

MINUTES  
GOVERNING BODY MEETING

GOVERNING BODY  
EAST SALEM SERVICE DISTRICT  
2:00 PM, TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026  
COMMISSIONERS BOARD ROOM  
MARION COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE

MEETING OPENED: Commissioner Cameron opened the meeting and noted the following attendance:

ATTENDANCE: Present:  
Commissioners Kevin Cameron, Danielle Bethell, and Colm Willis (@ 2:21 PM)  
Matt Lawyer, Toni Whitler & Trevor Lane- Board's Office  
Steve Elzinga & Andrew Mittendorf - Office of Legal Counsel  
Brian Nicholas, Dennis Mansfield, Kevin Thompson, and Lily Gimby - Public Works  
Michael Johnson & Kathy Rogers (via Zoom) - ESSD Advisory Committee Members

Guests:  
Reuben Gershin – Santana Village Park Association  
Marilynn Long – Santana Village Park Association

OPERATIONS UPDATE:

**Santana Village Park Update:**

Dennis Mansfield provided an update regarding compliance issues with the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) related to Santana Village Park and the Auburn Park conversion connected to the Scotts Mills park project. The county is currently out of compliance because Santana Village Park, originally acquired with LWCF funding, was deeded to the Santana Village Park Association in 2012, and because a revised appraisal for the Auburn Park conversion created a \$45,000 value gap that must be addressed through additional park land or improvements. Commissioner Cameron asked for clarification on the appraisal amount and the sale amount of Auburn Park. It was confirmed that cash outlay was \$360,000 and the property was appraised at \$391,000. The sales agreement between Castor Trust and Marion County to purchase Scotts Mills property was for \$360,000.00 in cash and \$90,000.00 in donation value so a total of \$450,000.00.

Kevin Thompson discussed a potential option to utilize a parcel near Browns Island adjacent to Eola Bend Park as conversion property to address the Auburn Park deficit. The proposal could provide additional recreational value, however, that is a negotiation and will be determined by NPS (National Park Service). Kevin Thompson noted that an appraisal would be required to confirm the property's value and that approval from state and federal agencies would be necessary to determine whether the proposal satisfies LWCF requirements. Commissioners discussed the compliance process and Commissioner Bethell requested clarification regarding agency enforcement via OPRD (Oregon Parks and Recreational Department) and potentially requesting a waiver. Kevin Thompson is expected to hear from National Parks Service if this Brown's Island land would qualify for recreational use. Once an answer comes back that it would qualify, Commissioner Cameron directed to move forward with the appraisal, once it qualifies.

Commissioners and staff discussed the Santana Village Park Association (SVPA) proposal regarding the continued maintenance and improvement of Santana Village Park. The park has been owned and maintained by the nonprofit association since the county transferred the deed in 2012. Volunteers from the association have been responsible for routine upkeep such as mowing and general maintenance. Approximately five years ago, the association requested financial support due to increasing costs and the labor burden on volunteers. In response, the East Salem Service District (ESSD) approved a five-year maintenance agreement providing up to \$40,000 in reimbursement for eligible maintenance expenses (about \$8,000 per year), with unused funds allowed to roll over within the term. That agreement is set to expire on July 31, 2026. SVPA's new proposal asks to continue the maintenance arrangement while also seeking support for capital improvement projects, including infrastructure repairs, hazard tree removal, fencing, playground safety upgrades, and equipment replacement. The advisory group expressed general support for continuing the partnership but requested more detailed cost estimates for the proposed capital improvements before making a formal recommendation.

Discussions also addressed operational, financial, and equity considerations. Parks staff noted that if the property were transferred back to the county, the county would assume ownership responsibility and would likely need to bring the playground and other facilities up to current safety standards, which could slow improvements compared to the volunteer-led model. The original deed includes provisions requiring the park to remain open space and publicly accessible, maintain liability insurance, and remain under SVPA management unless the county approves a transfer; the association is currently meeting these obligations. Community members highlighted the significant volunteer effort that keeps the park operating but also noted that volunteers are aging and that some maintenance tasks exceed their capacity. ESSD representatives also raised concerns about equity in the use of district funds, noting that other areas of the district have needs such as lighting, stormwater improvements, and park maintenance. Current ESSD funding for the park comes from a pool of revenue generated by delinquent sewer account collections managed through the City of Salem, which supports district parks, lighting, and administrative costs.

Next steps include drafting a potential extension of the existing maintenance agreement with SVPA, developing a detailed annual maintenance plan and prioritized capital improvement schedule, and identifying grant opportunities for park improvements through community and economic development programs. County staff will also continue evaluating broader park funding and compliance matters, including working with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the National Park Service on land and water conservation compliance issues related to other park properties. No immediate change to the park's ownership was proposed, and the current community-led stewardship model will remain the baseline while financial, legal, and governance considerations are further evaluated.

#### **Other**

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting was adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Columbilly", written in a cursive style.

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Chair, Governing Body  
East Salem Service District