



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION

Public Information Officer (PIO)

Minutes

Tuesday, August 4, 2026, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Commissioners' Boardroom
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5231
Salem, Oregon 97301

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Kevin Cameron, Danielle Bethell and Colm Willis.

Board's Office: Jonathan Sanford, Alvin Klausen, Kendall Hall, Chris Eppley, Jon Heynen, Trevor Lane and Matt Lawyer.

Public Works (PW): Erin Burt and Brian Nicholas.

Sheriff's Office (SO): Todd Moquin, Matt Wilsonson, Addison Allemann, and Jeremy Landers

District Attorney's (DA) Office: Shannon Sullivan and Lena Prine.

Health and Human Services (HHS): Melissa Gable and Troy Gregg.

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Discussion

-All

- Communications Policy:
 - Better coordination so external audiences experience county as unified entity.
 - Ensure board aware and accountable for what public sees from departments.
 - Communication policy in place but needs real-world experience refinement.
 - Staff should feel free to share concerns and suggestions.
 - Balance department autonomy/expertise with board oversight/risk management.
 - HHS process:
 - Anything external must go through an approval ladder:
 - Staff.
 - Supervisor.
 - Division Director.
 - HHS communications.
 - County PIO.
 - Use SmartSheet and communication approval form to track submissions and approvals for:
 - Social media posts
 - Flyers, brochures, presentations, newsletters
 - Any materials with county branding, including swag

- Process exposed branding inconsistencies, improved quality and appropriateness of content.
- Concern item volume going to the County PIO:
 - Recognize not all highly technical presentations may need that level of review.
- Previous problematic trainings/content led to heightened board sensitivity and need to rebuild trust.
- HHS tracking edits and lessons learned to improve staff-created content over time.
- PW process:
 - Newer dedicated communications role:
 - Procedures still being refined.
 - Use Agora Pulse with custom approval workflow:
 - Point person.
 - Supervisor.
 - County PIO.
 - Approvals and scheduling handled entirely in tool:
 - Minimal email back-and-forth.
 - Workflow for emergencies:
 - All key leaders included for visibility.
 - One person required to approve in time-sensitive situations.
 - Pre-approved emergency templates:
 - Area affected, hazard, required action, consequence, duration.
 - Coordinate with SO's by sharing approved emergency messages.
- DA process:
 - Most drafted internally and always lawyer-reviewed before release.
 - Focus:
 - High-profile cases.
 - Community livability issues.
 - Closing loop on cases in media or other agency issued releases.
 - Typical communication points in a case:
 - After arraignment on indictment.
 - After case resolution/sentencing.
 - Large PIO workload spent reviewing law enforcement press releases:
 - Ensure information does not undermine ongoing investigations.
 - Pulling back excessive detail where necessary.
 - Limited role in emergency communication, with main exception of officer-involved shootings:
 - Initial avoid-the-area message from involved agency.
 - Detailed follow-up release with officer names from investigative agency.
 - Final release authored by DA's office after grand jury.
 - Opportunity identified to use communications for:
 - Promoting DA-led programs:
 - Especially victim assistance and events like Crosswalk.
 - Recruiting advocates and informing public about supportive services:
 - Not just high-intensity criminal matters.
- SO's process:
 - Very limited access to social media:
 - Only a small number of staff with posting/approval authority.
 - Standard two-person approval:
 - PIO drafts, supervisor approves.

- Major items, reviewed by Sheriff/Undersheriff or DA.
 - Posts do not go live without sign-off.
 - Core content categories:
 - Education and safety information.
 - Emergencies and incident updates.
 - Community engagement and positive stories.
 - Employee recognition.
 - Recruitment.
 - Information intake:
 - Reports.
 - Calls from supervisors or command staff.
 - Radio traffic.
 - On-scene response.
- Cross-office policy alignment:
 - Administrative policy intentionally written not to bind other elected offices:
 - Offices are still encouraged to align with their principles.
 - Crosswalk between SO's and county policies to identify gaps.
 - Legal risk management when content involves many departments or is sensitive.
- Email and mass-notification tools:
 - Use cases across departments:
 - GovDelivery used for:
 - Public newsletters.
 - Staff newsletters in some departments.
 - Ferry updates and other simple status messages.
 - Everbridge used by SO's for emergency notifications.
 - Reported evacuation that did not actually occur:
 - Concern about inaccurate media reporting and public confusion.
 - Design and analytics:
 - GovDelivery seen as outdated, inflexible, and unchanged for years.
 - Desire for design flexibility and better analytics.
 - Mailchimp/Constant Contact as alternatives with better design capabilities and analytics.
 - Ask if Finance, Legal, and IT support leaving GovDelivery to modern platform.
- Social media tools and workflow:
 - Agora Pulse:
 - Used by PW and SO's for:
 - Scheduling posts.
 - Multi-step approvals.
 - Analytics and quarterly performance reporting.
 - Board's office uses it for scheduling when needed and analytics.
 - HHS:
 - Uses SmartSheet for tracking all comms approvals and Meta Business Suite to schedule social posts.
 - Likely will need SmartSheet for non-social content.
 - Large number of programs and approvers may make building simple workflow difficult.
- Content coordination and proactive communication:
 - Many county prevention and support programs are under-promoted:
 - Juvenile services.

