

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
February 7, 2024
Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room
Heppner, Oregon

Present In-Person: Staff: Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholtz, Commissioner Roy Drago Jr., Matthew Jensen, Valerie Ballard, Justin Nelson, Gregory Goebel, Jaylene Papineau, Kevin Ince, Sherriff Bowles, Undersheriff Snider, and approximately 25 members of the public.

Present Via Zoom: Staff: Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Corey Sweeney, Deona Siex, Morgan Browning, Lindsay Grogan, Robin Canaday, Sarah Rea, Tamra Mabbott, and approximately 75 members of the public.

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

Special Presentation:

State Cultural Trust

Jaylene Papineau explained the State Cultural Trust provides grants around Oregon, funding arts and cultural projects. Ms. Papineau then introduced Aili Schreiner from the Oregon Cultural Trust. Ms. Schreiner explained the trust was founded in 2001, having granted over 10 thousand grants worth over \$40 million to arts, heritage, and humanities organizations. Funding is provided by donating to cultural non-profits and then to the cultural trust, qualifying for the Culture Tax Credit. Rodeos, parades, cultural societies, libraries, museums, and public radio receive funds from the trust.

Public Comment:

Chair Sykes reminded the audience of the three-minute time limit for Public Comment. In-person commenters speak first, then the public may provide comments via zoom.

The following people provided comments regarding the Ambulance Service Area Plan (ASA) Emily Roberts (Morrow County Health District CEO), Tina Davidson, Jodi Ferguson, Stephen Munkers, Nicole Mahoney, Charlie Sumner, John Kilkenny, Nancy Arson, Stuart Dick, Scott Ezell, Raymond Akers

The following people provided comments via Zoom: Kirstin Espinola, Sarah Bayless, Colleen Neubert, Kevin Jepsen

At the conclusion of Public Comments, Chair Sykes reminded the public that commissioner contact information is available at the end of the agenda.

Chair Sykes requested to move the Administrator Update concerning the ASA to the top of the agenda.

Administrator Update:

Ambulance Service Area

Mr. Jensen said that since the last meeting, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has confirmed receipt of the ASA, and it is under review. Morrow County Health District (MCHD) expressed acceptance to the current proposed ordinance and ASA, but is insisting on an exclusive, one provider model. Mr. Jensen explained that the ASA needs to be determined first, and the

County can work with providers for service. He stressed the County is not asking MCHD to terminate and that MCHD submitted the 90-day notice to vacate of their own volition.

County staff are reviewing proposals for interim services. The maps aren't changing. The language does allow for other providers. Contracts and proposals will not be requested until the ASA is complete.

Acknowledging concerns and rumors of AMR providing ambulance services, Mr. Jensen emphasized AMR is to lease out ambulances. They will not provide paramedics or EMTs.

The Tri-County ambulance coverage, a membership program that allows individuals to pay \$45 annually for ambulance coverage, is administered by the Morrow County Health District for three counties including Morrow County. A new ambulance service provider will necessitate new negotiations but is not something that needs to be addressed presently.

Chair Sykes said that after one of the "Town Hall" meetings not sponsored by the County, he spoke with MCHD board member, John Murray about participating in joint meetings between the Board of Commissioners and MCHD Board. A public meeting is proposed for February 8, 2024 to set framework for future joint meetings.

Commissioners Drago and Wenholtz agreed that it should be held as a Special Meeting.

Open Agenda:

Commissioner Drago requested to add a discussion about the process of liaison person for LUBGWAMA Committee (Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area) to the end of the business items.

Mr. Jensen requested adding an update to the audit process in department reports.

Consent Agenda:

Commissioner Wenholtz noted he requested structural changes to the minutes of the Special Meeting held on January 24th. Executive Assistant Valerie Ballard confirmed making the corrections and included the updated draft minutes on the agenda packet prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Drago moved to approve the following items:

- Minutes: Regular Meeting January 17, 2024, Regular Meeting and Land Use Hearing January 24, 2024

Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Chair Sykes called for a ten-minute recess.

Break: 10:22 am-10:35

Business Items:

Letter to Energy Facility Siting Council – Wagon Trail Solar Application for Site Certification

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Commissioner Wenholz recused himself from the discussion and signing of the letter as he is a member of Umatilla Electric Coop Board of Directors for a potential conflict of interest.

Ms. Mabbott presented a map done by Associate Planner, Stephen Wrecsics, mapping renewable energy projects in Morrow County. Pointing out an orange area on the map, she explained it is the proposed area for the Wagon Trail Solar Project which is the subject in the letter. The Wagon Trail Solar Project is approximately 7,450 acres with a 500-megawatt capacity. Ms. Mabbott reviewed key points in the letter, which can be found in the meeting's agenda packet.

Mr. Sweeney explained that other existing solar projects, Wheatridge 1 and 2, have had issues with weeds over the last 3 years with missed fulfillment obligations for weed management. There are gaps in the noxious weed plans with a lot of requirements and expectations, necessitating more compliance oversight and coordination.

