

Metro

*600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736
oregonmetro.gov*



Metro

Minutes

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

10:00 AM

**Concord Community Center, 3811 SE Concord Rd, Oak Grove, OR
97267. <https://zoom.us/j/615079992> (Webinar ID: 615079992) or
253-205-0468 (toll free), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=0eEIIWnTfg4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eEIIWnTfg4)**

Council meeting

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President González called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Present: 7 - Councilor Duncan Hwang, Councilor Mary Nolan, Councilor Gerritt Rosenthal, Council President Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Councilor Christine Lewis, Councilor Ashton Simpson, and Councilor Miles Palacios

2. Introduction and Grants Overview

Parks and Nature Director Jon Blasher introduced the five grant programs under consideration.

3. Resolutions**2.1 Resolution No. 26-5579 For the Purpose of Approving Funding for Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants**

Presenter(s): Jon Blasher, Parks and Nature Director
Crista Gardner, Capital Grants Program Manager

Attachments: [Resolution No. 26-5579](#)
[Exhibit A](#)
[Staff Report](#)

Staff and guest presenters described the eight projects across the region recommended for funding through Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Program.

Staff clarified for Councilor Hwang that approximately \$5 million or more was secured in matching funding to support the projects funded by the grants.

Tualatin City Councilor Bridget Brooks thanked Council for their consideration of a recommended grant for the Tualatin Riverfront Park and Trail. She thanked Councilor Rosenthal for his representation of District 3.

A motion was made by Councilor Rosenthal, seconded by Councilor Simpson, that this item be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilor Hwang, Councilor Nolan, Councilor Rosenthal, Council President Gonzalez, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Simpson, and Councilor Palacios

2.2 **Resolution No. 26-5581** For the Purpose of Approving Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants

Presenter(s): Jon Blasher, Parks and Nature Director
 Crista Gardner, Capital Grants Program Manager
 Gabrielle Brown, Capital Grants Program Manager

Attachments: [Resolution No. 26-5581](#)
 [Exhibit A](#)
 [Staff Report](#)

Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants staff joined the presenters. They described efforts to include more people in feedback, including a dozen community events, and noted that it resulted in one of the most successful community budget programs of its size nationally. Presenters also described the following resolution (Resolution No. 26-5625) as part of the same presentation.

Franklin Ouchida, Oregon Wheelchair Hikers, described the ways feedback from the community led to improvements in mobility and accessibility on trails, including accessibility for individuals that can only access existing facilities with difficulty.

Staff then provided a brief overview of the 23 projects recommended for funding, including a new process of community-led acquisitions.

Councilor Lewis emphasized the success of community budgeting and thanked Metro and the community for their support for this program in District 2 and for participation. She thanked the cities, parks districts, and other owners of the projects.

Councilor Hwang asked whether the current round of projects

considered for funding were more heavily weighted toward restoration and whether engagement efforts were more efficient this round, after investments in engagement in the first round. Staff explained that the requests reflect individual community needs and identities and that they saw a 20% decrease in program cost compared to first round, largely attributable to adaptation and reuse of materials.

Councilor Palacios and President González both spoke broadly in favor of community budgeting.

Grover Boanefel, community advocate, described his difficulty choosing projects to vote for from such a well-qualified list of proposals, and he urged adoption.

A motion was made by Councilor Lewis, seconded by Councilor Palacios, that this item be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilor Hwang, Councilor Nolan, Councilor Rosenthal, Council President Gonzalez, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Simpson, and Councilor Palacios

2.3 Resolution No. 26-5625 For the Purpose of Approving Funding for Protect and Restore Land Community-Led Acquisition Grants

Presenter(s): Jon Blasher, Parks and Nature Director
Crista Gardner, Capital Grants Program Manager
Gabrielle Brown, Capital Grants Program Manager

Attachments: [Resolution No. 26-5625](#)
[Exhibit A](#)
[Staff Report](#)

Presenters also described the resolution as part of the presentation for Resolution No. 26-5581. Councilor discussion was directed at the Community Choice program.

A motion was made by Councilor Lewis, seconded by Councilor Simpson, that this item be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilor Hwang, Councilor Nolan, Councilor Rosenthal, Council President Gonzalez, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Simpson, and Councilor Palacios

- 2.4 **Resolution No. 26-5580** For the Purpose of Approving 2026-26 Nature in Neighborhoods Community Stewardship Community Stewardship and Restoration Community Grants

Presenter(s): Jon Blasher (he/him), Parks and Nature Director
Karissa Lowe, Community Grants Program Manager

Attachments: [Resolution No. 26-5580](#)
[Exhibit A to Resolution No. 26-5580](#)
[Staff Report](#)

Staff specified that Nature in Neighborhoods Community Grants include two programs; the recommended grants fall under the Restoration and Stewardship program.

Staff described the recommended grants. Leigh Rappaport, Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center (POIC), spoke in favor of funding for the POIC Natural Resource Pathway Project.

Councilor Lewis described her enthusiasm for community organizations dedicated to restoration and access to nature; Councilor Simpson uplifted the food sovereignty projects.

