

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
April 2, 2025
Upper Conference Room, Bartholomew Building
Heppner, Oregon

Present In Person Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Commissioner Gus Peterson, Matt Jensen, Valerie Ballard, Justin Nelson, Robin Canaday, Eric Imes, Rory Rowlette, Sue Gibbs, Kevin Ince, Lindsay Grogan; Non-Staff: Dean Robinson, Kimberly Lindsay, Melissa Coiner, Sharon Timms, Karen Cooley

Present Via Zoom Tami Ewing, Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Deona Siex, Amanda Kendrick, Mike Gorman, Jaylene Papineau, Vincent Guerrero, Rosemarie Kylo, Erin Anderson; Non-staff: Matthew Dixon, Sue Oliver, Aaron Palmquist, Brenda Proffitt, Andrea Di Salvo, Griffin Beach

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

9:02 a.m.

Public Comment

No comments in person or online

Consideration and Adoption of Agenda

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

Department Reports

Public Health report presented by Robin Canaday

Community Counseling Solutions report presented by Kimberly Lindsay and Melissa Coiner

Public Works report presented by Eric Imes and Rory Rowlette

Fair report presented by Sue Gibbs

District Attorney report presented by Justin Nelson

Human Resources report presented by Lindsay Grogan

Administrator's report presented by Matthew Jensen

Public Comment

The Board circled back to Public Comment due to earlier user end technical difficulties.

Sue Oliver of Irrigon spoke in support of funding for the Irrigon Senior Center, requested of the Board to support the Morrow County School District bond, and expressed her appreciation for the Columbia Development Authority (CDA) discussion on the agenda and restated her concern over Morrow County's representation on the CDA board.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to pull item b (2025 Wolf Compensation Grant Agreement) and approve items a (Minutes: March 19, 2025) and c (Invoice Approval: Rock Crushing).

Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

One substantial typo and additional errors were found in the Wolf Compensation Grant Agreement and addressed. Valerie Ballard, executive assistant, had already reached out to the Oregon Department of Agriculture regarding the errors and was waiting for a revised agreement.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the 2025, Wolf Compensation and Financial Assistance Grant, with the change of the correct year and scrivener's errors as have been identified by Ms. Ballard.

Commissioner Wenholz second the motion. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Business Items

Strategic Plan Update

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator; Matthew Dixon, Strategic Planning Consultant
The strategic planning project which will identify and prioritize large projects and initiatives throughout Morrow County will be driven by community input through surveys, workshops, and focus groups. There will be a series of meetings from April through June, with various stakeholders, the advisory committee, and the public.

Irrigon Senior Center Funding Request

Sharon Timms, Stokes Landing Irrigon Senior Center President; Karen Cooley, Treasurer
Stokes Landing Senior Center in Irrigon Oregon is primarily run by volunteers and serves area seniors with meals, entertainment, and lending medical equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs.

The senior center is able to keep expenses low due to volunteers, fundraising, grants, and donations, but needs additional moneys to pay for the two employed cooks, building expenses, and additional services the senior center would like to provide.

The \$40,000 request would use the second half of \$80,000 previously allocated to unspecified senior program support.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to release Senior Citizen Funds in the amount of \$40,000 and authorize payment for senior programs and services. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Approval of Master Funding Agreement

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The Master Funding Agreement has two documents, one being the Master Funding Agreement with the State responsible for \$12.575 million and the County paying the remainder. There is an additional \$170,000 commitment from the State which is reserved for project monitoring costs. The projection so far is the County has a 68% share of the building and being responsible for \$22.6 million with the state paying for 34% at an estimated \$12.4 million.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the Master Funding Agreement and authorize Chair Sykes to sign the documents. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Break 11:02 a.m.

Resume 11:09 a.m.

Consideration of Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM) Grant

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

In 2022, the County received a grant from ODEM in the amount of \$117,580 for an emergency back-up generator at the Irrigon Government Center. The project has faced various delays and with additional work and changes to cost of goods, the project is approximately \$30,000 more than the grant amount.

