

# Metro

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Metro

## Minutes

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

10:30 AM

This is a Joint Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission (MERC) and Council work session. This meeting will adjourn into Metro Regional Center, Council Chamber;  
a Council work session.

<https://zoom.us/j/615079992> (Webinar ID: 615079992) or  
253-205-0468 (toll free); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z133VsbwkaE>

**Council work session**

**Joint MERC and Council work session****1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

President Peterson called the joint work session to order at 10:37 a.m. Chair Stoudamire-Phillips introduced the newest commissioner, Dave Parulo.

**Present:** 12 -Council President Lynn Peterson, Councilor Christine Lewis, Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Councilor Mary Nolan, Councilor Ashton Simpson, Councilor Gerritt Rosenthal, Councilor Duncan Hwang, Chair Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, Commissioner Dave Parulo, Commissioner Dañel Malan Gonzalez, Commissioner Chris Oxley, and Commissioner Damien Hall

**Excused:** 2 - Commissioner David Penilton and Commissioners Deirdre Krys-Rusoff

**2. Joint MERC + Council Work Session Topics:****2.1 Expo Future Project Updates**

**Presenter(s):** Craig Stroud (he/him), General Manager, Visitor Venues  
Cindy Wallace (she/her), Executive Director, Oregon Convention Center and Expo Center  
Eric Crandall (he/him), Construction Manager, Metro Project Management Office

**Attachments:** [Staff Report 1 - Historical Significance and Memorialization](#)  
[Staff Report 2 - Sports Investment](#)  
[Staff Report 3 - Sports Marketing](#)

Staff reviewed Council objectives for the Expo Center and updated Council and MERC on current activities. They shared possible Expo Center upgrades to support sports tourism and economic projections.

Jim Etzel, CEO of Sport Oregon, spoke to the value of Expo's existing infrastructure as the region considers efforts to attract sports events. He also emphasized the benefits of Expo Center's location compared to similar facilities nationwide.

Presenters reiterated throughout the discussion the benefits that this industry could bring, including a proliferation of community events and enthusiasm among industry partners for a future venue in the region.

Councilor González was drawn to the potential economic benefits and wondered how the Portland region might one day achieve a national spotlight for such efforts. He was particularly interested in economic impacts that return shared benefits to the entire region, and not just the central city. He urged his colleagues and the commissioners to discuss a funding strategy early, alongside vision.

Chief Operating Officer Madrigal stated that the primary benefit of the proposals is economic development for the region, rather than revenues for the venue itself. She demonstrated a preference for financing that is not reliant on general fund revenues.

Commissioner Oxley shared attributes of success in the sports event industry, including the importance of client relationships and the need for quick decision-making. He wondered whether the downsides of a fully sports-centric business model had been explored.

Staff reiterated that the proposal seeks to balance

commitment to community, long-term client relationships, and new sports uses.

Staff provided information to Councilor Hwang about hotel scheduling policies, noting that event planners must book hotels in the Portland region, and not Washington.

Councilor Lewis identified a need for more investment in hotels in the area immediately surrounding Expo Center. Commissioner Parulo noted that youth sports groups are more tolerant of hotels further from the site, due to rate sensitivity and the nature of the events.

Staff shared with Councilor Lewis that focusing on top sports-volleyball and basketball-is a data-backed decision; other sports with lower upfront costs for renovation do not present comparable returns on investment.

Staff noted in response to Commissioner Malan González that changes in operations at Portland's Centers for the Arts would not free up meaningful resources to dedicate to Expo Center operations.

In terms of the facilities themselves, presenters responded to Councilor Nolan that spectators are not a primary investment consideration due to the character and limitations of the events. They elaborated that locker rooms are similarly less valuable than one might guess.

Presenters also clarified for Councilor Rosenthal that Expo Center hosts medical technicians and specialists on-site, with first aid facilities in both Halls D and E.

Staff circulated samples of surfaces that could be used and described the industry's increased comfort with synthetic materials.

Councilor Hwang felt that next steps should move quickly.

Councilor Nolan emphasized the historic significance of the site and encouraged careful consideration of memorialization throughout the project.

President Peterson asked if Councilors and Commissioners would be interested in more information about an accelerated timeframe for moving to a fully sports-centric model. Councilors and Commissioners shared that interest.

Staff committed to exploring a year-round, fully sports-oriented facility. They indicated they would consider the timeline for such shifts, how to accommodate existing clients, operational costs, and revenues.

Chair Stoudamire-Phillips closed the discussion by summarizing the unique location and potential benefits-for local athletes, for those in Washington, for the potential revitalization of the Delta Park area, and even for touring athletes, who could play at a central facility rather than a network of schools. President Peterson shared the enthusiasm and characterized it as a downpayment for the region's future.

**3. Adjourn to Council work session**

President Peterson adjourned the joint work session at  
12:14 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anne Buzzini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Anne Buzzini, Council Legislative Advisor February 12,  
2026