

Meeting Minutes

Meeting details:

Meeting: Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission Meeting
Date: December 3, 2025
Time: 12:30pm - 2:30 pm
Place: Zoom - webinar ID: 814 1114 0803

Commissioners present:

Chair Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, Damien Hall, Deidra-Krys-Rusoff, Dañel Malán-González, Chris Oxley and David Penilton

Commissioners excused:

Deanna Palm

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called the meeting to order at 12:32pm

Public Communication

- Chair Stoudamire-Phillips opened the meeting to members of the public wanting to testify on agenda and non-agenda items

Commission / Council Liaison Communication

- Commissioner Penilton shared highlights of the recent National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals Excellence Awards event
- Chair Stoudamire-Phillips congratulated Supplier of the Year award recipient Tracy Chapman
- Councilor Rosenthal shared updates on Zoo Lights, Metro's notice to withdraw from the P5 IGA with the City of Portland, Progress on Regional Housing Coordination Strategy and oversight commission for housing services, and an upcoming response to Governor's economic development proposal
 - Commissioner Krys-Rusoff asked if there will be a citizen oversight committee for housing services
 - Rosenthal responded that a new commission would replace the tri-county body, include elected officials and community reps, and make funding recommendations

General Manager Communications

Craig Stroud provided the following updates:

- Introduced food hall concept at 910 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Renovation plan includes building and adjacent food cart pod
- Prosper Portland is seeking Metro investment via 10-year loan for this development concept
- Venues FY24 economic impact: \$513M total, 17% increase over FY23, representing 3,500 jobs, \$30M tax revenue
- P5 agreement termination update

- Commissioner Krys-Rusoff asked how does current economic impact compare to pre-COVID levels
- Stroud responded FY19 peak: \$785M vs FY24: \$440M; jobs down from 7,000 to 3,100

Financial Update

Ashley Sloan, MERC Finance Manager, presented an update on venues financial performance for July – October 2025

- Lodging tax collections tracking 3% ahead of last year
- OCC revenue up 17% YoY; major events driving growth
- P5 revenue was down in October vs. last year (due to prior year's Wicked), but YTD was up 18%
- Expo revenue up 13% YoY; 47% ahead of FY24
- Capital projects on track and under budget
 - Commissioner Malán-González thanked Sloan for including the detail around capital projects
 - Commissioner Penilton asked about the expenses spike in October
 - Sloan shared there was a \$175K software charge plus September event expenses posted in October
 - Commissioner Penilton asked if we track visitors' origin and length of stay for economic impact
 - Lembo responded yes, annually via ZIP code and ticket data
 - Commissioner Penilton asked about capital projects budget gaps in the report
 - Sloan responded that most projects are still open; team monitors monthly. Stroud to follow up on anomalies

Attachment: [Financial Report](#)
[Financial Statement of Activity](#)

Venue Business Reports

Portland'5 Centers for the Arts

Rachael Lembo, Executive Director, provided the following updates:

- Partnership with Northwest Children's Theatre for spring 2026
- Keller Café redesign into quick-service station; closure in Jan 2026
- LED lighting upgrade at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall completed
- Transition back to City of Portland by June 2027 if termination agreement is not finalized sooner

Oregon Convention Center and Portland Expo Center

Cindy Wallace, Executive Director, provided the following updates:

- OCC+Expo: SafeConnect public safety program extended through July 2026
- Hosted NCBMP conference (460 attendees)
- Upcoming holiday markets: My People's Market, Crafty Wonderland
- Maintenance and deep cleaning during quiet periods
 - Commissioner Krys-Rusoff asked if there are any metrics showing SafeConnect program successes
 - Wallace to share annual report from Portland Metro Chamber with overview of calls, assists, and improvements

Consent Agenda

- **Consideration of the November 5, 2025, MERC Meeting Minutes**

This item was approved.

Attachment: [Meeting Minutes](#)

Travel Portland 1st Quarter Report

James Jessie, Chief Sales Officer presented

Revenue Outlook:

- OCC revenues projected at \$20M for FY25; strong performance expected through FY26
- Long-term focus on fiscal years 27–31 with significant tentative business in pipeline

Current Year Performance:

- First-quarter OCC revenue tracking well; no anticipated shortfalls
- Room night goal: 200,000 for the year; on track to exceed targets

Customer Satisfaction:

- Convention service scores remain high (3.9/4), ensuring repeat business

Economic Impact:

- ROI already surpassing targets; strong second quarter anticipated

Market KPIs:

- Challenges persist in occupancy and ADR; strategy focuses on filling OCC to stabilize rates

Event Success:

- National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals conference was highly successful, generating new business opportunities and positive media coverage

Sports Market Pivot:

- Expo Center upgrades attracting new events (e.g., Junior Volleyball Association West Coast Cup starting 2028)
- USA Track & Field returning in December 2026

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Report

Angela Nelson, VP of Equity and Partnerships presented

Influencer & Media Engagement:

- \$150K Travel Oregon grant supporting BIPOC influencer program; Latino press trip hosted in August

Community Partnerships:

- Events with local storytellers and cultural organizations; focus on amplifying diverse voices

Accessibility Initiatives:

- Collaboration with Travel Ability and Travel Oregon to improve destination accessibility

Rose City Certified Program:

- New hospitality training launched; 200 individuals certified, goal of 1,000 by fiscal year-end

Cultural Enrichment Grants:

- \$20K awarded to local nonprofits promoting multicultural engagement

Scholarship Program:

- Five small businesses completed advanced business management training; next cohort begins February 2026

Marketing Initiatives:

- Portland Staycation campaigns (Fall and Winter editions) to boost local tourism
- Portland Dining Month returning in March with multi-course menus at two price points

Attachments: [Travel Portland 1st Quarter 2025-26 Report](#)

Expo Future Project Update

Craig Stroud, GM Visitor Venues presented

- Governance structure for historical memorialization under development
- Geotechnical assessment of Hall A nearing completion
- MOU signed with Interstate Bridge Replacement Program for potential light rail overnight facility
- \$2M interim sports investment progressing; design by Scott Edwards Architecture
- Joint Metro Council & MERC meeting scheduled for Feb 10
 - Commissioner asked if light rail across the new bridge has been confirmed
 - Stroud responded not yet - planning ensures feasibility if funding and decisions align

Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Stoudamire Phillips adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

- *Minutes submitted by Amy Nelson*