



O R E G O N

MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Work Session Summary Minutes

Parks Update

October 30, 2025. 10:00 AM

Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Salem
5th Floor, Suite 5232, Commissioners Board Room

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Danielle Bethell, Colm Willis, and Kevin Cameron.

Board's Office: Alvin Klausen, Matt Lawyer, Trevor Lane, and Toni Whitler.

Legal Counsel: Steve Elzinga.

Public Works: Brian Nicholas, Kevin Thompson, and Dennis Mansfield.

Citizen: Kathy Rogers.

Commissioner Kevin Cameron called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Discussion

- Salmon Falls Reopening:
 - Remains closed since the fire:
 - Efforts are underway to prepare for next season's reopening.
 - Main parking, on Bureau Land Management (BLM), land is not available:
 - Lacking a formal agreement.
 - Secondary, larger parking lot is being developed.
 - Capacity for about 42 vehicles.
 - Following being constructed:
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant pathways.
 - New restrooms:
 - Moved onto park property from BLM land due to fire damage.
 - New picnic areas.
 - Widened entrance road:
 - Two-vehicle width.
 - Rebuilding stairs and trails destroyed in the fire.
 - Bridges that burned are also being replaced.
 - First-responder access is prioritized:
 - Wider stairways and emergency access road features.
 - Hammerhead turnarounds.
 - Attempting to asphalt the main lot if funding sufficient:
 - Otherwise, it will be gravel with possible overflow in secondary lot.
 - Project budget:
 - \$550,000 (General fund plus System Development Charge (SDCs)).
 - Detailed plans to be within budget while prioritizing critical elements.
 - Bidding will occur for asphaltting and concrete work around the restrooms:
 - Restroom's installation timeline directly affects other construction.

- Target reopening:
 - End of June or potentially 4th of July.
 - After installing prefab restroom, utilities, and hardscaping.
- Hazard trees are an ongoing concern:
 - Proactive removal is coordinated with Oregon Conservation Corps.
 - Existing dying trees are managed for fire risk.
- Debris from fire used as barriers rather than incurring high hauling costs.
- Scotts Mills Parking:
 - Community input solicited via digital survey:
 - More outreach in schools, city platforms, and maybe sheriff's department resources for reach beyond city limits.
 - Two parking improvement options were reviewed:
 - Paving and reconfiguring current parallel gravel parking to angled spaces:
 - Minimal earthwork, 8-10 additional spots.
 - Potential Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) permitting.
 - Estimated \$150,000.
 - May not fully meet capacity needs.
 - Create brand new parking lot:
 - Estimated 50 spaces.
 - \$300,000.
 - Wetland mitigation and significant permitting.
 - Up to 15 months construction.
 - Need to improve messaging:
 - Opinions from city residents and surrounding county residents.
 - Possibly geo-target outreach.
 - School district boundary and zip code targeting as means for comprehensive community engagement.
 - The Parks Commission recommend option 1:
 - Evaluate its impact before pursuing more major construction.
 - Community feedback helps determine preferred solution and outreach methods for project buy-in.
- Niagara Geotech Assess:
 - Remains closed following fire damage:
 - Focus on phased reopening, safe access, and basic amenities.
 - Tree hazard and instability persists along riverside and proposed paths:
 - Some trees left as environmental buffers per regulations.
 - Estimated reopen cost for minimal access:
 - \$255,000.
 - Some expenses eligible for FEMA reimbursement.
 - Reimbursement mechanism.
 - Federal funds administered through Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM).
 - Slope and stair stability are key concern:
 - Geotechnical report flagged 5-inch separation between main staircase and supporting slab.
 - Ongoing erosion due to post-fire conditions.
 - Three options for slope remediation:
 - Install a tie-in structure to anchor the stairs further back:

- Estimated \$100,000.
 - Install wire mesh over the slope for broader stabilization:
 - Estimated \$250,000.
 - Do nothing and periodically monitor:
 - If chosen, stairs remain closed due to safety risk.
- Balance preservation (stairs' Heritage status) with safety and major slide risk.
- Phased opening:
 - Overlook vistas and wildflower meadow access and not reopen stairs.
 - Lean toward holding off reopening until full, safe access is possible.
- Fire Memorial:
 - At North Fork Park, slightly off parking lot for accessibility.
 - ADA compliant (associated higher costs for flat paths and surfaces).
 - Funding initially identified at \$25,000:
 - Potential additional \$25,000 for accessibility and construction costs.
 - Plinth and bronze plaque with names of the five individuals who lost their lives in the fire:
 - Benches for contemplation.
 - Appropriately recognize first responders:
 - Potential inscription of all rescuers' names, or artistic elements on memorial.
 - Avoid "memorial sprawl" (multiple similar installations):
 - Balance stories of those lost and those who responded.
 - Community engagement and family input of deceased is vital next step:
 - Consult legal on appropriate outreach.
 - Potential Parks Foundation for donation management and for ongoing and future memorial projects.
- Reservations & Parking:
 - Extended parks season significantly increases sale of total and annual parking passes and park visits:
 - Especially at North Fork and Scotts Mills parks.
 - Enhanced parking enforcement at North Fork drives higher compliance:
 - Anecdotal evidence shows Scotts Mills may have higher visits.
 - Paid parking and reservation system increases revenue and compliance:
 - Annual passes making approximately 19% of total parking revenue.
 - Camping reservations are up:
 - Hosts indicate higher use and improved visitor behavior post system adoption.
 - Shelter reservations are lower:
 - See growth opportunity.
 - Depends on public awareness and future facility investment.
 - Revenue/cost breakdowns:
 - \$81,000 net from parking and camping.
 - Labor for cleaning/maintenance not fully factored in.
 - Aims to improve tracking of visitor demographics and behaviors:
 - Cell data analysis.
 - Better inform future planning and marketing.

Other:

- Complexities of the following:

- FEMA and state emergency funding.
 - Ongoing reimbursement processes.
 - Rationale behind state management of federal funds.
- Opportunities for cross-department and community partnerships:
 - Oregon Parks Forever, schools, law enforcement.
- Clear structure and direction on foundation and partnership models before soliciting or managing community donations.
- Add educational and interpretive signs about fire recovery and conservation into each park's future development.
- Recognize important community interest in North Fork and Scotts Mills parks:
 - Despite their operational challenges.

Next Steps:

- Legal counsel to coordinate on best way to engage the families of the five individuals honored in the fire memorial at North Fork Park.
- Oregon Parks Forever foundation and options for facilitating donations and partnerships.
- Reach out to Silver Falls School District superintendent to explore ways to engage broader portion of Scotts Mills community for feedback.
- Outreach planned to expand digital survey response:
 - Use zip code or school district boundaries.
- Community and family feedback before finalizing fire memorial.
- Bids solicited for Salmon Falls infrastructure:
 - Asphalt, concrete, and restroom installation.
- Seek more robust visitor data collection methods for future planning:
 - Through cell data.
- Evaluate parking solutions and community input at Scotts Mills before construction.
- Coordinate with federal/state agencies on FEMA reimbursement and park reopening funding allocations.
- Establish permanent, sustainable process for managing partnerships, community input, and memorial/donation programs.

Adjourned – time: 11:35 a.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White