A motion was made by Councilor Simpson, seconded by Councilor Rosenthal, that this item be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilor Hwang, Councilor Nolan, Councilor Rosenthal, Council President Gonzalez, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Simpson, and Councilor Palacios

- 2.5 **Resolution 26-5578 For the Purpose of Approving a Third Round of Funding for Parks and Nature Bond Large-Scale Community Visions Program**

Presenter(s): Jon Blasher (he/him), Parks and Nature Director
Linda Bartolini Venegas (she/her), Large Scale Community

Attachments: Visions Program Manager
[Resolution No. 26-5578](#)
[Exhibit A](#)
[Staff Report](#)

Staff reviewed the Large Scale Community Visions Program, including updated recommendations based on Council feedback during a recent work session.

Representatives from Working Theory Farm described their grant proposal, which Council had previously asked staff to include in their grant recommendation.

Councilor Nolan expressed concern that the Bird Alliance was not invited to present as a guest speaker, and staff noted each program invites one speaker based on availability.

Councilor Rosenthal asked how reductions in funding would affect project scope and viability, and staff provided high-level details about how updated recommendations for funding affect project scope.

City of Tigard Mayor Yi Kang Hu urged Council to restore the full \$3.8 million funding for Ash Creek Nature Link. He specified that the funding gap is large enough to make the project infeasible. He emphasized that the project is shovel-ready and in a low-income neighborhood that would serve children and seniors.

Tigard City Councilor Bridget Brooks noted that there is a time-limited donation to support the project, complicated by unexpected changes to their anticipated funding. She emphasized the declining level of services for city residents.

Kelley Beamer, Executive Director at East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, introduced Jordan Adams, graduate of the fisheries program. He shared his experience in restoration

and monitoring water quality and dams.

Joe Wisniewski, City of Tigard engineer, described the difficulty of moving forward on the Ash Creek project with reduced funding, noting that the full award is the last piece of funding for a publicly owned asset on public property.

Elizabeth Edwards, Clean Water Services Chief of Staff, explained that Clean Water Services is the largest match funder of the Ash Creek project.

Dr. Leslie King, Sandy River Watershed Council, explained that the Sandy River flows to Kelly Creek. She noted the significance of the dam removal project and how Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) students were essential to understanding salmon kills in the river and the significance of the dam removal project.

Jennifer Bohmer, Vice President of Advancement and Community Engagement at MHCC, described the opportunities available to the 18,000 students at MHCC, who are overcoming challenges to achieve a higher education, including two-thirds who struggle to meeting basic needs.

Micah Mescal, Urban Conservation Director for Bird Alliance of Oregon, explained that the project seeks to bring nature to an urban environment along NE 82nd Boulevard. He spoke to the City of Portland's desire to fund the project as well.

Councilor Nolan asked if each project sponsor would abandon their project with partial funding.

Tigard applicants said they would pursue additional funding through Nature in Neighborhoods programs, but there would be a high risk of returning grant funds for inability to deliver, especially considering the disposition of donated property

contingent on full funding.

Henney Sullivan from Working Theory Farms committed to accepting partial funding and would use the partial funding to seek additional funds to finalize the project.

April McKeown, Kelly Creek Dam Removal Project Manager, explained that the project can't be scaled down and is on track to reach full funding on time for project completion.

After the resolution was moved and seconded, Councilor Rosenthal moved to amend the resolution as described in his amendment, distributed and included in the meeting packet. His amendment proposed to remove funding for the Bird Alliance project and to pull funds from Work Theory Farms to fully fund the Ash Creek project in Tigard, in accordance with staff's original recommendation.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Councilors resumed discussion on the main motion. Councilor Hwang recalled his previous hope that other funding solutions existed.

Resuming his previous hope to identify other funding solutions, he asked Metro staff to provide a plan and feasibility for accelerating the next round of Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants. Deputy Chief Operating Officer Andrew Scott asked Council to consider unintended consequences, which would be included in a proposal for accelerating the program in the coming weeks.

Councilor Nolan appreciated her colleagues and the process to deliberate about the funding recommendations, namely, policymaker discretion following a staff recommendation that

followed a rigorous scoring process.

Councilor Simpson thanked voters for supporting the 2019 Parks and Nature Bond and he expressed his strong support for the Kelly Creek project at MHCC. He acknowledged the Vance Project, also located in District 1, which was not recommended for funding.

Councilor Palacios asked staff to specify in their proposal for an accelerated capital funding program to include details about engagement.

Councilor Lewis recalled that Large Scale Community Visions was designed to be a funding program to provide catalyst funding for community projects. She strongly supported the dam removal at Kelly Creek.

Councilor Rosenthal appreciated program efforts to simplify applications and provide community oversight. He disagreed with Council action to overrule the staff scoring criteria, and expressed concern that Council deliberation to do so may have lacked some critical information.

President González reiterated the exceptional proposals, both recommended for funding and otherwise. He thanked community members for their advocacy throughout the process.

A motion was made by Councilor Simpson, seconded by Councilor Nolan, that this item be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Councilor Hwang, Councilor Nolan, Council President Gonzalez, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Simpson, and Councilor Palacios

Abstain: 1 - Councilor Rosenthal

4. Chief Operating Officer Communication

No updates.

5. Councilor Communication

No updates.

6. Adjourn

President González closed consideration of the substantive agenda by appreciating the role of parks and natural areas in the greater Portland region. Deputy COO Scott shared those sentiments and appreciated the community engagement and the role of smaller projects in transforming the region.

President González adjourned the Council meeting at 12:48 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Buzzini".

Anne Buzzini, Council Legislative Advisor

July 23, 2026