
Agenda

**May 5, 2025
4:45 PM**

Committee Members:

Judy Juntunen Jill Van Buren Scott McClure
Adrienne Fritze Carol Chin Cornelia Levy-Bencheton David Dodson Roz Keeney

Staff Members:

Paul Wallsinger, Benton County Facilities Manager
Levon Atwood, Benton County Facilities Technician, Courthouse Maintenance
Amelia Butler, Benton County Facilities Administrative Specialist (Recorder)

I. Introduction & Visitor Comments

II. Agenda Review

III. Benton County Facilities Staff Updates

IV. Administration:

- Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

V. Old Business:

- Further review of Benton County Courthouse Reuse Committee recommendation report to Benton County Board of Commissioners

VI. New Business

VII. Other Business & Questions

Meeting Adjournment

Next Meeting Scheduled For: June 2025

Minutes

**May 5, 2025
4:45 PM**

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Adrienne Fritze Carol Chin Cornelia Levy-Bencheton David Dobson Roz Keeney

Staff Members:

Paul Wallsinger, Benton County Facilities Manager
Levon Atwood, Benton County Facilities Technician, Courthouse Maintenance
Amelia Butler, Benton County Facilities Administrative Specialist (Recorder)

Absent:

Jill Van Buren

- I. **Introduction & Visitor Comments:** Meeting commenced at 4:48 PM. The group proceeded with introductions amongst the members. David shared that he has been appointed to a Corvallis Downtown Development Committee and expects to bring updates to this group during that process. The group also exchanged a few lighthearted ghost stories. There were no visitors present.
- II. **Agenda Review:** The group reviewed the agenda and added one new item under New Business: discussing options for attorneys to fill a vacant committee position.
- III. **Benton County Facilities Staff Updates:** Paul reported that Jesse Ott, Director of NAPE, has been invited to a future meeting and confirmed his interest in attending. Amelia will send an invite, and Morgan Driggs will attend as a liaison from Community Development and the Historic Resources Commission. The group is interested in bringing Morgan into discussions on historic elements. Paul also shared that a soft groundbreaking for the new courthouse is scheduled for May 9.
- IV. **Administration:**
 - Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: The group reviewed and approved the previous meeting minutes with one correction in Paul's section, which Amelia will fix. David moved to approve the minutes, with Adrienne and Cornelia seconding the motion.

V. Old Business:

- **Courthouse Reuse Report:** David gave an overview of the Benton County Courthouse Reuse Committee's report and related Board of Commissioners (BOC) meeting minutes. He noted that while the report was presented, it was never formally adopted by the BOC. The report presented three primary options for reuse: as a public art or event space, office space, or a mixed-use facility. A class at Oregon State University contributed to the process by proposing potential uses.
 - **Continued:** Judy commented on the lack of BOC follow-up, and Adrienne suggested that the failed JSIP bond may have deprioritized the issue. The committee acknowledged that seismic safety upgrades are a significant barrier to any reuse and discussed the idea of approaching the BOC to revisit the report, especially now that construction of the new courthouse has begun.
 - Adrienne spoke with Commissioner Gabe Shepherd, who expressed understanding of the courthouse's historic importance and willingness to work in partnership with the CPC. Judy and Paul emphasized that any upgrades should meet at least a life-safety standard. Scott noted that the seismic requirements would impact usable space and should be factored into reuse plans. David and others suggested that phased seismic retrofitting might make the project more feasible, especially from a funding standpoint.
 - Paul mentioned that he's been monitoring market conditions and that construction costs are rising. The committee agreed that funding for upgrades might need to be raised in stages, and a phased retrofit could support that. David and Paul also discussed that the county's recent acquisition of new office space reduces the need to relocate governmental functions into the old courthouse, though there could be potential to host third-party vendors or community services like restorative justice programs. Other reuse ideas included mock trial spaces for students. Some uses, such as restaurants or residential housing, were deemed unlikely due to legal or code restrictions.
 - David raised concerns that the courthouse could fall into disuse, similar to another historic building in Corvallis. Carol asked Paul to locate the most recent engineering assessments for seismic retrofits. Amelia found the relevant report in digital files and will share it with the group. The committee plans to review the report ahead of the next meeting.
- **Historical Documentation Project:** Adrienne proposed creating two books to preserve and promote the courthouse's history: one focusing on the building's architecture and non-human history, and another capturing notable court cases, oral histories, and personal stories—possibly including ghost stories. Judy noted that OSU has existing oral histories that could contribute to this project. The group discussed prominent judges and historical photos that could also be included in the books.

VI. New Business

- **Attorney Vacancy:** The group discussed options for filling the attorney vacancy on the committee. Roz suggested contacting Justin Wirth and Jennifer Nash and expressed concern about cold calling. Adrienne offered to reach out to someone at the Wright Law Firm. The group debated whether the attorney should have specific land-use expertise or just general legal familiarity with the courthouse. Paul clarified that the CPC can make recommendations, but the BOC is responsible for appointments. Adrienne will also check with the Corvallis Chamber of Commerce to help solicit candidates.

VII. Other Business & Questions

- **Seismic Report:** The group plans to review the seismic report before the next meeting and consider inviting the original engineers to discuss its findings in person. Adrienne emphasized the importance of developing clear next steps and potentially proposing action to the BOC. Paul noted that the CPC could request a work session with the BOC to discuss the report.
- **OSU:** Judy volunteered to contact Jill and OSU to gather additional oral histories and speak with community members who might have stories or records to contribute. The group expressed interest in touring the courthouse and asked Paul to coordinate with Jill Van Buren and courthouse staff to arrange a tour, potentially in place of a regular meeting.
- **New Courthouse Update:** David provided an update on the Swick House, which is located on the site of the new courthouse. He spoke with Sheri Mishler from OTAK, who had worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to document the house's history. The house, which was on the historic register, has been deemed hazardous and unsalvageable, and a report was completed outlining archaeological mitigation efforts. Amelia read aloud the RFP scope, and Paul confirmed that no proposals were submitted due to the building's condition.

Meeting Adjournment: 6:07 PM

Next Meeting Scheduled For: June 2025