



Marion County **TODAY** from Your Commissioners

— SPRING 2025 —



A Note from Your Marion County Commissioners

With 2025 well underway and spring in the air, the Marion County Board of Commissioners is happy to bring you updates and news from around the county.

This issue of Marion County Today covers economic development in the community, a grant program for employers to hire teens looking for their first job, and a collaborative partnership between the county and local government to address behavioral health and public safety needs in our community. We will also highlight a fun piece of Marion County history, as well as a free educational resource for young children.

We also want to invite you to attend the State of the County address, taking place on April 9, 2025, where we as your Board of Commissioners will update the County on what we have accomplished in the past year, current projects, and what the future holds for Marion County residents. Free seating with a reservation, as well as a paid option with lunch for those who may be interested are both available. Most of all, we want to provide you an

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Un mensaje de la junta de comisionados

Con 2025 bien entrado y la primavera en el aire, la Junta de Comisionados del Condado de Marion se complace en traer actualizaciones y noticias de todo el condado.

Esta edición de Marion County Today cubre el desarrollo económico en la comunidad, un programa de becas para los empleadores a contratar a los adolescentes en busca de su primer empleo, y una asociación de colaboración entre el condado y el gobierno local para hacer frente a la salud del comportamiento y las necesidades de seguridad pública en nuestra comunidad. También vamos a destacar un artículo divertido de la historia del Condado de Marion, así como un recurso educativo gratuito para los niños pequeños.

También queremos invitarle a asistir al Estado de la dirección del Condado, que tendrá lugar el 9 de abril de 2025, donde nosotros, como su Junta de Comisionados pondrá al día el Condado de lo que hemos logrado en el último año, los proyectos actuales, y lo que depara el futuro para los residentes del Condado de Marion.

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A Note from Your Marion County Commissioners

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opportunity to come, listen, and interact with your elected officials.

We recognize this newsletter cannot cover every area of interest to the community, and we hope that you will follow our news blog (marioncountynews.org) and our social media. We take our role as your representatives seriously, and we want to hear from you. If you have any questions or concerns, please email us at commissioners@co.marion.or.us, or call 503-588-5212.

As always, thank you for allowing us to serve.

Sincerely,

Your Marion County Board of Commissioners
Danielle Bethell, *Chair*
Colm Willis, *Commissioner*
Kevin Cameron, *Commissioner*
Jan Fritz, *CAO*

Un mensaje de la junta de comisionados

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Asientos gratis con una reserva, así como una opción de pago con el almuerzo para aquellos que puedan estar interesados están disponibles. Por encima de todo, queremos ofrecerle la oportunidad de venir, escuchar e interactuar con sus funcionarios electos.

Reconocemos que este boletín no puede cubrir todas las áreas de interés para la comunidad, y esperamos que sigan nuestro blog de noticias (marioncountynews.org) y nuestras redes sociales. Nos tomamos muy en serio nuestro papel de representantes de los ciudadanos y queremos conocer su opinión. Si tiene alguna pregunta o duda, envíenos un correo electrónico a commissioners@co.marion.or.us, o llame al 503-588-5212.

Como siempre, gracias por permitirnos servirles.

Sinceramente,

Su Junta de Comisionados del Condado de Marion
Danielle Bethell, *Chair*
Colm Willis, *Commissioner*
Kevin Cameron, *Commissioner*
Jan Fritz, *CAO*



Commissioner Colm Willis, Commissioner & Chair Danielle Bethell, Commissioner Kevin Cameron.

Marion County Elected Officials Sworn in to Office

On January 6, 2025, four Marion County elected officials were officially sworn in including, Marion County Commissioner Danielle Bethell, Sheriff Nick Hunter, County Assessor Tom Rohlfing, and County Clerk Bill Burgess.



Sheriff Nick Hunter, Assessor Tom Rohlfing, Commissioner Danielle Bethell, & Clerk Bill Burgess.

The oaths of office were administered by Marion County Circuit Court Judges the Honorable Presiding Judge Tracy Prall and the Honorable Judge Amy Queen.