The deadline for the grant is June 30, 2025 for installation and the generator lead time is six months out. Staff are requesting the Board approve the County paying the estimated \$30,000 difference before requesting an extension on the grant deadline.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve staff pursuing an extension of the grant and to include up to an additional \$30,000 from County funds for the completion of the Irrigon Emergency Generator Project. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Credit Card Exception Request

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

As part of the employee appreciation event held in January, four gift cards to local restaurants were purchased as service awards using County issued credit cards at County Administrator, Matthew Jensen's, direction. This direction violated the credit card policy but was an unintended oversight. County policy doesn't prohibit purchase of gift cards, but due to unique risks, purchasing gift cards with credit cards prohibits most gift card purchases. Mr. Jensen brought the exception request to the Board but is prepared to personally pay for the gift cards if that is the direction the Board chooses.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to direct County Administrator to reimburse the County in the amount of \$302.44 due to violation of County Credit Card Policy. Commissioner Sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

LUBGWMA Community Outreach Budget Request

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator; Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

The Lower Umatilla Basin Ground Water Management Area (LUBGWMA) has contracted with Oregon Consensus, a community outreach group to coordinate social media and communication on the water and nitrate issue. They are requesting a \$4,000 contribution from both Morrow and Umatilla Counties for phase III.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the LUBGWMA Community Outreach Budget Request in the amount of \$4,000. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Resolution R-2025-02 PERS

Lindsay Grogan, HR Director

The County currently provides retirement benefits to anyone hired on or after July 1, 2020 in a 401a plan while employees hired before that date are on a defined benefit pension plan. As part of a long term strategy to ensure consistent benefits across the County, this is a request to provide PERS to employees hired after July 1, 2020. This has been finalized with union groups, and this would allow for the inclusion of non-union employees as well.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve Resolution R-2025-02, authorizing Morrow County to transition eligible employees hired on or after July 1, 2020, from the County's 401(a) retirement plan to the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) and to proceed with the necessary steps to enter into a PERS coverage agreement. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Compensation Board Recommendation

Lindsay Grogan, HR Director

After meeting on March 17, the Compensation Board recommends a 2.9% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the Treasurer, Clerk, and Justice of the Peace. For the Board of Commissioners, the Compensation Board recommends increasing the annual salary to \$77,000 plus a 2.9% COLA. The Compensation Board recommends increasing the District Attorney stipend from \$16,544 to \$25,000 per year.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to forward the Elected Officials compensation as recommended by the Compensation Board to the Budget Committee. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

County Volunteer Policy Handbook

Lindsay Grogan, HR Director

Commissioner Wenholtz found a grammatical error in the draft of the Volunteer Policy Handbook saying, "our Morrow County" and noted the possessive should be removed.

Commissioner Wenholtz motioned to approve the Morrow County Volunteer Handbook with a minor correction to the language to provide guidance, policies, and expectations for volunteers serving Morrow County, effective April 2, 2025.

Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval

Letter of Support House Bill 2410

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

At the previous Morrow County Board of Commissioners meeting, Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorrnan requested a letter of support from Morrow County Commissioners

for HB 2410 which will allow the Energy Facility Siting Counsel (EFSC) to issue a site certificate for a small modular reactor energy facility demonstration project in Umatilla County.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the letter in support of HB 2410. Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Notice of Intent – Sunrise Solar

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Out of an abundance of caution, Commissioner Wenholz declared a potential conflict of interest as a Board member for Umatilla Electric Coop (UEC). UEC does not currently have a service contract with the Sunrise Solar project, but there is a remote possibility that they will work together.

Sunrise Solar is a proposed solar voltaic energy project approximately one mile northeast of the City of Lone, covering 6,981 acres.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the letter and direct staff to send it to the Siting Officer for the Energy Facility Siting Counsel for the State of Oregon. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Additional discussion followed and Commissioner Peterson requested to hold a work session given the amount of solar project in the area.

Chair Sykes asked Assessor, Mike Gorman, to create a spreadsheet on expected income and invite representatives from the Department of Revenue to attend the meeting, scheduled for April 30.

Lower Willow Creek Managed Aquifer Feasibility Study Invoice

Kevin Ince

A motion was made at the September 4, 2024 Board of Commissioners meeting to contribute to the feasibility study on the condition that landowners contribute as well. Review of the invoice reflects Morrow County and Port of Morrow sharing the costs without landowner participation. As this could potentially increase income substantially for farmers, Commissioner Wenholz expressed his opinion that landowners should also contribute.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to reject invoice payment of OWRD-2024-3 submitted by Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District. Chair Sykes seconded the motion and Commissioner Peterson abstained.

Columbia Development Authority Meeting Protocols Discussion

Gus Peterson, Commissioner

The Board discussed how to improve efficiency of Columbia Development Authority (CDA) meetings and the CDA adopting formal meeting rules. No action was taken.

Fiscal Agent Agreement for Clean Water Consortium

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

Commissioner Peterson motioned to table the Fiscal Agent Agreement until the April 16 meeting. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Correspondence

None

Commissioner Reports

Brief reports on Commissioner activity were provided.

Adjourn

11:35 a.m.