



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

# Work Session Summary Minutes

## Willamette Workforce Partnership & Opal Creek Promise Implementation Plan

December 18, 2025. 9:30 AM

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

### ATTENDANCE:

**Commissioners:** Colm Willis, Danielle Behtell, and Kevin Cameron.

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

**Community Services and Economic Development:** Krista Ulm, Ashley Jackson, Tami Cicerol, Sarah Couley, Chip Bury, and Kelli Weese.

**Oregon Workforce Partnership:** Dean Craig, Kim Parker-Llerenas, and Kathy Moore.

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

### Willamette Workforce Partnership Presentation

- Youth Employment Program update:
  - Grew in reach and recognition countywide.
- Served nine different communities and expanded into nine industries:
  - Dominant presence in food service and hospitality.
- Youth participants primarily clustered in the 16–17 age group.
- Number of younger (14–15) participants increased compared to previous cycles.
- Program Metrics:
  - Ran from February through September.
  - Engaged 8,696.10 hours of youth labor.
  - Invested \$43,040.50 in wages and support.
- As of the September report:
  - Four employers pending approval have been added.
- Number of pending employer applications continue to increase:
  - Eight businesses pending at time of reporting.
  - Additional potential post-holiday invoicing anticipated.
- Word-of-mouth outreach strategy resulted in strong uptake.
- Business alliances and community chambers served as essential partners in expansion.
- Youth gained meaningful job experience:
  - Including pay comprehension:
    - Taxes, and deductions.
  - Workplace conduct.
  - Customer service.:
    - Described in youth surveys.
- Anticipate exceeding previous allocated \$50,000 in annual program funds:

- Recommend increasing to accommodate growth through September.
- Expected annual budget of \$60,000.

## Opal Creek Promise Implementation Plan

- Focus on allocating \$12 million:
  - \$8.4M into construction.
  - \$3.6M into non-construction:
    - Mandated by grant and federal requirements.
- Reviewed current funding allocations:
  - \$3 million allocated to Detroit marinas project:
    - Construction to fully close currently projected funding gap.
    - Concerns about possible change orders, increasing required funding.
  - \$500,000 reallocated to canyon radio project:
    - Includes equipment and public safety communications enhancements.
  - \$2 million earmarked for a trail project.
  - Planning/project grants distributed:
    - Detroit, Gates, Mill City, and Idanha.
    - Parks visioning and infrastructure.
    - Some towns have completed projects.
    - Others delayed by staff turnover but are regaining momentum.
- Definitions differentiating construction from non-construction expenditures:
  - Whether radio equipment counts as planning/supplies vs. installation work.
- Project proposals submitted to Oregon Business Development Department (OBDD) in increments:
  - Instead of waiting for finalized implementation plan before releasing funds.
- Process for handling potential change orders and assessed risks related to project and contractor cost overruns:
  - Monitor actual project costs versus allocated budget.
  - Review and present proposed change orders to the board for evaluation.
  - Avoid setting a “floor” in advance to prevent inflated change order requests.
  - Only adjust the budget after change order details are fully negotiated.
  - Transparent discussion of project responsibility before approving extra costs.
- Some previously allocated project funds had expired and not been renewed:
  - Such as agriculture business with Oregon State University (OSU) extension.
  - Affecting the available funding structure.
- Possible \$3 million reserve for future natural gas line:
  - Engineering study underway.
  - Significant funding gap and uncertainty about project viability given total projected costs.
  - \$11 million or more.
- Create grant competition/program with Opal Creek funds to solicit proposals from canyon communities as new priorities arise.
- Action items:
  - Prepare definitions and budget breakdowns for construction vs. non-construction buckets.
  - Finalize and presenting proposals for Detroit marina and canyon radio.
  - Compile project status update for each jurisdiction.
  - Seek a process for faster OBDD project approvals.

## Discussion

- Willamette Workforce Partnership:
  - Program barriers:
    - Working hour constraints for 14–15-year-olds.
    - Additional certification requirements.
    - Prohibitions on certain equipment use:
      - Seen as obstacle for youth and employers.
  - Positive long-term impacts of early work experience.
  - Important to lower unnecessary barriers to youth employment.
  - Employer motivations:
    - Difference between subsidizing existing hires and truly recruiting new youth.
    - Concerns about program driving youth recruitment rather than subsidizing preexisting hires.
  - Financial sustainability:
    - Recognize current funding could be exhausted prior to contract renewal.
    - Draft amendments or projections to avoid service gaps.
- Opal Creek Promise Implementation Plan:
  - Transparency on reporting status of Opal Creek-funded projects:
    - Updates on both completed and in-progress work by jurisdiction.
  - Submit full Opal Creek Implementation Plan to OBDD at once, or break into incremental project approvals as individual projects become ready:
    - Favor incremental approach to avoid delays.
  - Review and learn from errors on projects like the Detroit Marina:
    - Accountability and discuss project responsibility at board sessions.
  - Local input and grant competitions or open calls for proposals to allocate funding to future canyon initiatives:
    - Leverage Opal Creek budget for broader community benefit.
  - Long-term impact of timely and well-managed project approvals:
    - Momentum in project rollouts to maximize value of funds for region.
  - Communication and engagement with community partners and state agencies for Opal Creek project success.

## Other

- Future Farmers of America (FFA) defunded at the state level:
  - Attendees encouraged to lend their voices to protect such programs.
- City-level activities and community organizations updates:
  - Mill City and Detroit completed community visioning projects.
  - Gates also engaged in visioning work.
  - Mill City repairing park wall that had fallen into the river.
  - Idanha shifting project focus and involvement of a new local nonprofit to support grant and planning efforts.
  - Community organizations and nonprofits are more active:
    - Idea generation and project implementation:
- Funding sources:
  - Some projects, including the Opal Creek Promise Implementation Plan, funded by Oregon state lottery dollars.
  - Some previous contracts use different, more narrowly targeted funds.
  - Funding sources reviewed to ensure proper allocation between construction and non-construction categories.

## **Next Steps**

- Detailed budget and per-employer spending report for Youth Employment Program given to the board.
- Prepare projection and recommendation for amending or increasing next contract's amount based on current/pending spending and invoices.
- Referenced documentation from presentation to be given to the commissioners.
- Prepare draft Opal Creek Implementation Plan proposal defining construction vs. non-construction funding.
- Change orders and cost estimates for Detroit marina project presented for review.
- Status updates on completed and progress projects compiled and delivered.
- NW Natural contacted for engineering study update on natural gas line project.
- Process for submitting incremental pieces of Opal Creek Implementation Plan to OBDD.
- Board office given current Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) rules and guidelines for youth employment.
- Follow-up meetings to review budgets, project statuses, and prepare potential contract and funding amendments.

**Adjourned** – time: 10:25 a.m.

**Minutes by:** Mary Vityukova

**Reviewed by:** Gary L. White