



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Work Session Summary Minutes

Chemeketa Community Fields and Salem Baseball Grant Amendment

December 16, 2025. 1:30 PM

Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Salem
5th Floor, Suite 5232, Commissioners Board Room

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Colm Willis, and Kevin Cameron.

Board's Office: Alvin Klausen, Chris Eppley, Trevor Lane, Toni Whitler, and Matt Lawyer.

Legal Counsel: Steve Elzinga.

Community Services and Economic Development: Chip Bury, and Kelli Weese.

Capital Futbol Club: Collin Box.

Chemeketa Community College (CCC): Aaron Hunter, Jessica Howard, and Holly Nelson.

Epping Family Foundation: Sue Bloom, and Gary Epping.

Marion Berries Baseball Club: Luke Emanuel, and Pat Zajac

Salem Baseball: Carson Kuenzi, Shane Kuenzi and Derek Neliton.

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

Chemeketa Fields

- Upgrades to athletic fields at the Chemeketa Salem campus:
 - Made possible through a capital projects bond measure passed in May.
- Upgrading softball, baseball, and soccer fields to turf surfaces:
 - Enables year-round use, increase durability, and expand community access.
- Installing lighting on baseball fields after decades without:
 - Partial funding and partnership with the Epping Family Foundation.
- Shared and multi-use athletic facilities:
 - Tennis courts (also used for pickleball and sand volleyball) and their connection to community partners, including Blanchette Catholic School and summer youth programs.
- Chemeketa sports and recreation spaces are used by:
 - High schools.
 - Youth organizations:
 - Football club, and American Legion.
 - Public access to tennis/volleyball courts.
- Efforts to refresh surfaces and modernize amenities.
- Commitment to improve concessions, accessibility, and general infrastructure:
 - To support both college and community programming.
- Facilities serve as a local hub:

- Transit access, Boys and Girls Club partnership, and proximity to community youth housing.
- College allocating estimated \$10–12 million to projects:
 - Small funding gap due to expanded plans and construction cost increases.

Salem Baseball Revised Proposal

- Marion Berries Baseball Club affirms Chemeketa as its long-term home following a successful inaugural season:
 - Attendance, affordability, and positive experiences for attendees.
- Alignment of baseball club's mission with the college:
 - Focus on youth, family engagement, and community enrichment.
- "Berry Pass" summer program:
 - For kids to participate in physical, educational, and family-friendly activities.
- Turf fields maximize play time and make facilities reliable regardless of weather.
- Revised contract amendment to include a new Marion Berries location:
 - Change requires simple contract update.
 - Not new board approval or funding increase.
- Commitment to ensure field access for high schools and youth leagues:
 - Leveraging the bond-funded improvements for broader use.

Discussion

- Vision to leverage Chemeketa's land and facilities as a long-term community asset:
 - Comparable to successful models at Lane Community College.
- Future "dream" developments:
 - Additional youth fields, facilities for tournaments, after-school programming, and cooperative management with a range of partners.
- Identified 5+ acres for community and food-share purposes:
 - Inclusivity for marginalized populations and alternative high school students.
- Housing and socio-demographic:
 - Thousands of kids live within a mile of site.
 - High need for accessible and affordable youth recreation.
- Consider multi-phase buildout to address evolving needs:
 - Complete current athletic field upgrades.
 - Pursue broader vision for a youth sports complex.
- Funding challenges:
 - Need \$1.5–\$2 million above bond for improved/amended plans.
 - Conceptual estimate of at least \$4–\$5 million in capital for broader projects.
- Multi-organization collaboration for economic, educational and social uplift:
 - College, foundations, local businesses, clubs, and government.
- Explore operational models, management partnerships, and reservation systems.
- College may provide land but not operate expanded programs directly.

Other

- Update on state grant:
 - \$3 million from legislature:
 - Initially routed to Willamette University for youth access.
 - County and city contributions:
 - \$300,000 contributed by each for a total of \$600,000.
 - For field improvements and facility upgrades.

- Willamette University facilities are contractually obligated to be accessible for high school/youth sports for a decade:
 - Construction timelines remain uncertain.
- Continued outreach and collaboration:
 - Phone calls and grant applications.
- Economic impact of expanded recreational infrastructure:
 - Job creation.
 - Business for hotels/restaurants.
 - Tourism potential.
 - Tax base enrichment.
 - Neighborhood revitalization.
- Social connections through athletic organizations and positive impact on youth and families.

Next Steps

- Prepare and execute contract amendment to add Marion Berries' new location to their existing grant/contract:
 - No change in dollar amount.
- Complete baseball, softball turf installations and related improvements:
 - To be ready by April 1st.
- Commitment to operate and maintain from college funds after upgrades done.
- Initiate new grant applications:
 - Additional youth sports, community, and facility development funding.
- Develop conceptual multi-phase plan and funding strategy for facility expansion:
 - Identify potential operators and management structures.
- Available for high school and youth organization use:
 - Under community use agreements.
- Outreach about Willamette University/state grants and aligning with field projects.
- Open communication for:
 - Fundraising, resource sharing, and vision sports/facility development.

Adjourned – time: 2:28 p.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White