“I want to say thank you to the voters of Marion County for allowing us to continue to serve everyone in Marion County,” said Commissioner Bethell. “I also want to congratulate the Sheriff Nick Hunter, Clerk Bill Burgess, and Assessor Tom Rohlfing on their elections. We have an amazing team at Marion County, and together we will continue working on the issues that are important to our community.”



Marion County Commissioner Danielle Bethell, Chair, sworn into office by The Honorable Judge Amy Queen.



To watch the ceremony and complete remarks, view the recorded livestream by scanning the adjacent QR Code.

Program Offers Free Book Per Month to Kids Under Five in Marion County

Did you know that Marion County residents can get one free book a month mailed to their child up until the age of five? It's part of Marion County's partnership with the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, a program that was founded in 1995 and provides literacy resources across the nation.

“Before he passed away, my Daddy told me the Imagination Library was probably the most important thing I had ever done,” Parton said on her website. “I can't tell you how much that meant to me because I created the Imagination Library as a tribute to my Daddy.

“He was the smartest man I have ever known, but I know in my heart his inability to read probably kept him from fulfilling all of his dreams.”

The program is designed to help promote literacy among children. Marion County began the program two years ago and has allocated \$30,000 in Economic Development lottery dollars for three years to help fund it.



Commissioner Colm Willis holds a sample book from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library during Board Session.

“Unlike our neighbors to the north in Multnomah County where their reading proficiency rate levels are above fifty percent for children at the end of grade three, our numbers are more in the mid-twenty percent level,” said Margie Lowe, Fiscal & Performance Officer with Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub. “That's really a daunting number for us, because children who do not read well at the end of grade three are four times as likely not to finish high school.”

“As a dad who loves reading to my kids, I've seen firsthand how they engage and learn when someone takes the time to sit and read with them,” said

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Program Offers Free Book Per Month to Kids Under Five in Marion County

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Commissioner Colm Willis. “I think this is a fantastic resource to have in our community.”

With the program, a free, quality book is mailed every month to every child under the age of five who is registered for the program at no cost to the family. It is also not dependent on family income. There are age-specific reading tips for parents that accompany the books to help with literacy and education. For increased accessibility, books can also be sent as audio books or in braille.

“Providing resources like this to our kids is so important to help them learn and thrive as they grow,” said Commissioner Kevin Cameron.

Since finalizing the grant agreement with Marion County in November 2024, more than 1,300 children have been registered in the nine zip codes supported by the grant. This represents a registration rate 156% of the national model for the same program.

“Having a resource like this for the kids in our community is so vital for setting them up with success in the rest of their lives,” said Commissioner Danielle Bethell, Chair. “I’m thrilled to see the success it’s had in its first year here, and I want to see it grow and expand even more across the county.”



If you have a child under the age of five, **register them today** with the adjacent QR code.

Marion County, City of Salem Hold Joint Work Session on Behavioral Health, Public Safety

On January 30, 2025, The Marion County Board of Commissioners hosted Salem Mayor Julie Hoy and the Salem City Council for a joint work session.

This meeting was largely informational and focused on enhancing collaboration between the County and the City, exploring shared resources, and identifying innovative solutions to address the complex challenges facing our community. The County also presented on RESTORE court, a deflection initiative established after the passage of House Bill 4002, which aims to improve outcomes for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders.



Salem Mayor Julie Hoy, Commissioner Danielle Bethell (Chair), Commissioner Colm Willis, and Commissioner Kevin Cameron.

“I am happy to be working collaboratively with Mayor Hoy and the City Council in this space,” said Marion County Commissioner Chair Danielle Bethell. “By understanding the resources we can provide and working to cover the gaps in services, we can come together and find the most effective path forward to restoring individuals in crisis in our community.”

Mayor Hoy echoed this sentiment: “I am encouraged with the dialogue and collaborative spirit demonstrated by both the County and the City. Our ongoing partnership is essential to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our residents. I look forward to continuing this work and turning these discussions into concrete actions.”

