



**MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION**

**Economic Development Program Update
Minutes**

Thursday, February 17, 2026, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Commissioners' Boardroom
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5231
Salem, Oregon 97301

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioner's: Colm Willis, Danielle Bethell and Kevin Cameron.

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

Legal Counsel: Jennifer Rogers.

Community and Economic Development: Ashley Jackson, Krystal Ulm, Sarah Coutley, Tami Cirerol, Kelli Weese, and Chip Bury.

North Marion Tourism Collaborative (NMTC): Shawn Waite, Ann Schultz, Kayla Maxwell, Jamie Zamrin, John Zobrist, Stacy Palmer, Sam Bauman-Kaluf, Emily Iverson, and Selwyn Sampson.

City of Woodburn: Jamie Johnk.

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Economic Development Program Update

-Tami Cirerol, Chip Bury, and Sarah Coutley

a. NMTC Presentation:

- Formed in 2019 to address coordinated tourism promotion in North Marion.
- Independent 501(c)(6) Destination Management Organization (DMO):
 - As of April 2024.
- Represents nine cities plus the unincorporated area of Brooks.
- Governed by 13-person board:
 - City, nonprofit, and private business representatives.
- In-kind support from Woodburn's Economic Development Department.
- Purpose and vision:
 - Strengthen visitor economy, local businesses, and livability for all.
 - Long-term destination strategy and operational funding plan.
 - Diverse, agritourism-focused year-round destination:
 - Little World Tour between Salem and Portland.
- Strategic impact areas:
 - Organizational Capacity.
 - Relationships.
 - Marketing.
 - Experiences.
- Funding strategy:

- Annual partner/membership model for businesses and nonprofits.
 - Funding commitments from all nine municipalities and Marion County.
 - Offer partnership marketing opportunities.
 - Selective grant use and event-based assessments.
- Financial goals by July 2028:
 - Annual operating budget of at least \$250,000 going into FY 2029.
 - Annual contributions from actively participating organizations.
- Marketing plan and target audiences:
 - Content library, marketing calendar, illustrated map, newsletter, and niche campaigns.
 - Urban explorers, Festival/Cultural seekers, Garden and Nature enthusiasts.
- Track visitation, lodging, spending, and events using Placer AI and produce:
 - An annual economic impact report and marketing impact report.
- Branding:
 - Retired previous logo as it did not adequately reflect regional scope.
 - New logo with “always colorful” tagline and vibrant, colorful palette.
 - Marketing toolkit to support “one name, one region” identity.
- Example of event-based tourism assessment:
 - Major agritourism event added \$0.25 to \$1.00 online convenience fee:
 - Model being considered for replication at other large events.
- Transient Lodging Tax (TLT/TOT):
 - Limited accommodations in North Marion constrain TLT potential.
 - Silverton and Woodburn collect and allocate to NMTC.
- Member and partner benefits:
 - Access to Placer AI data and consultation.
 - Demographics, busiest hours, destination patterns, and marketing.

b. Business Retention and Expansion:

- Existing contract for business retention and expansion services is expiring.
- Interest in more competitive performance Request for Proposals (RFP).
- Strengthen Marion County’s ability to:
 - Anticipate business needs.
 - Respond effectively to emerging risks and opportunities.
 - Support informed expansion and investment decisions.
- Structure:
 - About three years.
 - Multiple awards possible.
 - Total funding target of about \$200,000 per year:
 - Potentially split among providers.
 - Administrative costs capped at 15%.
 - Payments tied to performance and achievement of agreed milestones.
- Reporting:
 - Biannual progress reports.
 - Which businesses were contacted.
 - Nature of issues or opportunities identified.
 - Actions taken and progress with county/partner support.
 - Capturing barriers and gaps encountered.
 - What did or did not work, inform policy and resource adjustments.
 - “But for” analysis:
 - What outcomes would not have occurred without interventions.
- Measurement priorities:
 - Real and personal property investment.

- Retention outcomes.
- Use of existing incentives.
- Acknowledgement of state-level policy constraints.
- Participation and eligibility:
 - Not be limited to Marion County-based organizations.
 - Preference to Oregon-based providers where appropriate.
 - Allow qualified out-of-area firms if they work in person.
 - Proposals covering all of Marion County or specific subregions:
 - If a provider is particularly well-positioned there.
- Inform the existing contractor that:
 - Current structure will not be renewed.
 - A new competitive RFP process will be used.
 - They are welcome to submit a proposal under the new model.

3. Discussion

-All

- Limited lodging capacity and resulting constraints on TLT revenue:
 - Especially outside Woodburn and Silverton.
- Tourism-related programs often funded by lottery dollars and General Fund.
- Potential threats to lottery revenue could reduce funds for county programs:
 - Possible casino on Portland Road.
- Importance of investment and property tax base:
 - Short-term spending, capital investment, property tax base growth, and business expansion.
 - Agricultural land often has limited property tax revenue due to deferrals.
- Silverton and local tourism strategy:
 - Developing destination strategy and lodging feasibility study:
 - Need for more “heads in beds.”
 - Imposes TLT on qualifying Airbnb’s within city limits.
- Economic development philosophy:
 - Accountability, honesty of failures and to adjust based on real-world barriers.
 - Curious, persistent, and creative in success in hard policy environments.
 - Proactive in notifying of issues to county for potential policy responses.
- Geographic and provider considerations:
 - Non-local firms can bring fresh perspectives:
 - Still need to be present in Marion County.
 - Balance between local understanding and outside expertise.
- Field and recreational investment:
 - Potential investments in turf and field improvements in the canyon area.
 - Proposals for such projects may seek Opal Creek or other eligible funding.

4. Other

-All

- ARPA can be used infrastructure freeing Opal Creek funds for other priorities.
 - Agreement that Opal Creek funding use must:
 - Fit within statutory parameters.
 - Administered through structured process:
 - Likely application similar to Emergent Economic Opportunity Program (EEOP) model.
 - Request for a written outline:
 - The allowable uses of Opal Creek funds.

- The constraints and compliance requirements.
 - The proposed process for submitting and evaluating concepts.
 - Meeting to review ARPA allocations and balances before deciding on Opal Creek and related funds.
- State and local partnership opportunities:
 - Local soccer group to potentially improve fields in the canyon and in Stayton.
 - Opal Creek funds only used for canyon-related improvements.
 - Group is encouraged to develop a coherent plan for broader funding sources.

5. Next Steps

-All

- For NMTC and tourism:
 - Finalize and execute cooperative agreements with all nine municipalities and Marion County.
 - Implement marketing and branding plan.
 - Further explore additional partnership opportunities.
- For Business Retention and Expansion RFP:
 - Incorporate board feedback into the draft RFP/RFI:
 - Clear objectives and performance measures.
 - Report barriers, “but for” impacts, and investment outcomes.
 - Administrative cap of 15% and performance-based payment.
 - Consult with contracts, legal, and finance.
 - Finalize and post multi-step RFP.
 - Communicate with current contractor.
- For Opal Creek and ARPA funding:
 - Develop a structured Opal Creek application process.
 - Prepare and share documentation with the board.
 - Schedule and hold a March meeting.

Adjourned – time: 2:24 p.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White