



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2025
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING AT 12:00 PM
33568 E COLUMBIA AVE; SCAPPOOSE, OR 97056 & MICROSOFT TEAMS (HYBRID)

Disclaimer: These minutes are intended to summarize the conversations that took place in this meeting rather than provide a full transcript. Anyone wishing to view the full conversation can find a recording of this meeting on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/Jg0UC7s-Gso>

Attendees: Chair Christine Collins, Vice Chair Karl Fenstermaker, Committee Member Brian Rosenthal, Committee Member George Hafeman, Committee Member Paul Fidrych, Committee Member Sean Findon, Committee Member David Sideras, City Councilor Jeannet Santiago, Columbia Economic Team Executive Director Paul Vogel, OMIC R&D Executive Director Don Hendrickson, PCC OMIC Training Center Director Chelsey Lynne, Port of Columbia County Commissioner Nancy Ward, Columbia River PUD Administration/Public Relations Manager Gina Sisco, Scappoose Public Library Director Jeff Weiss, Community Development Director Laurie Oliver Joseph, Assistant to City Manager/City Planner N.J. Johnson, Columbia County Land Development Services Director, CDC Office Administrator Liz Happala, Ralph Culpepper

Committee Members Absent: Judy Isaman

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:01 pm by Chair Christine Turner.

1.1 Meeting Agenda

Sean made a motion to approve the October 30, 2025 agenda. Vice Chair Karl Fenstermaker seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

1.2 Meeting Minutes

Brian made a motion to approve the September 18, 2025 minutes. Vice Chair Karl Fenstermaker seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

1.3 Public comment

No public comment.

2. NEW BUSINESS

2.1 Updates

- Columbia Economic Team - Paul
 - Project Oak Tree, a food processing and production facility, held a meeting with CET, Columbia River PUD, and the City of Scappoose to discuss building a facility here. This would be 400-500 jobs. We have been notified Scappoose is one of their top 3 sites but they're still looking at sites in Idaho and Utah as well.



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- Working with Oregon Aero to retain 45 jobs at the Scappoose Airport.
 - Keep it Local for the Holidays kicks off November 15.
- Scappoose City Council - NJ
 - Developing an assessment tool for the City Manager.
 - November 3, 2025 meeting canceled.
 - Goal setting session will take place early 2026.
- Columbia County
 - *No update provided.*
- OMIC R&D - Don
 - Hiring key team members and are now up to 20 staff.
 - One of five Centers for Innovation Excellence, which is a grant program by Business Oregon.
 - Hosting National Institute of Standards & Technology town hall in our building in December.
 - Introducing high speed printer for composites, which will be of interest to drone industry.
 - Hosted Manufacturing Day along with PCC OMIC and had over 150 students attend, most of them from Scappoose High School and Middle School.
 - Hosted 20 interns this summer, many are local and many are on track to completing their degrees at Oregon Institute of Technology.
- PCC OMIC - Chelsey
 - Hosted Manufacturing Day along with OMIC R&D and had over 150 students attend.
 - Hosting Advancing Diversity in Manufacturing Day (formerly Women in Manufacturing Day) in February.
 - Historic Tourism Markers are being created and placed throughout the county by our interns.
- Port of Columbia County - Nancy
 - Put together committee for the future of the Scappoose Bay Marina. We cannot afford to dredge as much as we need to, making the summertime use a huge challenge.
 - New owner of paddle shack has taken over since Next Adventure's departure.
 - The Scappoose Airport will be closing for 90 days next year due to some necessary tarmac and electrical improvements the FAA is funding. If we do anything to lengthen the project or create the need for the workers to be paid overtime, the Port will have to pay for that.
- Columbia River PUD - Gina
 - Signed power sales agreement with BPA, guaranteeing affordable tier 1 power rates through September 2044.



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- Budget Committee approved 2026 budget. Will go to our board for hearings in December.
- Held customer appreciation dinner, where 85 people attended.
- Launched new website.

Sean left the meeting at 12:48.

- Scappoose Public Library - Jeff
 - Kids Market at the Senior Center on November 15. This is where kids learn entrepreneurial skills, create a business plan, and make business decisions about risk and profit.
 - Continuing our food drive efforts with big support from Grocery Outlet. Federal funding is declining, SNAP is being cut, and more people are coming to our drive.
- City of Scappoose - Laurie
 - Held a pre-application meeting with Scappoose Hospitality Group to discuss their hotel project. They are putting together their land use application now and will submit soon.
 - Deemed an annexation and partition complete, it will begin hearings on December 11, 2025 at Planning Commission.
 - Owner of gravel lot at the corner of E Columbia Avenue and NE 1st Street reached out for the first time in a while and is again interested in developing the site. We'll be meeting with him next month.
 - Applied for two grants through ODOT, one for a transportation system plan update and one for a downtown plan. We received a grant for the TSP update but not for the downtown plan. Our downtown plan application was very close and we have a good sense of how to submit a successful request next cycle in 2026.
 - Received a \$1 million grant for Grabhorn Park to develop a creekside trail, parking lot, restrooms, grading for multiuse sports field, and disc golf.

