

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
May 21, 2025
Don Adams Conference Room, Irrigon Government Center
Irrigon, Oregon

Present In Person Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Commissioner Gus Peterson, Valerie Ballard, Matthew Jensen, Justin Nelson, Brian Snyder, Kevin Ince, Tamra Mabbott, Lindsay Grogan, Corey Sweeney; non-staff: Lisa Pratt, Mike Hughes, and eight members of the public.

Present Via Zoom Mike Gorman, Amanda Kendrick, Vince Guerrero, Sandi Pointer, Robin Canaday, Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Deona Siex, Sarah Rhea; John Bowles Non-staff: Fierce Catoc, Brad Bingenheimer, Kathy Wilson, Aaron Landau, Autumn Morgan, Griffin Beach, Aaron Palmquist, Julie Jensen, Lisa Mittelsdorf

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

9:02 a.m.

Public Comment

Walt Gerard of Irrigon addressed the Board regarding concerns with personal safety, drug related activity, and squatters on his property and asked for more help from the Sheriff's Office.

Commissioner Sykes reminded the audience that phone numbers and email addresses of Commissioners are provided at the bottom of the meeting agenda.

Consideration and Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Peterson motioned to accept the agenda with the removal of item 6.b. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Special Business Item

Financial Audit Fiscal Year 2024

Kevin Ince, Finance Director; Kathy Wilson, Brad Bingenheimer, and Fierce Catoc from SingerLewak

The audit for fiscal year 2024 (FY24) showed no material weaknesses or deficiencies, with three small over expenditures identified and a few errors in historical information, but nothing indicative of weakness or system breakdown. Capital assets increased by roughly \$7 million primarily through airport construction and vehicle and equipment acquisition, bringing the net amount to \$76 million. Net pension liability increased by about \$1 million with a total reported of \$31 million. The benchmark for fund balance is at least 50% while Morrow County has about 86% which exceeds standards.

Previously identified deficiencies, such as the lack of disaster recovery plan are being addressed by staff and while a plan is not in place yet, as it is being worked on, the finding is not repeated. If the next audit shows insufficient progress, it could be readdressed.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to accept the financial statements and audit report for FY24. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Department Reports

The Planning Department monthly report was presented by Tamra Mabbott

The Sheriff's Office monthly report was presented by Brian Snyder

The Weed quarterly report was presented by Corey Sweeney

The Veterans Services report was presented by Amanada Kenderick

The Justice Court quarterly report was presented by Judge Diehl

The Accounts Payable report was rescheduled to June 4

The Treasurer's monthly report was submitted by Jaylene Papineau

The County Administrator's report was presented by Matthew Jensen

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Peterson motioned to accept the consent agenda. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Recess

10:10 a.m.

Resume

10:16 a.m.

Business Items

Public Health Officer Contract

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The Public Health Officer is currently considered a contractor receiving a monthly stipend, and this contract will change it to a hourly contracted employee. This change is due to changes in insurance requirements and Dr. Emily Jack, who fills the role as Public Health Officer, also provides family planning services, which is a contracted position. The dual role complicates Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) requirements and transitioning the Public Health Officer to a contracted employee will remedy those issues.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the contract with Dr. Emily Jack for Public Health Officer as a contracted employee. Commissioner Wenholz seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Request to Modify Funding Motion for Lower Willow Creek Ground Water Recharge Project

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator; Kevin Payne, Morrow County Soil & Water Conservation District; Kip Krebs, Landowner

The Board was previously approached to help fund a ground water recharge project for the Lower Willow Creek which was approved on the condition that landowners also financially contribute. When the Board received the invoice from the Morrow County Soil Water Conservation District, Port of Morrow (POM) was covering the other portion instead of

landowners. Due to the financial contributions not matching the motion made by the Board, the Board decided against paying Morrow County's portion.

It is anticipated that after the initial funding, landowners will contribute in phase 2 of the recharge project. The total amount of water for water rights is 1.837 billion gallons shared between Morrow and Gilliam Counties, encompassing 1697 irrigated acres in Morrow County and 400 acres in Gilliam County.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to rescind the funding motion made on September 4, 2024, with regards to the Willow Creek Ground Water Recharge Project. Commissioner Sykes seconded.

