

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

Tuesday, February 20, 2024, 9:00 AM

Present: Xanthippe Augerot, Chair; Nancy Wyse, Vice Chair; Pat Malone, Commissioner; Vance Croney, County Counsel; Rachel McEneny, County Administrator

Staff: Tomi Douglas, Jesse Ott, Adam Stebbins, Natural Areas, Parks, and Events; Cory Grogan, Public Information Officer; April Holland, Health Services; Maura Kwiatkowski, Amanda Makepeace, Board Staff; Toby Lewis, Darren Nichols, Linda Ray, Community Development; Erika Milo, Board Recorder

Elected Official: Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff

Guests: John Harris, Horsepower Productions; Brett Davis, Julie Jackson, Republic Services; Jessica Hougen, Janet Nishihara, Terri Thomas, Benton Historical Society; Joel Geier, Mark Yeager, Bailey Payne, Marilee Hoppner, Residents

1. Opening

1.1. Call to Order

Chair Augerot called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

1.2. Introductions

1.3. Announcements

No announcements were made.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

A. Augerot advised the materials for the public hearing that will be held at 11 AM were published as part of an addendum to the agenda. By utilizing an addendum to the agenda for materials received after the deadline for agenda publication, the agenda can be posted well before the meeting date.

B. The following item was added to the agenda under 9. Other:

9.1 Letter of Support for Congressional Delegated Spending Awards – Rick Crager, Financial Services

3. Proclamation

3.1 Proclaiming February 20, 2024 as Benton County's Day of Remembrance of Japanese Americans Incarcerated During World War II, Proclamation P2024-002 – Dr. Janet Nishihara, Oregon State University; Jessica Hougen and Terri Thomas, Benton County Historical Society (BCHS)

Nishihara thanked the Board for the opportunity to present the proclamation and read the proclamation aloud.

Augerot asked whether any observance activities were scheduled at the museum. Hougen advised a lecture by Russell Yamada would be held at the museum on February 21 at 10:30 AM. One of Yamada's parents was incarcerated because of the 1942 Executive Order.

Malone expressed appreciation for the collaborative effort to bring the proclamation before the Board.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve Proclamation #P2024-002, in the matter of proclaiming February 20, 2024 as Benton County's Day of Remembrance for Japanese Americans Incarcerated During World War II. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Augerot thanked those present for the collaborative effort among organizations and hopes we will continue to acknowledge this part of our history and the Japanese American community.

4. Comments from the Public

Mark Yeager, resident, spoke about the recently received Valley Landfills (VL) report on Coffin Butte Landfill (CBL), indicating the form and format of the document made it essentially unreadable with the font and the characteristics with which it was put together. It is also not a factual report, but a propaganda piece filled with unsupported and unaudited claims that cannot be left unchallenged. Regarding the June 20, 2022 EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) inspection and documentation of massive methane leaks, the propaganda piece says, and I quote, "it is our view that a known landfill gas expansion project may have had a negative impact on the readings."

On June 1, 2022, construction of new gas wells commenced at CBL but were estimated to finish by the end of June. On June 7, VL conducted their surface emissions monitoring for the quarter and found only six leaks in the range of 100 to 1,400 parts per 1 million. On June 17, VL conducted their follow-up monitoring, going back to their original leaks from June 7 and seeing if any of the corrective actions yielded improved results. They found that all six had improved, but still three of them had exceeded 100 parts per 1 million.

Then, only four days later, EPA arrived unannounced, and they found 76 exceedances over 300 parts per 1 million, some hitting the maximum limit of the instruments range at 70,000 parts per 1 million. The inspector from EPA observed concerns over VL's monitoring techniques, which fell short of best practices. The inspector also noted the earlier surface

emissions monitoring report showed their monitoring path as covering areas of the landfill. VL told the inspector they didn't actually monitor there. The inspector asks why these discrepancies are there between the reported monitoring path and the actual monitoring path. VL told EPA that impromptu changes to the route during monitoring is typical practice.

