

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
March 18, 2026
Don Adams Conference Room, Irrigon Government Center
Irrigon, Oregon

Present In Person Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Commissioner Gus Peterson, Matt Jensen, Justin Nelson, Valerie Ballard, Kevin Ince, Brian Snyder, Amanda Kendrick; non-staff: Brandon Hammond, Jonathan Tallman

Present Via Zoom Michelle Kestler, Sandi Pointer, Deona Siex, Mike Gorman, Bobbi Childers, Vince Guerrero, Yvonne Morter, Sabrina Bailey-Cave, Sarah Rea, Latosha Hedman, Rose Kylo, Amanda Kendrick, Robin Canaday; non-staff: Andrea Di Salvo, Julie Kensen, Mary Killion, Torrie Griggs, Griffin Beach, Erika Morton, Stephanie Case, Phil Newton, Natalia Wight

Call to Order

9:02 a.m.

Public Comment

In Person

Jonathan Tallman from Boardman, Oregon, told the Board that he had been contacted by Public Works Director, Eric Imes, the day prior about Mr. Tallman's property on 450 Laurel Lane and County access. For the record, the County has access through his property already granted, and Mr. Tallman added that he has emailed Planning Director, Tamra Mabbott, about Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) issues and how they have been communicated with the City of Boardman with the UGB and Transportation System Plan (TSP).

Mr. Tallman expressed the opinion that a "back door deal" is happening and requested related communications in addition to a sit-down conversation.

County Administrator Matthew Jensen responded to Mr. Tallman's comment and said he would contact Mr. Tallman after the Board of Commissioners meeting.

Via Zoom

Phil Newton with Oregon Teamsters 223 introduced himself to the Board. Mr. Newton, with Austin DiPaolo, will be negotiating on behalf of the Sheriff's Association and visiting in-person April 2nd and 3rd.

Consideration and Adoption of Agenda

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

Department Reports

The Accounts Payable monthly report was submitted by Kevin Ince

The Planning Department monthly report was presented by Tamra Mabbott with George Cress

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

The Treasurer's monthly report was submitted by Jaylene Papineau
The Veteran's Services quarterly report was presented by Amanda Kendrick
The County Administrator's report was presented by Matthew Jensen

Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes: January 21, 2026
- b. 7th Amendment to IGA \$185824 OHA Financing Public Health Services
- c. Out of State Travel Request: Veterans Services Officer NACVSO Conference
- d. Amazon Data Services Road Use and Maintenance Agreement

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Business Items

Electrical Inspection Services Presentation

Brandon Hammond, City of Boardman Manager; Glenn McIntire, City of Boardman Building Official

Morrow County contracts building inspections through the City of Boardman with electrical inspections and permitting done by the Oregon Building Codes Division. City of Boardman is proposing Morrow County take over electrical inspections and permitting from the State and contract with Boardman for those services.

No action taken. The City of Boardman will return to a future meeting for the Board to vote on the subject.

Comment Letter to Energy Facility Siting Council Regarding Notice of Intent Filed by MN8 for the Wells Spring Solar Project

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Commissioner Wenholz declared a potential conflict of interest as a member of the Umatilla Electric Coop (UEC) Board of Directors. While UEC currently does not have any agreements with MN8, future agreements are possible.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) has been filed with the Energy Facility Siting Council for the proposed Wells Spring Solar Project by MN8 Energy. The proposed letter is the County's response to the NOI and the result of collaboration between the Planning Director, Public Works Director, and Weed Program Manager.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the letter for the Notice of Intent comments for the Wells Spring Solar Project. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Consideration to Appoint Morrow County Planning Commission Member Representing Irrigon Area

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Charlene Cooley has submitted her resignation from the Planning Commission and after advertising the vacancy, Brian George submitted a letter of interest.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to appoint Brian George to finish out Charlene Cooley's term and then begin a new term on January 1, 2027, for the Planning Commission. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Consideration to Appoint 2 Members of the Morrow County Compensation Board

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

Per Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 204.112, each governing body is required to appoint a compensation board to review the compensation of elected officials. The Morrow County Compensation Board can range from 3-5 members and has two vacancies after one term has ended and another member moved out of the area.

After advertising the openings, two applicants expressed interest: Brandon Hammond, who is City Manager of the City of Boardman, and Edith Velasco, a long-time resident of Morrow County currently working for the Morrow County Public Health Department. Concern has been raised about a County staff member being a part of the Compensation Board, however there is nothing in ORS prohibiting that.

Commissioner Wenholtz motioned to appoint Brandon Hammond to the Compensation Board with the term ending December 31, 2029. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Morrow County Triennial Report

Robin Canaday, Public Health Director; Kevin Ince, Finance Director

Oregon Health Authority (OHA) performs a full review of the Public Health Department every three years. An error in Vital Records was found and quickly resolved, a missing invoice was discovered and promptly paid, and there was an outdated cost analysis, and OHA provided an updated cost analysis tool.

