

UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Present: Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo, Chair
 Commissioner Donna Beverage
 Commissioner Paul Anderes

Commissioner Scarfo opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was given with all three Commissioners present.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no additions made to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Scarfo asked that public comment be limited to two-minutes per comment.

Irene Gilbert, 2310 Adams Avenue, La Grande, addressed the Commissioners with her concerns regarding B2H. She provided a copy of her comments to the Commissioners and Administrative Officer Burgess for the record. Ms. Gilbert is very concerned about the site certificate amendments and believes they will have significant negative impact on the community.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

JRI Grant Award

Valerie Schlichting, Victim Assistance Program Director, presented the JRI Grant Award to the Commissioners for their consideration.

This grant agreement is between the State of Oregon - Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) and Union County for the purpose of funding Justice Reinvestment programs.

Total grant funds are in the amount of \$357,940 and is effective January 1, 2024 through March 31, 2026.

**Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the JRI Grant Award as presented.
Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

VOCA Grant Award

Valerie Schlichting, Victim Assistance Program Director, presented the VOCA Grant Award to the Commissioners for their consideration.

This grant agreement is between the Oregon Department of Justice and Union County which provides emergency funds for victims in Union County, travel and training, supplies and also funds the Victims Assistance Program Director position.

Total grant funds are in the amount of \$200,374 and is effective October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2025.

Commissioner Beverage made a motion to approve the VOCA Grant Award as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Sheriff's Department Update

Sheriff Cody Bowen addressed the Commissioners with an update regarding the limit on the possession of fentanyl proposed by legislation, changing the misdemeanor levels. This gives law enforcement more teeth to pose consequences and to up the game on their end.

About a month ago, the Sheriff's Office decided to reup the drug task force team. This is the second time he has spoken publicly about this. The Sheriff's Department was the last entity to run the taskforce, which consisted of the La Grande Police Department and Oregon State Police. Sheriff Bowen introduced Deputy McKaig and Deputy Suttan, who were the last two acting members of the taskforce, and are now located in the Joseph Building next to the Detective Division. Sheriff Bowen has been in contact with Chief Bell regarding staffing, unfortunately he is unable to commit to any staff, however will request funding for an additional detective at the city's upcoming retreat on January 22.

Sheriff Bowen also provided an update related to Friends of the Children, which he spoke to the Commissioners about several months ago. It is a national organization that employs full time mentors for youth from kindergarten to high school, up to twelve years total. What Friends of the Children has done over the last six months is meet with numerous leaders in Baker County, Umatilla County, Wallowa County, Union County and as far as Ontario to find out the needs in the communities. Since then, Friends of the Children has chosen to establish their hub in Union County, which he is very excited about.

Commissioner Anderes asked Sheriff Bowen what his thoughts are about the BM 110 reforms making public drug use illegal. He would like to see teeth dug into drug trafficking, there are folks that travel to the metropolitan area and bring the drugs back to our community. What he would like to see with Measure 110, is more funding and treatment options.

FY 2022-23 Financial Audit Report

Chelsea Hewitt, Connected Professional Accountants, opened her presentation by thanking Union County staff for their assistance during the audit.

Mrs. Hewitt provided an overview of the governance letter, which states that there are estimates that go into the audit process. Also disclosed are significant audit matters, estimates, disagreements with management, which she was happy to report there were none.

The journal entries attached to the letter are done in convenience to the staff. There is nothing on the list that Mrs. Hewitt found alarming or concerning.

The first couple pages of the audit contain the Independent Auditor's Report that requires an opinion. Union County received an unmodified opinion, which is the best opinion available.

Everything beyond that is required in the audit report. She sees nothing of concern to draw the Commissioners' attention to.

She recommended the Commissioners read pages 4-5 because it is done by staff, which shows comparisons from last fiscal year to the current fiscal year.

Mrs. Hewitt reported that the net position within the county increased \$5,000,000 this year from the prior year, and also an increase the last two years. Again, this is very positive.

The Fund Financial Statements explain that governmental funds increased by about \$3,400,000, which is also very positive. There were no concerns to report.

The Proprietary Funds statements are the Airport Fund, Buffalo Peak and Solid Waste, which also saw an increase of \$922,000 from the prior year. This has been a hot topic for the past few years, and one of the few years that Buffalo Peak has a positive increase by a \$111,000 from the prior year.

