



MARCH 14, 2025

Board meeting minutes FINAL

ATTENDEES

Board

Greg Jones, Tiquette Bramlett, Cristina Gonzales, Justin King, Dionne Irvine, Austin Kraemer, Adam Ramirez

Staff

Gina Bianco, Katie van Bargaen, Carissa Cook, Sally Crawford, Stacey Kohler, Jessica Willey

MEETING OPENING

- Chair G. Jones called the Oregon Wine Board public meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Review of the meeting minutes

- The Board reviewed the meeting minutes from December 5, 2024.

MOTION: M. Ponzi moved that the December 5, 2024, meeting minutes be approved. C. Gonzales seconded. The motion carried 9-0.

- The Board reviewed the meeting minutes from January 22, 2025.

MOTION: T. Bramlett moved that the January 22 meeting minutes be approved. C. Gonzales seconded. The motion carried 9-0.

Finance Committee Update

- The Board reviewed a prior conversation from the December meeting concerning the inclusion of A. Ramirez in the Finance Committee. It was noted that A. Ramirez, along with G. Jones and Treasurer G. Mortensen, had participated in reviewing the 2024 Semi-Independent Agency Report of 2021-2023 Biennium and Financial Review Conducted by Moss Adams. It was agreed that A. Ramirez would be consulted on future financial matters and internal controls as needed.
- S. Crawford included the FY2024-25 1st Quarter Financials with proper ending balances, but some hidden lines. The 1st Q FY24-25 Financials will be presented at the next board meeting for review and final approval.
- S. Crawford presented FY2024-25 2nd Quarter Financials. The balance sheet reflects total assets of \$1.762 million. The P&L showed Total Revenue of \$1.397M and Total Expenses of \$1.264M.

S. Crawford noted she anticipates Oregon Wine Symposium revenue for the full year to be approximately \$40,000 lower than the budgeted \$330,000 due to low sponsorships. M. Ponzi raised questions on how OWB was going to make up that \$40,000 loss from OWS. S. Crawford advised OWB is currently assessing the impact of securing sponsorships and the strategies for obtaining them. This process is being coordinated with OWA and our the event organizer. OWB will release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Event Organizer for 2026 Symposium.

MOTION: D. Irvine moved that FY2024-25 Q2 Financials be approved. A. Kraemer seconded. The motion carried 9-0.

- S. Crawford presented the proposed budget for FY2025-26 to meet the State's deadline of April 1. As typical, significant changes are expected to this budget at the August Board meeting as we will have final financials for FY24-25, surplus funds and better estimates of tax revenue for the FY25-26. The detailed budgeting work will begin in the coming months and will involve board and committee members. This process will be guided by our strategic plan and revenue forecasts.
- M. Ponzi questioned how the grape tax assessments being calculated for the FY25-26 budget. S. Crawford explained that the grape assessment in this version of the budget is based on a three-year average for that revenue line which is the typical model. Due to the current climate, a revised formula may be used for the August revisions.
- M. Ponzi expressed concerns about not having been involved in the budget process in regards to the Marketing Committee.
- G. Bianco emphasized that, as a semi-independent agency, we must meet the state's deadline and submit a budget by April 1. She noted that the preliminary budget is a working document that will incorporate input from the Board and committees. Additionally, she stressed the importance of the strategic plan in determining budget allocations.
- A. Ramirez highlighted the need for a cohesive understanding of the budget and alignment with the strategic plan among the Board members to ensure transparency and facilitate a better understanding of the budgeting process.
- R. Moshier suggested that since OWB needs to finalize its strategic planning and the operating budget is still being developed, it would be advisable for OWB to consider maintaining last year's budget with only a slight increase. He pointed out that OWB should allocate more funds for marketing. S. Crawford responded by explaining that OWB cannot simply replicate last year's budget because the current budget is spending down over \$800,000 surplus funds. The new budget must accurately reflect the actual funds available. Although the current draft shows cuts in education and marketing, this is only a preliminary version that will be significantly revised in August after the strategic planning is completed. The goal is to create a financially responsible budget that aligns with the organization's resources and future needs.

MOTION: M. Ponzi made a motion to approve the proposed FY 2025-26 budget as presented with the understanding that OWB will refine it in the coming months using insights from the strategic plan and committee input. A. Kraemer seconded. The motion carried 9-0.

- A. Kraemer and M. Ponzi recommended a conservative approach to projecting grape assessment revenue for the upcoming budget.
- The Board considered an industry grant request for the Asian American & Pacific Islander Food and Wine Fest.

MOTION: R. Moshier made a motion to approve an industry grant fund of \$2,000 for the AAPI Food and Wine Fest. C. Gonzales seconded. The motion carried 9-0.

