



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

January 14, 2026

3:00 p.m.

Hybrid

Approved: July 28, 2026

Call to Order

Chair Hanson called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Chris Hanson, Brent Stutzman, Tim Weber, Sherrie Payne

Members absent: Lisa Avery (excused)

Approval of July 24, 2025 Minutes

Motion: Commissioner Weber motioned to approve the minutes for July 24, 2025 as presented.

Commissioner Payne seconded the motion. All voted in favor of approving the minutes. (4-0)

Business from the Public

None.

Scheduled Business

3:02 p.m.

- Airport Feasibility Study Feedback with ECONorthwest

Matt Craigie introduced himself as Project Manager, ECONorthwest and Nicole Underwood, Senior Project Manager. ECONorthwest is working for the City of Albany on identifying potential future options for the city owned municipal airport site. Phase 1 of the study was about establishing a baseline understanding of existing conditions (operations/financial performance) and the potential economic opportunities and constraints poised by different options. He emphasized that this was a preliminary assessment to inform discussions and any decision would require additional community and stakeholder engagement. He summarized potential actions to consider as 1. Maintaining the status quo. 2. Modifying the airport (additional hangers/runway extension), or 3. Site Redevelopment.

3:11 p.m.

Nicole Underwood described what they found in the financial and economic assessment. She reported that the city-owned airport only plays a limited role (Category 4- local/general aviation) in the State's Aviation Network and currently provides only modest economic opportunity for the city. She emphasized the reason for the study is the airport's current unsustainable financial position with expenses continuing to grow.

Their property assessment indicated that:

- Physical and regulatory constraints limit runway expansion.

- Historic resource designation will influence potential changes. (Listed on National Register of Historic Places.)
- Continuing airport operations limit any non-aviation development.
- Sale/lease potential of a 5-acre piece not impeding runway access that could be developed.
- Redevelopment will require a formal FAA closure process including settlement of federal grant obligations (a multi-year process).
- Very favorable potential for alternate land use due to size and I-5 access.

Commissioner Weber asked about whether smaller Cessna's could land here. Craigie noted they need to consult their aviation experts on the potential. But the runway doesn't provide space for more commercial air services.

3:17 p.m.

Craigie continued describing some of the expansion and redevelopment scenarios for the 100-acre property:

- Expansion/enhanced aviation use (additional hangars/non-aviation space)
- Industrial Use – (Manufacturing/Warehousing)
- Mixed Use (Housing/Retail)
- Civic/Institutional Campus (innovation campus' and civic/campus expansions/partnerships)
- Other ideas?

Commissioner Weber asked about the status of utilities for industrial use. Craigie didn't have those logistical answers at this point but noted each use would entail different utility requirements. Mixed use would require substantial changes to the transportation infrastructure. Upgraded sewer and water, etc.

Craigie offered that they were also wanting some feedback on what criteria could be used to rank the different options.

Commissioner Hanson asked about the downside to not having an airport and was interested in how other communities with small airports stay viable? Craigie said it depends on the type and size of the airport and regional demand as well as its capability to land larger commercial airlines. He provided some examples.

Commissioner Hanson added that the Albany Airport is one of the oldest continuously running airports in the US. Hanson shared that he is reluctant to advise eliminating it at this point because of what changes he sees in aviation moving towards electric and vertical takeoff vehicles. Requiring a smaller footprint for operation could change the airport from a liability to an asset in the future facilitating air taxi services.

Commissioner Weber noted that the Aurora Airport success has been due to heavy lift helicopter use and business use. So, is the Albany Airport able to provide for similar helicopter use if upgraded? Craigie again referred to consulting with their aviation expert but they will flush out that option with them.

Commissioner Hanson offered that perhaps management changes and sale/lease of the 5-acre parcel could produce enough funds to cover expenses. He noted that Millersburg's investment in industrial land on I-5 has been problematic.

Commissioner Weber emphasized the importance of public opinion in the decision.

Commissioner Stutzman asked about the FAA Grant payback and the amount. Craigie indicated that those figures will be flushed out in this next Phase. But any improvement that the FAA has supported would need to be reimbursed. Nicole added it could be a payback over 10 to 20 years of use.

Commissioner Stutzman asked about the Historic site requirements. Craigie shared that changes would have to go through a redevelopment process for historic properties. But repurposing the building for other uses may be an option. He noted that part of the tarmac is historic as well.

Commissioner Payne has concern about getting rid of the airport as it is very difficult to acquire public property to construct a new airport if needed. Craigie responded that there are other alternatives/airports fairly close by.

Commissioner Weber acknowledged that business travel isn't possible for Albany unless vertical takeoff is possible. But what about use by smaller turbo jets like used by FedEx? Craigie agreed to look into it.

Craigie asked about the Commission's opinion on the 5 acres site and selling/leasing to generate funds. Possibly commercial uses?

