



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION

Economic Development Program Update
Minutes

Tuesday, April 21, 2026, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Commissioners' Boardroom
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5231
Salem, Oregon 97301

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Colm Willis, Danielle Bethell and Kevin Cameron.

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

Legal Counsel: Steve Elzinga, and Jennifer Rogers.

Community and Economic Development: Chip Bury, Sarah Coutley, Kellie Weese, and Krista Ulm.

Information Technology: Adam Crateau.

Public Works: Jon Speckman.

Commissioner Kevin Cameron called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Rural Homesite Opportunity Map/Project

-Sarah Coutley, Adam Crateau & John Speckman

- Overview of updated Rural Homesite Opportunity Map including:
 - Refinements and cleanup to prepare for public use
 - Creation of landing page with instructions and subscription steps
 - Draft landowners opt-out letter already reviewed by legal
 - Draft Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for website and possibly mail with letters.
- Clarified that:
 - Map shows potential homesite opportunities only.
 - Inclusion on map does not guarantee ability to sell or build
 - Contact information for different types of questions provided on map interface
- Map features:
 - Users can view parcels, tax account information, and link to property/tax data
 - Does not directly list owner names:
 - Tax account info can be used to look them up
- Opt-out process:
 - Approximately 400 landowners are included in initial map set.
 - Owners will get opt-out letters with three-week window before map goes live.
 - Owners can opt-out before launch and at any time afterwards
- Opt-in (future) considerations:

- Conceptually possible for owners who previously opted out to opt back in.
- Ensure planning is neutral and maintains oversight:
 - Parcels that do not meet criteria are not added improperly.
- Community & Economic Development is likely be the face of the program:
 - Will handle marketing and opt out/opt in logistics:
- Planning will be consulted on regulatory questions.
- Legal and disclaimer:
 - Additional disclaimer language to clarify map inclusion does not guarantee approval of any future applications
 - Criteria used to construct the map will guide any future additions or removals

3. Willamette Workforce Partnership Contract

-Sarah Coutley

- Youth employment and environment workforce grant contract is ending in June 2026.
- Proposal:
 - Extend existing contract for additional six months using remaining funds.
 - Consider revising small business definition from ≤ 35 employees to ≤ 100 employees.
- Rationale for changing small business definition:
 - Several local employers hiring youth currently excluded because they exceed 35 employees but are under 100 (examples discussed: Enchanted Forest, The Athletic Edge)
 - These employers offer a range of work experiences (e.g., childcare, concessions, recreation) beyond typical fast food
- Program guardrails (unchanged):
 - \$5/hour subsidy, up to 1,000 hours per eligible youth
 - \$6,000 maximum per employer
- Strong support for maximizing youth employment and work experience
- Concern of subsidizing large chains and franchises:
 - Already hire teens without incentives and may have resources
- Focus subsidy on:
 - Local small businesses.
 - Locally owned enterprises.
 - Those with deeper mentoring/skill building potential.
- Guardrail options discussed:
 - Raise employee cap to 100:
 - Exclude businesses under national or regional franchise agreements.
 - Considering restrictions based on ownership.
 - Draft language suggested to exclude:
 - Locations operating under national or regional franchise agreements.
 - With refinement to capture large non franchise chains
- Contract terms:
 - Clarified that current agreement text limits how far it can be extended.
 - Extend current agreement through December 31, 2026:
 - Within legal/contract limits.
 - Pursue Request for Information (RFI) for longer-term administrator:
 - Subject to final contract language and board direction.

4. Tourism Grants

-Chip Bury & Sarah Coutley

- Background:
 - County historically provided roughly \$1.2M in tourism support over 10 years.
 - Prior agreements with Travel Salem and North Marion tourism have expired:
 - Creating a funding gap.
- New tourism grant program:
 - Transparent grant system for tourism designed in 2025 and launched in 2026.
 - Timeline:
 - Program going live April 2026
 - Applications due April 30, 2026
 - Staff review May 2026
 - Applicant presentations to board June 2, 2026
 - Board funding decisions June 25, 2026
 - Notifications to applicants July 2026
 - Contracts executed:
 - Between notification and year end.
 - Expenses eligible back to defined start date.
 - Goal to align with July 1st fiscal start:
 - Possible backdating of eligible expenses.
 - Legal will amend initial resolutions to make references more neutral:
 - Specific attachments may evolve.
- Gap issue:
 - Existing contracts:
 - Travel Salem's prior agreement expired July 1, 2025:
 - No funding has been received since.
 - North Marion's prior agreement expired December 31, 2025:
 - No funding since.
 - Board previously directed staff to prepare one-time agreements:
 - \$150,000 for Travel Salem.
 - \$50,000 for North Marion.
 - One-time agreements initially made to run through December 3, 2026.
- Decision on one-time agreements:
 - Provide \$150,000 to Travel Salem as a one-time agreement.
 - Provide \$50,000 to North Marion as a one-time agreement.
 - Both agreements end on June 30, 2026:
 - Aligned with fiscal year.
 - May cover retroactive work, but total one-time amounts remain the same.
 - Clear communication will emphasize:
 - These are bridge payments.
 - New program is competitive.
 - There is no entitlement to future funds
 - Welcome to apply to new grant program starting July 1, 2026.

