

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting
May 6, 2026
Upper Conference Room, Bartholomew Building
Heppner, Oregon

Present In Person Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Commissioner Gus Peterson, Valerie Ballard, Matthew Jensen, Justin Nelson, Kevin Ince, Mike Gorman, Rory Rowlette, Pat Keeley, Michelle Kestler, John Bowles, Kristin Bowles, Vince Guerrero; non-staff: Ron McKinnis
Present Via Zoom Rose Kylo, Deona Siex, Amanda Kendrick. Erin Anderson, Steven Davis, Yvonne Morter, Latosha Hedeman, Raymi Cain, John Bowles; non-staff: Daniel Kearns, Andrea Di Salvo, Torrie Griggs, Erika Morton, Julie Jensen

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

9:01 a.m.

Public Comment

No Comment

Consideration and Adoption of Agenda

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

Department Reports

The Assessment and Tax report was presented by Mike Gorman
The Finance Department report was presented by Kevin Ince
The Public Works report was presented by Rory Rowlette
The County Administrator report was presented by Matthew Jensen

Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes: February 18, 2026 Land Use Hearing; February 20, 2026 Special Session; March 4, 2026 Regular Session
- b. Annual Authorization to Invest
- c. ~~On-Call Engineering & Surveying Services Contract~~
- d. Morrow County Public Transit Contract Award for One ADA Accessible Transit Van
- e. Intergovernmental Agreement with Oregon Health Authority and Sole Source Provider Contract with Community Counseling Solutions
- f. North Transfer Station Lease Agreement
- g. Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Fy26 Quarter 4 Jail Bed Invoice
- h. Sheriff's Office Out of State Travel Request
- i. Thompson Rock Pit Agreement
- j. Approve Stage 4 Budget and Contract Amendment with GSI Water Solutions

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the consent agenda excluding item 5c. On-Call Engineering & Surveying Services Contract. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

On Call Engineering & Surveying Services Contract

Chair Sykes asked if this would affect the County Administrator's spending limit. Kevin Ince, Finance Director, clarified that the contract only creates a contractual relationship. Staff have followed the procurement process to have an engineer on hand if the need arises and any specific tasks that exceed an individual's authorization would go before the Board for budgetary consideration.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the on-call engineering and surveying service agreement with Keller Associates and authorize execution of the contract. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Public Hearing

Request for Special Procurement Determination: Recording & Event Logging System Upgrade for Emergency Dispatch

John Bowles, Sheriff; Kevin Ince, Finance Director

The Board of Commissioners, as the local contract review board, can designate procurement as a special procurement under the Morrow County Procurement and Contracting Policy. This is a joint procurement request as the recording and event logging system is utilized by both Morrow County Sheriff's Office and Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. With Board approval and subject to funding, the cost of the system will be included in the fiscal year 2026-27 budget and split 50/50 between Morrow and Umatilla Counties.

Public Comment

No Comments

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the request for a special procurement of the emergency dispatch & event logging system upgrades and authorize the Morrow County Sheriff's Office to proceed in coordination with Umatilla County. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to authorize the County Administrator to sign and execute contracts and documents necessary to complete the procurement. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Business Items

Kunze Right of Way Dedication

Rory Rowlette, Deputy Public Works Director; Ron McKinnis, McKinnis Engineering
Morrow County has been working with Ron McKinnis of McKinnis Engineering and a local developer to dedicate an additional 10-feet of right away along Kunze Road.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve right-of-way dedication of Kunze Ln section as presented. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Liability Insurance Deductible Proposal for Fiscal Year 2026-27

Kevin Ince, Finance Director; Michelle Kestler, Finance Manager

The Finance Department has been looking for opportunities to manage and lower overhead costs of the County. Michelle Kestler, Finance Manager, found the general and auto liability aggregate of \$20,000 and such a low deductible exceeds need. The conclusion after reviewing multiple plans was that going to \$50,000 would save the County between \$80,000-110,000 annually.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the transition to a \$50,000 per-occurrence liability deductible for the County's insurance program beginning FY27 policy year and authorize the Finance Department to continue pursuing insurance related cost-saving measures.

Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Morrow County Public Transit Discretionary Grant Request

Pat Keeley, Transit Supervisor

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has been looking to expand its greater transit initiative. Currently, there is no connection between the City of Boardman and The Dalles and Morrow County Public Transit (MCPT) is in the position to apply and perform the service if awarded the grant.

This is proposed as a pilot program to ensure sustainability, and once the program is in place, a rider could go from Ontario, Oregon to the coast via public transit while also connecting small pioneer towns to transit access.

Commissioner Wenholz motioned to approve grant application for STIF discretionary funds to support Morrow County Public Transit pilot project. Commissioner Peterson seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Budget Adjustment Transfer of Appropriations

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

The proposed budget adjustment is a transfer of appropriations from the Contingency Fund to materials and services and personnel in the Fair Fund. This does exhaust the remaining contingency balance but is necessary to support operations through the end of the fiscal year.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve resolution R-2026-10 transferring appropriations from operating contingency and adjusting the budget as presented therein. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

ORD-2026-06 Amendment to Ordinance MC-03-06 Morrow County Solid Waste Management Plan

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator; Justin Nelson, County Counsel

The Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) adopted in 2006 limits the use of solid waste fees and licenses to only be used for solid waste expenditures. Prior to adoption, funds were allocated to the General Fund and used to support other groups and this continued after the adoption of the plan.

To ensure compliance, the proposed Ordinance ORD-2026-06 amends the SWMP providing consistently between the ordinance and historic practice.

Justin Nelson, County Counsel, read the ordinance in full and then by title only.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to adopt ORD-2026-06 amending MC-03-06 and the Morrow County Solid Waste Management Plan through a full reading of the ordinance. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Request for Remote Work Exception – Deputy District Attorney

Justin Nelson, District Attorney

Morrow County has been without a Deputy District Attorney (DDA) for over 1.5 years. Former DDA, Zach Williams left Morrow County to help his family in Washington but is interested in returning to work for the County in a remote/hybrid schedule. This would be considered as a one-off exception as he is a known entity and due to the length of time the position has been available.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to authorize allowing remote work for current Deputy District Attorney job posting. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Compensation Board Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2026-27

Matthew Jensen, County Administrator

The elected officials Compensation Board met on April 17, 2026. The Compensation Board is recommending a broad 2.7% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase for the Commissioners, Assessor, Clerk, Justice of the Peace, and Treasurer positions. The Board also recommends an additional 2.3% increase to the Commissioners, Assessor, Clerk, Justice of the Peace, and Sheriff positions, an additional 1% for the Sheriff to prevent compression issues, and increase the District Attorney stipend by 5% to \$26,250.

Commissioner Peterson motioned to forward the Elected Officials compensation package as presented with the corrections Administrator Jensen provided to the Budget Committee. Commissioner Wenholtz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Correspondence

No correspondence

Commissioner Reports

Brief reports on Commissioner activity were provided

Recess

10:39 a.m.

Resume

10:46 a.m.

Executive Session

The Board met in Executive Session pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a), which allows the Commission to meet in executive session to consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent.

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.

ORS 192.660 (2)(g) Which allows the Board to consider preliminary negotiations involving matters of trade or commerce in which the governing body is in competition with governing bodies in other states or nations.

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

Return to Open Session

Commissioner Peterson motioned to approve the Sheriff's Office to make an employment offer for Patrol Deputy at Grade 21, Step 11. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.

Adjourn

12:13 p.m.