Here's a quote regarding the question of how the planned gas expansion project would impact results. So Daniel Hines, the EPA inspector, asked VL if the gas collection system was operational on the day of the surface emissions monitoring inspection, or if there was anything different from standard operations that could have impacted the results of the monitoring. Republic stated that nothing was operating differently than normal with all wells in operation and collection running. In October 2022, VL did its third quarter emissions monitoring and found 24 total exceedances of the emission limits. This is notably more than the exceedances they found during the gas wall construction project in June, but less than the EPA findings. This is just one example of the propaganda contained in this report. They knew then, and they know now, that this facility is spewing massive amounts of methane and other pollutants every day into the air.

It's your duty to hold this company accountable for the misrepresentations in this report and to tell the residents of the county the true story behind this destructive industrial operation.

5. Work Session

5.1 *Monthly Health Update – April Holland, Health Services

Holland provided a status update on the respiratory viruses t circulating over the last several months.

Hospitalizations for COVID-19 have decreased over the past few weeks, At last month's update, 242 individuals were hospitalized across the state with COVID-19. The most recent data reflects a decrease to 154. When there are less than 200 hospitalized individuals, it is a positive sign in terms of hospital capacity. The COVID-19 test positivity rate has been below 10% for three weeks, and the various data monitored indicates the downward trend is expected to continue.

Holland referenced a graphic showing vaccine uptake by county. People in Benton County are getting the updated booster. Benton County is tied with Multnomah County for the highest vaccination rate for the fall 2023 booster at 21.2%. In January, the booster rate was 18%. Holland thanked the 19,928 individuals in Benton County who received the updated booster to protect from severe illness and reduce transmission in the community, which helps protect our most vulnerable residents.

Holland also provided an update on Oregon's long-term care facilities' vaccination rates for the fall 2023 vaccine. Benton County's vaccination rate amongst long-term care facility residents was up to 61%. Benton County leads the way by quite a bit among medium and large sized counties. Holland applauded the efforts of public health professionals and others in the community to ensure long-term care facility populations have access to the vaccine.

Hospitalizations for influenza decreased significantly in the last few of weeks. Wastewater sampling for influenza also showed positive decreases. At the March update, approximately 37% of sites were reporting increases. Now, about one third of sites are reporting sustained or decreases. Holland stressed it is still flu season, and the virus is still circulating. It is not uncommon with influenza to see a smaller wave of a secondary strain following the primary strain.

Regarding the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), hospitalizations have declined greatly, and it is nearly the end of the RSV season. New RSV vaccines have tremendous potential to reduce hospitalizations and deaths for young children and people age 65+. The vaccine is now approved for pregnant individuals, and an RSV monoclonal antibody shot is newly approved from infants up to eight months, as well as toddlers with increased risk factors.

Lastly, Holland reported on the historic weekly trends in Emergency Department (ED) visits for viral respiratory illness types as a percentage of all ED visits. In mid-November 2022, there was a significant spike in ED visits for these illnesses – 14% of total ED visits. Visits decreased to approximately 2% toward the end of February 2023 and remained low until mid-September 2023. Following another spike in early January 2024, ED visits tapered off to less than 4% by February 2024.

Malone was glad to see Benton County ranked highest among Oregon counties in vaccination rates, although the 21% rate is still fairly low. Are the current illness trends related to previous vaccines or immunity resulting from having the virus since the booster rates are fairly low? Holland noted that collective immunity is due to all these factors; immune memory can result in fewer hospitalizations and deaths. While we do have a relatively high 2023 vaccine rate of 21.2%, Holland pointed to the collective experience from the start of vaccinations. It is indicative of earlier in the pandemic when Benton County residents took COVID-19 seriously and worked on isolation, bubbling, and vaccines.

Malone asked whether Holland anticipated a different COVID-19 booster in fall 2024. Holland indicated she did not have a definitive answer but does anticipate more boosters. Recommendations could also change. As researchers learn more about risk factors, boosters may be tailored to specific populations or anyone who would like to get them. As variants emerge, having more boosters to achieve the level of protection needed will be an ongoing effort.

