

the responses were very nostalgic about the boat. I will say that we were not quite expecting the level of sentimental attachment, but it is understandable, and it led us to reflect on what we could have done differently.

The history of Bend is critically important, especially as it is growing and changing so dramatically, and we do want the public involved with our services. I think the question is, what is going to come next? Our work out there is not finished. We plan to have a public outreach process. We had intended to; we probably could have told people that sooner, rather than after the fact, to look at what kind of replacement equipment should be there. Some people are very interested in maybe another type of boat, and maybe that is what it is. We will see what the community thinks and what kids these days are most interested in seeing.

We are committed to doing this outreach because, one, it is the right thing to do, but also because we really want to honor the feedback that we received over the last week. You all know that taking care of what we have is our priority, and we have a lot of aging systems. We must make decisions all the time, and we are going to have to make more decisions about replacing things. The boat at Harmon was unique, for sure, but we have other things that some people may be attached to, so we need to consider that. We also need to consider safety and access as we make those choices moving forward.

We have told community members that they are welcome to contact us at any time. We have this public meeting and this public forum for people to show up, but we are also going to be reaching out and doing intentional outreach with them as well. I want to say thank you to the community members. Some of their feedback was hard to hear, and some of it was expressed very bluntly, but it keeps us accountable. We needed to hear that, and I respect it. Thank you everybody and thank you to the Board. There is more to come on the process for the boat moving forward.”

Work Session

Board Clerk Natalie Macsalka provided a high-level review of fiscal year 2026 progress under the district’s 2024-2029 Strategic Plan. Staff completed 54 of 67 annual actions across the plan’s team, service and community priorities. Highlights included improvements to employee onboarding and recognition, operational efficiencies, volunteer engagement, the tree inventory and inclusive recreation programming.

Fiscal year 2027 actions are underway, and planning for fiscal year 2028 will begin in November. Board members commended staff’s progress and discussed lessons learned, including the value of phasing larger efforts and allowing additional time for work involving multiple partners.

Executive Director’s report

- Healy recognized staff work completed during the Larkspur Center maintenance closure, including pool maintenance, exterior painting and other facility improvements. The Art Station was expected to open September 21, and the Juniper outdoor pool cover was expected to go up in mid-October.

- Healy celebrated Kids Inc. for being fully staffed by the start of the program, crediting strategic staffing decisions, professional development and improved retention.
- September 17 pickleball naming celebration at Pine Nursery Park.
- District representatives would attend ORPA, where the district would receive a safety award for the AEDs in Parks project and Kelsey would present a session. She thanked the Community Engagement team and the Foundation for coordinating the Hollinshead open house and Pavilionpalooza.

Good of the Order

- Director Owens reported on the City of Bend work session concerning the shared framework and tree code review; attendance at the Nine Peaks ribbon cutting; patron questions regarding Larkspur hours, youth swim center access and potential open-space acquisition; and migrating Vaux's swifts at the Boys & Girls Club.
- Director Schiffman thanked the Board and staff for covering responsibilities during her wildfire assignments. She supported the safety-based decision regarding the Harmon Park boat and suggested a plaque or interpretive feature to preserve its history as replacement equipment is considered. Healy agreed staff would evaluate the suggestion.
- Director Schoen supported staff's safety decision, acknowledged the community's disappointment and emphasized public involvement in determining what replaces the boat. She also reported on Pavilionpalooza and thanked the Foundation and District staff.
- Director Schneider congratulated Redmond on opening its new recreation center and recognized staff, consultants and volunteers participating in the South Connection stakeholder process.

The meeting adjourned following Good of the Order. The next board meeting is October 6, 2026. ###