

# Meeting Minutes

## Meeting details:

Meeting: Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission Meeting  
Date: May 6, 2026  
Time: 12:30pm - 2:30 pm  
Place: Oregon Convention Center Room F150 | Zoom

### Commissioners present:

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

### Commissioners excused:

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### Call to Order and Roll Call

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

### Public Communication

- None

### Commission / Council Liaison Communication

- Commissioner Pendleton acknowledged the loss of Travel Portland team members
- Commissioner Parulo noted National Travel and Tourism Week and highlighted the importance of tourism economic impact data from Travel Oregon
- Councilor Rosenthal recognized the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Day event; shared the Vision 50 survey closes May 15; the zoo pavilion redesign is underway, and parking remains a major issue
- Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called for interest in serving in a MERC Officer role for upcoming term

### Financial Update

Ashley Sloan, MERC Finance Manager, presented an update on venues financial performance noting March activity has normalized after strong February events.

- Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) is down 19% year-over-year for March
- Forecast revised to 3% below prior year
- OCC revenue is up 20% year-to-date (+\$5.8M)
- Portland's revenue is slightly behind due to prior-year comparisons
- Expo revenue is up 14% year-to-date. Expenditures exceed budget but are offset by gains
  - Commissioner Krys-Rusoff voiced concern over declining TLT and sustainability of venue funding models. The finance team is adjusting forecasts monthly and closely monitoring trends
  - Councilor Rosenthal asked if lower hotel rates or reduced occupancy contribute to the TLT decline
  - Sloan affirmed both factors contribute

Attachment:

[Financial Report](#)

[Financial Statement of Activity](#)

### **General Manager Communications**

Craig Stroud provided an update on:

- FY27 budget presented; no major changes expected
  - Sport Oregon gala and Travel Portland awards events highlighted
  - Expo Future Vision updates:
  - Memorialization planning ongoing
  - Hall A structural feasibility review completed (separation feasible but costly)
  - Sports “365 model” under study
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- Commissioner Oxley asked if the analysis would include relocation or elimination of current Expo users
  - Stroud responded yes, the analysis will include which events can relocate to OCC or other spaces, financial impacts to Expo and clients, and community access improvements. A likely recommendation could advise Hall E for select trade shows, and a majority use for year-round sports for a balanced approach between revenue and community value
  - Commissioner Oxley asked if the analysis would include financial, regional economic, and community use impact
  - Stroud responded yes, the financial and economic impacts will be quantified, and community impacts described qualitatively where needed
  - Commissioner Krys-Rusoff asked how the lost revenue from increased community use will be addressed
  - Stroud acknowledged the need for broader funding strategies and emphasized need for regional investment and support
  - Commissioner Pendleton asked how community will be informed about the phased implementation
  - Stroud shared that the communication strategy will be prioritized and community engagement is ongoing
  - Commissioner Malán-González asked if Cirque du Soleil parking conflicts will be an issue
  - Stroud responded that no significant risk is expected but back up options at Port of Portland Terminal 6 parking and Portland International Raceway overflow were identified

### **Venue Business Reports**

#### **Portland’s 5 Centers for the Arts**

Rachael Lembo, Executive Director, provided the following updates:

- Booking & programming: Northwest Children’s Theatre returning, Music on Main (July–Aug) and P5 Presents shows performing well
- Website redesign receiving positive feedback and accessibility testing underway with Center for Accessible Technology
- Security & operations: Public safety leadership transition to internal P5 team, Derek Bliss remains through transition

- Governance transition: City received 9 RFI submissions; Interest includes local, regional, national operators
- Many expect city to fund deferred maintenance
- Strong interest indicates positive outlook for future
  - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff asked if Lembo was involved with the RFI evaluation
  - Lembo responded that the P5 Executive Committee reviewed RFIs and provided input and no formal selection process yet as City will determine next steps

