



MEETING MINUTES

Bend Economic Development Advisory Board

Location: Council Chambers, City Hall, 710 NW Wall Street

Date: June 1, 2026

Time: 12:00 p.m.

12:00 p.m. BEDAB Meeting

1. Called to order at 12:03 p.m. by roll call.

In attendance:

- Members: John Evons- Chair, Jillian Taylor- Vice Chair, Amy Bertram (online), Jenn Lynch (online), Willie Hertford (online), Chad Schlottmann
- Ex-Officio: Heather Ficht, Emily Boyd for Sara Odendahl, Jeff Knapp, Mike Richards, Rebecca Robinson, J.C. Nore, Garrett Loveall
- Councilor Liaison: mayor Pro Tem Perkins

Absent: Member Mark Kroncke

2. Public Comment

none

3. Mayor Pro Tem Perkins Update

- Council will vote on the Climate Fee issue on Wednesday, 06/03/2026
- The City of Bend is entering a Grant Agreement for the Reed Market Bridge
- Franklin Avenue night work infrastructure has begun
- Every year, there is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandated count of the houseless in the community. This year, Bend and Deschutes County showed the largest decrease in the State, Bend decreased by 16% and the county by 14%. This is from a history of annual double-digit increases. The progress is due to State investment, but also the service providers doing the work
- Council will hear a presentation and talk about Southeast area transportation supplemental System Development Charges (SDC) on 06/10/2026
- Council will have Budget discussions and Visit Bend planning discussions on 06/17/2026
- Council will meet with Warm Springs tribal members at the end of June 2026



- Regarding the tree preservation code, Council is committed to reevaluate and industrial land is a good example of a need for a revision
- During the 05/20/2026 Council meeting, Council accepted code changes related to advisory bodies roles and responsibilities and economic development and environment related grant funding was approved

4. Approve May 4 Meeting Minutes

Member Taylor moved to approve the May 4, 2026 Meeting Minutes. Member Lynch seconded the motion.

The voice vote passed 6-0.

Yes: Bertram, Lynch, Taylor, Evons, Hertford, Schlottman

No: none

5. Visit Bend Annual Business Plan and Budget Presentation

Presentation by: Jeff Knapp and Nate Wyeth

Knapp began with introductory information about Visit Bend and shared the current proposed budget stating the organization is expecting a 2% increase and there are many headwinds coming. Knapp reviewed the budget, sharing a detailed slide and noted a bit of a deficit. Wyeth noted that the tourist industry is resilient, that Visit Bend usually breaks even, and that the 2% is very conservative. Knapp and Wyeth spoke about the revenue and expenses of Visit Bend.

Lynch asked about funding for grant programs and Wyeth responded that Visit Bend utilizes funds transferred from the City to help fund Visit Bend-run grant programs to ensure consistent investment in those programs over the years.

Evons stated that Visit Bend has magnitudes more fuel to invest in the community than the City and asked for more background on the grant programs.

Knapp responded that when the mills in Bend closed, the city had the largest unemployment rate in the country, it was decided something needed to be done, and the community leaned into tourism as an economic driver. The 2008 recession also impacted Bend and at that time, the City Council decided to put additional resources into tourism and marketing, which Visit Bend did. Wyeth explained that Visit Bend handled tourism well, however there was a lack of balance, and the grants helped to strike a more palatable balance. Wyeth explained the history of Visit Bend's relationship with the community and how the current grant programs played into that and developed into their current form.



Knapp explained that Visit Bend reinvests in the community to ensure tourism continues to benefit the community.

Evons asked what the litmus test is when the numbers dip, how Visit Bend knows how to best use funds. Wyeth responded by saying that the organization is very strategic about trying to flatten out the seasonality visitor curve and often there needs to be a community conversation to ensure that visitors are welcome in Bend.

Knapp added that Visit Bend employs folks to focus on expanding group travel and businesses and invests in data and human capital to help with decision making.

