



Board of Commissioners

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MEETING MINUTES

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS GOAL-SETTING WORK SESSION

August 8, 2023 – 9:00 AM

PRESENT: Pat Malone, Chair; Xanthippe Augerot, Vice Chair; Nancy Wyse, Commissioner; Suzanne Hoffman, Interim County Administrator

STAFF: Maura Kwiatkowski, Meeting Recorder; April Holland, Kailee Olson, Rebecca Taylor, Health Services; Cory Grogan, JonnaVe Stokes, Public Information/Communications; Sarah Siddiqui, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Rick Crager, Shurisa Steed, Financial Services

GUESTS: Bernie Cummings; Alex Powers, Mid Valley Media

1. Call to Order

Chair Malone called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM. Introductions were made. There were no announcements.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

There were no changes to agenda.

3. Meeting Minutes Approval

The June 13, 2023 Goal-setting Minutes and the June 27, 2023 minutes of the Joint Meeting with the Albany City Council were presented for approval.

MOTION: Augerot moved to approve the June 13, 2023 Goal-setting minutes and the June 27, 2023 minutes of the Joint Meeting with the Albany City Council. Wyse seconded the motion, **which was approved 3-0.**

4. Discussion Topics

4.1 Strategic Communications Update – Cory Grogan, Public Information Officer

Grogan presented an update and expressed a desire to also discuss the biennium report. Hoffman asked whether there is a mechanism to capture who is listening to the podcasts. Grogan indicated he would track those numbers for upcoming Podcast 4.

A survey will be released soon to collect feedback from the community regarding the Justice System Improvement Program bond measure not approved by voters.

The Historic Courthouse Advisory Committee (HCAC) messaging was delayed but will follow the Fair.

Grogan reviewed advertising and outreach for the upcoming Fair and wildfire awareness. Last year, the upgraded digital displays were popular with Fair attendees. Other current external communications and social media topics include road closures, podcasts, new county administrator, hazardous waste disposal, cooling centers, and water resources.

Grogan discussed county publications, plain language and web training, and October branding signage for the Kalapuya Building. The website project and webmaster recruitment are in progress.

Grogan also discussed the final draft biennium report. Augerot asked about the individual department descriptions; have the directors reviewed those? Grogan said no, but he will reach out to directors. Grogan encouraged the Board to review the report once more and provide final comments. Hoffman requested that additional contact numbers for Health Services be added to the report.

Crager asked whether the county prepares an annual report to provide more current information. Perhaps this is something to be considered in the future; it would not be as substantial as the biennium report. Augerot agreed there may be an opportunity for a brief annual report; Grogan concurred. Augerot suggested the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) grant process could be a component of an annual report. Crager suggested also including good work such as the homelessness work being done. Crager would like to see actual expenditures versus budgeted in an annual report.

4.2 Pledge of Allegiance at Board of Commissioners Meetings – Pat Malone, Chair

This issue was raised with Augerot by a constituent, who indicated she would bring the matter to the full Board. The pledge was recited in past Board meetings but dropped off during the COVID pandemic. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Coordinator Sarah Siddiqui was tasked with obtaining additional information and perspectives.

Siddiqui noted one of the largest communities in the county is Spanish speaking, and many are migrant workers. The flag's meaning has changed as politics change, and Siddiqui does not believe it aligns with county EDI goals and asked the Board to consider the impacts of reciting the pledge.

Holland appreciated the Board's consideration of the impact of pledging allegiance to a flag and to a republic that does not have liberty and justice for all. Holland indicated she shared her comments as a military veteran and someone who loves her country.

Malone mentioned a neighbor had done research similar to that presented by Siddiqui. The pledge has a checkered history, and part of the Board's job is to be inclusive. The "under God" language was added in the 1950s during the fight against Communism. Perhaps there is another way to have a meaningful start to Board meetings such as an inspirational quote or a "today in history" moment.

Wyse indicated no concerns about reciting the pledge or not reciting it. The information presented seems primarily negative. Are there any positives? Siddiqui suggested there are pros for the dominant group of people. Research did not show any pros outside of nationalism; however, Siddiqui would be happy to do more in-depth research. There is nothing inherently wrong with the flag or the pledge; it is more about what it has come to symbolize for some people.

Augerot expressed discomfort with reciting the pledge.

4.3 Grant Applications and Funding Requests, Discussion and Action – Rick Crager, Financial Services

Four grants were presented to the Board; one each for the Cities of Adair Village, Monroe, and Philomath, as well as one for the Community Services Consortium Linn Benton Food Share. The revenue source is the transient lodging tax, and grant focus has traditionally been on economic development efforts. The grant awards will require some additional follow-up and reporting by the recipients. Community Services Consortium Linn Benton Food Share applied for \$100,000 for the biennium; Crager recommends \$75,960. The \$75,960 amount was built into the current budget.

MOTION: Wyse motioned to approve the requested funding totaling \$105,960 through four separate grant applications, including \$10,000 each to the Cities of Philomath, Monroe, and Adair Village, totaling \$30,000 for economic development, and \$75,960 to the Community Services Consortium Linn Benton Food Share for purchase of emergency food and supplies to support residents of Benton County seeking resources. Augerot seconded the motion, **which was approved 3-0.**

4.4 Coordinated Homeless Response Office: Update and Discussion of the House Bill 4123 Strategic Plan – April Holland, Rebecca Taylor; Health Services

Holland introduced the topic. Taylor discussed the goals of the presentation, which were to provide an update on the strategic plan organization, an update on partner engagement and coordination, and a discussion regarding the Coordinated Homeless Response Office's (CHRO's) strategic alignment with the Commissioners' strategic priorities.