The last part of the report is the single audit, the federal compliance audit. CPA performs two different audits, side by side. Union County is required to have the financial statement audit and the single audit because there are federal expenditures in excess of \$750,000. This year federal expenditures were \$3,200,000 down from about \$3,800,000 due to more COVID funds in the prior year. There were no federal audit findings or questioned costs.

Commissioner Anderes stated that as Commissioners, they sit on boards of entities who receive audit reports. He asked if Mrs. Hewitt could suggest questions or items they should pay special attention to.

The Commissioners thanked CPA for the thorough audit and report.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Anderes moved approval of the consent agenda which included the December 20 and January 3, 9 & 10, 2023 claims journals and the December 20 meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Court Order 2024-01: In the Matter of Selection of an Official Newspaper

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2024-01 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The Union County Board of Commissioners hereby select The Observer as the official newspaper for Union County for the calendar year 2024.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Court Order 2024-01; In the Matter of Selection of an Official Newspaper. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2024-02: In the Matter of Appointment of a Budget Officer for Union County for FY 2024-25

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2024-02 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The Union County Board of Commissioners need to appoint a Budget Officer for fiscal year 2024-25. Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, is qualified and has agreed to serve.

Commissioner Beverage made a motion to approve Court Order 2024-02; In the Matter of Appointment of a Budget Officer Shelley Burgess. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Wolf Depredation Compensation Recommendation

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the Wolf Depredation Compensation Recommendations to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The Union County Wolf Depredation committee met on December 21, 2023 to discuss and recommend awards for the applications received for the 2023 Non-lethal Deterrent and Management Techniques. There were four applicants for this category requesting a total of \$76,317.82.

Total funds available from the grant received from the Oregon Department of Agriculture were in the amount of \$62,000. The committee recommended awards to Mike Beckner/Bar V Cattle for \$20,846.82; James Baremore for \$18,191.03; Dave & Emily Gordon/D and E Cattle, LLC for \$18,191.09 and Eric Harlow for \$10,971.

Total grants funds proposed for approval are in the amount of \$62,000.

Commissioner Anderes noted that the range riders seem to be working well, and the nice thing about the airplane version of a range rider is that he is covering a lot more ground than his own. This past spring, Union County has surpassed Wallowa County with the highest population of known wolves as reported by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Some of the wolves that were recently transported to Colorado are from Union County.

Commissioner Beverage added that the Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee is a variety of members with lots of ideas and suggestions.

Commissioner Beverage made a motion to approve the Wolf Depredation Compensation Recommendations in the amount of \$62,000. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Land Sale Agreement

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the Land Sale Agreement to the Commissioners for their consideration.

This Purchase and Sale Agreement is between Union County and J.R. Zukin Corporation, which is the parent company for Meadow Outdoor Advertising. The agreement includes the offer from the corporation to purchase Lot 4, 4.33 acres, at the Baum Industrial Park for the amount of \$86,167 plus \$12,000 in advertising value.

J.R. Zukin Corporation also proposed to construct a steel fabrication shop of approximately 6,000 sq. ft. within 3 years of closing. Additionally, they proposed to create one permanent full-time job one year within building completion, with the potential of 2 more within 72 months.

The agreement has been reviewed by legal counsel. If accepted, the action will trigger the first right of refusal on the property held by Corwin Company, who will have the opportunity to exercise that right and match the offer. Legal counsel will handle the notification and process.

Commissioner Beverage made a motion to approve the Land Sale Agreement between JR Zukin. Commissioner Anderes seconded.

Roll call vote; Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Anderes, no. Commissioner Scarfo, yes.

Motion carried.

Vietnam War Memorial Fund

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the request from the Vietnam War Memorial Fund to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Commissioner Scarfo received a request via email from Steve Bates, President of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund asking the county for a monetary donation towards the memorial to be constructed on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds.

Currently, Union County has 841 Vietnam veterans. Administrative Officer Burgess recommends a \$1,000 contribution, as that is what other smaller counties have done, according to the information provided by Mr. Bates.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve an expenditure of \$1,000 for a contribution from Special Accounts for the Vietnam War Memorial Fund. Commissioner Beverage seconded.

Commissioner Anderes and Commissioner Beverage thanked Commissioner Scarfo for bringing this forward and is long overdue for the veterans in particular.

Motion carried unanimously.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Beverage thanked the Public Works Department and Emergency responders for all their hard work during this crazy weather.

Commissioner Anderes commented he was very excited about the Friends of the Children program.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 9 AM

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 9:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison".

Allison Moore

Senior Department Specialist