



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

1300 NW Wall Street, Bend, Oregon
(541) 388-6571

FOR RECORDING STAMP ONLY

DESCHUTES COUNTY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

8:00 AM

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026

ZOOM MEETING

A legislative work session was held on Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. via Zoom Virtual Meeting Platform.

| Deschutes County Attendance: | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| x | Commissioner Phil Chang, Chair | x | Nick Lelack, County Administrator |
| x | Commissioner Anthony DeBone, Vice Chair | x | Erik Kropp, Deputy County Administrator |
| x | Commissioner Patti Adair | x | Whitney Hale, Deputy County Administrator |
| x | Kristie Bollinger, Property Manager | x | Tim Brownell, Director Solid Waste |
| x | Sara Crosswhite, Director 9-1-1 | | Steve Dennison, County Clerk |
| x | Chris Doty, Director Road Department | | David Doyle, Legal Counsel |
| | Charles Fadeley, Justice of the Peace | x | Holly Harris, Director Health Services |
| x | Stephen Gunnels, District Attorney | x | Peter Gutowsky, Director Community Development |
| x | Holly Harris, Director Behavioral Health | x | Deevy Holcomb, Director Community Justice |
| x | Heather Kaisner, Director Public Health | | Sean Kirk, Manager Veteran's Services |
| x | Bill Kuhn, Treasurer | x | Tom Kuhn, Public Health Program Manager |
| | Scot Langton, Assessor | | Tania Mahood, Director Information Technology |
| x | Elizabeth Pape, Internal Auditor | x | Lee Randall, Director Facilities |
| | Kim Riley, Senior Assistant Legal Counsel | | Ty Rupert, Sheriff |

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|------------------------|---|---|---|
| x | Robert Tintle, Chief Financial Officer | x | Ryan Dunning, Management Analyst Property Management |
| x | Will Groves, Planning Manager | x | Heather Herauf, Procurement Manager |
| x | Zachary Neeman, Information Security Manager | x | Jen Patterson, Strategic Initiatives Manager |
| x | Jeff Price, DCSO Business Manager | x | Angie Powers, BQCC Administrative Assistant |
| Others Present: | | | |
| x | Doug Riggs, Director NW Policy Advocates | | |

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Chang called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

2. Commissioner Updates

Commissioner DeBone shared that he is meeting with the governor and other commissioners on Monday afternoon. Among other topics, he will address OHA administrative burden, the Highway 97 safety corridor, geothermal project tour opportunities, and a \$20 million investment in CORE3.

Commissioner Adair asked Doug Riggs to speak about the revenue forecast later in this meeting.

Chair Chang shared that he will be in Salem on Monday and will meet with other commissioners to advocate for Highway 97 safety corridor investments.

3. Updates from NW Policy Advocates

Doug Riggs noted that the deadline for most bills to get out of their committee of origin is next Friday, February 13. The revised revenue forecast is better than anticipated, with \$300 million additional revenue than the end-of-session forecast. However, there is still a \$900 million funding gap to continue providing services at the current level. Corporate revenues were up, as were corporate stock sales.

Responding to Chair Chang, the revised revenue forecast assumes the state tax code is fully coupled to the federal tax code for the biennium.

Related to transportation, Riggs said that the Legislature cannot repeal the measure passed last September, leaving it up to voters. The majority prefer the matter to appear on the May ballot. Legislators are not any closer to solving ODOT's current funding crisis.

Responding to Chair Chang, Riggs said that eight legislators working on the transportation package funding are not part of an official committee or subcommittee, but rather a group of legislators with transportation expertise.

4. Review Bill Tracker Report by Department

Jen Patterson introduced the week's Bill Tracker Report.

Riggs spoke about **HB 4130**, a technical bill which relates to farm income and helps county assessors determine eligibility for the farm property tax discounts. Some confusion lies over what constitutes a farm structure, processing products, and how to assess the land underneath a structure. The bill is supported by the Farm Bureau, the Oregon Property Owners Association, county assessors, and several bipartisan legislators. Riggs recommended support for the bill. Board position: priority 2 / support.

Riggs said that **HB 4153** is the farm store bill. It came to the legislature last year but did not make it through. This bill would clarify limited retail operations on a farm, assuming that no more than 25% of the property is being used for this purpose. A dash 2 amendment has the support of AOC, the Farm Bureau and Oregon Property Owners Association. The amendment would allow farm owners to operate events such as pumpkin patches, sleigh rides, and food celebrations. Proponents described the bill as clearing up uncertainties which currently exist, and Riggs provided some real-world examples. Will Groves highlighted a provision which states that county regulations don't unreasonably frustrate siting, noting this could have significant concerns with respect to potential litigation.

Holly Harris and Heather Kaisner highlighted a requirement that Environmental Health (EH) inspect on-site kitchen facilities. Costs associated with required regulations are a topic of interest to the EH division.

Gutowsky spoke about section 2, subsection 7 of the dash 2 amendment, which acknowledges the ability of local governments to adopt certain siting standards, noting that it omits compliance with building codes. The concern is that operations may utilize agricultural exempt accessory structures that were not intended for public use. A simple fix would be to acknowledge building life and fire safety codes.

