

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Livestream: <http://facebook.com/BentonCoGov>

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

9:00 a.m.

Present: **Pat Malone**, Chair; **Xanthippe Augerot**, Commissioner; **Nancy Wyse**, Commissioner; **Vance Croney**, County Counsel; **Rick Crager**, Interim County Administrator

Staff: **Eric Bowling**, **April Holland**, **Kailee Olson**, **Damien Sands**, Health; **Cory Grogan**, Public Information Officer; **Adam Loerts**, Information Technology; **Amanda Makepeace**, BOC Staff; **Tracy Martineau**, Human Resources; **Rachel McEneny**, incoming County Administrator; **Erika Milo**, BOC Recorder; **Darren Nichols**, **Inga Williams**, Community Development; **Jesse Ott**, Natural Areas, Parks & Events; **Jef Van Arsdall**, Sheriff

Guests: **Heather DeSart**, Northwest Oregon Works; **Joe Frenel**, **Rachael Maddock-Hughes**, Rural Prosperity Partners; **John Harris**, Horsepower Productions; **Aleita Hass-Holcombe**, **Alison Hobgood**, Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center; **Mandy Place**, **Andrea Spritz**, residents; **Nancy Taniguchi**, Historic Resources Commission

1. Opening:

1. Call to Order

Chair Malone called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

2. Introductions

3. Announcements

No announcements were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

3. *Comments from the Public

Hobgood, Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center (CDDC) Executive Director, shared that CDDC was recently burglarized and vandalized by a guest with an acute mental health disability. CDDC is the only day resource and navigation center for people experiencing extreme poverty in this region. Hobgood emphasized the refusal of government officials and agencies to truly witness the crisis that many in this community are experiencing and the work that providers are doing to mitigate it. The Board recently voted to prioritize funding for a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC). CDDC is an EOC every day. Conversations with the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center Emergency Department, Assertive Community Treatment team, and Corvallis Police Department suggest CDDC is managing the real-time version of the type of future crisis the County is planning for. Governor Tina Kotek declared homelessness a statewide emergency, yet local governments continue to ignore the crisis and take service providers for granted. CDDC, Unity Shelter, Community Housing First, Vina Moses, Community Outreach, Incorporated, Faith Hope & Charity, and Pathfinders are Benton's Emergency Management team, and CDDC is Benton's EOC. Government needs to acknowledge the current emergency,

which is only getting worse. For many guests, everyday existence is a state of emergency. Soon there will be emergencies related to winter warming, summer cooling, and wildfires. Valuing providers' hard work with ongoing committed funding, true political will, and tangible, functional material spaces is a must. The status quo is not sustainable. Everyone needs to work together to support those who are most vulnerable.

Wyse asked if Hobgood had a specific, tangible request.

Hobgood expressed frustration with funding decisions made at the September 5, 2023 Board Meeting. Work by CDDC and the County on a Homeless Navigation Center has hit another obstacle. The City is working on a time, place, and manner sleeping guide that is dysfunctional, and policy is not working. Hobgood called for more engagement and direct funding. Staff keep trying to do the work, but help never totally materializes. The situation is bad. It will be hard to expect staff to still show up if there is not a more coordinated effort, which requires funding.

Augerot noted there is a need for operational support, but also space. Augerot would love to provide some of the first funding for a new space, but many other projects are already further along. Augerot acknowledged this is a daily emergency and praised the work of Hobgood and team. The Board and the community have to figure out how to do this.

Hobgood described experiencing grief in witnessing guests' very challenging lives, as well as grief at how the system continues to fail. Hobgood hoped that something can be done collectively, because it is impossible to do alone.

