

**MARION COUNTY
Parks Commission
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Thursday, March 19, 2026
Time: 2:00pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Teams or Willamette Conference Room at Public Works, 5155 Silverton Road NE

Present: **Members:** Alton (Al) Hoover, Wayne Rawlins, Hunter McClure, Tabitha Henricksen (Teams) and Amanda Arthurs (Teams)

Staff: Brian Nicholas, Kevin Thompson, Whitney Ned, Toni Whitler – Boards Office (Teams)

Guests: Herschel Sangster, Robert Swan – Community Services Consortium (Teams)

Absent: **Excused:**

Unexcused:

Quorum: **Yes**

ADMINISTRATIVE (Information/Discussion/Action)

Alton Hoover called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

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

Attendance/Roll Call: Done.

Agenda Changes: None.

Approval of January 15, 2026 Meeting Minutes

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

Discussion: None

Result: A voice vote is unanimous – motion passes.

Public Input: None

Parks Membership Update

Whitney stated that effective March 4, 2026, Alton Hoover was confirmed as Chair, Tabitha Henricksen confirmed as Vice Chair and Hunter McClure confirmed as Parks Commissioner. Currently two vacancies remain on the Commission. Kevin shared about ongoing recruitment efforts, with a focus on diversifying representation across the County. Strategies for outreach include social media, coordination with County communications and volunteer coordinator, and development of a newsletter. Hersch was recognized for his service as a Parks Commission member and Chair.

Guest Speaker – Community Services Consortium (CSC)

Robert Swan works as the Operations Manager, overseeing a program through CSC that supports workforce development, wildfire recovery efforts, and park restoration and maintenance. Some key activities include fuel reduction and hazardous tree removal, debris cleanup, fencing and replanting, trail and park restoration work, as well as firewood processing and donation to canyon residents. The program's workforce development employs and trains local (Santiam Canyon) residents by providing chainsaw training, wilderness first aid training and job placement support. Robert and his team have made a significant contribution to reopening and maintaining Marion County parks.

Parks Tour Discussion

The Commission discussed organizing site visits to parks, with the likelihood of multiple tours to visit all 19 parks. Dividing the parks by location (local vs canyon, urban vs rural) or project type (development vs maintenance) were two possible options presented. Whitney will send out a poll for some tentative dates at the end of April.

Park Ambassadors

Kevin brought up the idea of each commissioner becoming a liaison/ambassador for 2-3 parks, a concept shared by Wayne at a previous meeting. The parks (minus Niagara) were assigned as follows:

- **Tabitha:** Salmon Falls, Bear Creek, North Fork, North Santiam
- **Al:** Spong's Landing, Labish Village and Denny
- **Wayne:** St. Louis Ponds, Bonesteele, Scotts Mills and Rogers Wayside
- **Hunter:** Parkdale, Aumsville Ponds, Scotts Mills and Packsaddle
- **Amanda:** Joryville, Eola Bend and Minto

Ambassadors are encouraged to visit each of their parks and create a "first impressions" report to share at the next meeting. This report may include observed conditions and/or activities, suggested improvements or any interactions with the public. Some sort of accessory (at least a name tag, ideally a vest with noticeable identification) was discussed to increase awareness and engagement with the public.

2025 Parks Program

Kevin presented an overview of the Parks Program in 2025, highlighting the following:

The Big Picture:

- 18 developed/2 undeveloped parks
- 685 acres
- Workload Type: seasonal
- 4 FTE + .75 seasonal staff

Hours and Tasks

- 69%: Hours spent on Operations and Maintenance (O&M)

- Vegetation management ~ 50%
- Trash ~13%
- Restrooms ~11%
- Trails ~5%
- Other ~ 22%
 - Graffiti removal, shelter, playground and campsite maintenance
- Over 1,000 maintenance hours in 2025 were spent at Spongs Landing, followed by Scotts Mills with ~600 hrs and ~250 hours at Aumsville Ponds.
- 20.9%: Travel hours between parks
 - Travel time increases to 31% during busy season
- 10%: Hours on Building/Improvement projects

Efficiencies

- Wide-deck mower reduced mowing time by 30%
- Leaf vacuum cut maintenance time by 60%
- Changes in processes have increased efficiency by 10%

Challenges

- Limited staffing vs large geographical area
- High travel time impacts efficiency
- Need for continued data-driven decision making

Commissioners' Roundtable

Hersch shared encouragement to Parks Commissioners and upcoming events for the Keizer area. Other commissioners stated their enthusiasm for getting out into the parks for their ambassador assignments.

Meeting adjourned at 3:55 pm

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, May 21, 2026 @ 2:00 p.m.