



O R E G O N

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 Cirerol, 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