{Exhibit 1: Hobgood Testimony}

4. Work Session

4.1 Monthly COVID Update from Health Services – *April Holland, Health Services*

Holland thanked Hobgood for those comments; it is an honor to work with service providers. The United States has experienced a rise in COVID-19 hospitalizations and transmission for several weeks. In Oregon, 247 individuals were hospitalized with COVID-19 at the last update. Last month, there were 173. There is a concerning rise in hospitalizations for people age 65 and above compared to increases in other age groups. Benton County had no COVID-19 hospitalizations last week. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) predict relatively stable hospitalization rates in coming weeks. Despite increased hospitalizations, there have not been increased deaths in Oregon, but nationwide, 2% of deaths were COVID-19 related in the past week, up from 1% last month. Statewide testing positivity rate is 15%, up from 11% last month. For Health and Human Services Region 10 (including Oregon), about 13% of tests were positive over the last two weeks. Last month, several neighboring areas showed increased wastewater signals, but levels are plateauing at a moderate concentration in most areas. A plateau means steady transmission. There are no significant new variants, only Omicron XBB-related variants, which are very contagious but are not more virulent and do not cause more severe illness than previous Omicron strains. Exercise additional caution to protect those most susceptible to severe outcomes. Anyone who is infected can experience long COVID.

On September 11, 2023, the CDC recommended the new monovalent XBB1.5-based mRNA booster for people aged 6 months and above. The CDC says everyone can benefit from vaccination, and many COVID-19 deaths could be vaccine-preventable. Prioritize vaccination of those at high risk and remain aware of equity considerations. COVID-19 vaccination will no

longer be covered by the government, but most insurance plans will cover it at no individual cost. Those without insurance will be able to get low-cost vaccination from local health centers, State, local, territorial, and Tribal Health Departments, and pharmacies that participate in the CDC Bridge Access Program. Bridge doses will be available in mid-October 2023. Children covered by the Vaccines for Children program may receive a vaccine from an enrolled provider. Oregon will have 30,000 doses for uninsured or underinsured adults at Federally Qualified Health Centers, Benton Community Health Centers, Tribal Health Centers, and participating pharmacies such as Walgreen's and CVS. Recently CDC shared messaging about hospital capacity in the respiratory virus season. Oregon has low hospital beds per capita, so small changes in admissions could strain hospital capacity. Even a mild to moderate respiratory virus season could cause serious drain. OHA will monitor the primary contributors to severe illness: influenza, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and COVID-19. Hospitals and similar facilities may reinstitute masking recommendations when virus levels increase. Wastewater data on influenza and RSV will be available soon.

Malone asked when the new vaccine booster would be readily available in Benton County.

Holland replied that vaccines are expected any time now. The bivalent or early primary boosters will no longer be used, simplifying the process. Some pharmacies are already making appointments, and Samaritan Health Services says its online scheduler will be available soon. Holland recommended contacting providers or pharmacies about availability.

Responding to a question from Malone, Holland confirmed that the new vaccine would be available at the County vaccination clinic this month.

Malone asked if RSV vaccination was also recommended this fall.

Holland did not have the recommendations on hand; the RSV vaccine is age-specific. It is safe to have all three vaccines at once, but this could compound some after-effects depending on age and health status. Individuals should discuss this with their provider.

Malone had heard there is not much research on receiving all three vaccines at the same time.

Holland replied there is no contraindication in the vaccine protocols. Staff are working with long-term care facilities to determine whether vaccinating some or all residents is advisable.

4.2 Northwest Oregon Works (NOW) Update – Heather DeSart, NOW

DeSart requested feedback on the presentation. Funded primarily through the Department of Labor, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) help train and employ job seekers. NOW serves Benton, Lincoln, Tillamook, Clatsop, and Columbia Counties. A local elected official is assigned to each WIB; Malone sits on the NOW board.

In the last State legislative session, the Future Ready Oregon investment package approved \$200 million in statewide WIB funding. The Prosperity 10,000 program will receive \$35 million in increments, and WIBs will receive \$10 million Workforce Benefits Navigator Grants. NOW applied for several other grants and helped community organizations apply.

