

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON
Wednesday, July 8, 2026, 1:00 p.m.
Hybrid from the
John Gumm Building and Civic Center in
St. Helens, Oregon

WORK SESSION

Present: Commissioner Kellie Jo Smith, Commissioner Margaret Magruder, Commissioner Casey Garrett, Sarah Hanson, County Counsel, and Jacyn Normine, Board Office Administrator.

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Smith called this meeting to order at 1:02 pm.

APPROVE AGENDA

- Commissioner Garrett moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Magruder seconded. **Vote:** MM & CG, all in favor. Motion Approved.

STAFF DISCUSSION

1. Holly Miller, IT Director, Broadband Update.

Holly Miller, IT Director, announced the awarding of the Saint Helens District grant, increasing the total grant amount to \$16 million and adding 1,058 BEAD-service locations to the project footprint. With this award, the County has now secured the grant areas we were hoping to receive, and the current financial model indicates the project could generate positive cash flow beginning in year 5, the first year after construction is complete. After discussion, staff requests Board Authorization to use the remaining Title III funds to complete the due diligence work as discussed and to return to the Board in September with a final recommendation, including the information needed to decide whether to move forward or withdraw. The Board was in consensus and directed staff to move forward and return in September with the additional information needed to decide whether to proceed or withdraw from the program.

2. The Revenue Option Work Group, Mike Russell, Sarah Hanson, Amy Hansford, Lindsay Elder, Suzie Dahl, and Jacyn Normine returned to the Board with updates, additional information, and a request to implement revenue sources.

Business Licenses

The goal is to implement County Business Licenses on January 1, 2027. It is estimated that Columbia County has 3 to 4 thousand businesses throughout the County. The work group discussed a couple of key benefits for the County and businesses, which would

also lend credibility to property/business owners. After the discussion, Commissioner Garrett does not want to increase licensing fees within city limits but would like more information on unincorporated areas. Commissioner Smith and Commissioner Magruder also would like to see additional information. The Board directed staff to continue with the process and bring back additional information at a future work session.

November Ballot -Transient Lodging Taxes (TLT).

Columbia County is one of the few counties without a TLT tax. The group has researched percentages in surrounding counties and is back to discuss with the Board and request authorization to proceed with preparing a TLT Tax for the November 2026 Ballot.

Being conservative, with a 7% tax added to city lodging and 13% to unincorporated lodging areas, the county would see approximately \$150,000.00 in the first year, with the general fund capturing an estimated \$75,000.00 in the first year, and a 15% increase year after year. The other 50% would go toward supporting Tourism; there are several ways funds could be appropriated. The Commissioners are all in support of taking this to the November Ballot. However, Commissioner Garrett is concerned about the percentage being added to the cities. He suggested a way to keep the maximum tax at 13%. The group will conduct some calculations and bring back recommendations, along with the Ballot Title, for their consideration at or before the August 5, 2026, meeting.

Update on Timber Tax.

Amy did some research on Timber Tax Revenue and has cleared up the confusion on MBF vs. MMB. MBF is Thousand Board Feet, and MMBF is Million Board Feet. A brief discussion was held regarding acreage and tax exemptions. The group will move forward with gathering more information and bringing it back to the Board for their consideration for inclusion on the November 2027 Ballot.

Update for SDC's.

Mike discussed updating the System Development Charges (SDCs) for transportation and parks, noting that adjustments have not been made since 2007, resulting in a proposed 79.75% increase in the SDCs for roads. This would raise the fee from \$2,250 to approximately \$4,044 per peak-hour trip. For parks, the fee would increase from \$750 to roughly \$1,348 for single-family homes and from \$605.77 to about \$1,089 for multifamily units. He notes that this change does not require voter approval and can be made by the board as an administrative decision, provided there's a rationale for the adjustments. Mike compared existing rates with those in other counties, noting that Baker County's proposed SDCs are on the higher end compared to surrounding areas. The Commissioners support the adjustment but express concerns about a sudden 79% increase, indicating a need for a more gradual approach to catch up on the long-overdue

adjustments. Mike will work with the Parks Director, and they will return to the Board with recommendations on fee adjustments.

Update for the Community Partnership Parking Program (Pilot).

Lindsay gave an update on the pilot program from the 4th of July weekend— it did not go as well as we had hoped. A discussion centered on planning an event, particularly parking and vendor arrangements, expressed concern about being unprepared for potential backlash if parking issues arise, noting that pre-selling parking spots is challenging on short notice. Various options are being considered, including working with the downtown association to provide vendors with exclusive parking. There is mention of the need for cashless payment options and of the high rates charged by current parking services. The group will be better prepared for the series of Halloweentown events, which runs for 5 weeks.

ADMINISTRATOR BOARD MATTERS

- Jacyn shared with the Board that the South Chamber has reached out with interest in hosting a Candidate’s Campaign for Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, and her opponent, Dr. Barbara Kahl, at the John Gumm Building and Civic Center in September. More information to come.
- Jacyn brought to the table for discussion, appointing an Emergency Manager and the best oversight location. Mike Russell and Commissioner Magruder shared information that they had received from OEM. Counsel will review the statutes and report back with further information or requested action.

BOARD ROUNDTABLE

Commissioner Magruder shared the sad news of George Hafeman’s passing and told a story about the self-driving car ride he took her on.

ADJOURN

With nothing further to come before this Board, this meeting was adjourned.

The recording of this meeting is posted at www.columbiacountyor.gov/meetings

The next regular scheduled meeting is on July 15, 2026.

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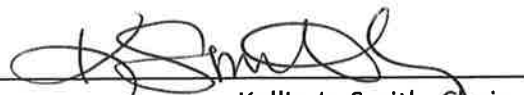
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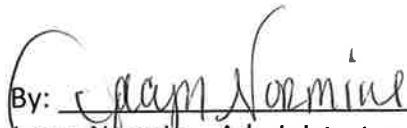
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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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By: 
Kellie Jo Smith, Chair

By: 
Casey Garrett, Commissioner

By: 
Jacyn Normine, Administrator,

By: 
Margaret Magruder, Commissioner