Commissioner Weber favored aviation use providing for expansion.

Commissioner Hanson thought that the 5 acres would be easy to carve off for commercial use without impacting the aviation use that could be included on the main property. But still favored being strategic in their thinking especially considering the potential for air taxi service in reducing traffic congestion traveling to PDX. He also asked if they had considered regional sports fields which would provide revenues. As field space is critical. Staff agreed noting the services nearby would provide an ideal setup.

Commissioner Stutzman added that considering the 5-acre parcel being sectioned off, suggested that parking would be an important factor to consider. He also asked how much interest is in civic/institutional campus space. Underwood explained it is very early in the process, so if it is an interest from the city in that option, they will investigate it further. Craigie did add that many universities are considering public/private industry partnerships for research in robotics, AI, etc. Integrating new technologies in the long term.

Commissioner Hanson asked how long it would take the FAA to de-certify the airport. Craigie thought based on other de-commissions he was aware of it took the FAA 10 years plus.

Commissioner Stutzman asked about relocation of the airport. Craigie said they haven't looked into that as part of this study.

Commissioner Hanson offered that the natural solution for the 5-acre parcel would be to have it changed to a commercial use but he would rather see it go light industrial. Industrial would create more desirable job types versus retail. Albany has little shovel ready acreage left for that category so it would be a good use and no impact the airport.

Underwood clarified that the budget deficit amounts she mentioned at \$90,000 for 2025 is projected to increase closer to \$200,000 for 2026/27. Craigie noted it was part of their charge to look at those financial projections. There is a financial advisor is a part of their project team. But so far, any revenue producing suggestions unfortunately don't make up the deficit.

3:55 p.m.

Underwood noted that they are beginning to develop criteria for evaluating the scenarios. She heard concern for thinking about future needs and benefits to the community. Craigie thought that understanding stakeholder priorities was important, he agrees on concerns about it being public property and the use of the 5-acre parcel in helping with current solvency. Also looking at future economics with new technologies.

Commissioner Hanson offered his initial ranking of options. He believed housing was the lowest priority and not a strategic priority for Albany. He emphasized quality of life, what makes Albany attractive, and job creation.

Commissioner Stutzman concurred. Housing is needed but not necessarily an option for the airport. He preferred keeping the airport as an airport rather than redevelopment if possible.

Craigie noted that the Phase 1 report is concluded and could be shared.

Staff Business

4:04 p.m.

Sophie Adams assured the Commission that there will be other public engagement opportunities for input on the airport planning and a presentation to the City Council. She noted she provided regional economic data and business openings and closures in their packets. There are plans to discuss city-wide small business grant in the future. The council directed staff to pause that program in order to direct attention to a renewed CARA Grant program downtown. The CARA Grant takes priority right now as there are funds left from when it was discontinued- roughly \$500,000 in total that need to be awarded. There is a meeting on January 28 after the City Council meeting to discuss the program and open up advertising to award those funds. The ARA will make those decisions.

She then talked about the South Willamette Valley Innovation Corridor effort led by the Oregon Business Council, OSU and U of O. It's in its early conceptual phases in capturing innovation and prioritizing economic strategy. It is a goal for the city already but staff will keep members informed. Then she mentioned the Governor's Prosperity Roadmap that was announced and Business Oregon Economic Development Strategy Framework recently as well. There is movement at the statehouse and regionally business-friendly efforts for capturing innovation out of the universities.

Part of Downtown is included in an Economic Improvement District traditionally renewed every 3-5 years providing funding streams for economic development work downtown. That will go to the Council for reauthorization soon. Additionally, Valliscor was successful in receiving the \$500,000 water and sewer grant from the City Council and a 3-year property tax abatement incentive called Enterprise Zone – this is something that the Commission had discussed and recommended it to the Council. She wanted to know if they wanted to take similar action regarding an extended Enterprise Zone application that will add two years to the end of the 3-year program for a total of 5 years and for companies agreeing to pay a higher wage to their employees in exchange for the qualifying extra two years. She asked if they wanted to recommend that extension to the Council.

Commissioner Hanson asked if a quorum was necessary noting he may have a conflict with that to declare. Staff suggested it would be better to just indicate a thumbs up support rather than a vote.

Commissioner Stutzman asked how many employees would be impacted. Adams said there is a minimum of employees impacted to meet that requirement and it's looking like up to 100 plus for future phases. So, a substantial increase. Linn County also has to approve the additional two years if the council approves.

All Commissioners present signified support verbally and with "thumbs up."

Business from the Commission

None.

Next Meeting Date

The next scheduled meeting date to be determined in April.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Hanson adjourned the meeting at 4:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Susan Muniz
Recorder

Sophie Adams
Economic Development Manager

**Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. The documents are available by emailing cityrecorder@albanyoregon.gov.*