DeSart described NOW program participation and investment for 2022-23 (see presentation). Programs included Prosperity 10,000, Workplace Innovations and Opportunity Act for youth and adults, State Youth Employment Program, Youth Development (YD), and Oregon Youth

Employment Program (OYEP). In total, NOW invested \$304,244,062 and served 113 participants in Benton County.

Youth programs have been very successful. From July to September 2023, NOW enrolled eight Benton County participants in On the Job Training and Individual Training Accounts in partnership with Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) and College Hill Alternative High School. Through direct service YD grants, NOW worked with school districts and 55 out-of-school youth to pay for General Educational Developmental test preparation materials. NOW provided \$55,000 in combined direct support to youth and wages for Student Success Coaches. Through OYEP, NOW spent \$50,000 on wages for 11 Benton participants in Cooperative Work Experience (CWE). DeSart showed a video in which a participant described the benefits of CWE; Amy Burbee, LBCC CWE faculty chair, also commented on life-changing OYEP funding. Some students have already been offered jobs.

DeSart shared that NOW received a \$750,000 HowToProgram (HTP) grant through Oregon Health Authority to establish a behavioral health program, which was so successful that several Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs), including Samaritan and Columbia Pacific, have invested to continue the programs. NOW held a behavioral health career fair in September 2023 which had great employer turnout, but needs to be marketed differently to attract younger job-seekers. HTP has 13 Benton County participants and IHN has 8. NOW is working with LBCC on cohorts in phlebotomy and child home care. Gabe Gurule, Corvallis Fire Department, is developing a paramedic/ Emergency Medical Technician training to address the nationwide shortage.

Augerot noted that as 2023 Board Chair for Community Services Consortium, she sees a lot of this work due to the interdependence of funding for employment issues. Seeing the Benton County numbers called out is helpful. Funding for facilitated local partnerships has increased; Augerot was glad to see collaboration with LBCC and Samaritan, which will continue to evolve. Augerot's goal is always 'no wrong door.'

Regarding the \$200 million in State funding, Malone asked about the timetable and whether the funding would continue.

DeSart replied that NOW has through 2026 to spend the one-time funds. Oregon Workforce Partnership (the association of all nine local directors) helped develop Senate Bill 623 to provide an overall evaluation of the public workforce system. NOW wants to continue Prosperity 10,000. Ideally, some of that funding would come from the Governor's permanent biennium budget.

Malone asked where Benton County residents could take Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training.

DeSart will follow up. Currently, Benton residents could get training in Lincoln County.

Wyse asked how often NOW reports to the Board of Commissioners.

DeSart noted that Malone and Clatsop County have requested more frequent updates; staff will try to report quarterly.

Wyse suggested that email updates could also work.

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 10:04 a.m. and reconvened at 10:09 a.m.

4.3 Plan for Onboarding Incoming County Administrator – Tracy Martineau, Human Resources

Martineau has worked with Lindsey Goodwin (Finance), and Maura Kwiatkowski and Marriah De La Vega (Board’s Office) to set McEneny up with a laptop, keys, permissions, and calendar. The County will hold several meet-and-greet events, starting with a staff reception on October 2, 2023, then probably expand to City Managers and Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments in November 2023. McEneny is connected to Microsoft 365 and will have training through the NEOGOV onboarding portal. McEneny’s initial meetings with department directors will be casual, followed by one-on-one meetings to establish McEneny’s priorities.

Augerot asked if Crager would have a list of ongoing issues to brief McEneny.

Crager replied that he and Martineau will update the list with McEneny. McEneny will also meet with each Commissioner.

Martineau shared previous County Administrator Joe Kerby’s leadership policies with McEneny.

Wyse asked if the introductory meetings would be virtual, or in-person.

Martineau replied there would be virtual options, but in-person is best.

Wyse asked Martineau to prioritize in-person attendance and inform all departments.

McEneny agreed that in-person meetings are preferable when possible.

