

Meeting Minutes

Meeting details:

Meeting: Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission Meeting
Date: November 5, 2025
Time: 12:30pm - 2:30 pm
Place: Oregon Convention Center, Holladay Suite and Zoom

Commissioners present:

Chair Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, Deidra-Krys-Rusoff, Dañel Malán-González, Deanna Palm and David Penilton

Commissioners excused:

Damien Hall, Chris Oxley

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called the meeting to order at 12:40pm

Public Communication

- Chair Stoudamire-Phillips opened the meeting to members of the public wanting to testify on agenda and non-agenda items
- Bill Crane, Executive Director, Portland Piano International shared concerns about deteriorating conditions at Portland's 5 Centers for the Arts and urged improvements to encourage downtown arts attendance

Commission / Council Liaison Communication

- Council Rosenthal outlined major areas of focus: performance venues and sports, Future Vision, supportive housing services, housing, parks & nature, solid waste, cultural planning
- Commissioner Penilton praised the OCC venue tour for insights into safety, security, and environmental initiatives
- Commissioner Krys-Rusoff commended staff for excellent service at the recent Literary Arts event held at P5

General Manager Communications

Craig Stroud provided the following updates:

Expo Future

- workgroup forming for feasibility assessment of the 46 Historic Significance and Memorialization Committee recommendations
- Governance framework under development; completion expected March 2026
- Hall A structural assessment underway
- Interim sports infrastructure project: \$2M budget; recommendations due January

General updates

- Attended a food and beverage conference hosted by Levy last month that focused on guest experience

- Metro Government Affairs is coordinating with Washington County to identify a representative to nominate to MERC
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff requested the budget for the Expo interim sports equipment investments. Stroud responded that 2 million was allocated by Metro
 - Commissioner Malán-González referenced flooring recommendations from Hunden Partners and highlighted potential financial tradeoffs for assessment. Stroud outlined floor box constraints, synthetic flooring surface, and temporary flooring options

Financial Update

Ashley Sloan, MERC Finance Manager, presented a FY2026 overview

- Strong start; Q1 traditionally slow but higher event levels
- TLT collections down 28% vs prior year
- OCC: \$4.4M revenue
- Portland'5: \$3M revenue; attendance up 111% for Q1
- Expo: \$276K revenue; down 15% vs prior (Cirque) year
 - Commissioner Malán-González requested capital expense details to be included in future reports
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff highlighted impressive F&B numbers for OCC from recent events and asked if any changes were made to reflect the increase. Wallace referenced the recent launch of Orbit Marketplace with AI self service feature reduced speed of service to an average of 22 seconds per customer

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

Venue Business Reports

Oregon Convention Center and Portland Expo Center

Cindy Wallace Executive Director provided the following updates:

OCC

- Completed capital projects include Orbit Marketplace renovation, safety upgrades, rain garden restoration
- Launched redesigned website

Expo

- Sports infrastructure project progressing
- Employee engagement survey shows gains
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff asked about any staff resistance to the recent changes at OCC. Wallace responded they are receiving good feedback from all impacted departments and acknowledged initial anxiety around changes
 - Commissioner Penilton asked about any budgeting impacts from the increased security measures. Wallace highlighted that there wasn't an increase in labor or FTE, just system enhancements

Portland'5 Centers for the Arts

Rachael Lembo, Executive Director, provided the following updates:

- Event highlights: Rocky Horror Picture Show and upcoming Kamala Harris conversation
- Facility upgrades include HVAC improvements, and energy audits
- P5 / City IGA dissolution policy options will be presented to Metro Council on November 20
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff asked about staff's awareness of dissolution process. Lembo cited survey responses reflected the desire for more communication. Listening sessions are being scheduled to keep staff informed and to hear direct questions and feedback
 - Commissioner Penilton asked if wages and benefits will be transferred with staff from Metro to the City. Lembo responded yes, state statute dictates that current wages must be maintained for at least 12 months. They also have additional protections through their collective bargaining agreements
 - Commissioner Malán-González shared concerns around the city's bandwidth and the possibility of privatizing operations. Lembo responded that yes, it will be a city decision

Consent Agenda

- **Consideration of the September 3, 2025, MERC Meeting Minutes**

This item was approved.

Attachment: [Meeting Minutes](#)

Action Agenda

Resolution No. 25-07: For the purpose of recognizing Deanna Palm's contributions to the Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission (MERC)
Chair Stoudamire-Phillips and Commissioners presented

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called for a vote on Resolution No. 25-07.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff, seconded by Commissioner Penilton, that Resolution 25-07 be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 5 Stoudamire-Phillips, Kryz-Rusoff, Malán-González, Palm and Penilton

Attachments: [Resolution 25-07](#)

5-Year Forecast Presentation

Ashley Sloan, MERC Finance Manager; Cindy Wallace, Interim Executive Director, OCC + Expo; Rachael Lembo, Interim Executive Director, Portland5; and Kat Kelley, Economist, Metro Revenue and Analytics Division presented

Assumptions

- No new FTE; salary growth 3–5% annually
- PERS rates forecast to rise
- TLT growth: 3% annually

Economic Outlook

- National economy expanding moderately; inflation at 3%
- Portland job growth flat; leisure and hospitality improving

Venue Forecasts

- P5: Negative fund balance by FY2029; capital needs unfunded
- OCC: Negative fund balance by FY2028
- Expo: Revenue growth modest; capital allocation insufficient

Key Themes

- Deferred maintenance and capital funding gaps pose risks
- Transition of Portland's management to City of Portland by June 2027
- Opportunities in new venue openings and partnerships
- Need for sustainable funding model for capital improvements
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff highlighted that the current model of funding capital improvements from operations profit is unsustainable and unlike any other venue model in the nation
 - Commissioner Penilton acknowledged the difficult decisions ahead but is energized by potential new opportunities and collaborations

Attachments: [5 Year Forecast](#)

Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Stoudamire Phillips adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

- *Minutes submitted by Amy Nelson*