

# OREGON TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

January 30, 2026

Virtual Meeting

**Tourism Commissioners present included:** Chair Greg Willitts, Vice Chair Patel, and Commissioners Travis Hill, Jenifer Roe, David Gremmels, Heather Miller and Nick Pearson.

## **Welcome and Introductions (starts at 0:12 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts opens the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and welcomes everyone to the January 30, 2026, Oregon Tourism Commission virtual meeting.

Chair Willitts thanks everyone for joining virtually, noting the agenda can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website.

Chair Willitts states that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements required by state law were met.

The members of the Oregon Tourism Commission introduce themselves. Commissioner DiNovo was unable to attend.

Department of Justice representative Sylvia Cramond also joins the meeting and introduces herself.

Executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles (H&S; Heidrick) representatives Jackie Zavitz, Mollie Moore and Alissa Fernandez introduce themselves.

## **Chair Remarks (starts at 5:34 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts acknowledges yesterday's meeting and the thoughtful conversation in the executive search process. The Commission is guided by Travel Oregon's values and is focused on making the best decision in interest of the agency.

One written public comment from Wendy Giordano, City of Brookings (Exhibit A), was submitted expressing seeking leadership that is intentionally inclusive of rural coastal Oregon as an approach that distributes visitor demand and strengthens tourism resilience.

## **Commission Action (starts at 8:52 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts states that one of the meeting's goal is to approve the hiring standards, policy directives and hiring plan presented by Heidrick & Struggles.

Commissioner Gremmels appreciates yesterday's conversation and the inputs offered by Heidrick & Struggles. He shares gratitude for the public comment and notes that the Commission is intentional in supporting all regions of the state.

Alissa shares the executive search materials (Exhibit B) including the hiring standards, policy directives and hiring plan.

Commissioners Hill and Gremmels support the proposed edits of equitable language on the hiring standards.

Alissa proposes an edit to specify communication and ambassador of the vision to the hiring standards as well as an edit to the minimum qualifications to adjust the specific education field. Commissioners Hill and Gremmels support the edits. Commissioner Roe asks about candidate preference with a degree in a specific field. Alissa answers that specific industry experience would be a preferred quality. Commissioner Roe, Gremmels, Hill and Pearson support the change.

Chair Willitts asks to review the hiring plan and application window. He shares Commissioner DiNovo's support of the March 30 application deadline. Chair Willitts asks if an accelerated deadline is possible, closer to mid-March. Commissioner Roe supports a 6-week application window. She asks what happens if the window is closed but there are not enough qualified candidates. Jackie answers that the March 30 application deadline provides H&S enough time to find qualified candidates. Jackie answers that interviews dates have not been set. Commissioner Hills adds comment that pre-screening would happen before March 30. Sylvia states that the deadline must be upheld and begin the interview process after the deadline.

Vice Chair Patel supports a mid-March deadline. Commissioner Gremmels supports aligning with Heidrick's perspective. Jackie supports avoiding a failed search that could happen without enough time. Alissa adds that candidates appreciate reviewing the role and holding conversations with the search firm.

Commissioner Roe asks to clarify the timeline once the application deadline ends. Jackie answers that every step is not on the calendar and shares the compounding steps.

Sylvia clarifies that all candidates who apply by the deadline must be screened equally.

Commissioner Pearson supports a March 30 deadline.

Commissioner Hill advocates for a first consideration status to be added so as to not lose candidates who apply early but move on to other opportunities.

Commissioner Miller supports the March 30 deadline.

Jackie can work to manage candidate expectations while the application window remains open.

Chair Willitts aggregates that the majority support the March 30 deadline.

Chair Willitts asks if there is additional feedback on the executive director title. All Commissioners present support the executive director title.

Commissioner Roe asks to link to ORS 284 within the job specification. Alissa answers that a link will be added. Commissioner Roe asks to remove 'annual' when referring to the Governor's Conference as the event timing may shift. Vice Chair Patel agrees.

Commissioner Hill asks to clarify the March 30 deadline or an 8-week window. Jackie answers March 30 would be the deadline.

Chair Willitts asks for a motion to approve and adopt the hiring standards, policy directives, and hiring plan as amended by the suggested language noted today, specifically the minimum qualifications, executive director title and application window (March 30 deadline).

