

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2025
via Zoom Webinar

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Elaine Albrich
Laura Brennan Bissell
Valerie Fowler
Robert Liberty
Jerry Meninick ~ 9:13 a.m.
Donna Mickley
Carina Miller
Michael Mills
James Morgan
Pah-tu Pitt
Nathan Reynolds
Dr. Ashley Thompson
Amy Weissfeld

COMMISSIONER MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Mackenzie Aamodt, Land Use Planner
Connie Acker, Finance & Administration Manager
Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Action Program Manager
Sage Ebel, Natural Resource Planner
Kelly Foster, Public Records & Administrative Analyst
Bryce Guske, Senior Planner
Colin Jarvis, Climate Corps Fellow Intern
Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Planner
Jeff Litwak, Legal Counsel
Mike Schrankel, GIS Manager
Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director

AUDIENCE PRESENT

Stephen Archer – Clark County
Nathan Baker – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Lynn Burditt – USDA Forest Service
Sam Charlie
Keith Cleveland – Hood River County
Dan Corcoran
Sheila Dooley

Scott Edelman
Casey Gatz – USDA Forest Service
Rachel Grice
Dr. Kelly Howsley-Glover – Wasco County
Nicolas Granum – USDA Forest Service
Alex Johnson
Larry Keister
Madison Kenney – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Ilene Le Vee
Terra Lingley
Steve McCoy – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Rodger Nichols
Mary Repar
Bryan Telegin
Renee Tkach – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Sofia Urrutia-Lopez – Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Others were present during the meeting.

Call to Order and Roll (8:30 a.m.) Chair Michael Mills called the meeting to order, and Connie Acker called roll.

Commission discussion on procedure for making motions (8:33 a.m.)
Commissioners discussed several options and considerations for best practices in making motions, including:

- Open discussion without motions can allow all perspectives to be expressed
- Motions can help guide discussions toward action items and decision-making
- Motions can limit the discussion parameters
- Preventing motion-making can also limit discussion
- Different Commissioners have various communication styles and backgrounds; discussion can ensure all perspectives are heard
- Discussion can continue after a motion or second is made
- Many motions are amended on the floor through discussion
- A “parking lot” or whiteboard was proposed for motions so the discussion can proceed without seconding at the time of motion
- The “parking lot” approach will require management of the discussion and effort from staff to catalog motions

Chair Mills: Informally assessed the Commission’s appetite for the proposed “parking lot” approach suggested by Commissioner Weissfeld and proposed moving forward with this method and reassessing over time as it can be a work in progress.

Continued Deliberation and Decision on *Friends of the Columbia Gorge, et al. v. James D. Howsley and Clark County*, CRGC No. COA-C-23-01. (Attachment A)

Commissioners were asked to provide updates to those disclosures of ex parte communications and potential conflicts of interest provided before the January 14, 2025, appeal hearing.

Commissioner Mickley did not attend the January 14, 2025, Commission meeting. Commissioner Mickley stated that she had received Friends of the Columbia Gorge newsletters but did not recall reading any in-depth. She stated that she could be impartial.

Commissioner Meninick asked to abstain from voting as he did not attend the January 14, 2025, Commission meeting and had not reviewed the January 14, 2025, record.

The remaining Commissioners acknowledged that they had no disclosures to update.

During deliberation on the appeal, Commissioner Fowler asked a procedural question about whether a second motion could be introduced while another motion was active.

- Counsel Litwak: Stated that Robert's Rules require one motion on the table at once. He noted that other potential motions can be discussed but cannot be on the table until the first motion has been resolved.
- Commissioner Weissfeld: Later stated her belief that Robert's Rules allow a pending motion to be postponed, which requires a vote, and asked Counsel Litwak to review the rules again.
- Commissioner Fowler: Later in the discussion, amplified and seconded Weissfeld's suggestion that two motions can be discussed. She stated this would avoid restricting discussion and noted that she would like to rely on Commissioner Weissfeld's understanding of Robert's Rules.

The Gorge Commission continued its deliberation. The following motions were brought before the Commission for vote:

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Motion 2

Motion	Liberty
Seconded	Mills

I move that the hearings examiner erred in interpreting the code in finding that the gabions, culverts and other improvements to the drainage system were not a structure.

	Yes	No	Abstain
Albrich		x	
Brennan Bissell		x	
Fowler		x	
Liberty	x		
Meninick			
Miller	x		
Morgan	x		
Pitt	x		
Reynolds	x		
Thompson			x
Weissfeld	x		
Mills - Chair	x		
Total	7	3	1

The motion passed.

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Motion 4

Motion	Morgan
Seconded	Reynolds

I move that there is a finding of error in the hearing examiners conclusion that the applicant need not investigate or evaluate whether the multiple seeps and springs on the property generate any water resource.