Commissioner Drago moved to review and sign the letter. Chair Wenholz seconded. Vote, 2 yes, 1 recused

Request for Refund-One Energy Renewables

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Ms. Mabbott explained in 2022, One Energy Renewables paid \$42,000 in Conditional Use Permit and Goal 3 application fees for their Trail Solar project. The application was withdrawn, and One Energy Renewables requested a partial refund, the amount at the County's discretion. One Energy Renewables has submitted an application for another location near the original site.

Commissioner Drago moved to direct staff to estimate the portion of the fee that may be refundable. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Contract Award for Architectural Services – Circuit Court

Matthew Jensen, Administrator

Mr. Jensen presented the amended contract for architectural services for the Circuit Court building. He introduced Project Manager, Earl Eastman from Alliance Management & Construction Services. Alliance Management & Construction Services will act as a liaison, ensuring that the project goes smoothly and communicating with Oregon Judicial Department on requirements for the building.

Commissioner Drago moved to approve R=2024-3 for Architectural Services and authorize Chair Sykes to sign. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

2024-2025 IGA with Oregon Health Authority for Financing of Community Mental Health, Addiction Treatment, Recover & Prevention, and Problem Gambling Services

A calendar-based agreement, it is state mandated with the funding going to the County which is contracted with Community Counseling Solutions, and the County allocates money to the provider.

Commissioner Wenholz moved to approve the 2024-2025 IGA financing for mental health and authorizing Chair Sykes for signature. Commissioner Drago seconded: Vote: Unanimous approval.

Funding for Position – LUBGWAMA Liaison

Commissioner Drago

LUBGWAMA is moving forward on a position that will be working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Board is asked to approve a contribution of up to \$8500 toward the contract between the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Jane Hill. Umatilla County has also been asked to contribute \$8,500, and State Agencies including Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Health Authority are contributing as well. The contract is limited to six months in order to see if the position is feasible and works. Mr. Drago confirmed with Finance Director, Kevin Ince, that funds to fulfill the request are available.

Commissioner Wenholz moved to fund the LUBGWAMA Liaison up to \$8,500. Chair sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous Approval.

Administrator Update Continued:

Matthew Jensen, Administrator

Mr. Jensen said there was a kickoff meeting on February 6 for the Circuit Court. At the meeting, the draft schedule was reviewed and meetings with internal stakeholders are to follow. Tentatively, the March 6th Board of Commissioners meeting will have information on what will go in the building. The survey and geotechnical report show the site is usable and site reports will be released soon. There will be listening sessions with neighbors and interested parties toward the end of the month to voice issues and questions. Design information will be shared in May and negotiations for fair and rodeo parking are still in the works.

Regarding Town Halls concerning the ASA, Mr. Jensen said rules haven't been drafted yet, but will be sent out to Commissioners individually for feedback. They will be a Town Hall format, recorded as public meetings, where questions will be addressed and answered. There will be a third-party mediator running time to ensure the meeting is run fairly and impartially.

Mr. Jensen announced that Commission meetings have been recorded since the beginning of the year, and the videos are available on YouTube and links are available on Facebook and there are plans to make them available on the County Website as well. Closed captioning and translations are available through YouTube.

Lastly, the Assistant County Administrator position has several highly qualified applicants and there will be initial interviews with a scoring committee including Chair Sykes.

Department Reports:

The Assessment and Taxation Report was submitted by Assessor Mike Gorman

The Public Works Report was provided by Eric Imes. Sandi Pointer, Public Works Administrative Manager made herself available for questions.

The Sheriff Report was provided by Undersheriff Brian Snider

The Audit update was provided by Kevin Ince. Mr. Ince explained in 2021 there was an issue with single audit filing, changing the County's designation to high risk and the 2022 audit might need to be redone.

Correspondence:

Darrell Green, Grants and Projects Manager of Blue Mountain Community College sent a Letter of Commitment for the collaboration on the Frontier Oregon Innovation Hub, providing support and technical assistance to entrepreneurs in Eastern Oregon. The letter was discussed and will be addressed more thoroughly at a future meeting.

A letter from Raymond Michael, former resident of Morrow County was reviewed.

Commissioner Reports:

Brief reports of Commissioner activity were provided. Commissioner Wenholtz will attend a meeting with Community Renewable Energy Association (CREA). Commissioner Drago will attend a LUBGWMA meeting and he will also meet with Governor Tina Kotek.

Break: 12:00

Executive Session

The Morrow County Board of Commissioners will now meet in executive session pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a), which allows the Commission to meet in executive session **to consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent.**

Return from Executive Session

Commissioner Wenholtz moved to approve offering up to step 13 range 26 to the finance manager applicant. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous yes.

Signing of Documents.

Adjourn: 12:23 p.m.