

**Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
February 4, 2026
Upper Conference Room, Bartholomew Building
Heppner, Oregon**

Present In Person Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Matthew Jensen, Valerie Ballard, Justin Nelson, Kevin Ince, Mike Gorman, Vince Guerrero, Chelsey Gover-Price, Tamra Mabbott, Rory Rowlette; non-staff: Dale Boyd, Kandi Boyd

Present Via Zoom Raymi Cain, Sandi Pointer, Angel Stanger, Latosha Hedman, Judith Santiago, Erin Anderson, Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Tylynn Cimmiyotti, Rose Kylo, Commissioner Gus Peterson; non-staff: Andrea Di Salvo, Isavel Gonzales, Jessica Rose, Karen Pettigrew, Brad Bingenheimer, Patrick Bestebreuer, Stephanie Case, Julie Jensen, Kathy Wilson

Call to Order

9:02 a.m.

Public Comment

Kandi Boyd, Heppner, Former Morrow County employee: Ms. Boyd addressed the Board to share her experience with the retirement system. Ms. Boyd's last day was December 16 and has yet to receive a retirement payment. Ms. Boyd has emailed the Board, county administrator, and human resources (HR) and said she has only heard from HR and Commissioner Peterson replied to her this morning. She asked them to consider how a situation like hers would impact their lives, stating that she was disappointed that the issue remained unresolved.

County Administrator, Matthew Jensen, apologized, adding he is pushing for daily updates on the situation and will reach out to Ms. Boyd directly. Internal processes are being reviewed to prevent this from occurring again.

Consideration and Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to adopt the agenda as presented. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Wenholz, Sykes) 1 absent (Peterson) motion carried.

Department Reports

The Assessment & Tax report was presented by Mike Gorman

The Public Works report was presented by Eric Imes

The Administrator's report was presented by Matthew Jensen

Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes: November 7, 2025; December 3, 2025; December 30, 2025
- b. Approval of Sole-Source Fiber Transport Services for County Fairgrounds Connectivity
- c. UCSO - JAN-MAR 2026 Jail Bed Invoice

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the consent agenda as presented. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Wenholz, Sykes) 1 absent (Peterson) motion carried.

Business Items

Financial Statements & Auditors Report, Year End June 30, 2025

Kevin Ince, Finance Director; Brad Bigenheimer, SingerLewak, Kathy Wilson, Singer Lewak (auditors)

The audit for fiscal year 2024-25 was filed by the December 31 deadline, which is an improvement over last year. Total assets at the end of the year were \$152.9 million, deferred outflows of resources \$4.9 million, total liabilities \$35 million, leaving the County in a net position of \$122.83 million which is an increase over the previous year. Revenues decreased from \$53.5 million to \$49.4 million, while expenses increased from \$37.9 million to \$42.3 million.

No significant deficiencies or weaknesses in internal controls were found based on Government Auditing Standards. The Federal Compliance Report did have one finding relating to timely submission of report of Congressionally Mandated Programs.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to accept the Fiscal Year 2025 financial statements and auditors report. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote 2 in favor (Wenholz and Sykes) 1 absent (Peterson) motion carried.

Letter of Support for IMPACTS Grant Application

Jessica Rose, Morrow County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC)

Jessica Rose, LPSCC Coordinator, applied on behalf of Morrow and Umatilla Counties for the Improving People's Access to Community-based Treatment, Supports and Services (IMPACTS) Grant which serves frequent utilizers of emergency rooms and jails, to stabilize them and provide them with needed resources. This is a pass-through grant with funds coming to Community Counseling Solutions through the County and Ms. Rose is requesting a letter of support from the Board for the grant application.

Commissioner Wenholz suggested making two corrections to the letter. "There is a demonstrated shortage of supports and services for individuals" and "Given the stated issue and desire to improve outcomes, this joint application, if approved, will develop a comprehensive, evidence based, wraparound services program aimed at improving services and reducing recidivism amongst those in the identified population."

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve signing the letter of support with the changes requested. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Wenholz and Sykes) 1 absent (Peterson). Motion carried.

Road Budget Reallocation of Funds to Expedite a Tractor Truck Purchase

Eric Imes, Public Works Director; Kevin Ince, Finance Director

The Road Budget reallocation request is due to a 1988 Kenworth truck facing significant engine failure. A budget adjustment is not needed, as funds will come from a planned fencing project which can be postponed.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the reallocation of funds to purchase a new tractor truck and appoint the County Administrator to affect the purchase and payment. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Wenholz and Sykes) 1 absent (Peterson). Motion carried.

ZeaChem Property – Foreclosure Update

Mike Gorman, Assessor

ZeaChem is an experimental ethanol processing facility on leased Port of Morrow property with over \$1.1 million in delinquent taxes. There is a Circuit Court judgement waiting that will grant the County the assets, and as the assets are on Port property, the Port is interested in the outcome. Mike Gorman, Assessor, has met with Port officials who believe there are additional interested parties. Due to it being on industrial property, assets are not required to go to auction, and the County can dispose of it as it sees fit.

Wolf Depredation Advisory Committee Compensation Recommendations

Valerie Ballard, Executive Assistant

The Morrow County Wolf Depredation Advisory Committee met on January 13 to review livestock producer claim applications for compensation of non-lethal preventative measures. Morrow County was awarded \$50,000 in preventative funds and received \$117,582 in claims. The committee did its best to distribute funds fairly and are requesting Board approval.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve the compensation recommendations as presented for non-lethal prevention. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Wenholz and Sykes) 1 absent (Peterson). Motion carried.

Consideration of Correspondence – BNSF Opposes Proposed UP-NS Merger

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

BNSF Railway is looking for parties to oppose a merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern and requested the Board of Commissioners to support the opposition.

The Board's consensus was to refrain from acting on the request.

Consideration of the City of Irrigon Land Use Notice AMD #266-26

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Commissioner Wenholz noted a "strange situation" as he and his mother-in-law both own property in the City of Irrigon.

County Counsel, Justin Nelson, explained there is a rule of necessity which allows for a tie break or vote despite a potential personal interest. Commissioner Wenholz responded that this is not a necessity, it is best not to participate.

Commissioner Peterson joined the conversation via Zoom at 10:04 a.m.

Commissioner Wenholz recused himself as he owns property in the City of Irrigon.

Commissioner Peterson motioned that we have a statement of support from the County to be submitted by 5:00 p.m. tonight. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Peterson and Sykes) 1 recused (Wenholz). Motion carried.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to direct staff to write and sign the letter of support. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Peterson and Sykes) 1 recused (Wenholz). Motion carried.

Correspondence

No correspondence

Commissioner Reports

Brief reports on Commissioner activity were provided.

Recess

10:10 a.m.

Resume

10:15 a.m.

Executive Session

The Board met in Executive Session pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2)(a) which allows the governing body of a public body to hold an executive session for the purpose of considering the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent.

And

Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(d) to conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations.

Return to Open Session

11:08 a.m.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to authorize the County Administrator to extend an employment offer for the Principal Planner position up to Grade 26, Step 7. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to authorize the negotiation team to respond to the Sergeants Association proposal as discussed in executive session. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Adjourn

11:12 a.m.