Augerot indicated the “at a glance” document was very helpful; she sees a need to operationalize on the back end. Taylor noted that each section of the strategic plan will include HOPE (Home, Opportunity, Planning, and Equity) policy recommendations and identify how the projects 1) move the recommendation forward, 2) meet the requirements of HB 4123, and 3) achieve the overarching community priorities. A significant amount of detail will be included in the workplans. Holland added that specific activities will be identified and incorporated into the internal workplan. One opportunity is the countywide list of all that has been accomplished regarding homelessness. Do the Commissioners want the Coordinated Homeless Response office to contact each department to identify their activities? Augerot indicated some of the information is captured in the budget process and does not want to create additional work for staff.

Taylor advised that as the strategic plan has been crafted, focus has been on external partners; we have not yet looked internally to define what this means for the county. The internal inventory could be a component of the strategic plan. Augerot believes it makes sense to identify internal resources and ensure we are all aligned. Taylor agreed the more perspectives at the table, the better our response.

Malone asked about HB 4123 funding; we have just begun Year 2 of the two-year funding. Taylor advised the community has done an outstanding job helping gather the information needed in a very short timeframe. Malone asked about funding after the end of HB 4123 two-year funding. Crager indicated there is no specific “use by” date on the state funding. The county calculated how far out staffing can be funded using the state funds and some ARPA funding and is hoping to generate other resources to pay for staff over time. We are positioned to fund current staff levels through the 2025-27 biennium. Malone was glad to see the movement toward long-term goals rather than short-term firefighting. Crager noted the difficulty of the work staff is doing; it is a difficult problem to solve. Many county departments are involved, and it will be important to bring the departments together for a coordinated response. Flexibility of resources is necessary to help solve the problems of homelessness. Holland expressed appreciation for the commitment of staff working on this issue and recognized Taylor for her leadership.

Taylor confirmed the assignment from the Board: prepare a cross-departmental inventory of homelessness-related activities completed to date and define how county departments will work together going forward.

Malone thanked Taylor and Holland for the update and the work they are doing.

Augerot indicated the county submitted a proposal for rapid rehousing. Taylor advised the community plans were submitted July 21. A shelter addendum was also submitted on that date on behalf of Unity Shelter. The county was notified some information in one part of the plan needs to be moved to another part of the plan. We also learned there is a great deal of flexibility. The funding agreements will reflect that communities need more time to determine where the funds will go to meet the defined metrics.

Malone indicated the legislature over time has been selecting themes. The most recent session focused on housing and homelessness. He expressed hope this theme and related initiatives will continue in future legislative sessions.

Augerot reported processes are being implemented to obtain information from across the state to use that information to leverage ongoing programs and change funding methods.

4.5 County Administrator Updates – Suzanne Hoffman, Interim County Administrator

- The remainder of the month will be focused on transitioning interim county administrator responsibilities to Crager and preparing for further transition to incoming County Administrator Rachel McEneny.
- A number of performance evaluations are in progress. For those not complete but due shortly after, Hoffman's notes can be added to Kerby's to assist Crager or McEneny with completion.
- The Health and Human Services (HHS) Director position description is complete. Hoffman expressed appreciation to Lane and Lincoln Counties for sharing helpful information. The position is with Human Resources Director Martineau to finalize and select an executive search firm.
- Community Health Centers (CHC) Executive Director (ED) Carla Jones resigned effective September 29. This lengthy notice will be helpful for transitioning. Jones accepted a position that allows her to remain connected to CHCs across the state. Robust transition documents are available to reply upon, and Hoffman will be talking with the CHC Board regarding appointment of an interim ED and the recruitment process for a new ED. It would be beneficial to have the HHS Director on board first. Holland has expressed a willingness to continue as Interim Health Director until the HHS Director position is filled.

4.6 Commissioner Updates – Board of Commissioners

Augerot

- Attended the National Association of Counties (NACo) conference, which was useful and productive. Most useful were the public safety and law enforcement meetings, since Augerot is a member of NACo's Justice and Public Safety Policy Steering Committee. There were also productive meetings on housing and homelessness.
- Attended the Oregon Community Foundation Board retreat in Corvallis last week.
- Visited Monroe and the new South Benton food pantry. The former church building will be a true community center. Gave a Benton County tour as the bus traveled down Highway 99.
- Contacted by Executive Director Elena Valdés Chavarría regarding the Corvallis Multicultural Center (CMC), which had to move somewhat abruptly from their 9th Street location to a campus building. CMC realized it needs new space and is interested in working with the county on options. Augerot suggested CMC reach out to the Benton County Foundation, since there are other nonprofit organizations also looking for space.
- Participated in Corvallis' Government Corner session at the library last Saturday, which was a very positive experience.

- Augerot enjoyed her shift at the Fair and looks forward to reviewing the attendance numbers; suggested the Board receive a Fair debrief from Douglas and Ott soon.
- September 8 is the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) District 5 meeting in Eugene. Augerot will not attend due to previously scheduled travel. A leadership role in District 5 may be available if Wyse or Malone is interested.


Wyse

- Attended the Fair on several days.


Malone

- Attended the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition meeting on July 26. The event was well attended.
- Attended the August 1 Corvallis Chamber of Commerce meeting; the Chamber is reorganizing their legislative team.
- Attended the Fair.
- Attended the county's quarterly new employee orientation.
- Will attend the Council of Governments Barbeque at Philomath Park on August 17.
- The annual chili cookoff is September 10 at Philomath Rodeo Grounds.
- The AOC legislative retreat is scheduled for September 21 in Klamath Falls; Augerot will also attend. Given the number of commissioners from other counties not running for reelection, there will be leadership opportunities available at the Steering Committee level.
- Would like to develop a coordinated calendar of community events for Board members.

Chair Malone adjourned the meeting at 11:34 AM.



Pat Malone, Chair



Maura Kwiatkowski, Recorder