Chair Chang noted that the Chair of the Hood River Board of Commissioners is a farmer who has concerns over **HB 4153**. While acknowledging the importance of economic viability for current farmers, in areas with high-cost land for agriculture, like the Hood River Valley, she is concerned about new and emerging farmers.

Commissioner Adair spoke to the importance of providing income-earning opportunities for farmers. Board position: priority 2 / watch.

Nick Lelack, Whitney Hale, and Erik Kropp left the meeting at 8:30 a.m. to attend another commitment.

Commissioner DeBone spoke about **HB 4121**, referred to as the “Spartacus Bill”, which has a line item for \$20 million in future lottery bonding for CORE3. Riggs noted that Representative Evans had a similar bill last session which Deschutes County supported. This short session, the bill has been streamlined and aligned with the governor’s priorities.

The funding mechanism for this bill was discussed at length, with Riggs stating that this funding is a key cog in the wheel for statewide emergency planning and response in the event of a natural disaster. Responding to Commissioner Adair, Commissioner DeBone stated that CORE3 has received approximately \$40 million in funding towards an estimated total project cost of \$100 million. Board position: priority 1 / support.

Commissioner DeBone spoke about a port study bill (**SB 1591**) which does not appear on this week’s report. CORE3, the Bend Municipal Airport, the Redmond Airport and area around Juniper Ridge are mentioned in this bill. Riggs noted that Boardman is the only inland port in Oregon, and the concept could open up our area for federal funding and additional state funding. Chair Chang highlighted that any change to the governance structure of the Redmond Airport is important as the airport is undertaking a \$180 million project. This bill will be added to the report for next week. Board position: priority 2 / watch.

Patterson introduced **SB 1593**, which relates to recreational liability. Riggs noted that ski resorts are experiencing difficulties in obtaining insurance. This bill is broader and applies to companies providing other recreational opportunities such as river rafting and ziplining. These business operators are also having difficulties obtaining insurance. This bill reestablishes standards that other states have adopted to get balanced. Board position: priority 2 / support.

Peter Gutwosky discussed **SB 1551**, which invalidates deed restrictions or CCRs in planned communities which prohibit the removal of non-fire-hardened building materials. Riggs said that clarification is needed, so an amendment will likely be proposed. Board position: priority 1 / watch.

Zach Neeman covered **HB4055** which is scheduled for a hearing tomorrow. The IT department opposes this bill without amendments. The bill addresses coordination with the state as related to cybersecurity incidents, however some of the language

in the bill requires clarification. Neeman elaborated, noting there is subjective language on the definitions of cybersecurity incidents, and requirements for reporting are overly broad. Additionally, section 4b gives broad authority to the State Chief Information Officer to share vulnerabilities with anyone they choose.

Chair Chang asked Neeman about substantial state intervention, which may be more necessary in smaller counties with lower capacity, and questioned whether there may be an opportunity to create categories. Neeman validated Chair Chang's comment. Commissioner DeBone stated support for Zach's leadership on this issue. Board position: priority 2 / oppose unless amended.

Kaisner spoke about **SB 1571**. This bill adds the definition of "nicotine" to expand the definition of "tobacco products" making it illegal to sell nicotine products, such as Zyn pouches, to minors. Board position: priority 2 / support.

Gutowsky spoke about **SB 1561**. In the event of a natural disaster, this bill would allow for the replacement of a dwelling rendered uninhabitable, under an alternative process that is not a land use decision. Board position: priority 2 / neutral.

Gutowsky shared that **SB 1578** allows for Rural Residential development in sparsely populated counties, with density of less than 30 people per square mile. Sections 4 and 5 would allow ADUs on EFU properties where there is a non-farm dwelling and would increase the size of the ADU from 900 sq. ft. to 2500 sq. ft. Gutowsky said that in Deschutes County, non-farm dwellings are sited on areas with poor soil types, and it is difficult to locate drain fields in these areas. If this bill passes, it will further complicate the location of drain fields and therefore septic systems. Riggs' understanding is that this bill does not apply to Deschutes County and believes that section 2 governs the remainder of the bill to apply only to those counties with less than 30 people per square mile. Responding to Chair Chang, Commissioner DeBone said that Deschutes County has approximately 64.5 people per square foot as of the 2022 census, so this bill will fall off the report.

Robert Tintle discussed Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) bill, **HB 4148**. Tintle said that this bill and **SB 1562** are essentially the same bill. Last year's TLT bill tried to expand the definition of public safety. **HB 4148** changes the split from 70% to tourism, 30% to counties to 40% to tourism, 60% to counties, and would allow special districts to be eligible for funding for services provided by a special district. This doesn't require that counties change how they allocate TLT funds but gives them the option.

DA Gunnels said that this bill seems like a more radical change than last session's bill and expressed some concerns over damaging our critical tourism industry. Chair Chang expressed his desire to keep tourism whole with a sustainable funding level.

Commissioner Adair highlighted the impacts of wildfire smoke and low snowpack on tourism. Board position on HB 4148 and SB 1562: priority 2 / watch.

Next Meeting: The next virtual legislative update meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 12th at 8:00 a.m.

Adjourn: Chair Chang adjourned the meeting at 9:08 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Angie Powers, Administrative Assistant