

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
March 5, 2025
Upper Conference Room, Bartholomew Building
Heppner, Oregon

Present In Person Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Gus Peterson, Matthew Jensen, Justin Nelson, Valerie Ballard, Kevin Ince, Vincent Guerrero, Eric Imes, Rory Rowlette; Non-staff: Sue Oliver, John Murray

Present Via Zoom Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Tami Ewing, Deona Siex, Rose Kylo, Kirsti Cason, Lindsay Grogan, Erin Anderson; Non-staff: Kevin Miracle, Brenda Proffitt, Autumn Morgan, Griffin Beach, Erika Morton, Matt McCaw, Kelly Stewart, Aaron Palmquist, Scott Ezell, Sarah Groom, Jose Fernandez

Absent Commissioner Jeff Wenholz

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance 9:02 a.m.

Public Comment

- Sue Oliver of Irrigon Oregon shared her concerns on national and local government developments and failures to perform basic functions. Ms. Oliver said she had multiple issues to address and began with the February 19 Town Hall hosted by Congressman Cliff Bentz, where some who asked questions were accused of being “paid actors”.

After attending the last meeting of the Columbia Development Authority (CDA), she stated she was horrified by the CDA Board members deflecting issues, Morrow County’s representative remaining silent, and only one member advocating for the public. If federal funding is pulled, it would be a huge financial hit. She asked the Board of Commissioners to publicly address their position on the CDA and where the County stands on the local school bond.

- John Murray of Heppner, speaking as a member of the Port of Morrow (POM) Commission, reported on the annexation request from Boardman Fire. It was discussed at the recent POM Commission meeting where the Commission voted unanimously to ask CDA to allow the future landowner to make the request should it come up. This was then taken to the CDA meeting where they also voted unanimously to rescind the request for annexation from Boardman Fire.

There was no vote at the POM Commission meeting, but there was consensus among the Commission that they would like to see Irrigon Fire be assigned that taxing area of the CDA to help support and build their program.

Secondly, the Port Commission requested an extension of the ten day deadline for withdrawal from the grant process and they were granted fifteen days. Staff will be going to Washington DC where they will meet with Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC).

Consideration and Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Peterson motioned to move the Artificial Intelligence Policy Discussion up to follow the Union Agreement Ratification. Chair Sykes seconded the motion. Vote: 2 aye, 1 absent.

Department Reports

The Public Works Report was presented by Eric Imes and Rory Rowlette

The Treasurers Written Report was submitted by Jaylene Papineau

The Accounts Payable Written Report was submitted by Kevin Ince

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- a. Minutes: February 5, 2025; February 19, 2025; February 21, 2025
- b. Application for Property Tax Refund

Chair Sykes seconded the motion. Vote: 2 aye, 1 absent.

Business Items

Recycling Modernization Act – Recycling Haulers as Authorized Service Provides

Sandi Pointer, Risk and Procurement Manager; Rosemarie Kylo, Public Works Administrative Manager

The Recycling Modernization Act goes into effect July 2025 and makes funds available to allow community plastic recycling. Those funds will come from plastic producers and manufacturers of packaged items through a producer responsibility organization (PRO).

Commissioner Peterson motioned to authorize the County Chair to sign a funding authorization form, allowing two recycling haulers to receive Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) funding. This supports cooperation, helps cover eligible costs, and advances the county's efforts to comply with the state's Recycling Modernization Act. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 aye, 1 absent. Motion carried.

Classification Review for Fiscal Year 2025-26

Lindsay Grogan, HR Director; Kevin Ince, Finance Director

Per the classification policy, only the Board of Commissioners can authorize new positions which are recommendations from the Personnel Review Committee. Four new positions are recommended: Weed Control Applicator (full-time), Janitor (full-time), HR Assistant (part-time), and Legal Assistant to the District Attorney (full-time).

Chair Sykes motioned to table this item until March 19. Motion died for lack of second.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the recommended classification requests for Fiscal Year 25-26. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 aye, 1 absent. Motion carried.

Ratification of the 2024-28 Collective Bargaining Agreement: General Employees Local 2479-002

Lindsay Grogan, HR Director

Negotiations for the 24-28 Collective Bargaining Agreement began May 2024 and an agreement was reached February 25, 2025 and the union voted to ratify the agreement. The Agreement in the packet is not yet finalized and once approved, not substantial changes will be made, only corrections for scrivener's errors. Once signed by the union, it will go to the Board for signature.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to ratify the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Morrow County and the Morrow County General Employees Local 2479-002. Chair Sykes seconded the motion. Vote: 2 aye, 1 absent. Motion carried.

Artificial Intelligence Policy Discussion

Lindsay Grogan, HR Director

With the increased popularity of Artificial Intelligence, Human Resources Director, Lindsay Grogan, has been developing an Artificial Intelligence policy. The policy is still a work in progress and has not yet gone to legal counsel for review but has been brought before the Board to see progress so far.

Amendment to Contract with DLR Group for A/E services attached to the Circuit Court Project

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

After a presentation by Kelli Stewart of DLR Group reviewing the Circuit Courthouse construction project and the plans for the building, the project timeline was discussed along with the intention to present plans to the public at the County Fair in August.

Due to project delays concerning siting, the cost estimate for the project has grown and the costs directly related to DLR Group have increased by \$941,904.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the amendment to DLR Group's contract increasing the amount to \$3,049,227 and authorizing the Commission Chair to sign. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 aye, 1 absent.

Oregon/Idaho Border Relocation Discussion

Matt McCaw, Greater Idaho

Morrow County citizens voted yes to require the Morrow County Board of Commissioners to discuss promoting Morrow County's interests regarding the location of the state border three times per year. Matt McCaw, Executive Director of Greater Idaho, provided updates on the movement and no action was taken.

Wildfire Hazard Map area Designation Concerns

David Sykes, Commissioner

A briefing paper regarding the Wildfire Hazard Map was submitted to the Board by Planning Director, Tamra Mabbott, in September 2024. Since then, homeowners' insurance rates have

doubled and tripled while others have had their insurance revoked entirely. County Counsel, Justin Nelson, will draft a letter to present to the Board March 19 opposing the designations.

Fire Annexation Process Discussion

Justin Nelson, County Counsel

Justin Nelson, County Counsel, explained the process of fire annexation.

County Administrator Update

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

Property Use License Request for ATV Youth Safety

Vince Guerrero, Assistant County Administrator; Greg Close, Park Manager

This is an ongoing property use agreement with Oregon State University. The State requires anyone under the age of sixteen to have hands on All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) training prior to riding on public lands. There are two training sites at the OHV Park with volunteer instructors who average 3-4 classes per month.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the Property Use License with Oregon State University and Authorize the Commission Chair to sign. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 aye, 1 absent.

Strategic Plan Update

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The advisory committee for the Strategic Plan has been established and stakeholders are being contacted.

Legislative Report

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) has brought Senate Bill 916 to our attention which would require municipalities to provide unemployment insurance while employees are striking.

House Bill 2725, the Strategic Investment Program (SIP) port bill has been moved from the Transportation Committee to the House Committee on Revenue and the County will continue to watch how it develops, and Mr. Jensen will reach out to John Shafer, Umatilla County Commissioner and AOC President.

Correspondence

None

Commissioner Reports

Brief reports on Commissioner activity were provided.

Break

10:48 a.m.

Resume

10:57 a.m.

Executive Session

The Morrow County Board of Commissioners met in executive session pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(f), which allows the Commission to meet in executive session to consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection.

Return to Open Session

11:33 a.m. No action taken

Other Business

No other business

Adjourn

11:33 a.m.