Morrow County contracts with Umatilla County for food, pool, and lodging inspections and there were three findings. One finding stemming from late fees applied to temporary restaurant permits, an 82% inspection rate with a standard of 90% to meet compliance, and the third was not conducting re-inspections within OHA's required time frame.

Ratification of 2025-27 Sergeants Association Collective Bargaining Agreement

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The Sergeants Association's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) was tentatively approved by the Board of Commissioners on February 18. The Sergeants Association has since ratified the agreement, and it is now presented to the Board for final approval.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to ratify the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Morrow County and the Morrow County Sheriff's Sergeants Association. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Sergeants Association Bonus Letter Ratification

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

Separate from the CBA Ratification but a part of the agreement, each individual in the Sergeant's Association will receive a ratification bonus of \$1,500.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the Sergeant's Association ratification bonus letter and authorize staff to proceed with processing the bonus on a separate check from the standard payroll process. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Consideration to update the County Personnel Policy 7f. Gifts and Gratuities

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The passage of House Bill 4161 reverses the ruling made by Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGE) regarding gifts and gratuities as an effort to restore "common sense and clarity". The proposed policy update in accordance to ORS 244.040 allows the County to provide intermittent food for officials and staff participating in meetings or training as well as items or merchandise as long as the value does not exceed \$100 per calendar year.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve and adopt the update to the County's Policy 7F. Gifts and Gratuities. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Consideration of Fiscal Year 2027 Reclassification Requests

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

Sixteen reclassification requests were submitted by employees, two of which have previously been acted on by the Board. The Classification Review committee is comprised of the County Administrator, Human Resources Director, and Finance Director. The committee recommends the following classification requests for inclusion in the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget:

FTE Request:

- Public Works – Servicing Mechanic (Grade 20)

Reclassification Requests:

- Public Health – Public Health Data Coordinator (Grade 18 Step 5 to Grade 19, Step 6)
- Public Health – Administrative Clerk to Senior Administrative Clerk (Grade 10 Step 5 to Grade 12 Step 5)
- Parole & Probation – Work Crew Supervisor (Grade 16 Step 2 to Grade 17 Step 4)
- Planning – Planning Technician to Associate Planner (Grade 19 Step 4 to Grade 23 Step 1)
- Justice Court – Senior Court Clerk to Office Manager (Grade 14 Step 9 to Grade 17 Step 6)

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the Public Health Data Coordinator reclassification effective immediately. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the proposed recommended classification requests for FY2027 to be included in the proposed budget for FY2027. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Consideration to Cancel MGMT for Compensation Study Services

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator; Kevin Ince, Finance Director

This is a request to cancel the contract with MGMT for compensation study services. Throughout the process, staff have questioned several times the reliability of the process. For example, one recommendation was an 8.9% increase to all employees, which could not be verified. Market comparables are inconsistent or unreliable with data comparing local salary compensation with Morrow County's own salaries.

Staff have essentially taken on the consultant's job and with recent hiring, now have the bandwidth to conduct their own study. Compensation reviews are required every three years, and third parties are not required.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to authorize staff to terminate the contract with MGMT and direct staff to evaluate alternative options for completing compensation study efforts. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: 2 in favor (Wenholz, Sykes) 1 opposed (Peterson) motion carried.

County Port Strategic Investment Program Intergovernmental Agreement

Gus Peterson, Commissioner

The County and Port of Morrow recently held a joint work session to discuss Strategic Investment Programs and a recent intergovernmental agreement (IGA) draft proposed by the County and rejected by the Port. Commissioner Peterson asked the Board to consider the best alternative to a negotiated agreement if an agreement cannot be reached.

Chair Sykes drafted a summary of the joint work session and asked the Board to review the summary during a short recess.

Recess

10:55 a.m.

Resume

11:04 a.m.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to appoint Commissioner Wenholz, Assessor Mike Gorman, and County Administrator Matthew Jensen to represent Morrow County in the work group with the Port Strategic Investment Program. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Data Center Study Proposal

Gus Peterson, Commissioner; Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

ECONorthwest has a proposal for a study on the impact of data centers. There were conflicting opinions amongst the Commissioners on the study, ranging from the study providing valuable, objective information on data centers, addressing constituent concerns and providing leaders with knowledge for future decisions, to feeling that the study proposal has a predetermined outcome and is outside the County's purview.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the data center study as proposed by ECONorthwest. Motion died for lack of second.

Correspondence

None

Commissioner Reports

Brief reports on Commissioner activity were provided.

Executive Session

11:47 a.m.

The Board met in Executive Session pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a) – To consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent.

Return to Open Session

11:53 a.m.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to allow District Attorney Justin Nelson to offer a position to the applicant discussed in Executive Session as Deputy District Attorney 3, Step 11. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Adjourn

11:53 a.m.