BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

November 17, 2026

District Office Building | 799 SW Columbia | Bend, Oregon

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Jodie Schiffman, Donna Owens, Nathan Hovekamp, Deb Schoen (Vice Chair) and Cary Schneider (Chair)

The official minutes of the November 17, 2026, Bend Park and Recreation District Board of Directors meeting are captured by video recording and are available for viewing on the Board Meetings webpage: https://www.bendparksandrec.org/about/board_meetings/.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order. Cary Schneider conducted roll call. All directors were present.

VISITOR COMMENTS

Orion Junkins provided comment requesting that the district consider bringing whitewater kayak pool sessions back to Juniper Swim & Fitness Center or Larkspur Community Center. He described the pool sessions as a safe and accessible way for beginners to learn kayaking and asked to meet with District representatives to better understand current barriers and explore whether the sessions could be offered again.

Scott Hand, vice president of the Sunrise Village HOA Board, provided comment regarding the Deschutes River Trail South Refinement Study. Speaking on behalf of the HOA Board and community, he expressed concerns about the feasibility, cost, environmental impacts and private property implications of a trail alignment through the gorge near Sunrise Village. He stated that the HOA is not opposed to trails but does not support an alignment through its private property and encouraged the district to pursue alternatives that would provide trail connections without affecting protected areas or private property.

WORK SESSION

1. Deschutes River Trail South Refinement Study Preliminary Alternatives Update

Principal Planner Henry Stroud and consultant Matt Kittleson provided additional analysis of Section 2 in response to questions raised by the Board during its October 6 discussion. Staff reviewed two potential routes and compared them with the alternatives previously identified in Sections 1 and 3.

The analysis identified significant challenges within Section 2, including steep canyon terrain, complex and costly trail construction, proximity to irrigation facilities, impacts to the state scenic waterway and substantial impacts to private property. One route would rely on an existing private staircase and connections through Sunrise Village, while a more direct riverfront route would affect HOA property and seven additional private properties. Staff noted that neither Section 2 nor Section 3 would fully close the existing Deschutes River Trail gap, while Section 1 provides a more direct opportunity to do so.

Staff recommended continuing analysis of Sections 1 and 3 and not advancing Section 2. Board members expressed support for the recommendation and appreciation for the additional analysis. The project will move into the alternatives analysis phase, including additional review of costs, travel distances and private property impacts and consultation with the stakeholder advisory group. Staff anticipate returning to the Board in spring 2027 with two preferred alternatives for consideration.

2. Optimize Play Update

Administrative Services Director Kristin Toney provided an update on Optimize Play, the District's continuous improvement initiative focused on empowering staff to improve service delivery, reduce waste and make better use of existing resources. The program uses a "Say It, See It, Solve It" framework to help employees identify problems, understand processes and implement improvements.

Since implementation, 199 employees have completed Greenbelt training and staff have identified 49 innovations across seven departments, with 34 completed and 15 in progress. Examples include streamlining pool chemical reporting, improving park patrol tracking, reorganizing workshops and paint stations, standardizing custodial purchasing and improving holiday phone messaging. Standardized custodial purchasing is expected to save approximately $12,000 to $20,000, while revised holiday phone messaging reduced Labor Day calls by approximately 70 percent.

Kristin Toney also highlighted the Playmaker Award, a quarterly recognition program celebrating staff innovations that improve efficiency, service, safety or employee experience. Board members expressed support for the initiative and recognized its contribution to the district’s culture of continuous improvement.

3. Events and Rentals Overview

Recreation Services Director Jase Newton, Events and Athletics Manager David Kiefer and Rental and Events Supervisor Katie Aceto provided an overview of the district’s events and rentals program, including park and facility rentals, athletic fields, tournaments, business uses and shelter reservations. Staff discussed growing demand for reservable spaces and the operational and environmental challenges associated with managing high-use locations such as Drake, Riverbend, Shevlin and Pine Nursery parks.

Staff described impacts associated with concentrated park use, including turf and tree damage, erosion, parking congestion, increased maintenance needs and conflicts between scheduled events and public use. Requests continue to exceed available capacity, with 76 park-use requests denied in 2024 and 127 denied in 2025. Staff have responded by directing events toward other suitable parks, limiting event days at certain locations, coordinating closely with event organizers and expanding automated tools and impact fees.

The Board discussed balancing organized events with spontaneous public use, protecting natural resources, expanding rentals to underused parks and neighborhood shelters, maintaining space for new events and considering the unique character and appropriate uses of individual parks.

Members also discussed cost recovery, potential adjustments to fees for high-demand or high-impact uses and opportunities to place additional responsibility on event organizers for impacts to District facilities.

Board members generally supported staff's current approach and encouraged continued efforts to distribute demand throughout the park system while protecting heavily used facilities and preserving opportunities for unstructured public use.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Upcoming Oregon legislative session topics include potential legislation affecting system development charges (SDCs) for park and recreation facilities. The Board supported preparing correspondence to the district's legislative delegation emphasizing the importance of maintaining SDC funding for parks, trails and recreation. Other issues being monitored include expansion of drug-free school zones to park and recreation facilities, Oregon Health Authority pool rules and water-safety initiatives.

- Implementation of the shared framework with the City of Bend is moving forward. The City is considering whether future transient lodging tax funding could support District capital projects that benefit tourism. Other concepts include financing SDCs for affordable housing projects within urban renewal areas and a potential resolution supporting qualified rental housing. These items are expected to return to the Board for further discussion.

- The Administrative Services team received the Government Finance Officers Association budget award for the 2026-27 budget, including additional recognition for integrating strategic goals into the budget document.

- Approximately 150 people attended the second Art Station open house, demonstrating continued strong community interest. Park Services staff have also moved into their new location on Boyd Acres Road, with work continuing on the fleet shop space.

- The Board and District staff were thanked for their service to the community, with wishes for a happy Thanksgiving.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Director Schiffman wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and shared that she recently visited Riley Ranch and trails in north Bend, noting that District trails and parks continued to be well used as colder weather arrived.

Director Owens wished the Board, staff and District a happy Thanksgiving.

Director Hovekamp asked for an update on Planning and Development vacancies and wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving. Staff reported that recruitment was underway for one planning position while another position was being evaluated before recruitment.

Vice Chair Schoen wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and expressed interest in staff's follow-up regarding the visitor request to bring kayak pool sessions back to District facilities, including understanding whether the sessions could be accommodated or the reasons they could not.

Chair Schneider wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and noted his appreciation for the holiday and time with family.

MEETING CONCLUSION

The meeting adjourned following Good of the Order.