

County Commissioners
Colm Willis, Chair
Kevin Cameron
Danielle Bethell



Chief Administrative Officer
Jan Fritz

MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION

Economic Development Program Update Minutes

Thursday, January 29, 2026, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Commissioners' Boardroom
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5231
Salem, Oregon 97301

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioner's: Colm Willis, and Kevin Cameron.

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

Legal Counsel: Scott Norris.

Community and Economic Development: Chip Bury, Sarah Cooley, Tami Cirerol, Kelli Weese, Ashey Jackson, Krista Ulm, Eric Mason and Laura McClellan.

Point Man Ministries: Wayne Repose, Bart Bartow, and Ron VanBlack

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Introduction and Background

-Kelli Weese

- Status update on Santiam Canyon Veterans and First Responders Memorial.
- Provide a full program update on Economic Development Program:
 - Including funding posture, active projects, and needed Board direction.
- Economic Development team is fully staffed:
 - Dedicated staff for finance, contracts, and project management.

3. Program Overview

-Chip Bury, Sarah Coutley & Tami Cirerol

a. Review of Economic Development Program Including Direction:

- Current Process:
 - Two, two-hour full program work sessions per year.
 - Additional topic specific monthly work sessions as needed.
 - Current process and format is working and should continue.
 - Some topics may be scheduled separately on Board of Commissioners (BOC)/Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) agendas.
- Significant Opal Creek investment:
 - \$15M total, about 17% spent to date.
 - Use of lottery funds about \$2.7M in FY24–25, about 66% spent.
 - Spending American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds fully and timely:

- Before December 2026 deadline.
 - Accountability and clear deliverables for all funded partners.
- Key project highlights:
 - Santiam Rail Trail:
 - Expanding concept from Mill City toward Fisherman's Bend.
 - Joint project team with Public Works forming.
 - Request for Proposal (RFP) sections to have cost estimates.
 - Mill City & Idanha Planning:
 - Using "self-determination" Opal Creek funds.
 - Mill City progress pending Army Corps permit.
 - Idanha forming steering committee with first meeting in March.
 - North Fork Recreation Operation Plan:
 - Consultant selected through Public Works RFP.
 - Cost higher than original budget.
 - Moving unused Opal Creek funds approved by state partners.
 - Contract moving through legal.
 - Detroit Lake Marina Excavation:
 - On track with permitting and coordination.
 - Bi-weekly email updates continue.
 - ARPA funds spent first:
 - U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) funds next.
 - After Opal Creek funds to meet spend by deadlines.
 - Exploratory drilling shifted from February to later in the year.
 - Community Resource Network:
 - Program and \$100K startup funds sent to United Way in 2024.
 - Fully expended funds and has 52 requests in 2025.
 - Annual reporting to continue through 2029.
 - Community Prosperity Initiative (CPI):
 - Cities get up to \$60K for economic development projects:
 - Either lump sum or \$20K/year over 3 years.
 - All cities requested 2025 funds except Stayton and Keizer:
 - Follow up is underway.
 - Youth Employment Grant:
 - Implemented via Willamette Workforce Partnership.
 - Current funding adequate to cover all approved employers.
 - Contract expires June 30.
 - Staff will return with options to extend or modify the program.
- b. Tourism Grant Program:
 - Background:

- Historically funded via agreements with Travel Salem and North Marion Tourism Collaborative.
- Travel Salem agreement expired July 1, 2025.
- North Marion agreement expired December 31, 2025.
- May 2025, shifted to formal grant program with 3 funding categories:
 - Salem Metro area tourism.
 - North Marion tourism.
 - One year, project-based tourism initiatives:
 - Detroit Lake tourism.
- Proposed structure and timeline:
 - Finalize new grant framework and bring it for adoption.
 - Open applications in spring with target timeline in April.
 - Review and selection by Board in May–June.
 - Notify awardees in July and develop contracts.
 - January 2027 funding start cycle :
 - Align with tourism's off season for planning and ramp up.
- Interim funding:
 - Avoid a funding gap in 2026:
 - Extend Travel Salem and North Marion agreements through December 31, 2026.
 - Continuing funding at current levels for that period.
 - Back dating unneeded, as total annual funding levels are maintained.
- Board direction:
 - Proceed with interim extensions through December 31, 2026.
 - Build new grant program.

c. Economic Development Partnership Program:

- Multiple organizations involved in business and economic development:
 - SEDCOR, chambers, Latino Business Alliance, workforce entities, and cities.
- Need a structured forum to:
 - Hear partner's priorities and definition of economic development.
 - Identify constraints, opportunities, and overlaps.
 - Inform county level strategy and funding priorities.
- Proposed Marion County Economic Development Partnership table:
 - One countywide convening meeting.
 - Potential invitees:
 - SEDCOR and other business retention/expansion providers.
 - Latino Business Alliance.
 - Local chambers of commerce.
 - Small Business Development Center.
 - Workforce partners.
 - City economic development staff where they exist.
 - Agricultural and homebuilder stakeholders.
 - Other relevant small business and sector partners.
- Approach:
 - Poll/survey to identify top issues and priorities.
 - Bring proposed questions and invitee list board for input.

