



Yamhill County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

Yamhill County Parks Advisory Board – Regular Meeting

Date: Wednesday, January 21, 2026 Time: 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Location: Yamhill County Public Works

Attendance: Board: Neyssa Hays (Chair), Amanda Mehlhoff (Vice Chair), Casey Heesacker (Secretary), Carla Chambers, John Olson, Celine Hall, Christy Cooke, Celine McCarthy, Lesley Anderson, Chris Teichroew, Mike Firestone, Brendan Gram

Staff: Travis Pease (Parks Manager); Mark Lago (Public Works Director)

Visitors: Commissioner King, Jason Fields (Visitor), James Goings (Visitor), Gretta Holmstrom (Visitor from GYWC), Logan Adams (GYWC Vice-chair), Caralee Johnston (Visitor), Matt Smith (CPRD Visitor), Mrs. Matt Smith

Absent: None

1. 5:32 PM – Call to Order

Chair: Neyssa Hays

Motion to approve the previous meeting minutes:

Motion made: Carla Chambers Second: John Olson

Motion passes unanimously

2. 5:36 PM – Welcome and introductions

All members and guests introduce themselves including any group affiliations

3. 5:33 PM – Proposed Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) by Commissioner King

Commissioner King states the proposed TLT is a fee structured for people who stay 30 days or less in Yamhill County. This would be a way for travelers to contribute to the County general fund for the infrastructure and Yamhill County services they use. Commissioner King uses issuing a tourist a DUI citation as an example, stating the Sheriff's office loses money with every DUI they process.

Commissioner King further states that 70% of funds raised through the proposed TLT have to go to promoting tourism within Yamhill County while 30% goes to the County general fund. Commissioner King states his proposal is to impose within Yamhill County a 9% TLT in unincorporated parts of Yamhill County and an additional 2% within incorporated areas. Commissioner King states this could generate an estimated 1.6 million dollars in revenue within the County. 70% of that would be spent on

promoting tourism. Commissioner King uses constructing a RV park at Whiteson County Park (currently closed to the public) as an example of how the 70% of TLT funds could be spent. Commissioner King states he would like to see the county parks become more self-sustaining, similar to other counties. Commissioner King states the proposed TLT would not be cumulative or “stacked” in the incorporated areas. Commissioner King uses the city of McMinnville as an example, under the proposed TLT, the new total lodging tax would be 1.5% State of Oregon TLT, 10% City of McMinnville TLT, and the new 2% Yamhill County TLT for a total of 13.5% of the booking fee. When asked for examples of what Travel Oregon has done to enhance tourism in Yamhill County, Commissioner King states Travel Oregon has given \$44,000 towards Rogers Landing, as well as done something with a nighttime boat tour. Commissioner King further states that the Yamhill County Wine industry was not aided by government process and that he would like government process to help expand other forms of tourism within the County. Commissioner King states he sees no downsides to this proposed TLT. Commissioner King states he does not want Yamhill County to have a DMO (destination market organization) as municipalities already operate competent ones. Visit McMinnville is one example. Casey Heesacker raises questions about the ROI from existing TLT money, citing an annual budget of nearly 50 Million dollars for Travel Oregon and 1.3 million dollars for Visit McMinnville, without tangible benefits for tourism in Yamhill County. Casey asks commissioner King to work with Travel Oregon and Visit McMinnville to see if they would be willing to partner with Yamhill County more in the future. Mike Firestone brought up a hotel in Dundee that was asking for a large TLT exemption, and the concern for investors driving policy, not the residents of Yamhill County. Commissioner King states he understands Mike’s concern, and that he has talked with Lifestyle Management (the biggest Airbnb business in the county), and that they support a 9% TLT. Christy Cooke asks about the inclusion of homeless shelters of Yamhill County into the TLT, Commissioner King states it has not been worked out. Christy speaks from her experience as a Travel Agent in Newberg, about experience and recreation opportunities in Yamhill County, and how Travel Oregon does not represent any of it. Christy uses Abby Road in Lafayette as an example of a local business underserved by existing TLT funded tourism enhancement programs. John gives insight on the inner working of Visit McMinnville and the way they prioritize their efforts, stating it is a work in progress. Commissioner King states that if the proposed TLT passes, the County will be the entity to decide where the money will be spent. The board agrees to table the discussion for future debate.