#### Oregon Convention Center and Portland Expo Center

Craig Stroud, General Manager, provided the following updates:

OCC:

- Event highlights: International Mass Timber with 3,500 attendees and Career Expo with 5,500 students
- Capital/operations: Ginkgo Marketplace converting to grab-and-go, waterproofing repairs underway, and safety bollards project near completion

Expo:

- Event highlights: RV Show: 8,800 attendees and Roadster Show: 10,200 attendees
- Sports 365 work continues with testing sport flooring materials and a site visit to comparable facility
- Client and staff surveys launching to improve communication, pricing, and event execution
  - Commissioner Parulo asked if the Ginkgo Marketplace be cashless
  - Stroud responded yes, it will be a scan-and-go model like Orbit Marketplace
  - Commissioner Parulo asked if safety was reviewed due to a recent incident
  - Stroud responded no, current work stems from earlier safety audit

#### **Consent Agenda**

- **Consideration of the April 1, 2026, MERC Meeting Minutes**  
This item was approved

Attachment: [Meeting Minutes](#)

#### **Oregon Sports Tourism Economy Report**

Matt Reed, Chief Operating Officer, Sport Oregon presented a statewide sports tourism study for spectator sports

Key findings (2024):

- \$1.7B total economic output
- 8,700 jobs
- 4M attendees
- \$300M+ in non-local spending

Focus areas: Professional teams, D1 colleges and one-off events

Study intentionally conservative; Participatory sports not yet included

- Commissioner Penilton asked about the focus on non-local visitors
- Reed noted it reflects new money entering the economy

- Commissioner Penilton asked what share of the national market Oregon could expect to capture
- Reed responded that it is not yet determined and the study is a baseline for future benchmarking
- Councilor Rosenthal asked if the study included merchandise sales
- Reed responded that they are likely embedded in the spending assumptions, but they were not isolated
- Commissioner Parulo asked how long the research phase of the study took
- Reed replied about 12-16 months
- Commissioner Parulo asked if the study will be repeated
- Reed shared yes, a short term follow up is planned with a 2–3-year cadence
- Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff was surprised to find Oregon was listed higher than Washington and Lane County listed higher than Multnomah
- Reed noted he couldn't speak directly to the specifics, but noted differing rates, and sports percentage compared to a lower GDP, among other factors

Attachment: [Oregon's Sport Economy Impacts Report](#)

### **Travel Portland Quarterly Report**

Presented by: James Jessie, Chief Operating Officer and Angela Nelson, VP of Equity and Partnerships

- Market & Booking Trends:  
strong future bookings in 2028–2030; short-term bookings still lagging; OCC revenue expected to meet projections
  - Hotel Market:  
Occupancy below 60%; lower room rates due to competition; need to increase compression via conventions
  - Sales & Strategy:  
Heavy focus on trade shows and sales missions; incentive programs driving bookings; service satisfaction scores remain high
  - EDI & Marketing:  
Women in Hospitality Forum launched; 700+ completions of certification program
  - Dining Month:  
128 restaurants participated, \$1.16M reported revenue; staycation promotion ongoing; influencer and cultural marketing expanded
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- Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff asked if airfare prices are impacting attendance
  - Jesse replied not significantly but flight availability is a larger issue
  - Commissioner Pendleton asked what is limiting convention recovery
  - Jesse noted lack of nearby amenities and increased competition from other cities with new development
  - Commissioner Parulo asked if the promos offered have been effective
  - Jesse responded yes, there is strong demand and around 30,000 room nights are anticipated
  - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff asked if shuttles could be coordinated to connect visitors to neighborhoods

- Jesse responded that light rail passes are already provided, and neighborhood promotion is in place. Shuttles are less desirable to planners

Attachment: [Travel Portland 3rd Quarter 2025-26 Report](#)

**Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Stoudamire Phillips adjourned the meeting at 2:26 p.m.

- *Minutes submitted by Amy Nelson*