

**Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
January 17, 2024
Don Adams Conference Room
Irrigon, Oregon**

Present in-person: Staff: Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Roy Drago Jr., Matthew Jensen, Valerie Ballard, Justin Nelson, Greg Goebel, Kevin Ince, Steve Freeland, Benjamin Tucker, Glen Diehl, Christy Kenny; Non-Staff: Mike Hughes, Stuart Dick

Present via Zoom: Staff: Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Deona Siex, Jaylene Papineau, Kristin Bowles, Morgan Browning, Robin Canaday, SaBrina Bailey-Cave, Stephanie Case and approximately 70 members of the public

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: 9:00 a.m.

Miscellaneous

District Attorney, Justin Nelson introduced the new Deputy District Attorney/co County Counsel, Greg Goebel.

Special Presentation

The special presentation but the State Cultural Trust was postponed.

Public Comment

Chair Sykes Reminded the audience of the three-minute time limit and that this is not a question-and-answer session.

In-person: Stuart Dick of Irrigon voiced concerns regarding the Ambulance Service Area Plan (ASA), nitrates in ground water, the Justice Court building location, and tax breaks given to corporations.

Via Zoom: Emily Roberts Chief Executive Officer of Morrow County Health District (MCHD) read a statement regarding the ASA.

Raymond Akers of Boardman, Veronica Ferguson of Lexington, and Karma Ezell of Irrigon all made statements regarding the ASA.

Administrator's Report

Ambulance Service Agreement Plan Update

Matthew Jensen

Mr. Jensen provided the MCHD press release from December 13, 2023. Providing an update on the ASA, he said the County submitted the revised ASA draft to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) with input from MCHD, Boardman Rural Fire Protection District, and the City of Irrigon. He explained State ordinance ORS. 682 requires counties to develop their own ASA. Mr. Jensen surveyed 35 Oregon counties, and of those 35, 32 have county defined ASAs. He emphasized nowhere in the ASA is "seizure" of ambulances mentioned. The ASA stated the vacating provider would turnover ambulances for use by the interim personnel until replacement service is established and the vacating provider will be compensated upon negotiation. However, listening to concerns of constituents, that language was removed from the most recent draft. Addressing concern of job loss, if the County does sign with a new provider, the ASA requires they extend interviews and offers of employment to current Emergency Medical Service employees. Mr. Jensen pointed out a section that was removed in error, taking Advanced Life Services (ALS) away from Irrigon. ALS was added to the current draft.

Mr. Jensen said he would like to hold Open House meetings once the OHA approves the ASA draft and he asked the Board to discuss how many open houses there should be a motion to allow Mr. Jensen to negotiate interim ambulance services going forward.

Commissioner Wenholtz requested at least three Open Houses: a meeting in Boardman, Irrigon, and at least one on the south end of the County. Chair Sykes suggested additional meetings in Heppner, Lone, and Lexington.

Commissioner Wenholtz moved to hold a Town Hall in each community to review and take questions on the OHA approved ASA Plan. Dates to be determined.

Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous yes.

Commissioner Drago moved to authorize Mr. Jensen to negotiate ambulance services for the County.

Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous yes.

Circuit Court Building Update

Matthew Jensen, Administrator

Mr. Jensen said the contract was received the day before and County Counsel needs time to review. He asked the Board to consider a special meeting the following week. Mr. Jensen wants to get the process started by February 1st with the design team, internal stakeholders such as those working in the building, and external stakeholders like residential neighbors, the fairground, and the elementary school.

Chair Sykes referenced a Town Hall held in September of 2023 concerning the proposed Circuit Court location. The project has been transparent, and the Town Hall allowed the public to ask extensive questions and voice concerns. He asked Mr. Jensen about the process going forward. Mr. Jensen hopes to have a full schedule for the construction of the Circuit Court to present to Commissioners and the public by the second Board of Commissioners meeting in February. The direction of the Circuit Court building is largely dependent on internal stakeholders as half the funding comes from the State and the Circuit Court has final say before funding is finalized.

Assistant County Administrator Position

Matthew Jensen, Administrator

Mr. Jensen explained the need for an Assistant County Administrator (ACA). The ACA would oversee departments that would benefit from more oversight such as Parks, Facilities, Fairgrounds, Tourism, and The Loop.

The funding largely comes from two open positions: Surveyor and Community Development Director. The budget for Surveyor is approximately \$125,000, and the Community Development Director budget is \$160,000. The County has a contracted surveyor with a separate budget making a full-time surveyor unnecessary. While the ACA is a new position, it replaces the Community Development Director position that was created in 2020 by the previous Board. The ACA will take on some duties of the Community Development Director, while the Planning Director already covers most of the Community Development Director's role.

Open Agenda: No Items

Consent Agenda:

Commissioner Wenholtz moved to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- 1) Minutes: January 3, 2024 Regular Meeting
- 2) Justice Reinvestment Grant Agreement

Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous yes

Business Items

Nationwide's Response to Retirement Payment Issue

Matthew Jensen, Administrator

Mr. Jensen explained the County transitioned to Nationwide to distribute Defined Benefit payments to retirees at the beginning of January. Approximately ninety former employees were impacted, and the County fronted money to ensure payments went out to retirees with Nationwide reimbursing the County.

Aaron Huff, New Business Experience Lead with Nationwide said automated services weren't available and employees were manually handling accounts which created a backlog. Nationwide will send out communication to retirees impacted by the delay, and Mr. Huff assured the Board that February's payments will go smoothly.

Mr. Jensen added that Nationwide has committed to repaying penalty fees to retirees.