The work session was the first of a series in the coming year to build a stronger opportunity for communication and a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead. Both the County and the City expressed commitment to ongoing collaboration.

“This collaboration is really going to be vital to ensure our communities are as safe as they can be and that people in crisis have access to the help they need,” said Commissioner Kevin Cameron. “I look forward to further work with the City of Salem in this area.”



To watch the entirety of the work session, scan the adjacent QR code.

This One Trick Funds Public Safety Without Raising Your Taxes

Have you ever wondered how vital services like education, public safety, and infrastructure get funded here in Marion County? You might think the bulk is paid

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for by your tax dollars, right? Well, that's only a piece of the story. The broader answer lies partly in a silent contributor: local businesses.

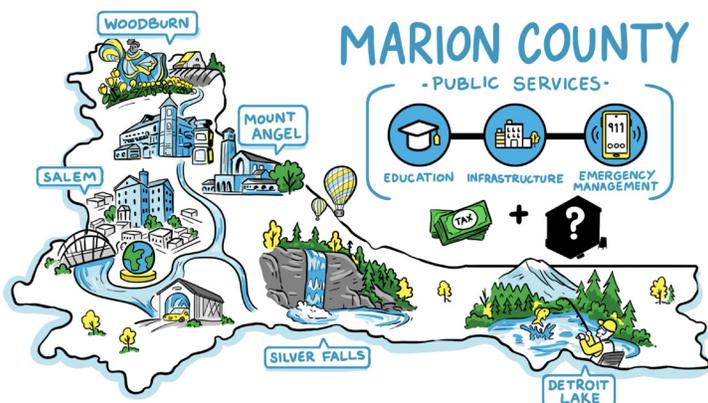
Businesses here in Marion County play a crucial role beyond creating family wage jobs and paying salaries. They also make a significant contribution to vital public services in our community through property taxes.



We made a quick explainer video to show how it works! Scan the QR code to view it here.

Unlike residents, who pay taxes based on their home value, businesses pay based on the value of their business property, including warehouses, machinery, and equipment. In Marion County, businesses carry just over 27% of the total property tax burden, easing the load on individual households like you and me. This translates to millions of dollars annually.

Here in Marion County, local businesses pay \$37.6 million in revenue to our local school districts every year. This is enough to hire 553 teachers in Salem-Keizer schools thanks to business property taxes! Local businesses also provide \$23.2 million in revenue to Marion County every year. This funds the equivalent of 272 sheriff deputies. And \$7.4 million in property taxes paid by local businesses to local fire districts is enough to hire 37 firefighters.



Every time you call the fire department, send your child to school, or are protected by the Sheriff's Department, you're benefiting from the support businesses provide to our community through property taxes.

Without this crucial contribution from local businesses, the tax burden for these services would fall on Marion County residents, increasing their property taxes by as much as \$2,000 per year. Instead, local businesses help

keep taxes lower for residents and provide a tremendous cost savings to local residents.

So, the next time you see a local business thriving, know that they are not just serving you as a customer, they are supporting our community in more ways than one. This helps to keep Marion County a vibrant place to live, work, and raise a family. In Marion County, buying locally means building locally.

And the more successful our local businesses can become, the more public services we all get to enjoy without any increase in your taxes.

Employers: Hire a Teen with the Youth Wage Grant Program

Are you a small business in Marion County looking to hire extra help and open to providing valuable work experience to a teen in your community? If so, you may qualify for Marion County's Youth Wage Grant Program.

Funded by lottery proceeds, this grant program helps support job creation for teens who want to gain work experience in Marion County. Participating businesses with 35 or fewer employees can be reimbursed \$5 per hour up to 1,000 hours per eligible youth, and a total of \$6,000 maximum compensation. An eligible youth must be between the ages of 14 to 17 to qualify and must have never previously worked.

This year's program was authorized for \$50,000 and will operate with funds through Willamette Workforce Partnership.

Employers looking to utilize these funds must secure a Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) permit prior to hiring, and they must hire a first-time youth employee between now and June 30, 2025.

