

**MARION COUNTY
Parks Commission
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Thursday, January 15, 2026
Time: 2:00pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Teams or Willamette Conference Room at Public Works, 5155 Silverton Road NE

Present: **Members:** Herschel Sangster, Alton (Al) Hoover, Wayne Rawlins, Bryan Hall, Tabitha Henricksen (Teams) and Amanda Arthurs (Teams)

Staff: Kevin Thompson, Whitney Ned, Toni Whitler – Boards Office

Guests: Hunter McClure

Absent: **Excused:**

Unexcused:

Quorum: **Yes**

ADMINISTRATIVE (Information/Discussion/Action)

Hersch Sangster called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm.

Introductions: Commission members, staff, and guests were introduced.

Attendance/Roll Call: Done.

Agenda Changes: None.

Approval of November 20, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Alton made a motion to accept minutes. Wayne seconded.

Discussion: None

Result: A voice vote is unanimous – motion passes.

Public Input: None

Parks Membership Update

Whitney stated that there are currently six filled seats, one vacancy and some upcoming changes with chair and vice-chair nominations, per bylaws section 7 regarding Officers. Marion County Volunteer Services is available to assist with recruitment. Hersch reiterated that as members, they are expected to be out in the community recruiting as well.

Vote on Recommendation of Hunter McClure

Approval of Recommendation to Board of Commissioners

Motion: Alton made a motion to recommend Hunter McClure to the Marion County Board of Commissioners for appointment with the Parks Commission. Bryan seconded.

Discussion: Hunter shared his background and experience in project management, his interest in community involvement and familiarity with IT systems. Commissioners asked about his engagement with Marion County Parks and requested that public applications be made available for membership recommendation in the future.

Result: A voice vote is unanimous – motion passes.

Chair and Vice Chair Nominations

Approval of Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

Motion: Hersch made a motion to recommend Alton Hoover as Chair and Tabitha Henricksen as Vice-Chair of the Parks Commission to the Marion County Board of Commissioners. Amanda seconded.

Discussion: Hersch shared that he will not be renewing his term as chair or commission member. Wayne nominated Alton as Chair and Tabitha as Vice Chair. Both accepted. Wayne thanked Hersch for his time as Chair.

Result: A voice vote is unanimous – motion passes.

Canyon Parks Update

Kevin provided a detailed presentation on Canyon Parks operations and post-fire recovery, including:

- Seasonal closure and reopening timelines
- Post-fire rebuilding and enhancement projects that involve paid county staff, contractors, non-profit organizations and volunteer groups
- Updates on Salmon Falls Park infrastructure, ADA improvements, restroom facilities, parking upgrades and trail work
- Wetland restoration efforts and environmental protection
- North Fork loop trail rebuilding and stairway safety improvements, a volunteer tree-planting event on February 14 and progress on the fire memorial planning/design
- Bear Creek Campground rebuild plan with \$1.25 million CDBG funding secured and an application to OPRD's Local Government Grant for an additional \$1 million. Projected ground breaking in Spring of 2027. Hersch signed the Letter of Support, approved by the Parks Commission at their November 20th regular meeting.

Valley Parks Update

Updates presented by Kevin on Hwy 22 and valley Parks:

- North Santiam is open with camping season opening on April 1, hazardous tree removal in progress
- Minto and Packsaddle are open
- Niagara is still closed from the fire; addressing safety concerns related to stairway and slope stability.
- All valley parks are open with a focus on general operations and maintenance, parking fees are not required until April 1

- Aumsville Ponds has posted two “no dogs” sign to help protect sensitive wildlife
- Scotts Mills Park survey results:
 - 32 responses out of roughly 400 residents
 - Major areas of concern are safety, noise/disturbances, litter and parking outside the park
 - Around 60% of those surveyed said that parking improvements would make their park experience better
 - Out of the three options for parking improvements:
 - 56.3% opted for no changes to parking
 - 31.3% chose option 2 – Additional south end parking
 - 9.4% liked option 1 – Additional entrance road parking
 - 3 % indicated they would like additional parking but don’t like either of the above options
- Spongs Landing volunteer planting project – date TBD
- Eola Bend losing slope on the trail along the Willamette River; will continue monitoring

Commissioners 2026 Vision

Hersch opened discussion for any ideas, goals or areas of focus for the Parks Commission in 2026. Hersch suggested members tour the valley parks after spending the last couple of years on canyon parks. Al would like to focus on reassuring the urban populations that we are still committed to city parks. Wayne offered for consideration bringing back the practice of each commission member “adopting” up to three parks to act as a liaison and report back to the Commission. Tabitha would like to brainstorm on ways to keep the community informed on all the work being done by Kevin and his team throughout Marion County parks. Amanda also liked the idea of touring the parks. From Kevin’s perspective as the Parks Supervisor, he is always looking for engaged parks commissioners who are willing to take on tasks and provide productive and proactive solutions.

It was briefly discussed that as we seek to gain more feedback from the public about any complaints or improvements they’d like to see in their parks, we keep their expectations aligned with the reality of our limited resources and be intentional about the questions we’re asking.

Commissioners’ Roundtable

Positive feedback and appreciation for time and effort Kevin put into the slideshow, providing pictures, charts and videos. Hersch spoke about his involvement with the Keizer helmet program. Bryan shared that he will no longer be part of the Parks Commission, effective today, January 15, 2026. Hersch thanked Bryan for his time with the Commission. Tabitha is looking forward to wrapping up the details about sponsorships. Amanda expressed gratitude for another great meeting and Wayne shared his appreciation for Hersch’s contribution as a member and service as Chair.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, March 19, 2026 @ 2:00 p.m.