Doug Baer, Retirement Solutions Assistant Vice President with Nationwide said Nationwide fell short of expectations and distributions are critical. He spoke highly of Mr. Jensen and his work to resolve the issue.

Mr. Jensen added Kevin Ince, Finance Director; Lindsay Grogan, Human Resources Director; and Jaylene Papineau, Treasurer, did a lot of work to fix the problem.

Columbia Development Authority Quarterly Report

Greg Smith, Project Manager

Mr. Smith began by saying the County is making difficult decisions and thanked everyone for serving. The Columbia Development Authority (CDA) is nearly done with Umatilla County's Master Plan with water and possible sewer lines, possible aggregate opportunities, preservation sites, and subdivision lots. Oregon Legislature allocated \$7 million to be split between Morrow and Umatilla Counties for road improvement. They are working on a division of property for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) aiming to finish around April.

CDA Request – Promissory Note Payment of \$192,000

The CDA took on an obligation of close to \$10 million for the acquisition of property. The U.S. Army provided a 12 month note backed by a letter of credit by the Bank of Eastern Oregon. Mr. Smith explained each of the five "partners" (CTUIR, Morrow County, Umatilla County, Port of Morrow, and Port of Umatilla), are obligated to send \$192,000 to the CDA. He mentioned there is interest in purchasing 100 acres for future hydrogen development which could alleviate some of the financial burden to the five partner groups.

Regarding the promissory note, Mr. Jensen asked if there is a chance for reimbursement, or if it was a one-time contribution the CDA. Mr. Smith confirmed at this time it is a one-time payment, but there is nothing preventing the CDA from reimbursing the partners after a real estate transaction.

Chair Sykes moved to direct staff to prepare a budget resolution for a budget adjustment to transfer the amount necessary to cover the expenditure. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous yes.

Community Counseling Solutions Communication and Response Protocol and Overdose Communication and Response Protocol

Item pushed back to be addressed at the end of Business Items.

FY 2024 Budget – Transfer of Appropriations

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

Mr. Ince provided an updated document to the Board, presenting a transfer of appropriations, from operating contingency to either the general fund or personnel services for other special revenue funds. During the last budget development for fiscal year 2024, the wage study was not yet complete. The Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Sheriff's Office, Community Corrections, and Emergency Dispatch were also not complete. The new positions of Assistant County Administrator and Finance Manager come from the general fund and their respective departments. The transfer of appropriations from contingency reflects the net impacts.

Commissioner Drago moved to amend Resolution R-2024-1 to reflect 10%, not 15%. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous Approval

Commissioner Drago moved to amend Exhibit A as shown in the handout. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Commissioner Drago moved to adopt Resolution R-2024-1 and approve the transfers from general operating contingencies as described therein as amended. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous yes.

Morrow County Public Transit Facility Update

Ben Tucker, Transit Manager

Mr. Tucker informed the Board that Public Transit applied for a federal grant for funding to construct a new transit facility but was not awarded the funds. He then presented three options for funding:

- 1) Reapply for 5339 Grant for the third time which would require finding a new location for the transit facility and little time to prepare as the application is due in February.
- 2) Apply for State STIF (Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund) Discretionary funding which would not require purchasing new property, but the application doesn't open until September 2024 and funds wouldn't be available until FY 2026.
- 3) County funds the construction on the site previously purchased by the County.

Emphasizing the need for a transit facility, Mr. Tucker explained that Public Transit offices are in Irrigon, vehicles are spread throughout the County, and the department is growing and needs more space.

Joining through Zoom, Angie Jones, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Regional Transit Coordinator for Region 5, explained the Federal Government is looking for "green" projects. She recommended adding infrastructure improvements to the next 5339 Federal grant application. If the County applies for the STIF discretionary funds, the State is also moving toward green projects and reflecting that in the applications could help chances of receiving funding.

Chair Sykes said of the three options, reapplying for the 5339 Grant and applying for STIF funding seemed like the best options.

Department Report

Chair Sykes asked Mr. Tucker to give his department report since he was already presenting. The Loop/Public Transit quarterly report was presented by Mr. Tucker. The Loop hired four new drivers, two of whom have CDLs and an additional dispatcher.

Break: 11:08 a.m.-11:18 a.m.

Community Counseling Solutions Communication and Response Protocol and Overdose Communication and Response Protocol

Ms. Lindsay was not present at today's meeting, but she went over the information on January 3, 2024. Commissioner Drago asked if the protocols were state mandated, which Mr. Nelson confirmed they are.

Commissioner Wenholz moved to approve and adopt the amended Morrow County SB 561 Communication and Response Protocol and HB 2395 Overdose Communication and Response Protocol. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous yes.

Department Reports Continued

- The Emergency Management Quarterly Report was presented by Steve Freeland, Emergency Manager. On a personal note, he said the onboarding process has been seamless.
- The Quarterly Juvenile Department Report was presented by Christy Kenny
- The Justice Court Quarterly Report was presented by Glen Diehl
- The Planning Department Monthly Report was presented by Tamra Mabbott
- Accounts Payable Monthly Written Report was provided by Kevin Ince
- The Human Resources Quarterly Report was provided by Lindsay Grogan
- The Quarterly Investment Report was provided by Jaylene Papineau

Correspondence

A letter from the Vietnam War Memorial Fund was read. They are halfway to funding and seeking more donations.

Commissioner Reports

A brief report of activity was provided by each Commissioner.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Nelson took a moment to introduce Glenn Wendell from the Oregon Department of Justice working on a homicide case in Morrow County.

Adjourned: 12:15 p.m.