

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
March 20, 2024
Don Adams Conference Room, Irrigon Oregon

Present In-Person: Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Commissioner Roy Drago Jr., Matthew Jensen, Valerie Ballard, Gregory Goebel, Tamra Mabbott, Kevin Ince, Patrick Keely, Ben Tucker, Brian Snyder; non-staff: Mike Hughes, Phil Rand, Stephen Munkers, Jeff Fox

Present Via-Zoom: Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Daisy Goebel, Justin Nelson, Marytza Reyes, Morgan Browning, Stephen Wrecsics, Sue Gibbs, Robin Canaday, Sarah Rhea, and approximately 45 members of the public

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

Public Comment:

Phil Rand of Irrigon asked several questions of the Board relating to ambulance services which had been answered in previous meetings.

Stephen Munkers, Irrigon and Morrow County Health District board member asked questions regarding ambulance services which had previously been addressed in previous meetings including the cost of ambulance leases.

Open Agenda: No items

Administrator's Report

The Administrator's Report was moved ahead of Business Items

Ambulance Service Area Plan Update

Matthew Jensen, Administrator

On March 12th, Morrow County Health District vacated as ambulance service provider and Boardman Fire Protection District fully took over as interim ambulance service provider. The City of Irrigon has coverage during the day while evenings are covered by a team in Boardman, and beginning March 22nd, Irrigon will have 24/7 coverage in town. The City of Heppner has around the clock coverage stationed at the Fairgrounds, and they were present at the rodeo and St. Patrick's Day celebration.

Mr. Jensen provided a timeline for future events in Ambulance Service Area (ASA) process:

- March 25, the County will post notification of the ASA ordinance.
- March 27 the notification will be published in the Heppner Gazette-Times.
- April 3, there will be a public hearing and first reading of the ordinance.
- April 17, the second reading of the ordinance and Commissioners may adopt.
- April 18, the County will issue a request for bids for ambulance service.
- July 16, 90 days will have passed since the second reading of the ordinance and the ordinance will go into effect.

If the Board determines that this is an emergency, the ordinance can take effect any time after the second reading and adoption of the ordinance. After April 4, an advisory committee will be formed at County discretion. Bob Blackmore, outside legal counsel recommended utilizing a cross section of the community. Some members should have ambulance and or emergency medical experience and the Public Health Director will lead the committee.

Circuit Courthouse Update

Matthew Jensen, Administrator

Morrow County was deemed as a first-round recipient of \$12.75 million for a courthouse construction project. The funds are exclusively for new construction, and initially the understanding according to ORS statutes required the courthouse to be in a county seat. Due to impacts on the rodeo, the inability to secure adequate parking, and public response, the Chief Justice wrote an opinion letter stating the Courthouse can be anywhere within the County. Alternate sites have been looked at with several sites being under review. The Port of Morrow (POM) owned Kinzua Mill Site is a possible location, but the Fairgrounds is still the first choice. After meeting with the design team and POM representatives, the estimated cost to add water service to the mill site is between \$500 and \$1million. Two other South County sites are being evaluated, and two County-owned acres is also being evaluated.

Business Items:

Financial Audit for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

After over twenty years with Barnett and Morrow as the auditor for the County, Singerlewak completed their first audit for fiscal year 2023. Mr. Ince, Finance Director, introduced the principal auditors from Singerlewak, Kathy Wilson and Brad Bingenheimer. They noted some deficiencies were found, specifically adjustments to prior periods. Mr. Bingenheimer reviewed key points that Singerlewak identified as needing improvement. When doing journal entries, Oregon minimum standards require secondary review and signature verifying accuracy. The County lacks a disaster recovery plan in the case of a potential cyber threat, and the County will need to increase network security and require personal passwords to be reset regularly.

A copy of the audit will be sent to the Secretary of State's office and from there, the Audits Division may conduct an additional review. Due to the number of expenditures of federal awards, there is still a single audit in process which will have a separate report.

Commissioner Drago motioned to accept the audited financial statement audit results for fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Secretary of State, Oregon Audits Division, Plan of Action

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

Mr. Ince explained that when there are any material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified by the auditors throughout the course of their audit, the County is required to adopt and file a plan of action with the Secretary of State Audits Division to address the deficiencies identified. It is Mr. Ince's recommendation that some items be addressed in the next 30 days, with some having already been taken care of, and develop a timeline to address other deficiencies.

While the County is already doing many things in the Disaster Recovery Plan, there isn't a defined plan in place which is needed. The County is unable to complete the plan in the time necessary. BerryDunn, the consulting firm contracted to work on the County's ERP project has been asked to work on a proposal to develop the plan but won't be able to complete their

proposal and implement it by the end of FY24. The auditors feel that it is unlikely the lack of a Disaster Recovery Plan by the next audit will result in a significant deficiency, if there is a consultant engaged in the project and there is a plan and timeline for completion.

Commissioner Drago motioned to approve the signing of the Plan of Action for the Finance Director can submit it to the Secretary of State. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Sunstone Solar Agriculture Mitigation Plan, Fund, and Memorandum of Agreement

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Commissioner Wenholtz noted that it was erroneously stated that Umatilla Electric Coop (UEC) has an agreement in place with Sunstone Solar, LLC (Sunstone Solar) for service. Commissioner Wenholtz verified that there is no contract in place but is recusing himself from participating in the conversation and voting as he is a member of the UEC Board of Directors.

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director introduced Jeff Fox of Pinegate Renewables, the company behind the Sunstone Solar project. Ms. Mabbott provided the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Morrow County and Pinegate Renewables, in addition to the proposed mitigation plan. As part of obtaining a Site Certificate and a Goal 3 exception approval from the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Counsel (EFSC), a mitigation project was proposed. In November 2023, Sunstone Solar participated in a work session where local entities provided input on the effects of the proposed 9,500-acre solar project in Morrow County and gave suggestions on how mitigate effects of the solar project.

The Sunstone Solar project will consist of up to six phases, with Sunstone paying a County designated fund \$1,179/acre up to \$11.08 million. The Board has been asked to sign a letter of support, indicating the County agrees that Sunstone Solar's mitigation project satisfies Goal 3 exception standards.

Commissioner Drago motioned to approve the mitigation plan, adopt the agreement, and authorize the Board Chair to sign a letter of support for Pinegate Renewables Sunstone Solar Agricultural Mitigation Project. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 yes, one recused.

The Loop – Fixed Route Update

Ben Tucker, Transit Manager and Patrick Keely, Transit Operations Supervisor

Morrow County's public transit system, The Loop is developing a fixed route service within the County to make traveling between cities and to and from large employers and local communities easier. Hiring full-time drivers began in January, aiding in finalizing and testing routes for the debut of the fixed route in April. It is estimated that in May, the Loop will connect with Kayak Public Transit to better serve even more of Eastern Oregon. The Loop has worked hard to increase public interest with news and social media and has made information on routes available online on the Morrow County website. When asked about park and rides, transit manager, Ben Tucker explained at this time, partners with stops do not want to support park and rides, but based on feedback and need, park and rides could develop in the future.

Department Reports

- The Sheriff's Office report was presented verbally by Undersheriff Snyder
- The Treasurer's written report was submitted by Jaylene Papineau
- The Planning Department report was presented by Tamra Mabbott
- The Accounts Payable report was provided by Kevin Ince

Commissioner Reports

Brief reports of Commissioner activity were provided.

Correspondence: None

Adjourned: 12:11 p.m.