"This really is a fantastic opportunity for both our youth and our employers, and we're thrilled to be able to provide this option for individuals within the County," said Commissioner Danielle Bethell, Chair. "Helping our employers prepare our youth for the future and building their skillset now is something our community can be proud of."



To learn more about the Youth Wage Grant Program, scan the adjacent QR Code.

History Corner: Putting the “Fight” in Volunteer Firefighter

In an effort to delve into the rich history of Marion County, we have been exploring stories that hark from many of our local communities and highlight service to the public. We were incredibly entertained to find a reprint of a January 19, 1913 issue of an Oregon Journal article regarding a fierce competition between rival volunteer firefighters in the late 1800s. We have summarized some of our favorite elements of the tale below.

In Salem’s past, a slew of fires in close succession in the 1860s highlighted a need for more efficient fire protection. These fires birthed two bands of volunteer firefighters: the Capital Engine No. 1, and its rival, the Tigers No. 2. While the Tigers tended to dominate the rivalry, being a part of the volunteer firefighters was a badge of honor for either band. These fiery rivals were known as the “foxtails.”

The foxtails weren’t just ordinary volunteer firefighters—they were devoted to their companies with almost fanatical loyalty, turning each fire into a wild spectacle of competition.

It wasn’t just about dousing flames, but also outwitting and outmaneuvering their opponents at every turn to be the first to connect to the fire hydrant and pour water on the blaze. The public saw the evident efficiency of such tactics and did not discourage their intense rivalry.

The pursuit of the coveted “foxtail” reward, which went to the first to reach the hydrant was an obsession for both teams. Pranks and ploys were fair game, with one Tiger reportedly using a stump as a decoy hydrant to outsmart a rival in a rush to the real water source. It was also reported that during one point of the rivalry, one fire was “touched off” in a strategic location to help one of the teams gain an advantage and win the day.

With tricks and ploy galore, it wasn’t all just fun and games. Fires were obviously serious business, with battles often extending beyond the flames to the streets themselves. It was not uncommon for blood to be spilled in streets in the frantic competing scramble for hydrants. The Reed Opera House itself was one building that caught fire during the time, and the quick thinking



Portraits of members of Tiger Engine Co. No. 2, Salem Fire Department, WHC Collections 2019.020.0003

and fierce rivalry of these bands saved it from serious damage. Amidst the chaos, a sense of camaraderie flourished between the volunteers, with many forging lifelong bonds.

As the years passed and the community grew, so too did the legacy of the “foxtails.” While the rivalry eventually gave way to a more efficient and unified fire department, the legacy of the foxtails lived on. Many former members of the volunteer firefighters went on to become prominent citizens of Marion County into the 1900s, following their legacy of service and sacrifice to the community.



To read the full tale published by the Willamette Heritage Center, scan the adjacent QR code.





Marion County
OREGON

STATE OF THE COUNTY

Open to the Public

 **Wednesday, April 9, 2025**

 **11:30 am - 12:00 pm Doors/Buffer Opens**
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm Program

 **Salem Convention Center**
200 Commercial St SE, Salem

LIMITED SEATING: Save Your Spot Today!

Buffet Lunch Included: **\$20.00**

General Admission (Lunch Not Included): **FREE**

Register Here



Registration Closes:
Friday, April 3rd at 5:00pm

bit.ly/MarionSOTC25



Marion County Commissioners
Kevin Cameron, Danielle Bethell, Colm Willis



Marion County Board of Commissioners Office

555 Court Street NE, Suite #5232
PO Box 14500
Salem, OR 97309



Weekly Board Sessions

Opportunity for public comment

Wednesdays at 9 a.m.
555 Court Street NE | Senator Hearing Room | Salem, OR
Board sessions stream live at: www.facebook.com/MarionCountyOR



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Board of Commissioners and Chief Administrative Officer



Danielle Bethell
Chair



Kevin Cameron
Commissioner



Colm Willis
Commissioner



Jan Fritz
*Chief Administrative
Officer*