County Commissioners
Colm Willis, Chair
Kevin Cameron
Danielle Bethell

Chief Administrative Officer
Jan Fritz

MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION

Building Inspection Budget Update
Minutes

Thursday, November 12, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Mt. Angel Conference Room
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5279
Salem, Oregon 97301

ATTENDANCE:
Commissioners: Colm Willis and Danielle Bethell.
Board's Office: Toni Whitler, Trevor Lane, Alvin Klausen, and Matt Lawyer.
Public Works: Brian Nicolas, Chris Russell, and Brandon Reich.

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions
-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Background and Recent Trends
-Brandon Reich and Chris Trussell

Summary of Discussion:
Building Inspection is a fee-funded program. Expenses have been increasing faster than revenue, with personnel representing most of the program's costs. Fluctuations in permit activity and working capital, noting that program's workload and revenue vary with construction activity and project timing. Commissioners asked about:

- Reported increase in Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) costs.
- Amount of working capital available as cash versus associated with open permits.
- Program's administrative charges.

Direction and Follow-up:
Board requested clarification of PERS cost allocation across fee-for-service programs, a cash-basis estimate distinguishing available working capital from amounts associated with open permits, and a breakdown of administrative charges.

Task: Confirm PERS allocation to Building Inspection and review allocation across county fee-for-service programs.
Assigned to: Matt Lawyer.
Deadline/Timeline: Not specified.

Task: Prepare estimated cash-basis forecast distinguishing available working capital from amounts associated with active permits, including estimated remaining labor for open projects.
Assigned to: Brandon Reich.
Deadline/Timeline: Not specified.

Task: Provide breakdown of administrative charges, including Public Works, downtown or central services, and building rent.
Assigned to: Brandon Reich.
Deadline/Timeline: Not specified.

3. Initial Options
-Brandon Reich and Chris Trussell

Summary of Discussion:
Cost pressures and measures being used or considered. Such as limiting temporary staffing and third-party contracting, holding positions vacant after retirement, cross-training staff, and limiting paid overtime. Commissioners discussed whether the fee structure reflects differences in project complexity and staff time. Including time spent assisting homeowners, and if additional or reinspection fees could be applied. Raised concerns about consistency in code interpretation and customer interactions. Brandon Reich identified staff training as an area of focus. Discussion included proposed building remodel, estimated at $3.5 million, and if its timing should be reconsidered in light of program's finances.

Direction and Follow-up:
Brandon Reich asked to develop fee-increase options. With projected impacts on revenue and personnel or Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) reductions for discussion at the December 8th meeting. Danielle Bethell expressed preference for preserving positions over proceeding with building remodel and suggested revisiting its timing after another summer of revenue results.

Task: Develop fee-increase options and show projected impacts on revenue and personnel or FTE reductions.
Assigned to: Brandon Reich.
Deadline/Timeline: December 8, 2026.

4. Next Steps
-All

Summary of Discussion:
Discussion concluded with plans to bring fee options to the December 8th Public Works budget meeting. Danielle Bethell proposed discussion with commercial and residential industry partners in January to gather feedback on proposed fees and service expectations. Brandon Reich agreed to coordinate the discussion.

Direction and Follow-up:
Fee options are to be presented on December 8th. A discussion with relevant commercial and residential industry partners is to be arranged for first part of January. Feedback on proposed fees and service expectations.

Task: Coordinate a discussion with relevant commercial and residential industry partners to obtain feedback on proposed fees and service expectations.
Assigned to: Brandon Reich.
Deadline/Timeline: By mid-January 2027.

Adjourned – time: 11:07 a.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova
Reviewed by: Gary L. White