5. Discussion

-All

- Marina/Osprey Point project update:
 - Meeting with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers revealed significant cultural and archeological materials at Osprey Point:
 - Where marina dredge spoils were planned to be placed/capped.
 - Federal review and cultural resource requirements may delay approvals by at least six months, possibly longer.

- Similar issues might also exist under other parts of reservoir:
 - Including marina areas themselves.
- Creates serious schedule risk given American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding deadlines and prohibition on disturbing soil before permits are issued.
- Costs and ARPA constraints:
 - Approximately \$700k–\$800k has already been spent on project.
 - Remaining ARPA funds must be committed/spent by ARPA deadline:
 - Concern that this cannot be achieved if permits are delayed.
- Options discussed:
 - Project in two phases:
 - Phase 1:
 - Obtain permits to excavate marina area only.
 - Focus on proving minimal or no artifacts beneath existing marina footprint.
 - Remove material this year.
 - Phase 2:
 - Secure permits for capping spoils at Osprey Point or alternate site.
 - Explore ARPA funding swaps:
 - Review if ARPA funds can be moved to other eligible projects and replaced with other funding for marina.
 - May be difficult at this late stage.
 - Identify alternative spoil/placement sites:
 - Consider alternative properties that could get material or support reshaped project designs.
- Concerns and frustrations:
 - Cultural resource issues were not raised earlier:
 - Despite years of discussion and work with the same federal agencies.
 - Change in personnel at Corps appears to have triggered new concerns:
 - Leading to perceived late-stage requirements.
 - Risk of extended delay if subject to full, prolonged cultural review process.
- Communication and confidentiality:
 - Many stakeholders in canyon are becoming aware of challenges.
 - Approach to external communication must be careful.
 - Desire to conduct confidential discussions with key partners before publicly signaling shifts in strategy.

6. Other

-All

- Willamette Heritage Center request:
 - Proposed funding to support after-school program focused on Title I schools.
 - About \$55,000.
 - Desire for county wide, not narrowly targeted, investments of this scale.
 - Perception of attempting to replace school district cuts rather than county role.
 - Prefer funding youth employment programs rather than museum income.
- Consensus not to fund this proposal as presented.

7. Next Steps

-All

- Rural Homesite Opportunity Map:

- Incorporate disclaimer clarifying map inclusion does not guarantee approval or sale.
- Complete opt-out letter and FAQs in coordination with legal.
- Send opt-out letters with three-week response window before map goes live.
- Manage opt-out and potential opt-in requests.
- Willamette Workforce Partnership Contract:
 - Draft amendment to extend youth program through December 31, 2026.
 - Revise small business definition for review and inclusion in amendment.
 - Plan RFI process at end of term to evaluate potential administrators.
- Tourism Grants:
 - Implement revised 2026 tourism grant timeline.
 - Amend tourism program resolution and any online materials.
 - Draft and execute one-time contracts with:
 - Clearly communicate that these are one time bridge funds.
- Marina Project / ARPA:
 - Define two-phase project approach:
 - Excavation first, capping/site work later.
 - Pursue necessary permits accordingly.
 - Consult with legal and ARPA administrators to:
 - Evaluate feasibility of fund swaps other ARPA eligible projects.
 - Coordinate with Public Works on potential alternative project options that could accept dredge material and/or ARPA funding.
 - Schedule confidential meeting with marina contractor regarding:
 - Alternatives borrow/spoil sites.
 - Confidentiality expectations.
 - Provide documentation for Corps interactions:
 - Clarify when cultural issues were or were not raised.
- Willamette Heritage Center:
 - No funding approved for proposed Title I after school program.
 - No further action was directed at this time.

Adjourned – time: 2:38 p.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White