Malone asked about the efficacy of the current influenza vaccine. Holland indicated she would review that data and report back to the Board.

McEneny asked about a case of plague (*Yersinia pestis*), which is also a bacteria that can be treated with antibiotics. Holland noted cases do arise occasionally; there was a recent case in central Oregon. This is just one of many examples of rare diseases seen across the state. Benton County will occasionally see a West Nile virus case or something more unusual.

{Exhibit 1: February 20, 2024 COVID-19 Update Presentation}

5.2 Quarterly Floodplain Program Updates – Toby Lewis, Community Development

Lewis indicated program updates would focus on four topics: 1) Integration of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), 2) status of the Marys River Gage, 3) the Community Rating System, and 4) the County floodplain program update/winter floodplain outreach.

1) Regarding the Integration of the NFIP and the ESA, Lewis reported there are two new cooperating agencies: the National Marine Fisheries Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). These two were added to the existing group of Benton, Tillamook, and Umatilla Counties; as well as the City of Portland and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. These operating agencies have a kind of behind the scenes look at the drafting of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as the project continues to move forward and an opportunity to comment at the appropriate time on documents from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). There was a set of draft instructions for identifying whether a project is located within the Action Area, which is the area that would be impacted by potential new regulations being drafted by FEMA.

Malone asked about the reason for pairing the three counties with the City of Portland. Lewis indicated those were the jurisdictions that expressed interest in being Cooperating Agencies and that were accepted into that role by FEMA. Augerot noted the participating counties resulted primarily from Commissioner interest and the various Community Development departments' capacity to engage in the process. Augerot indicated Tillamook County has a very deep, vested interest in the process. Umatilla County does as well.

Lewis indicated the instructions developed are helpful, especially for communities along the border of the area that would be affected by the regulations. Although Benton County is entirely within the project area, the county will not be affected. It is primarily southeastern Oregon. The draft EIS will be published by summer, which will be followed by an outreach and public comment period. Lewis is waiting for more detailed chapters to review, and FEMA is working with consultants to gather background information as they develop the chapters.

2) Marys River Gage was originally identified as potentially being closed or unfunded by the US Geological Survey (USGS) by October 2024. This was extended to January 2025 because there is a fair amount of support for keeping it open, and it is proximate to a population center. The gage is used for flood emergency warning and response, and it also has significant historical data. FEMA also relies on it for verifying and updating flood insurance rate maps. Priority gages are those near population centers, used for flood monitoring response needs, or have a long history, as well as those gages that monitor public health and impaired stream warning data.

3) The Community Rating System recertification was approved, as was our annual audit of that. It is an incentivized program that helps further the goals of the NFIP. Some of the key goals of the NFIP are to provide flood insurance to property owners and encourage flood reduction activities. The community rating system program identifies tools and incentives to help further these goals by identifying activities that can protect life and property during flood events, reducing exposure to and disruption from flood hazards, encouraging purchase of

flood insurance, and minimizing damage and disruption to infrastructure and people's homes, as well as preserving and restoring natural functions.

Benton County provides flood insurance information and flood risk information to individuals who contact the county. The county also discourages floodplain building whenever possible. We submitted two flood elevations, and both were approved, so the county is in good standing for another year. A larger assessment will occur in five years.

As part of that program, the county offers all property owners who have a flood insurance policy or structures in unincorporated Benton County a 15% discount on their flood insurance premiums. Formerly, only policies for structures in a flood hazard area received the 15% discount. There was a smaller discount for properties outside a flood hazard area. Now, all policies receive the 15% discount, regardless of whether the property is in a flood hazard area. The lines on the flood hazard maps do not hold water back, so it is beneficial the discount can be extended beyond the defined flood hazard area.

4) Regarding winter floodplain outreach, flyers are mailed annually to property owners in or partly in the flood hazard area. The flyers provide key information about what people should know before, during, and after a flood event. This annual direct mailing project is funded jointly by Community Development, Public Information, and Emergency Management.