International Marketing

- A. Ramirez provided an update on international marketing efforts, highlighting challenges due to political headwinds, such as tariffs and consumer sentiment.
- A. Ramirez commented that despite these challenges, there are bright spots ahead. OWB recently had a successful event in Paris, and ProWein in Germany is approaching.
- Opportunities in Asian markets remain promising, and OWB continues to maintain strong relationships in Canada and Europe even amid political pressures.
- OWB has been awarded ~\$650,000 in MAP funding. MAP funds are available for one fiscal year, starting from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

- S. Crawford updated the Board on RAAP funding. The RAAP fund has been allocated in tranches, with a plan for up to five in total. OWB has designated two tranches so far, each around one million dollars. OWB has five years to utilize these funds. Significant progress has already been made this fiscal year, but OWB is considering reallocating some expenses from the RAAP fund to the MAP fund, as each has specific usage restrictions.
- RAAP funds cannot be used in Mexico, Canada, China, or the UK, which limits OWB's spending options. Therefore, OWB has directed those funds towards MAP markets. With some programming adjustments, OWB is planning events in Montreal and Toronto this year. Currently, we have surplus MAP funds, allowing us to reallocate funds initially intended for the RAAP fund.
- A. Ramirez wanted to make the Board aware of the questions regarding the pause in federal grant funding that was circling last month but reported that OWB is not currently facing that issue.
- A. Ramirez explained to the Board the process of OWB's international funding. He noted that OWB spends money upfront and later receives reimbursement. He emphasized the importance of understanding this process because any issues with reimbursement could pose a financial risk to OWB.

Education Committee

- J. Willey presented a re-cap of the Oregon Wine Symposium survey.
 - OWB received responses from 331 participants, resulting in a 27% response rate.
 - The 2025 event received a Net Promotor Score of 19, a metric that shows how likely you would recommend something to a colleague by asking respondents to rate on a scale of 0 to 10. This is lower than past years.
 - This trend suggests the symposium is not meeting attendees' expectations as effectively as it has in the past.
 - J. Willey sees this as an opportunity to better understand the audience and improve the event's value proposition.
 - G. Mortensen shared his insights on the survey results. He stressed the importance of the Board & staff being fully committed to the event and making it a success for our industry. He commented that the OWS is our brand, and the Board and staff need to make sure we are taking this opportunity to deliver to the industry what it needs and improve how the OWB is perceived in the industry.
 - M. Ponzi concurred with G. Mortensen's assessment and proposed smaller group sessions for deeper discussions, as well as inviting external experts for new perspectives. She recommended establishing a "think tank" on OWS to ensure that OWB is delivering effectively.
 - A. Kraemer agreed that OWB needs to be thinking outside of the box to meet the needs of the industry. He also suggested more roundtable-style conversations and small groups for better interactions.
 - J. Willey acknowledged that the current symposium rating is unacceptable and does not meet the industry's needs. Her goal is to refresh the symposium to better address the specific needs and challenges of Oregon's wine industry, taking into account feedback from attendees.
 - Guest, C. Figgins, suggested merging Oregon and Washington Wine Symposiums into a single, larger event to provide more value for suppliers, wineries, and winegrowers.
 - He proposed bringing in international speakers and acknowledged the challenges of coordinating between multiple organizations. The idea is to create a more comprehensive and diverse symposium experience that goes beyond the current regional limitations.
 - A. Ramirez offered to help make connections with the Washington Winegrowers Association Board.

Strategic Planning Update

- G. Bianco gave a recap of the two in-person listening sessions held in the Umpqua Valley and Rogue Valley.
 - Both regions expressed concerns about federal-level issues facing the alcohol industry, rising costs and challenging tariff situations, competition from European wines, and tourism.

- There is a desire for more collaboration with restaurants, lodging and other organizations.
 - There were also conversations around developing a tourism strategy, along with targeted marketing and regional differentiation.
 - Concerns about budgeting and spending were raised, along with the need for better collaboration, education, and communication.
- There were discussions around the importance of industry communications and the need for more effective methods.
 - Guest, M. McLaughlin, commented that when there are industry specific actions, there should be standalone communications being sent.
 - There was also discussion on the effectiveness of board knowledge and using multiple communication methods i.e., weekly membership calls, emails, texting and/or phone calls

Other OWB Business

- M. Ponzi suggested that we have Marketing and IPC updates in future Board meetings to report on their activities.
- G. Jones agreed that all standing committees report at each meeting to help improve communication and accountability.
- M. Ponzi suggested that there might be potential for merging IPC members into the Marketing Committee to streamline operations.
 - D. Irvine commented that there have been thoughts on how to refresh the IPC Committee and would be willing to have a conversation on the thought of merging those two committees together.

Public Comment

- Guest, M. McLaughlin, asked about an update on the CRM system.
 - J. Willey commented that there have been some conversations on exploring the need for a system to better track and segment audience information.
 - S. Crawford mentioned that the CRM system was in the FY 2024-25 budget, but as of yet hasn't had the bandwidth to do a deeper dive.
 - G. Bianco reiterated that the staff is currently focused on immediate challenges while planning for future improvements, and the CRM system remains a priority for the future.
- Guest, M. McLaughlin, asked about OWB's statement on tariffs.
 - G. Bianco replied that it's currently being reviewed and will be published shortly.
- M. Ponzi asked about the OWB website update.
 - G. Bianco commented that the website update was included in the ODA grant application, and the OWB will know more in a few weeks.

MEETING FINALIZATION

- Chair G. Jones adjourned the Oregon Wine Board public meeting at 11:24 a.m.