

Meeting Minutes

Meeting details:

Meeting: Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission Meeting
Date: March 4, 2026
Time: 12:30pm - 2:30 pm
Place: Zoom - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81464909852>

Commissioners present:

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

Commissioners excused:

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called the meeting to order at 12:33pm

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 Parulo shared the Hillsboro Hops baseball stadium had their official lights on event this past Saturday, and will be open to the public April 7
- Commissioner Penilton commended P5 leadership for strong management, communication, and responsiveness
- Councilor Rosenthal provided updates on:
 - ongoing work of the Future Vision Commission, including an artist-led visioning process
 - development of a resolution to improve regional consistency for Supportive Housing Services
 - Continued acquisition of park land and progress on the Willamette Cove project
 - recent media attention involving Metro Council, with an emphasis on de-escalation and resolution

Financial Update

Ashley Sloan, MERC Finance Manager, presented an update on venues financial performance for January 2025.

- January activity was strong across all venues despite seasonal slowdown
- Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) collections increased year-over-year, though still tracking slightly below budget
- Convention Center revenue remains ahead of last year but below budget due to rental pacing
- Portland'5 remains ahead year-to-date, driven by Broadway programming
- Expo Center experienced a January revenue rebound due to major events and a one-time parking revenue adjustment

- A \$74,000 Energy Trust of Oregon rebate was secured for Schnitzer Hall improvements
 - Commissioner Krysov asked why OCC revenue is ahead of last year but behind budget
 - Sloan responded budget assumptions were more aggressive, and rentals are slightly below projections, though catering is performing well. February and March are expected to improve results
 - Commissioner Parulo asked why November expenses differ year-over-year at Expo
 - Sloan shared a prior annual bond payment is no longer required, creating the variance
 - Parulo asked how TLT is reported
 - Sloan responded collections are reported monthly with a year-end reconciliation period

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

Venue Business Reports

Portland's Centers for the Arts

Rachael Lembo, Executive Director, provided the following updates:

- Launch of a new, ADA accessible P'5 website
- Upcoming high profile programming, including a visit by Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson
- Strong performance of P5 Presents programming
- Completion of major facility maintenance projects
- Release of Facility Condition Assessments showing significant long term capital needs
- Update on City of Portland RFI process related to future operating models
- Portland Opera announced a \$5 million fundraising campaign to support long term sustainability
 - Chair Stoudamire-Phillips asked how many attended the recent facility tour
 - Lembo responded about two dozen participants
 - Commissioner Malán-González asked if Portland Opera is at risk of discontinuing operations
 - Lembo clarified that no closure has been announced. The campaign is a proactive fundraising effort, and the organization has secured a \$1 million lead gift and set an initial achievable goal

Oregon Convention Center and Portland Expo Center

Cindy Wallace, Executive Director, provided the following updates:

- Expansion of the Bold Reuse sustainable container program to the Expo Center
- Official address change for Expo Center to improve visitor access
- Continued progress in operational integration between OCC and Expo
- Improved parking operations resulting in increased revenue
- Pilot of autonomous floor care technology to support operations without reducing staff
- Successful delivery of multiple large-scale events with significant regional economic impact
 - Commissioner Penilton asked what drove increased parking revenue

- Wallace responded higher attendance, pricing alignment with OCC, improved lot utilization, and expanded parking partnerships
- Councilor Rosenthal asked about current firearm policies at events
- Wallace responded firearms are permitted consistent with state law unless prohibited by event producers
- Commissioner Parulo asked about the retention rate for reusable serviceware
- Wallace responded between 83% and 89%, indicating strong program success

Consent Agenda

- **Consideration of the January 7, 2026, MERC Meeting Minutes**

This item was approved

Attachment: [Meeting Minutes](#)

2025 External Audit Report

Brian Evans, Metro Auditor; Ashley Osten, Principal, Baker Tilly; and Brian Kennedy, Metro Chief Finance Officer presented

- Clean, unmodified audit opinions issued across all required reports
- No findings related to internal controls, compliance, or budgeting
- Prior year recommendations fully resolved
- Overview of upcoming accounting standards that will impact future reporting
 - Commission Kryz-Rusoff praised the audit results as exemplary and highlighted the importance of transparency and strong financial stewardship

Travel Portland Quarterly Report

James Jessie, Chief Operating Officer, and Andrea Markowski, Director of Convention Marketing, presented

- Strong year-to-date convention revenue performance, bolstered by major events
- Short term booking challenges persist for 2027, with improvement projected beginning in 2028
- New sports related bookings confirmed for Expo and OCC
- Marketing efforts focused on meeting planners and executive decisionmakers
- Successful trade show activation with Powell's Books at PCMA Convening Leaders resulted in new leads and significant room night potential
- Expanded use of data driven marketing, media placements, and industry partnerships
 - Councilor Rosenthal asked if new venues would have any impact or provide partnership opportunities
 - Markowski shared their sales teams are currently promoting the two new venues as potential additional draws for convention bookers
 - Commission Parulo asked about how the booth activation measurement program identifies between booth visitors and staffers
 - Markowski explained it is AI driven and takes note of the faces in the booth and staffers are excluded from the reported numbers

- Commissioner Penilton asked if the sensor data compares our data to other comparable destinations
- Markowski shared that the data shown was a comparison of similar sized booths

Attachments: [Travel Portland 2nd Quarter Report](#)

Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Stoudamire Phillips adjourned the meeting at 2:17 p.m.

- *Minutes submitted by Amy Nelson*