Augerot noted it was a Marys River Watershed Council (MRWC) Board member who brought the gage to her attention and wanted to thank the individuals at the MRWC for their diligence in working to keep the Marys River Gage open and useful for all.

Malone asked whether there was anything the Commissioners or the county could do to support keeping Marys River Gage open. Lewis indicated mainly expressing support for keeping the gage open. Based on conversations with USGS, Lewis believes they do not always have a great deal of specific information about gages, so the more USGS hears of support for a gage, the better. There are not many in Benton County, and this is a longstanding one.

Malone asked Lewis to review the criteria that allows Benton County to qualify for the discount. Lewis indicated the county participates in the community rating system; and as part of that, the county collects and reviews elevation certificates and keep those on file. An elevation certificate is documentation of the height of the floor of a building. Usually, it is for a house the flood elevation (how high the water is expected to be at that building and any venting that might allow water to flow through a crawl space to keep it from pushing on the foundation of the house and causing damage.

Flood information is also provided to customers via telephone inquiries and direct mailing. This information is also maintained at the libraries and will be on the Community Development department (CD) website, which is currently under construction. CD also reviews and maintains benchmark information, which is helpful for surveyors to complete the elevation certificates. CD encourages construction outside of flood hazard areas and helps ensure safe and compliant construction when it is needed or desired.

A number of organizations in the county have open spaces in FHAs, including county parks, city parks, conservation easements maintained by nonprofit organizations, and some state-owned properties. All those things encourage floodplains to be maintained as open as possible, which contributes to the discount.

Malone suggested this behind-the-scenes effort was something to share with the community; it could be included with the flood hazard pamphlet mailings. Lewis indicated CD is working on opportunities to increase the level of education about the floodplain program, how it keeps people safe, and how it reduces the impacts of flood events.

6. Consent Calendar

6.1 Approval of the December 19, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the Consent Calendar of February 20, 2024. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

7. Public Hearing

7.1 PH 1 Public Hearing Regarding Solid Waste Collection: Annual Rate Increase Request, Order #D2024-027 – Darren Nichols, Community Development; Julie Jackson, Republic Services

This item was heard after Item 9.1.

Chair Augerot opened the Public Hearing at 11:00 AM.

Staff Report

Nichols reminded the Board that Republic Services (RS) had requested a rate increase of 4.8% for solid waste collection services in Benton County. Prior collection service rate increases did not require Board action because they fell under a prior order, authorized by Benton County Code chapter 23, which authorized RS to unilaterally impose an annual refuse rate index (RRI) adjusted for inflationary cost increases. However, that authority operates under an adopted Board Order, and the Board had an adopted Order signed in 2013. Since 2013, rate increases have been imposed by RS unilaterally under that Order.

When the Board signed the franchise agreement, the prior order expired at the end of 2020. The Board is now being asked to reconsider a subsequent order to authorize the requested rate increase and then to set the terms for what may be appropriate going forward.

Benton County Code chapter 23 also requires the franchise hauler (RS) to submit an increase 90 days before the change, which requires a Public Hearing and Board decision not less than 30 days before the effective date. Any action taken at the current meeting would take effect in 30 days.

Nichols indicated CD staff recommended approval of the rate increase as proposed and adoption of Order #D2024-027, or the Board could request additional information or a revised rate schedule that does not create a reverse incentive for additional trash generation.

Augerot asked for confirmation that the order applied to the requested rate increase based on the previous RRI for 2024 and whether that takes the county back to the former practice of using the RRI into the future for an indefinite period. Nichols and Croney both confirmed this was the case. Nichols indicated there was an opportunity to reset the terms of those agreements.

Jackson noted the Board was not required to approve a rate increase, but rather to ensure rates were calculated correctly. RS comes before the Board each year, and Jackson expressed appreciation for the county's cooperation. Jackson confirmed the requested increase was determined using the RRI methodology, and the requested 4.8% increase averages approximately \$1.89 per existing account. The average increase over the last 10 years was 2.9%.

