



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



**State Library
of Oregon**

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Organization: State Library of Oregon

Date: July 1, 2026

Meeting: Rules Advisory Committee – Library closures and cuts

In attendance: Suzanne Bishop, St. Helens Public Library (Columbia County); Stephanie Chase, Libraries of Eastern Oregon; Bridget Esqueda, Salem Public Library (Marion and Polk counties); Heather Estrada, Umatilla County Special Library District; Cheryl Hancock, Harney County Library; Chris Ostberg, Grant County Library; Miriam Sisson, North Douglas Library District (Douglas County); Kris Wiley, Roseburg Public Library (Douglas County); Buzzy Nielsen, State Library of Oregon; Darci Hanning, State Library of Oregon; Jey Wann, State Library of Oregon (note-taker)

OARs under review: Creating new rules to clarify ORS 357.621

SUMMARY

Meeting started: 2:03

General topics

Library staff gave a general overview of ORS 357.621, what administrative rules are, and why this group is meeting.

- OARs clarify statutes. For instance, public contracting, public meetings, etc.
- Adding rules to clarify the statute about public hearings being required before abolishing or withdrawing public support from a public library.
- OARs can't contradict statute or go too far past what the statute says.
- Suggested changes will be reviewed by DOJ.

Staff shared a bill tracing from the State Archives about SB21 (1975). The bill created the ORS as it's written now. The below quote from a committee discussion about the legislation was helpful:

This amendment allows for ample public scrutiny of a decision to close or withdraw support from a library by requiring at least two public hearings over a nine week period of time. A requirement for wide public notice of the hearings is also included. We believe that this language will actually provide for more public participation in the decision to close or withdraw public support from a library than is provided by existing statute. Library contracts are excluded from this amendment since conditions relating to termination of the contract should normally be written into the contract itself. While the concept of withdrawal of support for a library is somewhat vague, we use it in the sense of substantial withdrawal of support rather than the type of budget restrictions that may be placed on several local government departments in a period of financial austerity.

Questions/Comments

The committee discussed various questions libraries might have about ORS 357.621 and made suggestions. Questions and suggestions are listed below:

- What proposed actions by a governing body would trigger the need to hold hearings?
 - Closures
 - Public funding, hours of operation, staffing
 - Other measures from the public library standards? Losing public library status
 - Large cuts to library disproportionate to other departments
 - Serial levies, cuts or election failures
- What information should be included in notice of the hearings?
 - Compliant with public meetings law
 - Service area affected, anticipated effect of changes
 - Could they also add the specific reduction amount that is being reduced?
 - Can the governing body limit who can speak?
 - Who is conducting the hearing?
 - What kind of guidance will there be
- After holding the hearings, how long does a governing body have to act before needing to hold new hearings?
 - End of current FY
- What about closures for budget reasons but intended to be temporary?
 - How has this been handled historically? What is “temporary”? I’d want to avoid this being used to subvert the public hearing requirement.
 - Substantial effect on services
 - How long “temporary” is can be squishy
 - Closures for construction, damage, etc. - 6 months?
 - Specificity about the end (e.g. FY)
 - After a certain period of time, have to hold hearings
 - Trigger based on not meeting minimum conditions
- Does the 2nd hearing need to be noticed?
 - Yes
- Does “abolish and withdraw support” need to be defined in the OAR?
 - Examples:
 - What if withdrawing support meant the closing of a branch?
 - What if deep cuts? Are there budget thresholds?
- What happens in the event that a governing body has no money to keep the library open during the hearings?
 - Example: Independence Public Library
 - See consequences question below
- Does reorganizing or transferring governance, such as contracting out, count as “abolishing”?
 - Contracts are covered in 1975 legislation discussion
 - Libraries that are already established
 - Contracting out to public/private entity

- In the current OAR, it states “The governing body shall give public notice of the public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the area for two successive weeks at least 30 days prior to the first hearing.” Many people do not have access to or subscribe to a newspaper. This should be updated to reflect more current standards of information access.
 - Also need to clarify what “area” the notice needs to go to.
 - Public meetings law
- What are the consequences if a government body does not follow the proper process as stated in the OAR?
 - Lawsuits, who has standing?
- Library advisory boards, what role, if any, should they serve in this process?
 - Might be helpful that they’re separate
 - Does library board need opportunity to speak on its own?

Other questions/comments:

- What is the process?
 1. Today’s meeting: general ideas from the RAC
 2. Next meeting: staff will provide draft language, hopefully with DOJ feedback.
 3. Create final proposed rules.
 4. Posted to the Secretary of State’s Office SOS, notify legislature, and open for public comment.
 5. Hearing schedule at state library board meeting (October).
 6. Board votes or make recommendations for changes. Suggested effective date: January 1, 2027, before local governments approve their 2027-28 budgets.
- Is this to strengthen a participatory process? An opportunity to decide what “substantial” means for cuts, etc. How are services affected?
 - Yes, these OARs are intended to define and strengthen public participation.
- It would be helpful to have guidance about what the governing body can do before elections.

Meeting ended: 3:00p