	Yes	No	Abstain
Albrich		x	
Brennan Bissell	x		
Fowler	x		
Liberty	x		
Meninick			
Miller	x		
Mills	x		
Morgan	x		
Pitt	x		
Reynolds	x		
Thompson	x		
Weissfeld	x		
Total	10	1	0

The motion passed.

Break – 10:38 – 10:53 a.m.

Approval of January 14, 2025, Commission Meeting Minutes (10:56 a.m.) Commissioner Elaine Albrich moved to adopt the January 14, 2025, meeting minutes, and Chair Mills seconded. The January 14, 2025, Commission Meeting Minutes were approved by a voice vote. Commissioners Meninick and Mickley abstained as they were not in attendance at the January 14, 2025, meeting.

Land Acknowledgment (10:57 a.m.) Bryce Guske read the Land Acknowledgment.

Treaty Tribe Word of the Day (10:59 a.m.) Commissioner Carina Miller shared puuy, which means snow, as the Treaty Tribe Word of the Day.

Opportunity for Treaty Tribe Nations to Address Commission (11:00 a.m.) As part of the Government-to-Government consultation process, the Commission welcomes input from Treaty Tribe Nations on any issue on the agenda and other matters. The Treaty Tribe Nations did not offer testimony.

Public comment on items related to the National Scenic Area (NSA) not on the agenda (11:00 a.m.)

- Mary Repar:
 - Expressed concern about nuclear reactors along the Columbia River. Noted there are no small nuclear reactors. Suggested the Gorge Commission investigate the issue and reminded the Commission that Hanford is just up the river. Stated there is nothing safe about nuclear, and it is not needed on the Columbia River.
 - Noted she appreciated Mitch Patton's letter about cleanup efforts at Bradford Island and reminded everyone of the price of pollution. Requested to know more about the cleanup and what it will do for the fish and the human beings who consume fish.

- Ilene Le Vee – Wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day and suggested that they enjoy the sunshine.

- Mitch Patton – Written public comment (Attachment B)

Executive Director's Report (11:05 a.m.) Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director, and staff provided brief updates:

- **Legislative Session**
 - Working with partners on a presentation to the Oregon Legislature.
 - There is no opportunity to present in Washington, but outreach is ongoing, including working with Friends of the Columbia Gorge to do outreach in Olympia.

- **2025-27 Oregon and Washington Biennial Budgets:** Connie Acker, Finance & Administration Manager, reported:
 - Washington Governor Bob Ferguson is asking all Washington state agencies to cut 6% of their budget; for the Commission, any reduction is doubled due to the required match from Oregon.
 - The Executive Director chose to submit a 3% reduction due to the doubling effect of matching. It is unclear whether Washington will require the requested 6% reduction options from the Commission.

- Commissioner Brennan Bissell: Asked when the Commission will post 2024 salaries online.
 - Acker: Noted that Washington State employee salary information is posted by the state, not by the Commission, and reporting is usually a couple of years behind.

- **Access Database Replacement – Phase 2** – Mike Schrankel, GIS Manager and Access Database Replacement Project Coordinator, reported:
 - Noted most of the staff have been busy with training, configuration, and data conversion efforts.
 - Work on the new website is ongoing, and an update will be shared in the next Communications Committee meeting.

- Commissioner Weissfeld:
 - Asked if training has been recorded and if there are succession/continuity plans to ensure backups.
 - Asked about plans for backups or permissions to prevent a “Frankenstein” system as configuration changes are made.
 - Schrankel:
 - Noted multiple staff are being trained, and training is being recorded
 - Added that Tyler Technologies has ongoing resources available for training.
 - The Organizational Change Management (OCM) process will include designing a process for change requests.

- Commissioner Morgan Asked whether the new database would have user groups that would allow all NSA counties uniform access to all available data.
 - Schrankel: Responded that all NSA counties have their own ordinance and processes for performing development reviews except for Klickitat County. Counties will have better access to existing data when staff have time to upload historical data, which will help counties perform future development reviews.

