transportation to participating hotels. Peers are present and plain-clothed, unarmed overnight security personnel are provided in kind by Knight Security, which made several hotels more willing to host this program.

FHC collects client data. The first activation housed 65 unique clients. Clients were all from Benton County, with 6.2% from the City of Albany and 93.8% from Corvallis. Most clients identified as having mental health and/or substance use disorder diagnoses and concerns. FHC also did exit interviews with 42 guests. Challenges included behavior issues and needing more volunteers for intake when clients surged from 30 to 60 on the third night. Two rooms were smoked in, incurring a \$250 cleaning fee per room.

Responding to a question from Kerby, Hartstein replied that guests who smoked in the room are not prohibited in future, in order to maintain low-barrier access. The fee is a minor issue in comparison to a client's risk of death.

Hoffman added that the definition of a low-barrier shelter is not having consequences for this type of minor offense. These clients have fairly high needs and no resources; many have been banned elsewhere for various behaviors.

Kerby recommended monitoring such costs to see if it was a significant issue.

Holland concurred.

Hoffman emphasized that FHC explains expectations to every guest during the intake process.

Hartstein shared several success stories. Areas for improvement: more skilled and trained staff/volunteers to support more a streamlined intake; identify immediately deployable volunteers; add a medical fragility question to intake; identify an alternate plan/location for sheltering in case of lack of funding or hotel availability.

Malone asked how the program was working for hotels.

Hartstein replied that FHC plans to interview hotel management. Anecdotally, hotel management appreciated having the security guard check in with them.

Kerby asked about the notification process for potential guests when sheltering is activated.

Hartstein explained that outreach happens through the Harm Reduction Team and an alert to other shelter providers, then word of mouth. Most guests heard about the program from Harm Reduction, a case manager, or friends.

Wyse approved of that approach rather than a notification blast, to avoid people from other areas using that capacity.

Holland agreed the service was only for Benton County clients. Coordination with providers is essential. The program cannot meet the entire cold weather demand.

Kerby asked if anyone was turned away due to a room limit.

Holland replied that only 15 rooms were available each night; FHC worked with Unity Church for overflow of seven to 13 guests.

Hoffman noted that staff originally envisioned a congregate setting; FHC proposed hotel sheltering, which staff think is better and can be realistically implemented. There is still a need for overflow in a congregate setting. Not everyone will be successful in a hotel, and FHC may not have enough hotel rooms at a given time. Staff did not expect the high volume of clients, so a continuum of emergency overflow options is needed. Because the County's contract is limited in scope, the County could not fund overflow at the church. FHC paid to provide that option. Hoffman thanked FHC and staff for working so collaboratively and generously.

Hartstein shared that a debrief was held with FHC and other providers. A hybrid congregate/hotel model might work, such as families/couples in a hotel and others in a congregate setting.

Hoffman noted there has been concern and misinformation about the security aspect. The security presence was minimal and non-intrusive, and is a significant part of why hotels are willing to participate.

Augerot had not heard concerns past the first two days of activation.

Malone asked about activation criteria and weather predictions.

Holland replied that staff used decades of weather data to create the thresholds. The Air Quality Index came from national standards. Summers have been warmer than average; other seasons have been more volatile. Criteria identify hazards beyond just a certain temperature.

Hoffman explained that thresholds are often resource-based. More relaxed standards means more activation, which requires more funding.

The Board praised the meaningful successes implemented in a short period of time.

Holland noted that with help from staff, FHC is well on its way to developing more capacity. This activation will put the contract close to the end of its funding. Startup costs and the first five days of activation cost \$29,000. This activation will put total costs at about \$49,200, not to exceed \$50,000.

Hoffman noted there is a provision to amend the amount with additional resources. If Corvallis does not award funding, staff will return to the Board and Crager; otherwise this could be the last activation. The funding totals about \$1 million and uses are very flexible. Benton County and Unity Shelter applied. It appears the desire is to split the pot.

{Exhibit 3: Inclement Weather Presentation}

3.7 Discussion of State of Emergency Declaration Regarding Homelessness – *Commissioner Xanthippe Augerot*

Augerot has been working with HOPE Project Manager Rebecca Taylor, Arena, and Hoffman to determine whether Benton County should declare a local emergency on housing and ask to be included with Governor Tina Kotek's Emergency Declaration. Benton is part of the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care (ROCC), which did not meet the threshold for the emergency. The Governor's Office and legislators are working to include ROCC Counties in some funding measures, but details are unknown. Legislators are working on House Bill (HB) 2001-1, which will make several statewide policy changes funded by Ways and Means, including changes in

eviction processes, expansion of youth homelessness programs, and modular housing. Augerot testified on HB 2001-1 that ROCC Counties want to be included in funding and see further investment in the pilot program for coordinated regional homelessness response. Augerot was undecided whether to declare a local housing emergency, or continue to wait and watch. The State will review additional applications to the executive order on March 10, 2023.

Arena noted that Benton meets the threshold as an individual County, but there has been little information on State requirements that may be imposed under a local emergency.

Augerot added there will be a statewide emergency activation center, so there is no requirement to set up a local EOC.

Hoffman leaned towards declaring a local emergency to ensure Benton's needs are considered.

Wyse commented that a declaration might help the County advocate for vulnerable community members, but could also have unintended consequences. Wyse asked if the Board could revoke a declaration quickly if that were the case.

Augerot confirmed. The Board should have a distinct data threshold below which the emergency would be revoked.

Wyse and Malone concurred.

Malone suggested asking legislators for guidance.

Augerot had spoken to Rayfield, who gave assurances that the rest of the state would be covered; however, the language of HB 2001-1 is being negotiated between legislators and the Governor's Office. Augerot can follow up with Rayfield about a local declaration.

The Board decided to prepare for a potential declaration and revisit the matter at the March 7, 2023 Board Meeting. Arena to work with Counsel on potential declaration language.

Chair Malone recessed at 12:50 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

3.8 County Administrator (CA) Transition Discussion – Joe Kerby, County Administrator; Suzanne Hoffman, Health Services Director

Kerby reported working with Crager and Hoffman on budget decisions, to be completed next week. Budget Committee meetings start in April 2023. Hoffman and Kerby are discussing transition items. Kerby will be away the week of February 27, 2023; Hoffman will be Acting CA at that time. Kerby's last day with Benton County is March 15, 2023. Staff selected a recruiting firm to find the next CA; Martineau is checking the firm's references. The project is on schedule.

Kerby is working with Human Resources (HR) on Natural Areas, Parks & Events Director interviews; the top three candidates will visit in person on February 25, 2023. The Board and Hoffman will participate. Two other panels and a stakeholder panel will help Kerby make the decision on February 24 or 27, 2023. There will be a Kalapuya Building open house on April 20, 2023 in partnership with Corvallis School District, which will host an art display.

4. Executive Session under ORS 192.660[2][e] – Negotiations for Property Transactions

Chair Malone recessed the regular Board Meeting at 1:14 p.m. and immediately entered Executive Session.

Chair Malone exited Executive Session at 2:04 p.m. and immediately resumed the regular Board Meeting.

5. Other

No other business was discussed.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

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