4. 6:15 PM – Discussion: Proposed Grant Writing Partnership with Greater Yamhill Watershed Council (GYWC)

Neyssa gives background on tonight’s discussion- partnering with GYWC will potentially lead to feasibility study, not immediate action in the parks’ creeks, lakes, dams, etc. Travis states this is a natural next step in the development of Metsker Park. Mike asks about what dollar amount GYWC will be asking for - Gretta states \$250,000 is a ballpark number. Gretta states American Rivers, OWEB, and several other fish passage funding options from ODFW are where the applications will be submitted. Mike asks Neyssa for which parts of the project the PAB will need to get permission from the Board of Commissioners to participate in; Neyssa states that since we don’t know what the project will entail, there is no way to answer that question. Greta and Travis concur.

John Olson makes a motion to recommend to the BOC the County partner with GYWC to pursue grant funding for feasibility studies related to projects discussed at the last meeting. Motion seconded by Mike Firestone. Motion passes unanimously. Mark Lago confirms with Gretta that a MOU will be brought to the BOC.

5. 6:23 PM – Staff Updates – Travis Pease

- Crabtree Park is part of County Parks inventory now, the transition from CPRD went well. Christy Cooke asks about the driveway culvert project. Travis states that correspondence with Knudsen Winery is occurring but nothing has happened yet. No communication for the past month with the property owner. Mike Firestone asks about liability; Mark Lago states it lies on the property owner, and that they have the grant funding to finish the project.
- High water and wind have delivered a substantial hit to the county parks. Upstream dock and launch lane at Rogers Landing are closed due to debris. Travis states the team spent 15 hours last week trying to open the launch lane. There is a debris dam in place, but some debris is getting under the logs. Mike Firestone reiterates the importance to the community of the boat launch at Rogers Landing. A dead tree in the dog park at Ed Grenfell fell and damaged some fencing. Stuart Grenfell took a hard hit, with one vault toilet filling with water and required emergency pumping. This issue was compounded by large amounts of trash being dumped into the toilet. The door handle was also vandalized and has resulted in that restroom being closed currently. Large debris piles within the park were deposited by high water, and subsequently cleared by roads dept. At Deer Creek Park, a large clump of Oregon Ash trees near the roadway fell over during the high water, creating a complicated problem. More to come on this issue.
- Recreation Ready Rodgers Landing: Greenworks was selected as the firm to take on the project. All the partners had onsite kick-off meeting with the Greenworks team at both project locations. (CPRD 219 site/Rogers Landing) The technical work is moving forward and potentially ahead of schedule. The result of the project will provide two concept designs with cost estimates. Project completion is estimated for late summer early fall.
- Buchanan-Cellers to be contacted by John Olson about dog park fence, following their interest in sponsoring the dog park at Ed Grenfell.

6. 6:25 PM – Chair Update

Neyssa Hays states she is a candidate in the upcoming County Commissioner election. If elected, Neyssa states she will have to leave the parks board next January. More to follow in the coming months.

7. 6:38 PM - Outreach for 2026

Neyssa states that while the Ed Grenfell “Pawsitively Electric” fundraiser reached its goal last year, it took more than the funds raised in expenses to get there, and it wasn’t a sustainable way to raise funds for all of the needs of the parks. She recommends that the PAB focus on outreach and advising, not fundraising. Christy Cooke states a park needing work is an idea that the community can buy into, and that direct sponsorship is most profitable instead of a fundraiser event. John Olson asks about older “Parks Quest” outreach. Carla states that less than 40 people submitted completed books. Neyssa notes that because we were allowing people to print their own books, we have no way of knowing how many people participated but didn’t finish. She gives a brief history of the program. Previously, several hundred books were printed and sold at participating retailers; sales covered the cost of the printing. Carla asks about other options. John states his family did the quest and that led him to the parks board. Mike suggests a monthly park focus. Travis suggests a small activity within the park highlighted monthly. Lesley suggests a scavenger hunt for each park with a sign-in log. Neyssa likes Lesley’s idea of a drop box, especially if it is able to be bolted to the ground. She notes

that in the past, containers with stamps were hidden for people to find using clues but were often stolen or relocated. Carla suggests print material like posters or other print material, possibly at the county fair, or at a park. Lesley entertains taking print materials or a booth to smaller community-based events like Carlton Fun Days. Mike likes the small community idea, citing excellent attendance at all he has personally attended. John contributes that he is willing to create a fun game that is social media based, working with Lesley. Christy states she will look into non-profit rules regarding raffles. Carla asks about forming a sub-committee. Neyssa states she will start an outreach subcommittee by email.

7. 6:50 PM – Calendar - Upcoming Events

Travis will not be available on February 18th, the next scheduled date. Mark Lago will stand in his place.

8. 7:00 PM – Adjournment

Motion by: Mike Firestone Seconded by: Celine Hall Vote: All in favor

Next Regular Meeting Schedule: Wednesday, February 18, 2026