2.2 Discuss Change of Use Permit

Brian: This came about because I have had a few tenants struggle with the change of use permit required by the Building Department. One of them said that even though they live in Columbia County and the rent is cheaper, it was easier to keep their business in Portland than move to Scappoose. I don't question the Building Department's authority to require it but I'm wanting to know if it's necessary. If it's not, we should get rid of it.

Suzie: Thank you for having me. I hope we can go through the items you've brought up here and anything else that comes up. A lot of this happens when businesses move into existing spaces and think it'll be easy and straightforward to just move in and get going. There are cases where this can be simple like retail to retail but it's often a different use, which adds the change of use layer. I had to apply for a change of use when I held a



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business here and it took less than 30 days. According to Oregon Structural Specialty Code, a change of use is defined as “a change of use of a building or a portion of a building, within the same group classification, for which there is a change in application of the code requirements.”

Brian: That’s not how it’s been enforced. The hair salon had to go through a change of use.

Suzie: Correct, because hair salons have new ventilation requirements since the new building codes have been updated. If you go to any city or county in Oregon, it’ll be the exact same thing.

Brian: Some communities don’t enforce this. Why is that?

Suzie: City of Portland, for example, has their own building code and they have several commercial spaces available that have already been converted to meet new code.

Chair Christine Collins: This appears to be a common theme though. Why is the default stance always no instead of the attitude of how to get to a yes?

Suzie: The study that just came out indicated that Scappoose is the easiest place to start a business in the County.

Chair Christine Collins: They surveyed 14 businesses; that’s not representative.

Suzie: I’m just going with the data we have. The other thing I can say is that if businesses take the time to come and talk to us, we can be very collaborative and helpful. It gets difficult when businesses get ahead of the process and do things that aren’t allowed or permitted because they didn’t check with us.

Vice Chair Karl Fenstermaker: I’ve been on the engineering side of this for a long time and I can say every single time you call any jurisdiction, tell them what your client wants to do, and ask if they need a permit, the answer is almost always yes. You’re changing your ventilation, lighting, access, and other stuff and they want to see what you’re doing because it’s a safety issue.

Brian: Is being grandfathered in by old standards pretty much gone now?

Suzie: It’s gone. It’s getting so difficult to be lenient on these because lots of people can appeal the safety of a building and these appeals cost the jurisdiction money to defend.

Chair Christine Collins: This does nothing for small businesses. Big companies have the people and resources to get through this but small businesses don’t have the time or money to jump through unnecessary hoops.

Suzie: It’s not that big of a hoop though. You can hand draw your layout, request a field review, and an inspector will come by and let you know if you’re good to operate.



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Brian: When we converted a bakery to a sushi restaurant, it required a change of use, which I don't understand because it's restaurant to restaurant. You, the City, and I met and you said you weren't going to open up the whole book and look at the entire building but when the inspector who was not in the meeting came, they told me that the bathroom wasn't ADA compliant. That would've been a \$30,000 upgrade. If I hadn't been proactive in meeting with you, the business wouldn't have known there was anything they could do about it and it would've been the end of that business.

Suzie: It may have been restaurant to restaurant but they were also adding fryers to there which were not UL listed.

Paul F: We have a building in northwest Portland and when we started, the City of Portland was amazing to work with. They told us everything we needed to do and not do to avoid a change of use permit.

Laurie: I had the opportunity to visit your business and your wife had also indicated that she did her homework and knew exactly what she could do with the building.

Paul F: That's right.

Laurie: So part of it is an educational component, especially for first-time business owners. That's why we have Jason Moon from the SBRC to conduct free trainings for businesses. CET is also facilitating a county-wide effort to review the permitting processes of all the jurisdictions and create instructional templates that businesses can follow when they're getting their permitting. This stuff isn't always easy but we're here to help and get people to a yes.

Brian: And you have. You've given me example drawings, worked with me on the code, been responsive. I'm complaining about the process. Don helped us get through the ventilation issues with the hair salon but she had already decided not to come here.

David: How long does a change of use take if someone has their ducks in a row?

Suzie: Once Planning signs off saying the use is allowed, it takes about a week for Building to process it.

David: I have to add too that Liz is amazing to work with and very helpful every time I call.

Chair Christine Collins: Do you charge for time?

Suzie: We charge for pre-application meetings when they're at a more serious level but we don't charge for walk-in discussions at the counter or informal meetings.

Laurie: Similarly, we charge for inquiry and pre-application meetings.

Jeff: If someone is going retail to retail, like at the old pet store, is that a change of use?

Suzie: Generally, yes but it always depends on the level of retail.



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Vice Chair Karl Fenstermaker: Occupancy and use are not synonymous in building code.

Brian: Maybe instead of calling it a change of use, we call it a change of tenant because when a new tenant complains to me that it's not a change of use, all I can tell them is that the City says it is.

Suzie: We use the language that the State gives us because it's their building code and permitting infrastructure that we adopt.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEXT MEETINGS

- Next meetings
 - November 20, 2025 at 12:00 pm
 - December 18, 2025 at 12:00 pm
 - January 15, 2026 at 12:00 pm

4. Meeting adjourned at 1:32 pm.