Mooney mentioned that according to City Council, these grant programs are very valuable to the community and local businesses.

Taylor noted that Visit Bend can't use own funds to promote the work being done and asked if there could be any funding for direct City leads such as public safety or even fire prevention.

Mayor Pro Tem Perkins responded with information about recent legislation allowing the City to claw back funds for various uses – approximately \$400,000 as of 2027 – and this will be in the next contract. Mayor Pro Tem Perkins spoke about the possibility of identifying business resiliency grants and there being a trigger for those decisions. Legislation was to allow cities to mitigate the impacts of tourism such as increased use of roads and trails. There exists the option to go to the voters to raise the tax but need to be careful not to go too high, which would discourage visitors.

Ficht stated that economic development is business and workforce development and that Bend could increase workforce development with youth and/or the houseless population.

Wyeth shared that fundamentally, when tourism does well, the City is better off, as developers see Bend as a suitable place for hotels, and tourism related businesses bring in millions of dollars of taxes each year.

Taylor emphasized Visit Bend's collaborative approach and partnership with the City. Mooney noted that the sequencing is important, keeping in mind many factors coming such as the new legislation, new contract and request for proposals going out.

Evons commented that peak occupancy is important but seems as though Visit Bend is deciding the right level of tourism in Bend. Evons stated that his struggle is to understand decision making as he does not want to miss out on growth opportunities in



Bend. Evons asked if the grant funding coming from transient lodging tax is best spent in this manner and if the tax is maximized.

Wyeth noted that as the city completes the RFP, it can define more the desired balance re: grant programs and marketing. Wyeth then shared a graph showing transient lodging tax collections and lodging occupancy rates, stating that the community needs to want visitors.

Knapp stated it is important to have these conversations and know when/where to adjust as needed.

Member Lynch moved to approve the FY27 Visit Bend Budget and Business Plan as presented on June 1, 2026. Member Taylor seconded the motion.

The voice vote passed 5-0.

Yes: Bertram, Lynch, Taylor, Hertford, Schlottman

No: none

Evons abstained

6. Transient Lodging Tax Legislative Considerations Work Session Recap

Presentation by: Mayor Pro Tem Perkins and Business Manager Cyrus Mooney

Mooney stated that this agenda item was no longer needed.

7. Employment Land Site Readiness Guest Presentation

Presentation by Economic Development Director Katy Brooks and Kirk Schueler, Taylor Brooks

Brooks introduced the agenda item and stated that Bend has a multi-year sustained effort to increase housing in the city and that people need to be able to afford to live within the city. Brooks noted that industrial land creates living wage jobs and while Bend needs tourism, commercial and industrial operations will ensure a balance to keep the ecosystem healthy. Regarding industrial land, most is in Juniper Ridge, and needs to be developed to increase wage generation.

The state of Oregon has funds to spur recruitment for industrial land, but Bend is not on the site readiness list, as it is a complex, high bar to be on the list. In order to be eligible for state and even federal funds, a city would need to be further down road than Bend is. Brooks explained that site readiness includes flat areas, water and sewer availability, broadband, and roads, and that for developers, the time to market is reduced.



Brooks stated that in Bend, the land is rocky, infrastructure is needed, permits are needed, and there are many things to do, which are expensive and take time. Brooks wanted to open the conversation to see what Bend can do to make the process more streamlined and noted there are funds available, but Bend needs to increase competitiveness.

Schueler spoke to the shovel readiness of the industrial land in Bend. Schueler stated that Taylor Brooks purchased 95 acres of Juniper Ridge and it was divided into a 20-acre tract and a 75-acre tract and the 20-acre tract has been parceled out into 5 lots. Schueler stated that there is an alignment with the City, as both benefit from development of competitive industrial lots that attract businesses and that the City still owns 229 acres in Juniper Ridge.

