



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

# Department Head and Elected Officials Meeting

## Summary Minutes

---

### Meeting Minutes

October 3, 2024. 9:30 AM  
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Salem  
5th Floor, Suite 5232, Commissioners Board Room

#### ATTENDANCE:

**Elected Officials:** Colm Willis, Kevin Cameron, Danielle Bethell.

**BOC Staff:** Chris Eppley

**Department Heads:** Brian Nicholas, Tamara Goettsch, Jeff White, DA Paige Clarkson, Sheriff Nicholas Hunter, Justice of the Peace Justin Kidd, Steve Elgin, Bill Burgess, Gary Christofferson,

**Oregon Government Ethics Commission:** Charlie Esparza, Chris Brewbaker

Commissioner Kevin Cameron called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

#### **Summary**

Discussed the upcoming statewide Emergency Operations Center (EOC) training from October 28-30, focusing on interoperability between Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) and counties. The EOC structure is proposed to shift to a permanent type three, with a core team of 18 for higher training and response readiness. The Ethics Commission training covered conflicts of interest, emphasizing the need for public officials to disclose potential conflicts and recuse themselves from discussions and votes if actual conflicts exist. The training addressed the importance of transparency and the potential for conflicts in decision-making processes, particularly in small communities with limited staff. The meeting covered the complexities of ethics laws, focusing on conflicts of interest, private use of office, and gift restrictions. Key points included the prohibition of using official positions for economic benefit. The \$50 annual limit on gifts from individuals with legislative interests was discussed, along with the need for policies to allow rewards on reimbursements. The importance of public trust and the process for handling complaints, with a maximum civil penalty of \$5,000 for violations. Addressed recent scams targeting county employees, urging diligence in verifying payment redirection requests.

#### **EOC October Exercise**

- Statewide EOC training to occur during the last week of October (October 28-30).
- Training aims to test interoperability and communication capabilities between the OEM and counties/large cities with emergency management departments.
- Proposal to transition the EOC structure to a permanent Type 3 model:
  - Highly trained teams with a Base of Operations Commander (BOC) commander and five functional leaders:

- Operations, planning, logistics, finance/administration, and public information.
- The goal is leaders who quickly integrate new personnel during emergencies.
- Proposed core team of 18 people with higher time commitments for training and potential disaster visits.
- Plan still in development, awaiting final approval to present to the board:
  - Discuss the county's investment in the new structure.

### **State Ethics Training**

- Mandatory training on ethics laws, public meetings law, and lobby law for elected officials of governing bodies with budgets over \$1 million.
- Training available via monthly webinars and in-person sessions.
- Covers requirements for public meetings, executive sessions, and scenarios involving conflicts of interest.
- Training is an annual requirement for elected officials and needs to be retaken if their term ends.
- Emphasis on reaching out to the Ethics Commission for guidance and advice.

### **Department Updates**

- Significant increase in scams targeting contracts and procurement staff, with emails requesting payment redirection to different accounts:
  - Emails can appear very legitimate, making it difficult to identify.
  - Recommend staff closely review payment requests:
    - Make phone calls to verify and not rely solely on email.
- Suggest sending an all-county email alert to raise awareness about the scams.
- Coordinate clarifications with finance, legal, and other departments to develop a policy and guidance for handling these situations.

### **Other**

- Conflict of Interest:
  - Differences between potential and actual conflicts of interest.
  - Important to recognize and disclose early in the decision-making process.
  - Department level decisions can impact elected officials:
    - Need for transparency.
  - Challenge in determining where the line is drawn for conflicts of interest:
    - Especially when decisions could have indirect financial impacts.
- Gifts:
  - Complexities around accepting gifts:
    - From relatives and the cultural considerations involved.
  - Gifts given to the agency versus gifts given to individual public officials.
- Use of Office:
  - Prohibited use of office:
    - Voting on benefits for retired officials
  - Difference between opportunities available to the general public versus because of one's official position.
  - Challenges navigating long-standing personal relationships and business dealings when they intersect with one's official duties.
  - Policies allowing rewards/discounts on credit cards used for reimbursable expenses:

- Need to have such policies in place.

**Adjourned** – time: 3:03 p.m.

**Minutes by:** Mary Vityukova

**Reviewed by:** Gary L. White