In the following discussion, Commissioner Wenholz reiterated his stance that this will benefit businesses and how they generate revenue and landowners who financially benefit should contribute.

Commissioner Peterson saw potential for increased tax revenue and for what farming can be done along Willow Creek.

Vote: 2 in favor (Peterson and Sykes) 1 opposed (Wenholz). Motion carried.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to fund the Lower Willow Creek Groundwater Recharge project in the amount of \$20,000. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 aye (Peterson and Sykes) 1 opposed (Wenholz).

Consideration of Annexation Request

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The County has received a fully legal and conforming annexation request from the Columbia Development Authority (CDA) under ORS 198.857 which includes special districts and therefore includes Boardman Fire Rescue District. Morrow County Commissioners are legally obligated to hold a public hearing no sooner than 20 days and no later than 50 days after the request is made.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to hold the public hearing to consider CDA petition for annexation into the Boardman Fire Rescue District on June 11 at 9:00 a.m. in Irrigon. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval

Legislative Updates

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director; Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

House Bill 2165 (HB 2165), which relates to rural water supplies, has passed through the House and has moved to the Joint Ways and Means Committee. The staff recommendation is to support HB2165 as it particularly benefits residents in the Lower Umatilla Ground Water Management Area (LUBGWMA).

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to sign the letter in support of HB2165. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

House Bill 1154 (HB 1154) relates to ground water. Commissioner Peterson said some points in the bill are great, others less so, while Commissioner Wenholz stated he is not in favor of the bill. No action was taken, but Commissioner Peterson committed to monitoring the bill's progress.

Fairground Arena Wall Rehab Contract

Vince Guerrero, Assistant County Administrator

\$89,445 in Capital funds were allocated to the arena wall repair in 2024 with the intent of staff completing the work. The project was delayed to 2025, and the project went from in house to seeking outside bids. A Request for Proposals was issued, and one proposal was submitted by Silver Creek Contracting in the amount of \$98,072.83 after negotiations. The Board is asked to approve using the \$89,455 in the fair capital projects fund and use the reserve fund for the remaining \$8,637.83. A supplemental budget will need to be completed as the funds are available but not budgeted for in FY25.

Commissioner Wenholz noted a possible redundancy in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the contract and a typo in section 8, requesting revisions.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the contract with Silver Creek Construction LLC in the amount of \$98,072.83 for Fairground Arena Wall Rehabilitation Project and direct the County Administrator to execute the documents with changes to the contract as discussed. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval

Commissioner Peterson motioned to direct staff to prepare a supplemental budget to account for the additional \$8,637.83 necessary to fund this project from either reserves or other capital resources as best determined by consensus of the County Administrator and Finance Director. Commissioner Wenholz seconded.

Kevin Ince, Finance Director, clarified that this was not included at all in the FY25 budget and requested adjusting the motion to direct staff to prepare a supplemental budget to cover the costs of the project.

Commissioner Peterson amended his motion to direct staff to create a supplemental budget to get the funds needed for the project. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Correspondence

A thank you card from KC Anderson, Morrow County Fair and Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo Queen, was shared to the Board expressing her appreciation for sending her to the Miss Rodeo Oregon Queen Clinic.

A letter requesting funds from the Heppner Rural Fire Protection District was distributed to the Board.

Commissioner Reports

Brief reports on Commissioner activity were provided.

A Special Session was scheduled for Tuesday, May 27, 9:00 a.m.

Executive Session

11:08 a.m.

Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(h), which allows the Commission to meet in executive session to consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

And

ORS 192.660(2)(d), which allows the Commission to meet in executive session to conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations.

Action is expected at the end of the Executive Session.

Resume

11:54 a.m.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to authorize the Human Resources Director to open contract negotiations with the Morrow County Sheriff's Office Association related to scheduling and overtime provisions. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Adjourn

11:55 p.m.