- Focus first meeting on listening and shared understanding.
 - Board willing to host this once and evaluate further needs after.
- Related chamber/small business support items:
 - Chamber & Small Business Support Grants:
 - 2025 cycle largely completed with one chamber still finalizing.
 - 2026 cycle:
 - Opened October and closed end of November.
 - Only three chambers applied (Jefferson, North Santiam, and Woodburn).
 - Some chambers are in leadership transition (e.g., Keizer and Stayton without executive directors).
 - Staff plan:
 - This quarter have one-on-one meetings to understand barriers.
 - Mount Angel support:
 - Local business group is forming a structured downtown/small business entity and exploring Main Street designation.
 - Board is open to:
 - Allow to access chamber style grant if:
 - Formal entity and bank account are in place, or
 - City of Mt. Angel serves as fiscal agent while group formalizes:
 - Mirror requirements in North Marion.
 - Conditioning funding on demonstrated organizational structure and accountability.

4. Other

-All

- Santiam Canyon Veterans & First Responders Memorial:
 - Project overview:
 - Planned veterans and first responders memorial near Gates using 4.75 acres donated by Freres Timber Resources, valued at about \$100K.
 - Star-shaped monument, eight flagpoles (U.S., Oregon, Prisoner of War (POW)/ Missing in Action (MIA), and all service branches), memorial bricks, marble monuments, and a battle cross element.
 - Total stated project cost is about \$818K:
 - \$39K raised locally plus in-kind support.
 - The goal is to dedicate July 4, 2026:
 - Coincide with the U.S. 250th anniversary.
- Requested from the County:
 - Direct financial support of around \$250K-\$300K.
 - Staff assistance with federal and state grants and expedited funding.
 - In-kind services (engineering, project management, and road work).
 - Advocacy and public endorsement to strengthen other funding requests.
- Regulatory and process issues:
 - Conflicting guidance between County Public Works and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding access and wetland issues.
 - Work previously stopped by Public Works order despite owning the property.

- Wetland delineation and crossing design now being advanced via Public Works and its engineering consultant (AKS Engineering), with an internal target to have access constructed by April 1.
- Funding decision will not be made immediately:
 - Application and clear plan are required.
- Amount requested unlikely to be fully funded by County:
 - Support smaller, well-scoped first phase tied to specific deliverables.
 - Considering future funding if initial phases are delivered successfully.
 - Partner with experienced organization for management and fiscal oversight.
- Other program notes:
 - North Block Initiative:
 - Structural/weight capacity assessment of deck/site to determine viable future uses.
 - Have on-call engineering vendor but no work scheduled.
 - Kayak Canyon radio project:
 - County provided partial funding years ago for upgrades and coverage.
 - Remaining funding requires Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approvals:
 - Project is on hold pending FCC action.
 - Emergent Economic Opportunity Program (EEOP):
 - Successful, flexible tool for rapid economic-development investments.
 - Possible future focus on out-of-school and after-school learning:
 - Particularly in under-resourced areas.
 - Good Neighbor Grant:
 - Currently has no pending applications.
 - Small, flexible fund to resolve occasional issues when other program don't.

5. Next Steps

-All

- Veterans Memorial:
 - County point-person to:
 - Follow-up with Public Works and engineering on wetland delineation and access.
 - Coordinate with veterans' group on steps and documentation.
 - Veterans' group to:
 - Prepare and submit a formal grant application.
 - Work with County staff and possibly an experienced partner on project management and budgeting.
 - Staff to:
 - Draft non-monetary letter of support for the project for Board signatures, confirming general county support without committing to a dollar amount at this stage.
- Opal Creek and Detroit Lake Marina:
 - Bring Detroit excavation proposal and related items to management update.
 - Maintain bi-weekly written updates to the board.
 - Spend ARPA funds first, then move to HUD and Opal Creek funds.
 - Monitor to ensure all ARPA dollars are spent by the federal deadline.
- Tourism Grant Program:
 - Finalize new tourism grant program design, application, and criteria with Finance and Legal.

- Bring program to board for adoption.
 - Do extensions with Travel Salem and North Marion Tourism Collaborative.
- Economic Development Partnership Table:
 - Develop draft invitee list and question set.
 - Bring a future work session.
 - Schedule a single countywide convening in spring.
- Chambers and Small Business Support:
 - Conduct one-on-one meetings with each chamber.
- For Mount Angel:
 - Coordinate with the forming business group and the City.
- North Block Initiative:
 - Work with Business Services:
 - Schedule deck/weight-capacity engineering assessment using existing on-call vendor.
 - Report back to the board.
- Youth Employment Grant:
 - Prepare options for the program post-June 30th.
- After-School / Learning Supports:
 - Explore and bring forward concepts.
 - Potential pilots or partnerships in high-need areas.
 - Possible use of EEOP or other flexible funds for after-school and enrichment programming.

Adjourned – time: 11:10 a.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White