The intent of the refuse rate was more frequent but smaller increases. To demonstrate that has occurred, in 2005 there was a 7% increase; in 2007 there was an 8.8% increase; and in 2009 an 8% increase. In 2013, there was a 9% increase. RS felt those larger increases were more difficult for its customers; and smaller, more frequent indexed-base increases were easier for customers. Anecdotally, that is how customers feel. The current increase is a higher one due to the economy. If the current methodology is continued, Jackson estimated next year's rate increase would be in the 2.9% to 3% range.

Augerot reminded that when the Board last discussed the increase, a waste reduction incentive was also discussed. Commissioner Wyse had requested information about how that would affect some of the county's households and demographic data on customers who would benefit/lose if the county shifted to that approach.

Jackson indicated the most common cart size is 32 gallons, which already demonstrates Benton County is working to reduce waste. Benton has the most robust collection system in Oregon outside of Multnomah County. Jackson was not aware of another county with weekly organics collection. This was a difficult decision, but it has been a good decision; there were many reduced size carts. RS offers a 20-gallon cart, but there is not a significant size or price difference between a 20 and a 32. A 20-gallon cart represents a determined waste reduction customer, and the Board may want to incentivize that. In the Portland Metro area, smaller cart sizes are incentivized by charging more for a larger cart; however, Portland does have some contamination issues. Also, it can be difficult for people to know which week to put which cart out. RS favors weekly collection.

Augerot expressed discomfort with changing rates without data and would like an analysis of the waste stream. Jackson indicated RS is not sure where to obtain much of that data, but they will continue to work on it. In the City of Salem, the chip on the cart method has not proven to be reliable; the scales on large trucks do not stay calibrated for long. A variety of approaches are available, but it can be difficult to identify which is best.

Wyse asked RS to confirm whether they had the information and indicated if not, it was alright to so indicate. Jackson advised RS did not have the information.

Augerot noted waste reduction is a cornerstone of the Sustainable Materials Management Plan (SMMP) and expressed comfort with the current rate structure for now to take advantage of what is learned from the SMMP process.

Malone reminded RS of his previous inquiry regarding construction debris. Although it did not apply to the issue currently before the Board, it is something that needs to be reviewed. Malone would like to see progress on the issue, especially something Benton County could do to access the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) in Brooks. The topic has been in discussion for at least five years, and Malone would like to see progress. He noted that the recent construction activity at OSU resulted in a significant amount of concrete going to Portland, which did not seem efficient, since OSU has regular building activity. There is also a fair amount of other construction in the area, and it is important to keep as much of that as possible out of the landfill.

Jackson advised RS hauls a great deal of OSU concrete to Portland because the MRF in Wilsonville can provide reports needed for OSU's LEED certification program. The Brooks MRF is in the process of obtaining that certification and having an employee certified; it will be a large savings. RS can and sometimes does take area construction waste to Brooks and Wilsonville, but there is an associated expense, and there is no flow control. It would be up to the Board to make this a requirement. In the Portland Metro, it is required; this may need to happen in Benton County. There is also economy of scale and efficiency with more loads going that direction. RS was stymied knowing the facility's capabilities and being unable to identify a solution for getting Benton County material there or for setting up a sorting facility here. Benton County alone does not have enough material to cover that cost. The development of a regional SMMP provides an opportunity for Benton County to partner with other counties to create a project that would work.

Nichols reported that in the last few weeks, he and SMMP Task Force Chair Steve Chase have met with other counties and waste regulators. The questions at the top of everyone's mind are: what is currently in the waste stream, and what can be removed? A waste characterization analysis is needed to compare to a facilities analysis. Where are the existing facilities, and where are the gaps in the system currently prohibiting a strategic facility or diversion point? Nichols expressed optimism about the direction of the SMMP process and the significant amount of collective interest across western Oregon.

Malone indicated he was not aware Benton County could not require a certain level of recycling and reuse. He will look to the SMMP Task Force to review such a potential requirement as part of the task force's analysis and recommendations to the Board regarding areas of improvement.

