

Meeting Minutes

Meeting details:

Meeting: Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission Meeting
Date: January 8, 2025
Time: 12:30pm - 2:30 pm
Place: Oregon Convention, Room F150 | Zoom

Commissioners present:

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

Commissioners excused:

Deanna Palm

Call to Order and Roll Call

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

Public Communication

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips opened the meeting to members of the public wanting to testify on agenda and non-agenda items

Konrad Lasota shared his support for Resolution 25-01 and 25-02 and highlighted the need for more ice sheets in the region

Commission / Council Liaison Communication

Councilor Gerritt Rosenthal: Council has begun general legislative priority meetings along with ongoing focus on housing and transportation work

General Manager Communications

Craig Stroud acknowledged Megan Conway as Travel Portland's new President and CEO; noted financial challenges and shared venues are holding on discretionary spending and only hiring for critical position vacancies. Each venue is assessing charges for services and sales teams are fully deployed to bring in business. Venue leadership are looking at ways to collaborate in management, staffing, processes, and technology

Finance Update

Ashley Sloan provided venue overviews and noted we are in the middle of FY26 budget planning and 5-year forecast

Attachment: [MERC Finance Report](#)

Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff: looking forward to collaborating on the budget process and acknowledged the challenging work ahead

Venue Business Reports

Oregon Convention Center

Cindy Wallace provided updates on evacuation improvement planning, front-of-house department public safety project, OCC annual all staff meeting, exceeding Q2 room night goals, and the upcoming PCMA conference

Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff: was the recent evacuation experience and lessons learned shared with the other venues?

Wallace: yes, the impact report was shared with venue teams and will be included in the ongoing venue collaboration conversations

Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff: asked if Portland highlights and talking points have been shared to all attending the upcoming PCMA conference

Wallace: yes, all hospitality partners have been provided supportive information and we will ensure Commissioner Oxley receives them as well

Commissioner Penilton: how often do you have trainings around evacuation procedures?

Wallace: the leadership team committed to 2 fire drills annually, in addition to various departmental trainings. We recently invested in 2 evacuation chairs located near the stairways

Commissioner Malán-González: recommended more frequent safety trainings or less required safety garments for staff to manage

Portland Expo Center

Matthew Rotchford provided overviews of FY25 book of business, event highlights, sustainability project work, and staff appreciation

Commissioner Penilton: asked for more information regarding event cancellations

Rotchford: highlighted the fall RV and Van Show cancellation due to ownership transitions and that Amazon trainings have moved to their own facilities

Portland's 5 Centers for the Arts

Brian Wilson provided updates on budget planning, event highlights, performing arts grant program distributions, theater bookings, social media features and IGA workgroup progress

Council Rosenthal: when can we expect to see the report on the Keller financial viability study?

Wilson: the city shared they will likely begin the study in March of this year

Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff: have the initial size parameters of the Live Nation venue changed to put them in direct competition with the Keller?

Wilson: both venues are between 3,000-4,000 seats, however the Live Nation venue is a flat floor concept. There is discussion indicating that only one will be able to sustain so construction timing will be essential

Consent Agenda

- **Consideration of the November 6, 2024, MERC Meeting Minutes**
This item was approved.

Attachment: [2024-11-06 MERC Meeting Minutes](#)

Action Agenda

- **Resolution 25-01 For the Purpose of Representing and Memorializing the History and Cultures Associated with the Portland Expo Center**
Stephanie Redman, she/they, Metro
Craig Stroud, he/him, General Manager, Visitor Venues

Attachments: [Resolution 25-01](#)
[Res 25-01 Staff Report](#)
[HSMC Recommendations Report](#)

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called for a vote on Resolution No. 25-01. It passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hall, seconded by Commissioner Oxley, that this item be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 6 Stoudamire-Phillips, Hall, Kryz-Rusoff, Oxley, Malán-González and Penilton

- **Resolution no. 25-02 For the Purpose of Redeveloping the Portland Expo Center as a Sports-Oriented Destination Venue**
Stephanie Redman, she/they, Metro
Craig Stroud, he/him, General Manager, Visitor Venues

Attachments: [Resolution 25-02](#)
[Res 25-02 Staff Report](#)
[Expo Future Preferred Scenario](#)

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips called for a vote on Resolution No. 25-02. It passed unanimously.

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

Aye: 6 Stoudamire-Phillips, Hall, Kryz-Rusoff, Oxley, Malán-González and Penilton

Presentation: Travel Portland Quarterly Report

Megan Conway, she/her, President and CEO, Travel Portland

James Jessie, he/him, Chief Sales Officer, Travel Portland

Angela Nelson, she/her, VP of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Travel Portland

Attachment: [Travel Portland 1st Quarter 2024-2025 Report](#)

Commissioner Kryz-Rusoff: asked about CEO engagement strategy and how that initiative has been received

James Jessie: our efforts around tailoring marketing to CEO's using leisure facing information seems to be resonating with decision makers. Our convention marketing expert will be reporting on the process and outcomes at an upcoming meeting

Megan Conway: highlighted the work around engaging new leaders and elected officials

Commissioner Penilton: asked about convention attendance trends

Jessie: estimates that 90% of conventions have switched back to in person gatherings. Organizations depend on revenue generated from conventions to fund their operations

Commissioner Malán-González: highlighted Portland's efforts around language accessibility and suggested using this information when promoting the region

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips: requested that the MERC venues be added to the venue list discussed in the EDI overview

Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Stoudamire Phillips adjourned the meeting at 2:19 p.m.