- Health prevention programs.
 - Victim assistance and community-based initiatives under DA.
- Shift some communication from reactive incident coverage to:
 - Proactive outreach about available services and supports.
 - Promote prevention programs that reduce later system use.
 - Cross-department campaigns where missions overlap.
- Juvenile does not have dedicated external communications position.
- Upcoming/Ongoing Projects:
 - SO's:
 - Pedestrian safety campaign:
 - Educational posts and materials about safety and related items.
 - Planned collaboration with PW, given overlapping responsibilities.
 - Evidence building opening upcoming:
 - Communications support planned.
 - Community conversations:
 - Public conversations similar to neighborhood watch meetings.
 - Format and scope still under development.
 - One community gathering in NE Salem mentioned as opportunity.
 - PW:
 - Ongoing seasonal communications:
 - Road project updates.
 - Seasonal hazard messaging.
 - Park operations.
 - Emergency messaging:
 - Continued refinement of emergency templates and approval flow.
 - North Fork Corridor project:
 - Work with state and federal partners to standardize across corridor.
 - Planned community engagement and open houses.
 - HHS:
 - Materials audit and redesign:
 - Review of all flyers, brochures, and similar materials.
 - Redesign to comply with county brand guidelines.
 - Rewrite to sixth-grade reading level for accessibility.
 - Internal and external messaging:
 - Ongoing all-staff messages with internal approval.
 - Messaging around facility transitions.
 - Updated decorating guidelines.
 - Board's Office / County-wide social media:
 - Quarterly social media performance review using data from Agora Pulse:
 - Compared performance by department and quarter:
 - HHS's volume held steady, but engagement declined:
 - Likely algorithmic throttling and topic resonance.
 - SO's and PW posts performed strongly:
 - Especially on high-interest and "hero" topics.
 - Board's Office posts performed well despite lower volume:
 - When focused on highly salient issues.
 - Identified hero content patterns:
 - Issues with immediate, concrete impact.
 - Strong interest in Detroit Lake and other high-visibility topics.
 - Ongoing interest in significant policy/legal issues.
 - Effective formats and tactics:
 - Image posts and multi-image carousels perform best.
 - Short, visually engaging videos doing well for PW.

- On Facebook/Instagram:
 - Graphics with headlines and partial text with “read more”.
 - Links to full articles or blogs.
- Emphasis on including clear call to action.
- Posting cadence, by platform and department, based on data:
 - Reduction in volume, more focus on targeted, high-impact posts.
 - standardize consistent week ranges rather than constant high-frequency posting.

3. Other

-All

- Tools and technology:
 - Shift to more modern email/marketing tools with:
 - Better design flexibility.
 - Stronger engagement analytics.
 - Comparable or improved deliverability compared to GovDelivery.
 - Ongoing use and expansion of social media tools to:
 - Streamline approvals.
 - Improve analytics.
 - Produce more engaging visual content.
- Media relations and misinformation:
 - Concern about media reporting inaccurate emergency details.
 - Inaccurate reports create public confusion and workload for responders and communication teams.
 - Reinforcement of the need for:
 - Clear, unified language from county channels.
 - Rapid correction or clarification when needed.
- Cross-department collaboration opportunities:
 - Desire intentional coordination among:
 - Juvenile services, SO’s, and HHS around prevention messaging.
 - DA’s victim services and county-wide victim advocacy and prevention.
 - Interest in leveraging communications to:
 - Recruit mentors and volunteers.
 - Increase public awareness of early-intervention programs.
 - Highlight positive, preventive efforts rather than only crisis response.

4. Next Steps

-All

- Communications Policy & Alignment:
 - Review SO’s communications policy against county policy:
 - Identify substantive differences.
 - Consider role of Juvenile services in county-wide communications framework:
 - Including potential need for dedicated communications support.
- Tools & Platforms:
 - Options to replace or supplement GovDelivery with platforms:
 - Legal and procurement requirements.
 - Security and compliance considerations.
 - Cost and budgeting impacts.
 - Evaluate expanded use or configuration of Agora Pulse for:
 - HHS’ social media approvals.
 - Standardized workflows across departments where appropriate.

- Content & Campaigns:
 - PW and SO's to coordinate:
 - Pedestrian safety campaign content.
 - Emergency messaging templates for unified language across agencies.
 - HHS:
 - Redesign public-facing materials to brand and reading-level standards.
 - Develop cross-department prevention and youth-based messaging.
 - DA's Office:
 - Promote services and community events beyond high-profile case updates.
- Structure and Follow-up:
 - Continue convening county PIOs and communications staff as a standing group.
 - Use future sessions to:
 - Share campaign plans and calendars across departments.
 - Review analytics and refine posting cadences and content pillars.
 - Advance work on shared tools, templates, and cross-department initiatives.

Adjourned – time: 2:41 p.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White