- **Confluence Training** – Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Planner, explained that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) funding has provided the opportunity to sponsor participation in the Confluence Project’s Field School program. The Gorge Commission is sponsoring a cohort of the Field School in February. It is a four-week series of story-driven, virtual meetings designed to elevate Indigenous voices and participants’ understanding of the Columbia River system. This is a unique opportunity for Commission staff, NSA planners, Forest Service staff, and members of partner organizations throughout the Gorge to learn more about the history of the landscapes we work to protect and enhance.
- **Climate Stewards** - Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Action Program Manager, reported:
 - Colin Jarvis, Climate Corps Fellow Intern, is leading the building of a second iteration of the Climate Stewards Program, first highlighted in 2023. Working with Oregon State Extension and community partners, planning is underway to start the program in the spring.
 - Staff are focused on:
 - Preparing for the annual climate report, highlighting goals
 - Launching the second Climate Stewards Program
 - Completing an internal assessment related to planning issues and needs
- **Best Practices Survey for Calendar Year 2024:** Acker reported:
 - Six Commissioners have completed the Best Practices Survey
 - Urged the remaining Commissioners to complete the survey by the extended February 28, 2025 deadline.
- **2024 Compliance Report** – Wolniakowski reported:
 - Explained the purpose of the report and asked for any questions. (Attachment C)
- **Commissioner Openings** – Wolniakowski announced:
 - Alex Johnson appeared before the Oregon Senate Rules Committee on February 10, 2025. The Rules Committee approved Johnson’s candidacy to replace Commissioner Morgan, and the matter will next go to the full Senate for confirmation. Wolniakowski attended the Rules Committee hearing with Johnson.
 - Recruitment for a replacement for Commissioner Ashley Thompson’s position has started.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Commissioner Liberty: Asked about the Rules Committee vote on the Oregon Governor-appointed nominee Alex Johnson and who dissented.
 - Wolniakowski: Responded that Senator Bonham voted “no” on the process and expressed wanting to see more candidates rather than just one.
- Commissioner Pitt: Expressed appreciation for the opportunity to testify before the Washington Senate Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee during her recent confirmation because she could speak highly of the Commission’s work.

USDA Forest Service Report (11:45 a.m.) Donna Mickley, Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, provided updates on Forest Service activities in the National Scenic Area:

- The Forest Service will be making a determination of consistency with the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area for improvements to Multnomah Falls Lodge. The proposed project involves repairs, modifications, and additions to a historic building, and directional boring under Multnomah Creek.
 - **Application** (.pdf)
 - Comments on the application are due **February 21, 2025**.
 - Please submit comments to **comments-pacificnorthwest-columbia-river-gorge-nsa@usda.gov** and include "CD-25-01-S" in the subject line.
- Comments on the Northwest Forest Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are due mid-March; an in-person meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2025, at the Stevenson Community Library.
- Working with Oregon State Parks, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and Columbia Area Transit to find funding to manage the Exit 31 parking area for Multnomah Falls, which costs approximately \$120,000 annually for safety/congestion mitigation.
- The Dog Mountain weekend shuttle service will begin on April 26, 2025, and run through June 15, 2025.
- Installing additional bike racks near Eagle Creek trailhead and continuing to look for opportunities to add bike racks.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Commissioner Brennan Bissel: Asked how much ammonium phosphate was dumped in fighting the Top of the World wildfire.
 - Commissioner Mickley: Will follow up.
- Commissioner Weissfeld: Suggested it would be wonderful to have a few weekends dedicated to cyclists only in the waterfall corridor, similar to what they do in the Mackenzie River corridor.

- Commissioner Fowler: Agrees with Commissioner Weissfeld on bikes.
- Commissioner Morgan: Noted some installed bike racks do not work.
- Commissioner Pitt: Expressed pleasure to have Commissioner Mickley back from detail and thanked her for her service.

Committee Reports (11:54 a.m.) The Communications and Rules Committees provided updates to the Commission.

- **Communications Committee** – Wolniakowski reported:
 - The Communications Committee did not meet on February 10, 2025
 - The next meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2025.
- **Rules Committee** – Jeff Litwak reported:
 - The Rules Committee is scheduled to meet on February 21, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Chair Mills:
 - Announced that half of the Commissioners have submitted the Executive Director performance review evaluation and requested that the remaining Commissioners complete the task.
 - Will attend the Oregon Natural Resources Ways & Means Budget Hearing on March 13, 2025, with staff.
 - Will meet with the Gorge Community Foundation on March 14, 2025, to determine whether grant opportunities are available for website communications.
- Commissioner Weissfeld: Acknowledged Mitch Patton’s comment letter and said it highlights the importance of tracking happenings on Bradford Island and wonders if it could be discussed in a future meeting.
 - Chair Mills: Asked Wolniakowski if the Army Corps of Engineers could provide an update.
- Commissioner Pitt: Thanked Commissioner Weissfeld for raising the issue again.
- Commissioner Liberty: Appreciated comments and concern about water consumption and suggested it might be a part of the conversation in future Management Plan updates.

Other Business (12:02 p.m.)

- **Executive Director's 2024 Annual Performance Review Schedule**
 - Chair Mills: Requested all Commissioner responses by the next Executive Committee meeting scheduled for February 25, 2025.

Adjourn – 12:03 p.m.

Meeting Attachments:

- Attachment A – Supplemental Staff Report for Appeal Hearing (Friends v. Clark County, COA-C-23-01)
- Attachment B – Public Comment – Mitch Patton
- Attachment C – 2024 Compliance Report

Approved – **March 11, 2025**