Schueler spoke about the challenges regarding developing industrial land in Bend, including current industrial vacancies, the amount of time it takes to get Bend's land "market-ready," and the slope of the land, which should be about 3%.

Schueler stated that industrial users are selecting Redmond and Prineville over Bend as those cities have flat, affordable, faster-to-permit industrial land.

Schueler also spoke about mass grading benefits and grading permits and how the tree code is related. He stated that completing grading before a lot is sold will save buyers 4 to 6 months of site work, which in many cases, makes it more attractive. Regarding mitigation costs for tree removal, they are real issues. Schueler explained that because there are so many trees, grading would require removing many trees or replanting.

Schueler asked the City of Bend to amend the tree preservation code to deregulate trees on industrial-zoned land. Schueler stated that this would improve opportunities to use industrial sites for both City and companies.

Taylor asked if all industrial zones are implicated and how other cities are in a more advanced state than Bend.

Brooks responded that in Oregon, industrial lands are difficult to develop, everywhere in state. Specifically in Bend, over years, the City has made attempts to figure out how to develop land, but things have been overtaken by events and time has been lost on this specific topic. Bend needs employment land and now is on a path towards development.

Schueler stated that one could argue that there has been growth of the industrial users without the commensurate land availability. He stated that regarding the tree code, a simple solution is to deregulate trees on industrial land, noting that other code sections



require trees, but to grade the land, Taylor Brooks requests a tree code update to exclude industrial lands from restrictive requirements.

Mooney clarified that the conversation today is focused on gaining support from BEDAB so that Mayor Pro Tem Perkins could ask Council to direct staff to further look into this issue and that granular solutions are not needed at this point.

Schueler stated that the greatest impact for Taylor Brooks would be to be able to clear their remaining four lots to sell them, and that the current tree preservation code would make this expensive and time consuming. Schueler stated that updating the code will remove barriers to developing employment opportunities in Bend.

Taylor reiterated the importance of moving quickly and asked how to fast-track this. Brooks stated that Council needs to direct staff to look into this as the City can invest in infrastructure, have plans, but will not be doing the grading.

Mooney will prepare a memo to be provided to Council as a reference.

Member Taylor moved to recommend that Council direct city staff to evaluate options to expedite Employment Land Site Readiness. Member Schlottman seconded the motion.

The voice vote passed 6-0.

Yes: Bertram, Lynch, Taylor, Evons, Hertford, Schlottman

No: none

8. Ex-Officio Updates

Mooney introduced Garrett Loveall, the new ex-officio for EDCO. Loveall gave his employment history and spoke about getting up to speed with BEDAB, saying he has seen both sides of business, and has experience in downtown development.

Boyd spoke about the Bend Chamber of Commerce saying that there will be a series of roundtables focused on the Prosperity Council's findings and recommendations. BEDAB members are welcome to join. Chamber board is working on finding a replacement provider in lieu of Providence.

Ficht spoke about East Cascade Works, saying that due to the Governor not continuing the Prosperity 10,000 Investment, budgets will be about \$1M less. However the organization will be restarting the Employee Training funding in the Fall of 2026. The Oregon employment department recognizes the effectiveness of the mobile employment van and invested in another, now there are two, mobile work source vans.



J.C. Nore introduced himself as the new COCC Small Business Development Center director. Provided his employment history.

Knapp shared that Visit Bend is hosting their first Destination Stewardship Conference in July 2026. Developing marketing plans with scenarios including around fire, also messaging with partners around fire.

9. Roundtable and Future Topics

Taylor mentioned bringing in more folks from the business community to speak with BEDAB to provide additional perspective. Mooney noted that this could align with Council's schedule and could also be thematic. Evons agreed and noted the trade sector is option. Homework before next meeting is to decide who would be appropriate as speakers.

Ficht will develop a presentation on year-over-year unemployment and related statistics and do a deep dive in data.

10. Adjourned at 1:54 p.m.



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