Commissioner Gremmels moves the motion and Commissioner Hill seconds the motion.

A roll call vote is taken given the virtual nature of the meeting:

- Commissioner Gremmels votes in favor.
- Commissioner Hill votes in favor.
- Commissioner Miller votes in favor.
- Commissioner Pearson votes in favor.
- Commissioner Roe votes in favor.
- Vice Chair Patel votes in favor.
- Chair Willitts votes in favor.
- Commissioner DiNovo was unable to attend the meeting.

The motion is approved and the hiring standards, policy directives, and hiring plan as amended by the suggested language noted today, specifically the minimum qualifications, executive director title and application window (March 30 deadline) are adopted.

Chair Willitts shares that the approved documents culminate in the executive director job specification/description.

### **Consideration of job specification and compensation (starts at 39:43 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Alissa walks through the job specification (Exhibit C).

Commissioners Roe and Miller asks for clarification on the RDMO statement to include "in each region".

Commissioner Roe asks for broader benefits information to be added to the job specification. Alissa answers that they can be added now or later in the recruitment process. Sylvia says that both avenues are possible. Commissioners Gremmels and Hill advocate to promote the benefits. Commissioner Roe agrees. Vice Chair Patel advocates for linking to state benefits.

Commissioner Roe asks Sylvia to clarify if there is one state website to link to. Sylvia says that there are multiple resources available. She advocates for adding PERS and PEBB resources to the job specification. Commissioners Miller and Roe agree with Sylvia's additional language.

Chair Willitts asks to have Travel Oregon Human Resources connect with H&S to get common benefits language on the job specification.

Chief of Staff Sarah Watson clarifies that bonuses are not offered, but merit raises are part of the compensation structure. Commissioner Gremmels appreciates the clarification.

Commissioner Pearson advocates to remove the top salary number as it could disincentivize applicants. Sylvia clarifies that a vote on the range must be done and a future vote could be possible. Commissioner Roe agrees with Commissioner Pearson's statement.

Sylvia clarifies that Oregon public records law apply which does not include a blanket exemption for application materials. Vice Chair Patel supports the transparency. Chair Willitts asks to add the public records language. Jackie answers that it will be added.

Commissioner Hill adds state benefits links to the chat including:  
<https://www.oregon.gov/jobs/Documents/Benefits%20Memo.pdf>  
<https://www.oregon.gov/jobs/pages/benefits.aspx>

Sarah Watson shares that common benefits language that will be added to the job specification.

Commissioner Hill asks Sylvia about the public records law. Sylvia shares that exemptions do exist but cannot answer the question without specificity. It is best practice to inform applicants so they are not surprised later.

Commissioner Roe advocates for public records law mention in the job specification. Alissa states that the language will be added after consulting with Travel Oregon.

Commissioner Gremmels asks for uniform economic impact number edits. Alissa updates the information to correctly reflect the \$14 billion economic impact number.

Chair Willitts shares the context for the compensation analysis and the balance of public sector accountability with a private sector industry. The Commission is only responsible for setting the executive director's compensation. Any discussion at this meeting would not affect other staff member's compensation. Under ORS 652.220(4), an employer cannot reduce an employee's pay in an attempt to comply with the pay equity law.

Commissioner Hill asks that this range falls in line with other state agencies. Chair Willitts answers affirmatively.

Chair Willitts asks for a motion to approve and adopt the starting compensation range of \$235,000 to \$255,000 which aligns with the organization's long-term strategic goals.

Commissioner Pearson moves the motion and Commissioner Gremmels seconds the motion.

A roll call vote is taken given the virtual nature of the meeting:

- Commissioner Gremmels votes in favor.
- Commissioner Hill votes in favor.
- Commissioner Miller votes in favor.
- Commissioner Pearson votes in favor.
- Commissioner Roe votes in favor.
- Vice Chair Patel votes in favor.
- Chair Willitts votes in favor.
- Commissioner DiNovo was unable to attend the meeting.

The motion is approved and the starting executive director compensation range of \$235,000 to \$255,000 is adopted.

### **Other Business**

Chair Willitts appreciates the conversation with the Commissioners and the public comments shared.

The next Oregon Tourism Commission meeting will be March 9 in Portland at the Oregon Convention Center.

Chair Willitts adjourns the meeting at 2:15 p.m.