Malone observed that Kerby took many notes, and recommended a ‘warm handoff,’ making sure that the information (including additions by Interim County Administrators Suzanne Hoffman and Crager) is transferred to McEneny.

Martineau noted that Hoffman and Crager have added to Kerby’s notes.

Crager will prioritize written documentation.

McEneny will create a video travelogue of her cross-country journey to Benton County.

5. Consent Calendar

5.1 Approval of Appointment to the Community Services Consortium Community Action Advisory Council – Order #D2023-071: Vince Adams and Kristi Collins

MOTION: Wyse moved to approve the Consent Calendar of September 19, 2023. Augerot seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

6. Proclamations

6.1 Proclaiming September 2023 as National Suicide Prevention Month, Proclamation #P2023-016 – Eric Bowling, Health Services

Bowling read the proclamation aloud. Benton County recognizes suicide as a public health issue.

MOTION: Augerot moved to proclaim September 2023 as National Suicide Prevention Month in Benton County, Proclamation #P2023-016. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

7. Public Hearing

PH 1 In the Matter of the First Reading of Ordinance 2023-0320 Amending the Benton County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map, Regarding the Adair Village Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) – Darren Nichols, Community Development

Chair Malone opened the Public Hearing at 11:01 a.m.

Staff Report

Nichols explained that on September 5, 2023, the Board approved the addition of .12 acre to the Adair Village UGB. Today's Ordinance formally amends the boundary, correcting a mapping error from the 2022 UGB amendment. The supporting documentation appeared in a prior action. The second reading will occur October 3, 2023, and the Ordinance will take effect November 3, 2023.

Public Comment

No comment was offered.

Counsel clarified that it would have been more efficient to continue the Public Hearing on September 5, 2023, then bring the Ordinance back to the continued hearing, rather than holding a another Public Hearing today.

Chair Malone closed the Public Hearing at 11:05 a.m.

MOTION: Augerot moved to enact Ordinance #2023-0320 amending the Adair Village Urban Growth Boundary and to conduct a final reading of the Ordinance. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Counsel performed the first reading. Second reading to be placed on the agenda under Old Business.

8. New Business

8.1 Request to Apply for the Oregon Heritage Grant (OHG) – Jesse Ott, Natural Areas, Parks, and Events; Inga Williams, Community Development

Williams explained this is a biennial State grant to preserve, develop, or interpret Oregon's cultural heritage. Benton County has chosen Fort Hoskins as a cultural resource of statewide significance.

Ott has worked with the Historic Resources Commission (HRC) and Community Development for several months, aiming to give each historic building a job. The County and the Alliance for Recreation and Natural Areas hold an annual event at Fort Hoskins during History Month. Staff propose partnering to hold a Kings Valley day to promote Beazell Memorial Forest, Fort Hoskins, and nearby communities. Ott is talking with Tribes, re-enactors, the Tarweed School, the Kings Valley Community Trust, and others. This grant would help the County produce the

event for 2024, and can be combined with current capital infrastructure projects, such as improving Fort signage or stabilization of the Commander's House. The grant typically awards \$3,000-20,000, so the County General Fund would need to match a minimum of \$3,000. Staff are finalizing the request amount, which will possibly be 50% of \$10,000.

Malone commented this was a good opportunity to showcase County resources and update the facilities.

MOTION: Wyse moved to authorize Natural Areas Parks and Events to apply for the Oregon Heritage Grant. Augerot seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

8.2 *Update from Historic Resources Commission (HRC) – Inga Williams, Community Development; Nancy Taniguchi, Historic Resources Commission Chair

Taniguchi stressed the value of historic preservation. For Historic Preservation Month, HRC will develop a historic presentations and trades program with Northwest Oregon Works, probably in spring 2024. Wallowa County Museum Director Jude Graham will serve as a mentor to help with the five County historic properties. The HRC meets the last Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Wyse expressed a love of historic structures, and has been a past liaison to the Corvallis HRC.

