



**MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION**

**Parks Update
Minutes**

Tuesday, March 10, 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, and Kevin Cameron.

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

Legal Counsel: Steve Elzinga, and Andrew Mittendorf.

Public Works: Brian Nicholas, Jeana Anderson, Dennis Mansfield, and Kevin Thompson.

Citizen: Kathey Rogers.

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

1. Welcome & Introductions

-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Parks Kickoff

-Dennis Mansfield

- Purpose of Meeting:
 - Provide high-level overview of current parks operations and financial status.
 - Share new data from 2025 calendar year.
 - Set stage for future decisions on service levels, funding, and specific parks.
- Public Works Accounting Manager to understand how financial reporting connects to policy-level decisions.
- Recent progress on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Category B emergency response funding for wildfire-related costs:
 - Final approval received.
 - Remaining steps mostly administrative before money is received.

3. Parks Operations Update

-Kevin Thompson

- System Overview:
 - Approximately 18 developed and 2 undeveloped parks about 685 acres total.
 - Park categories have different maintenance expectations and service levels:
 - Neighborhood, Community, Natural areas, and Regional parks.
- Workload & Seasonality:
 - Year-round vegetation management with seasonal shifts:
 - Spring - Grass and shrub growth.
 - Summer - Increased tree work.
 - Fall - Leaf cleanup.

- Winter - Maintenance to keep service levels up outside peak season.
- Staffing:
 - 4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in parks program:
 - Program Lead - Primarily office with some fieldwork.
 - Program Coordinator - About 50% in office and 50% fieldwork.
 - 2 Maintenance Technicians – Full-time in the field.
 - Seasonal staff added during peak season:
 - About 2.5 FTE to ongoing field work year-round and seasonal capacity.
- Around 2010 only one full-time employee maintained the parks.
- Additional staffing allowed proactive maintenance and higher service levels:
 - Better mowing, graffiti control, and repairs.
- Data-Driven Operations:
 - 2025 is first full calendar year of usable data on:
 - Time by task, park, travel, and productive work hours.
- 2025 Time Allocation:
 - Overall field time - Excluding administrative/time sheets/meetings:
 - About 70% on Operations & Maintenance (O&M).
 - About 10% on project work.
 - About 21% on travel across county.
 - In busy season, travel time can be up 31% of field hours.
- O&M Task Breakdown - 2025:
 - In parks and not driving - About 50% of vegetation work.
 - Significant portions of trash and restroom servicing.
 - Trails, vegetation, trash, and restrooms are 78% of park O&M time.
 - Remaining 22% covers other tasks.
- Park-by-Park Workload – 2025:
 - Spongs Landing and Scotts Mills use about 44% of total O&M hours.
 - Scotts Mills:
 - Trash-heavy and restroom-intensive.
 - Chronic issues with litter, feces, and general cleanliness.
 - Spongs Landing:
 - Large amounts of turf and trail vegetation to maintain.
 - Minimal hours at Salmon Falls and Niagara in 2025 as they remain closed.
- Operational Efficiencies and Tools:
 - Wide-area mower with about 10.5 ft. deck reduced mowing time by 30%.
 - Acquired leaf vacuum which cut cleanup time by about 60%.
 - Mulching instead of bagging clippings where acceptable.
 - Consider on-site leaves stockpile for potential community use.
- Partnerships, Volunteers, and Youth:
 - Grow volunteer program for trail work, beautification, and projects.
 - Collaboration with Community Services Consortium:
 - Funded by state and federal grants and no direct park fund impact.
 - Reengage juvenile crews for weeding and stormwater clean-up:
 - Stopped around COVID.
- Service-Level Implications of System Changes:
 - New or reopened parks and added amenities increase workload and costs.
 - Parkdale was a low maintenance open field and now a neighborhood park.
 - Potential return of Santana Village Park to county responsibility.
 - Reopening canyon parks.
 - Tree planting requests which add long-term costs.