Nichols advised the goal of the SMMP is to go as far upstream as possible to prevent solid materials from entering the waste stream, and then for solid materials we need to make sure those have a clear second or third purpose, so we are recycling and reusing as much as possible. Our goal for the SMMP is to create a circular economy to the extend possible.

Davis mentioned flow control in Marion County and confirmed the construction boxes are taken to the MRF, where 20% to 25% is removed for repurposing.

Regarding hauling, Augerot reported receiving a resident complaint over the weekend. The resident took a load of debris to CBL on Saturday, but it closed early; and the resident was very frustrated. How does RS address the issue of early closures, especially on Saturday, which is the biggest days for self-haulers? Davis indicated RS held its Annual Safety Banquet, and CBL was closed early so employees could attend. Davis was unsure how the early closure was communicated to the public. Augerot suggested that in the future, it would be very helpful for the county to receive early closure information well in advance so it can be disseminated through county communication channels. Davis acknowledged the need for better communication and will work to improve.

Chair Augerot opened the Public Hearing at 11:22 AM.

Public Comment

No comment was offered.

Chair Augerot closed the Public Hearing at 11:23 AM.

MOTION: Malone moved to approve the rate increase as proposed and adopt Order #D2024-027. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

8. New Business

8.1 Request for Approval to Apply for the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Section 6 Endangered Species Act Grant – Jesse Ott, Adam Stebbins; Natural Areas, Parks, and Events

Ott introduced Stebbins, Benton County's Natural Resources Coordinator, who has been involved with the project from its inception. Ott provided background on the Taylor Checkerspot Butterfly, which is less than two inches long. Its significance in Benton County is extreme because it is one of the few places on the planet that has these populations. Currently, in Oregon, there are two populations surviving in Benton County. Natural Areas, Parks, and Events (NAPE), particularly Stebbins, has been involved with this work for a considerable period.

Forty years ago, the species was thought to likely be extinct. In 2013, it was labeled as endangered by the federal government. NAPE was involved in bringing back the species and its habitat in Benton County well before the endangered designation.

Stebbins discussed monitoring activities and provided background on the work at sites in the Beazell Memorial Forest and Fitton Green Natural Area. The Taylor's Checkerspot is the county's marquee species within the upland prairies and was in the county's prairie conservation areas under the USFWS Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Benton County adopted the HCP in 2010. The HCP has informed NAPE's work at the locations referenced

by Ott since the early 2000's, with focused work being done over the last 10 or more years. Some of the highlights include controlled burns, expanding meadow habitat, and connecting meadow habitat. Much of this work aligns with some of the county's sustainable forestry operations, which results in a double benefit of opening the meadows and capitalizing on some thinning operations to offset the cost of the work.

Approximately three years ago, NAPE began long-term climate monitoring, weather monitoring, and microclimate monitoring in partnership with OSU Bioengineering. The county also has a partnership to compare trends here versus those in Washington state, where there is another large population of Taylor's Checkerspot butterflies. All this work informs long-term what is occurring in these rare meadow habitats; the biotic conditions, as well as the weather and the microclimate there.

Stebbins indicated this is not the first time the county has capitalized on Section 6 grant opportunities. It is similar to a pass-through from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the USFWS. The amount is relatively small (\$15,000), but it is crucial funding for the rare and expensive plant materials necessary for site expansion and restoration. That is the focus for the long-term habitat enhancement for this species and for the prairie conservation areas. NAPE will continue to work with partners (private contractors, nonprofit organizations, and the USFWS) to ensure the program is a continued success combined with the monitoring.

Augerot noted the Checkerspot population change from 500 adults in 2004 to 705 adults now and was glad to see the microclimate monitoring is occurring. Stebbins indicated the Taylor's Checkerspot was listed as threatened until fairly recently when their status was changed to endangered.