Augerot praised the strategic plan and coordination between HRC and Community Development to preserve resources through interpretation and community support.

Taniguchi thanked the Tarweed School. HRC hopes to partner formally with the school.

Malone asked who would be the Board liaison to HRC.

MOTION: Augerot moved to appoint Commissioner Wyse to be liaison to the Historic Resources Commission for Benton County. Malone seconded the motion, which **carried, 3-0.**

{Exhibit 2: Benton County Historic Resources Commission Report}

8.3 Media Relations Policy Update and Approval – Cory Grogan, Public Information Officer

Grogan presented the County's Media Relations & Strategic Communications policy for Board approval. Grogan coordinated updates with the Policy Oversight Committee, presented the policy at a Leadership Team meeting, and posted it for 10-day staff review.

Grogan reviewed changes to the document since the last version:

- Added information about the Public Information Officer (PIO) being responsible for community outreach.
- Updated some information based on the Emergency Manager's guidance about notifications, especially to vulnerable populations.
- Added information on how employees and department directors can coordinate to share successes with the media. Updated best practices for media inquiries. Added a media response schedule (guaranteed response time).

- Added information for employees about how to talk to the media, encouraging employees to coordinate with the PIO first. Added information about when inquiries should be coordinated by the PIO, and how that relates to departments (with exceptions for the Health Department and Sheriff's Office).
- Added information on how Commissioners should comment as individuals.
- Added information on when and how to report disinformation and factual errors, and how to notify the media.
- Included the County's right to refuse media interviews (for instance, if the County does not have a general framework, if the topic would violate legal matters, or the County does not feel the media is approaching the story from an objective angle).
- Media inquiries that require a lot of time to gather information should go through the PIO, then likely to Counsel, as this could require a public records request.
- Minor wording changes at the end about awareness and outreach, branding, advertising, and collateral materials.
- Updates to the photo/video consent policy. Consent is required to use the photo/video of a person under age 18. For a person over 18 in a public space with no reasonable expectation of privacy, the County can use the photo/video for outreach.

Augerot praised the document and asked if this had been posted on the Bee (internal staff website).

Grogan confirmed.

Malone stated it is more critical than ever that the County speak with one voice and that information be clear and correct. It is important to define County policies and make clear to the media how quickly the County can respond to media requests.

Grogan noted that the County values its partnerships with media in order to be transparent and tell the County's story.

Malone noted this aligns with the County website redesign, putting out accurate information and being perceived as a good source of information.

Wyse added that clear expectations on both sides help avoid misunderstandings and continue to build relationships with the County's media partners.

MOTION: Augerot moved to approve the Media Relations and Strategic Communications Policy. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Chair Malone recessed the meeting at 10:51 a.m. and reconvened at 11:00 a.m.

9. Departmental Reports & Requests

9.1 Broadband Action Team (BAT): Update, Funding, and Contract Proposal – Adam Loerts, Information Technology; Rachael Maddock-Hughes, Rural Prosperity Partners (formerly Sequoia Consulting)

Maddock-Hughes explained that the BAT helps the region secure the proportional amount of \$800 million in funding coming to the State. When BAT started, Lincoln County funded the group, then Linn County; BAT has talked for a while about all member counties buying in. Linn, Lincoln, and Lane Counties are onboard with this. This contract would deepen services that

Rural Prosperity Partners (RPP) will provide to BAT and ensure Benton receives the needed funding. In past years, RPP has secured funding for the feasibility study and work by consultant Solarity, advocated on behalf of rural communities, and served as BAT liaison with the Oregon Broadband Office (OBO). The next step is to turn information from the feasibility study into projects. RPP will work with the four member counties to coordinate regional and County-specific projects and develop competitive applications. RPP can also provide additional grant-writing services, monthly reports, or online/social media content. BAT plays an important role in infrastructure rollout and support of Digital Equity and Inclusion.

