

Meeting Minutes

Meeting details:

Meeting: Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission Meeting
Date: January 7, 2026
Time: 12:30pm - 2:30 pm
Place: Oregon Convention Center Room F150 | Zoom

Commissioners present:

Chair Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, Deidra-Krys-Rusoff, Dañel Malán-González, and Dave Parulo

Commissioners excused:

Damien Hall, Chris Oxley, David Penilton

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called the meeting to order at 12:35pm

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

- Chair Stoudamire-Phillips introduced new Commissioner Dave Parulo
- Commissioner Krys-Rusoff congratulated Chair Stoudamire-Phillips on being selected for Portland Business Journals Women of Influence award
- Councilor Rosenthal noted the Council recess and highlighted recent items like the establishment of the Supportive Housing Services Committee and the P5 transition work

General Manager Communications

Craig Stroud provided the following updates:

- Metro provided termination notice to the City of Portland for the Portland's operating management intergovernmental agreement on December 31st. The date of termination is June 30, 2027
- Metro Council unanimously reappointed Chair Stoudamire-Phillips, and Commissioners Krys-Rusoff and Penilton to another 4-year MERC term
- Metro and venues leaders joined other statewide public and private sector partners at the 2025 Leadership Summit held at the Oregon Convention Center on Dec 8th
- TLT collections continue to be soft, and conversations are starting around possible VFIGA revisions
- The next Metro Council and MERC joint work session will be on February 10
- Expo Future project updates on recent geotechnical assessment and governance structure development
 - Councilor Rosenthal asked if the results of the geotechnical study will influence the future work of the TriMet Max station

- Stroud assumed the Max station was built to modern standard, but we don't know the details of the condition of the station

Financial Update

Ashley Sloan, MERC Finance Manager, presented an update on venues financial performance for July through November.

- November TLT collections were down 21% from the previous year
- Year-to-date revenue at the Oregon Convention Center (OCC) was ahead by 10%
- Year-to-date revenue at P5 was ahead 8%
- Year-to-date revenue at Expo was 13% lower than last year
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff highlighted the success of the new Obit Café model and thanked staff for their work through ongoing change and budget constraints
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff asked if TLT funds had arrived yet
 - Sloan replied not as of a few hours prior and shared she is forecasting 3% less than last year to be conservative
 - Chair Stoudamire-Phillips appreciated that our grab and go model has unique offerings created by Chef Wambaa and team

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:

- Booking updates highlighted conventions for the National Art Education Association (2029) and the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (2028)
- The Junior Volleyball Association tournaments have been secured for 2028-2030
- Upcoming remodel of food and beverage spaces at Expo with AI-assisted checkout systems
- Recognized the departure of two long-standing employees, Chuck Dills and Monica Pea
 - Commissioner Penilton shared excitement about recently booked events and asked when the open sales position would be posted
 - Wallace responded that the position will be posted on Friday

Portland's 5 Centers for the Arts

Rachael Lembo, Executive Director, provided the following updates:

- Discussed communication strategies during management transitions, including a new monthly online newsletter
- P5 recently received a \$75,000 energy trust incentive for roof insulation at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff praised both venue directors for maintaining outstanding service levels despite ongoing transitions and budget cuts
 - Commissioner Penilton echoed the praise for the job done by both directors

Consent Agenda

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

This item was approved with a minor correction.

Attachment: [Meeting Minutes](#)

Future Vision Project Update

Malu Wilkinson, Planning, Development & Research Deputy Director and Jessica Zdeb, Principal Regional Planner presented an update on the region's Future Vision project

- Metro Charter requires a 50-year vision, updated every 15 years, and the current one is overdue
 - COO Marissa Madrigal shared her excitement for this project
 - Wilkinson posed a question to the Commission: What are the most exciting differences you hope to see in the future related to event venues
 - Commissioner Penilton expressed hope for workforce representation that reflects the community in 50 years
 - Commissioner Malán-González envisioned the region becoming more tourism-driven and increasingly multicultural and diverse in 50 years
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff emphasized the need for Metro to engage with all communities, including businesses and the nonprofit sector, to maintain balance and economic growth. She also encouraged engaging the senior community for their historical insights
 - Chair Stoudamire-Phillips stressed the importance of economic affordability and inclusivity of historically marginalized communities
 - Commissioner Malán-González recommended an interactive element with the artists on site
 - Penilton asked if Seattle or San Francisco had similar regional vision processes or if there was alignment/collaboration with other regions like the Pacific Northwest
 - Wilkinson confirmed neither Seattle nor San Francisco has the same 50-year charter requirement but do have visions. The Cascadia Innovation Corridor (Portland to Vancouver, BC high-speed rail) is likely the most coordinated effort currently
 - Commissioner Parulo highlighted the venues' role as an economic engine and the importance of awareness of the surrounding community dynamics. Parulo asked how balance was achieved with the diverse views on the Future Vision Commission
 - Zieb explained they used an application process to select members with diverse backgrounds and differing opinions. The process uses a consensus model rather than full agreement
 - Chair Stoudamire-Phillips requested updates on the process and would like MERC to engage when possible

FOTA Performance Update

Craig Stroud, General Manager, Visitor Venues presented

- Current areas of focus are stabilizing the program, improving data collection, and strengthening community relationships
- Currently data tracking is manual and burdensome
 - Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff expressed appreciation for bringing the FOTA program back to the forefront

- Chair Stoudamire-Phillips offered to share an update with the committee that worked on the original 2015 FOTA project
- Stroud agreed this would be a good idea in about six months, once the program stabilization is fully implemented

Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Stoudamire Phillips adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Executive Session

Under ORS 192.660(2)(d) to conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to conduct labor relations

- *Minutes submitted by Amy Nelson*