Malone asked about the level of progress the county was making. Stebbins indicated that under the HCP, habitat progress is significant regarding what is occurring with abiotic conditions, namely the heat. In the South Sound, which was the largest population of Taylor's Checkerspot, more than 90 percent of the population was lost during the heat dome. Malone appreciated the gradually expanding information being collected and asked what else can be learned. Stebbins advised the county has requested to be included the International Monitoring Group of OSU Professor Dr. John Selker's team, which would have the county be part of the worldwide climate monitoring stations. The county would have access to the analyses those teams are using that could be applied in Benton County. NAPE is also working on a small project with the Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE) to see what can be gleaned from that data. IAE received a grant to look specifically at the abiotic component; its impact on the Taylor's Checkerspot and the vegetation the species depends on.

MOTION: Malone moved to allow Natural Areas, Parks, and Events to apply for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Section VI Endangered Species Act Grant. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Augerot expressed appreciation for the update on the Taylor's Checkerspot and expressed desire for an update on the HCP and the work on private lands. Ott agreed the timing was appropriate for an update; staff will return to the Board with that update soon.

8.2 Acceptance of Easements for the Corvallis to Albany Path: Pilkington to Merloy Avenue – Laurel Byer, Public Works

Byer presented seven utility and access easements for the Pilkington to Merloy section of the Corvallis to Albany Multiuse Path. Three additional easements are in active negotiations.

Augerot asked whether the three easements in negotiation were interspersed or a consolidated stretch. Byer indicated the outstanding easements are in a row and located near Asbahr Avenue and to the north. Augerot appreciated those easements are contiguous and that there is an area where work could begin.

Malone expressed appreciation for the effort to secure the easements, including working with the various landowners. Malone and Byer met with Children's Farmhouse representatives in fall 2023 to address their questions regarding the county's plans and how their operation might be impacted. Malone felt it was a productive discussion. Byer indicated staff has been working closely with landowners and addressing their concerns to the extent possible.

Augerot reminded of the recent joint meeting with the Corvallis Council and the treatment of West Hills, with the junction of side roads like Asbahr Avenue with Highway 20. Specifically, the slightly raised treatment that provides an increased physical signal/indication of a crossing lane for bikes. Byer reported this has been done for some driveways; but at the roads, the path was swept back. This means the path is seen first, and motorists can look for people, proceed to the stop bar, and turn onto the highway.

MOTION: Malone moved to accept and approve the Public Utility and Access Easements for the Corvallis to Albany Path: Pilkington to Merloy Avenue. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

9. Other

9.1 Letter of Support for Congressional Delegated Spending Awards – Rick Crager, Financial Services

Crager advised the Board it is time to apply for Congressional Delegated Spending (CDS) grants, and the application process requires a variety of letters of support. The Board provided letters in the past, and Crager hoped the Board would do so for the current CDS application process.

The county has four priorities moving through the CDS process: 1) a planning grant for the 53rd Street overpass; 2) Jackson-Frazier boardwalk; 3) the Historic Courthouse; and 4) traditional housing assistance, which was also submitted to the state. Three letters from supporting organizations are also needed by February 23, 2024. The first funding application process will be that of Congresswoman Hoyle; which is expected to open soon.

Wyse reported that one piece of feedback the Commissioners received in Washington, DC was that the Historic Courthouse project was confusing and not sufficiently specific. Crager

indicated staff was working with CFM Advocates regarding how the project can be moved to the planning phase, as has been done with the 53rd Street project.

Augerot noted the county also received feedback from Michael Skipper, the county's federal liaison at CFM Advocates, regarding the Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk project. It is important to highlight the project is adjacent to low-income housing and in an area with a significant minority population and to emphasize the connectivity with Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center. Congressional staff advised it is important to frame the boardwalk as a keystone or larger vision.

MOTION: Malone moved that the Board of Commissioners provide a letter of support for Congressional Delegated Spending for four projects: the Historic Courthouse, Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk, 53rd Street overpass, and transitional housing. Wyse seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

Chair Augerot recessed the meeting at 10:20 AM and reconvened at 11:00 AM with Public Hearing 1.

10. Adjournment

Chair Augerot adjourned the meeting at 11:25 AM.



Xanthippe Augerot, Chair



Erika Milo, Recorder



Maura Kwiatkowski, Transcriptionist

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