Maddock-Hughes reviewed upcoming State funding programs:

- The \$6.5 million Broadband Technical Assistance Program (BTAP) from the Universal Service Fund. The opportunity will open in the next two months. RPP recommends that all BATs apply to fund contractors or staff, help secure other funding, receive grant-writing support, and perform rapid design studies (RDS) (which Solarity has already done for this region). The initial contract with the four counties can be partly or completely reimbursed by BTAP in future.
- The \$157 million Broadband Deployment Program (BDP) from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) infrastructure funding. Having the RDS will help acquire other funding. Solarity offers a grant tool to compare funding sources and projects.
- The \$688 million Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) funding will not be available until late 2024 or early 2025. OBO is still securing budget approvals and developing guidelines.
- The \$50 million Digital Equity Act funding will be available mid-2024, details to be determined. This is for non-infrastructure needs.

The goal of this proposal is for all four counties to support deepened BAT engagement services from RPP, and to advance the projects that will be identified through RDS or feasibility studies.

Loerts explained that each member county is being asked to contribute \$20,000 in the contract. Loerts supports this contract to bridge the next three to nine months until the County has a better idea how to use BTAP funding and the Solarity work is finished. Internet Service Provider (ISP) Pioneer Connect was awarded two United States Department of Agriculture ReConnect grants for broadband expansion. The Solarity tool maps the County's internet speed tests, which, combined with Federal Communications Commission mapping, show how to improve broadband access across the County. Loerts will present the report to the Board soon. Full buildout of fiber to all known gaps would cost about \$50 million. The report will recommend a fraction of that, a mix of fiber and fixed wireless. The County will also need a task force to communicate with ISPs and the public, and to help select projects. RPP will help build those relationships.

Wyse asked if this was a new contract.

Maddock-Hughes replied that RPP currently does not have a BAT contract with Benton; Linn has been paying the cost for the last two years, and Lincoln paid before that. In the new contract, Maddock-Hughes will work for a year with each county, and can apply for BTAP funding to do additional work. There is a three-to-five-year window for broadband funding and infrastructure deployment. Maddock-Hughes has a separate grant-writing contract with Benton.

Wyse asked if RPP had already secured contracts with the other counties.

Maddock-Hughes had done so with Lincoln and Lane Council of Governments, and is in conversations with Linn.

Wyse asked staff if Benton had budgeted for this expense.

Crager replied that matching funds dedicated to the feasibility study were built into the budget.

Augerot felt this was a perfect use of Benton's Economic Development Office lottery funds. It is good to know how the County can be more competitive. Benton has fewer gaps than some counties, but enrichment of service in some places would also be helpful. Augerot supported continuing BAT work.

Malone asked if Counsel had examined the contract.

Counsel replied no, but it will come to him for approval.

Malone stated that more regular BAT reports would be helpful.

Loerts noted that staff await Solarity's final report before presenting to the Board.

Maddock-Hughes explained that the studies will provide more concrete information; then conversation will focus on the role of counties and municipalities in bridging gaps. For public-private partnerships, the easiest approach is for ISPs to ask the County for a letter of support. The middle path is for the County to issue a Request for Qualifications from ISP partners to address gaps, and potentially provide funding (the County would be the applicant). Procurement will depend on whether there are public funds to match. Gap areas are often adjacent to service areas, which suggests potential ISP partners. Responding to a question from Wyse, Maddock-Hughes confirmed that Counsel can still review the contract after the Board approves it.

MOTION: Wyse moved to approve Benton County entering into a contract with Rural Prosperity Partners, LLC to facilitate the Broadband Action Team and assist in leading to quality outcomes of improved internet access for our community with the following costs. The fees for services are: Broadband Action Team (four counties): \$80,000 (\$20,000 from each county, with each county directly contracting with Rural Prosperity Partners). Augerot seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

10. Other

No other business was discussed.

11. Adjournment

Chair Malone adjourned the meeting at 11:33 p.m.



Pat Malone, Chair



Erika Milo, Recorder

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