4. Parks Financial Status

-Dennis Mansfield

- Parks are tracked in dedicated Parks Fund, with three key internal components:
 - Operations.
 - Projects – Capital and Restoration.
 - General Fund support.
- Overall fund shows:
 - Loss of about \$678,000 in FY 23–24 and gain of about \$317,000 in FY 24–25.
 - Projected decreases in net income in FY 25–26 and FY 26–27.
- Working capital:
 - Started FY 23–24 at about \$1.266 million.
 - If continues projected to fall to about \$153,000 by end of FY 26–27.
- Revenue Overview – Operations:
 - Approximate annual operating resources is \$380,000:
 - RV registration fees of about \$300,000 a year flowing to parks.
 - Camping and parking fees:
 - \$12,000 in FY 23–24 to \$80,000+ in FY 25–26.
 - Include increases with Salmon Falls reopening and expansion.
 - Interest earnings on fund balance provide a smaller but notable contribution.
- Operating Cost Structure:
 - Personnel costs:
 - Increased with adding two maintenance workers in FY 23–24.
 - One maintenance FTE in FY 24–25 was not refilled.
 - Public Works administrative, accounting, and safety allocation:
 - About \$96,000 a year charged to Parks Fund.
 - Central administrative charges are about \$96,000 a year.
 - These internal charges consume roughly 50% of total resources.
 - Other contracted services:
 - Security services - Approximately \$46–50k a year range.
 - Sanitary services - Portable toilets and pumping of stationary systems.
 - Sign and operations - Regular grading and gravel work.
 - Subscription services.
- Operations-Only Financial Performance:
 - Program is losing about \$300,000–\$350,000 annually.
 - Losses are driven by:
 - High fixed overhead.
 - Contracted services required for basic park function.
 - Personnel and material costs necessary to sustain current service levels.
- Projects and Capital:
 - FEMA wildfire recovery:
 - FY 23–24: Significant capital outlay before reimbursements.
 - FY 24–25: Improved due to FEMA bills processed and reimbursed.
 - FEMA covers 90%, with 10% local match from Parks Fund.
 - System Development Charges (SDCs):
 - Revenue for park improvements only, not available for operations.
 - Capital Outlay FY 26–27 of about \$784,000 includes:
 - Bear Creek planning funds.
 - Niagara and other FEMA eligible restoration projects.
 - Salmon Falls parking lot expansion.
 - Planned Minto trail restoration projects.
- Administrative Charge Policy Issues:
 - Administrative charges disproportionately large relative to size of Parks Fund.
 - Should parks be given temporary pass on some internal allocations.

- Concern of setting precedent for other small or financially stressed funds.
- Conversation planned regarding interest and administrative charges.
- Revenue Growth from New Amenities
 - Pay station and reservation system improvements have increased revenues.
 - Expansion of camping could boost RV and camping revenues.

5. Other

-All

- Santana Village Park:
 - County divested due to inadequate resources to maintain service levels.
 - Potential future responsibility for Santana.
 - Park has higher maintenance features:
 - Garden, baseball diamond, wood chip walking trail, and restroom.
 - Assumption park will substantially increase maintenance demands.
 - Meet with advisory group and East Salem Service District (ESSD) for input.
- Community Requests:
 - More shade trees and amenities which has ongoing maintenance and costs.
 - Watering, pruning, manage disease, leaf removal, mowing, and replacement.
- Interest Allocation and Countywide Financial Policy:
 - Intention to bring proposals to the Budget Committee on:
 - How interest earnings across the county should be allocated.
 - How to right-size internal admin charges for small funds like parks.
 - Systemic changes cannot be fully resolved before upcoming budget cycle:
 - Must be addressed before FY 27–28 to avoid a crisis in the Parks Fund.

6. Next Steps

-All

- Financial & Policy Analysis:
 - Develop options to right-size the Parks Fund:
 - Service level reduction scenarios.
 - Staffing versus contracting tradeoffs.
 - Adjustments of internal charges.
 - Identify and categorize capital projects in FY 26–27:
 - Restricted/obligatory.
 - Flexible/deferrable.
- Administrative & Interest Policy Reform:
 - Interest revenue usage and distribution.
 - Appropriate and transparent charge model for small funds.
- Santana Village Park:
 - Return to board at end of March:
 - Defined options for Santana Village.
 - Cost and service implications for each given current fund constraints.
 - Meet with Santana advisory group and incorporate into options.
- Youth and Volunteer Resources:
 - Confirm costs and availability of juvenile crews for park work.
 - Assess feasibility using youth programs to offset some labor-intensive tasks.
- Grants and Capital Funding:
 - Submit Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) grant application for Bear Creek.
- Revenue Monitoring and Reporting:
 - Track parking pass and campsite revenues by park.

- Compare pre and post implementation performance of pay stations and capacity.
 - Data to evaluate return on investment for improvements and technology.
- Follow-Up Meetings:
 - Review Parks Fund projections once administrative and interest allocation options clearer.
 - Make decisions before FY 27–28 to ensure sustainable operations.

Adjourned – time: 2:46 p.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White