

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
March 19, 2025
Don Adams Conference Room, Irrigon Government Center
Irrigon, Oregon

Present In Person Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Commissioner Gus Peterson, Matthew Jensen, Valerie Ballard, Justin Nelson, Kevin Ince, Brian Snyder, Christy Kenny; Non-staff: Karen Pettigrew, Greg Barron

Present Via Zoom Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Amanda Kenderick, Deona Siex, Lindsay Grogan, Steven Davis, Robin Canaday, Mike Gorman, Tami Ewing, Yvonne Morter; Non-staff: Aaron Palmquist, Andea Di Salvo, Griffin Beach

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

9:01 a.m.

Public Comment

Sue Oliver of Irrigon previously expressed her concerns regarding Columbia Development Authority (CDA) and Morrow County's representation on CDA's board. She had contacted County Commissioners requesting CDA discussion be included in today's agenda, to which Chair Sykes replied due to the legal landscape, he felt it was best the County take no action or engage in public meeting discussions on the topic. Ms. Oliver requested the Board of Commissioners take action despite legal uncertainties and will request the same from Umatilla County Commissioners.

Consideration and Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval

Department Reports

The Planning Department report was submitted by Tamra Mabbott

The Sheriff's Office report was presented by Brian Snyder

The Treasurer's report was submitted by Jaylene Papineau

The Accounts Payable report was submitted by Kevin Ince

The County Administrator's report was presented by Matthew Jensen

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve items b (payment authorization for ambulance services) and c (payment authorization to Umatilla County Sheriff's Office). Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval

Commissioner Wenholz found a minor typo in the minutes from the Land Use Hearing misidentifying Aaron Palmquist as being from City of Boardman and requested correction to City of Irrigon.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the minutes on the consent agenda with the correction to the Land Use Hearing minutes as requested. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Business Items

Approval of Courthouse Master Funding Agreement

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The Circuit Courthouse project is currently estimated to cost approximately \$35 million with the State of Oregon contributing \$13.2 million. The agreements have been reviewed and approved by County Counsel and are being revised to correct language from when siting plans were changed from Boardman to Heppner. Board consensus was to wait for the final version of the contract and hold a special session for approval.

Contract approval for Construction Manager/General Contractor for Circuit Courthouse

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The Board previously awarded the Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) contract to Bouten Construction at the January 22, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting. The contract has been reviewed by the design team and their legal counsel and is presented to the Board for approval.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the CM/GC contract as presented with Bouten Construction. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

North Morrow Vector Control District (NMVCD) Annual Report

Greg Barron, NMVCD Manager

2024 began with Greg Barron, North Morrow Vector Control District manager presenting at the Montana Mosquito and Vector Control Association providing them with information on the established NMVCD as Montana develops its own programs. Locally, West Nile Virus rates were down with positive test results leading to three applications of adulticide treatment in the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge which is unusual as abatement of mosquito larvae with larvicide is more commonly used.

NMVCD buildings are owned by the district, but on land leased from Port of Morrow. The Port has identified the need to relocate the NMVCD facilities and is working on a solution for both parties, but as NMVCD is outgrowing their facilities, this should work for both sides.

NMVCD Board of Trustees Appointments

Greg Barron, NMVCD Manager

Requesting to fill two positions on the Board of Trustees, Mr. Baron presented two nominees interested in serving on the Board. Following the unexpected passing of Board member, Len Greer, Jake Case, who is a member of the NMVCD Budget Committee, has expressed interest in the position.

Smokey Joe Wightman is a current Board of Trustees member and would like to serve another term.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to appoint Jake Case to position 5 of the North Morrow Vector Control District and Smokey Joe Wightman to position 2. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Juvenile Justice Update

Christy Kenny

Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) has been in the news recently as investigations are underway from failing to investigate abuse complaints. OYA director, Joe O'Leary, has been placed on administrative leave pending the investigation with Jana McLellan appointed as acting director. Youth served by OYA have typically exhausted their local programs with OYA providing residential and correctional programs for youth. Due to the sensitive nature of the investigation, Christy Kenny, Juvenile Department Director, did not provide more information at this time but is monitoring developments.

Boardman Senior Center Funding Request

Karen Pettigrew

During last spring's budget process, \$120,000 was budgeted to expand funding for senior citizen support. \$40,000 was specifically directed to South Morrow County Seniors Matter with the remaining money distributed geographically.

Commissioner Wenholtz motioned to release senior service funding and authorize the Finance Department to issue payment for Boardman Senior Center. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Legislative Updates

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) will be meeting tomorrow (March 20) to create a rule making committee for solar siting. Given Morrow County's experience with renewable energy with the largest amount of renewable energy projects, staff would like to submit a letter on behalf of Morrow County prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Wenholtz motioned to approve the letter to DLCD. Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion. Vote: 2 ayes, 1 opposed (Commissioner Peterson).

The Board previously directed staff to draft letters in opposition to the Oregon Wildfire Hazard Designation Map and the letters to Oregon Department of Forestry and Representative Greg Smith.

Commissioner Wenholtz motioned to approve the letters in opposition to the Oregon Wildfire Hazard Map. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) has issued opposition to HB3362 which would impose a 4% tax on retail sales of tires which would pay for rail transit, tire pollution, and wildlife crossings. The hearing was met with overwhelming opposition and the Board is asked if they want staff to take action in opposition to the bill.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to direct staff to craft a letter in opposition of HB3362 with Commissioner Peterson's potential testimony. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Correspondence

None

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Wenholz yielded the floor to Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorran.

Commissioner Dorran provided an update on HB2410 which would create a path for a small modular reactor (SMR) demonstration project. This is the first nuclear bill with bipartisan support and as data centers aren't the only local high energy use facility, casinos, farm irrigation, and more would benefit from the push for nuclear power.

Commissioner Wenholz requested Umatilla County staff draft a letter in support of HB2410 for the Morrow County Board of Commissioners to consider at the next meeting.

Adjourn

11:04 a.m.