Meeting Notes

Oregon Law Commission

Municipal and Justice Courts Work Group – Records of Abolished Local Courts Subgroup

October 21, 2026

I. Call to Order

In Attendance: Monte G Ludington, Judge Juliet Britton, Judge Emily Oberdorfer, Charlie Conrad, Jessica Minifie, Judge Daniel Cross, Lindsey Detweiler, Judge Erin Zemper, Amy Zubko, Nora Robison

Amy Zubko opened the meeting and outlined discussion of outstanding financial obligations in closed cases, followed by feedback from the Oregon District Attorneys Association (ODAA).

II. Discussion

a. Outstanding Financial Obligations

OJD presented proposed language requiring closing local courts to notify debtors that payments must go to the circuit court and provide financial information in a format readily importable into OJD's case management system. Required information would include charges and assessments, payments, adjustments, disbursements, amounts in trust or tender, and license sanctions.

Once those requirements were met, the circuit court would accept and distribute payments under the distribution rules applicable to circuit court judgments, avoiding separate financial configurations for transferred cases. If the requirements were not met, outstanding balances would be deemed satisfied upon transfer, except restitution and compensatory fines owed to victims.

There was discussion of expressly addressing the circuit court's responsibility for restitution and compensatory fines when transfer requirements are unmet; OJD was receptive to clarification and requested identification of those cases within transferred records.

Concerns were raised that requiring readily importable records could impose substantial costs on financially strained local courts. Members requested language emphasizing collaboration between the closing court and OJD during the transition period. OJD explained that technical requirements depend on the originating system and record volume, and that fixed statutory specifications could become outdated.

OJD clarified that existing law requires justice court records to be transferred but leaves jurisdiction and payment processing unclear; municipal court closures lack a comparable transfer statute, although circuit courts may assume municipal court functions by agreement with the state court administrator.

Lindsey Detweiler will consult with OJD about more collaborative language, and Charlie Conrad will seek information about the transfer of Damascus court records to identify any agreement or lessons learned. Further drafting of proposal will be deferred pending that consultation.

b. Closure Notice Period and District Attorney Participation

Discussion supported changing the default notice period from six months to one year, while retaining the ability of specified parties to agree to a shorter period. A year would accommodate budget cycles, while flexibility would permit faster or phased closures where appropriate.

District attorneys and law enforcement receive notice of the planned closure under subsection (2)(a); the issue in question was whether district attorneys should join the parties authorized under subsection (2)(b) to approve a shorter period.

Supporters emphasized effects on prosecutorial staffing, resources, pending cases, and future filings, while concerns focused on expanding the decision-making group and maintaining an efficient process. Alternatives included participation based on criminal caseload or budgetary impact, or requiring input from criminal justice partners without granting approval authority.

The group did not reach a resolution on district attorney approval authority; it will present the issue to the full work group.

III. Scheduling

The full Work Group will meet on October 28.