



**Benton
County**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

Planning Division

Office: (541) 766-6819

360 SW Avery Ave.
Corvallis, OR 97333
co.benton.or.us/cd

HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday December 14, 2021

The meeting was held in person at the Avery Building, 360 SW Avery Avenue, Corvallis, and remotely through GoToMeeting.

A. Call to Order and Introductions.

The meeting began at 6:35 PM. In attendance were Scott McClure (Chair), Cody Hull, Tanya Freeman, David Mayfield, Jay Sexton, Paul Berg, and Nancy Taniguchi (Vice-Chair)

Benton County staff: Inga Williams, Associate Planner; Nick Kurth, Justice System Improvement Project Manager; Lynne McKee, Fairgrounds Director.

Also in attendance: Erica Ceder, Historic Architect with DLR Group; Larry Landis, HRC Emeritus Member; and Judy Juntenan, Chair of the Courthouse Preservation Committee

Introductions made around the group.

B. Approval of November 15, 2021

Comm. Taniguchi made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Comm. Sexton, the motion passed unanimously.

C. Discussion of Historic Courthouse – Nick Kurth, Lynne McKee, Erica Ceder

Nick Kurth began the discussion. Will be requesting one-half million dollars or more to fund improvements – top items on the list include reroofing the courthouse and adding a new boiler. Nick will get with Lynn to see what other items there might be.

Two weeks ago the BoCC met and decided strategically that the district attorney should be housed with the new courthouse. A week ago the commissioners decided that they would move forward advancing the new courthouse and take advantage of state money. He mentions these two decision because it is turning the courthouse to a new direction and because it is really taking the historic courthouse out of the justice improvement program. Lynn will be taking over as steward of the historic courthouse since it will no longer be part of the justice program.

Erica Ceder went through the Historic Benton County Courthouse Preservation Plan and Conditions Assessment and the Feasibility Study draft. DLR did a physical conditions assessment of the courthouse, paired together with a preservation plan. Put together a framework for recommendations. At the time, there were unknowns about the future of the courthouse. That is separate from the Feasibility Study.

The Feasibility Study included: community engagement, resident and nonresident market analysis, competitive facilities analysis, user demand assessment, and potential partnerships.

Preliminary findings from the community engagement:

- Courthouse is an icon in the community, but many have never been inside
- Seismic vulnerability is a huge concern – perception that the courthouse is unsafe
- Some feel it should remain a courthouse or government building
- Courthouse should be inclusive and accessible to ALL members of the community
- Downtown development/vitality is a priority
- Benton County and Corvallis citizens are typically very engaged and active
- Meeting space is in high demand, especially affordable meeting space
- Many nonprofit organizations need affordable office space
- Medium sized performance venue space is in demand as is rehearsal space and teaching space
- Interest in arts/innovation opportunities (maker spaces)

Three potential options that seem most viable:

- 1) Benton/Corvallis Government Center – keeping a government presence in downtown Corvallis, share with state agencies potentially
- 2) Courthouse Event/Community Center – operate much like the fairgrounds
- 3) Center for Creativity, Culture, and Innovation – partner with other entities to host programs that cannot be currently accommodated. Pair with a non-profit entity.

She then went on to share comparable examples.

Larry Landis questioned mid-sized performance space – 3-400 seats is the target – fits closely with the new Arts & Education Complex that OSU is building. He thinks smaller more intimate venues are needed. Why the trend in moving government services out of downtown. Courthouse is adjacent to every bus line service. Keeping services there would allow employees to spend money downtown. Could see combined options – not mutually exclusive.

Comm. Mayfield – asked questions about some of the history of this review.

Judy Juntenan questioned if the courthouse was going to be made safe – seismically retrofitted Nick stated all of these efforts are meant to prevent it from becoming Benton County's largest artifact. The County is working on how to fund it.

Paul asked if the county wants to decide how the courthouse will be used prior to moving ahead with the other buildings. Nick responded that no, not necessarily. This is moving into uncharted territory. Don't need to identify the option but may place money in the bond to do the retrofit. – just identify the strategic direction the county is heading in.

Comm. Freeman wants to hear some assurance that there will be some effort to retrofit it, that some attempt will be made to get the funds without counting on the bond. Nick said that the board of county commissioners is in the best position to give that assurance. The BoCC decided over a year ago in public committee that if there was to be continued public use that the retrofit needs to be completed.

Discussion ensued.

D. Discussion about 2022 Historic Preservation Month

Possible theme: "Reconnecting People & Our Past"

KOAC Transmitter tour again - late 2022/early 2023 is the 100th Anniversary of OPB

College Hill Walking Tour – Doug Eaton did them

Re-enactors – Phil Hays – Fort Hoskins

Camp Adair – Palestine Church

Larry can do the OSU Tour

Possible Courthouse Tours allowed, according to Judy Juntenan.

Revamp the driving tour – do an audio podcast so when you get to a site you can have someone narrate the history.

Finley tour of the house and barns – borrow trunks from the museum

Starker Forest has a tour.

Mary's Peak tour – Grand Ronde.

Robert Kentta to speak on Indigenous history – Scott will contact him.

Have the Awards Banquet at the new museum

E. Items from the Public

None.

F. Items from the Commissioners

Comm. McClure will be meeting with Darren Nichols.

G. Items from Staff

Staff distributed a handout from La Grange Kentucky called a Strategy On A Page as an example of something that the commission can work on to come up with a mission, goals and strategies. To be added to the next agenda.

H. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.