

Board of Commissioners Meeting  
January 25, 2017

Present: Commissioner Steve McClure  
Commissioner Jack Howard  
Commissioner Donna Beverage

Commissioner McClure opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given with all three Commissioners present.

**Public Comments and Concerns**

Energy Public Comment

Norm Cimon, 1208 First Street, La Grande, stated that there are opportunities for a very different looking power system that would include an enormous value delivered locally. Once there is an established system, it will allow community development of solar and adjacent storage, bringing value to businesses and residents. The issues will be important for everyone to figure out and the county could be very involved in developments. This area is positioned to take advantage of this new business model due to low prices and it would have a three to four year lead time. The other positive for this area is that there is a co-op owned by consumers. This is important because the changes that threatened the old model guaranteed money for anything the utilities built; that model can be reworked. We need to work with the co-op as a partner, which has been a fairly significant problem in the past. He has spent three or four years cultivating a relationship with OTEC. He briefed their staff on changes and they understand that they will have to deal with those changes. They are quite excited to work with us on specific projects. He has talked to them about the possibility of a community solar component for housing. This would deliver value to residents and provide the possibility of working on a campus-wide scale with local organizations like the airport, hospital, university, and school campuses. Having community solar attached to a housing component is attractive to OTEC because they would be able to test smart meters. Smart meters are very useful for demand management. This would essentially change the way the power system works during times of high demand and allow them to work with consumers to moderate the grid. Consumers could be paid or given a rate decline. OTEC has been reluctant; it is not easy to tell consumers or ask them to do this. In the future it would be useful to educate and prepare the business community for changes that will happen and to develop alternative financing. The other possibility would include county initiatives for its own buildings, retrofits, energy audits and including the installation of energy storage and incorporating solar in new buildings. He will be putting together some alternatives that will work with OTEC. The idea is to put together a plan for housing that would include a community solar component, essentially delivering equity to the residents in the form of lower bills or a stake in the solar component itself, or maybe both. He hopes that the county will consider being a partner.

Commissioner Howard stated that some larger cities, like Las Vegas, are self-sufficient; that model uses both city and county resources to plan ahead. He asked if Mr. Cimon had looked at that model. Mr. Cimon stated that there are business models with various

financing and ways of delivering benefits to the residents; the idea is to pick through different models and elements that would work best here.

Commissioner Howard would like the Commission to consider this as an economic development tool and a way to attract businesses. His focus has been on housing rather than economic development. He, with others, developed a proposal last year and established an organization called Energy Equity of Oregon. The idea is to capture equity of energy savings through solar retrofits and affordable housing; the Housing Authority has some interest in it. It will take an initial investment of funds probably from someone such as the Myer Memorial Trust and he will pursue that end of it. At some point, he would like to have a collaborative discussion of other options, including attracting businesses to locate here to facilitate solar energy as a business add-on or incentive. The county has some resources it can bring into play with Baum Industrial Park.

Mr. Cimon stated that the reason to work carefully with utilities is because this will be challenging for them; they will be dealing with customers leaving in eight to ten years. He has already had a business person in town ask him how to go off the grid and utilities will see more of that from business customers. OTEC needs to think through how they can look at a different business model that can still deliver enough value and how they can partner with local entities, like towns and counties. He thinks OTEC would very much like to partner and see a formal commitment from an entity like the county.

Commissioner Beverage asked who Mr. Cimon was referring to when he said “we.” Mr. Cimon stated that he was referring to a local business partner, Steve Bartell; Randy Joseph, from a small wind farm; and others who are interested. He thinks Bill Grigsby at the university would be very interested in using the county’s housing expertise. Local members of Oregon Rural Action are also interested. He would like to get a team together with these interested parties to work with the county, the university and the business community to work through business models that are already available to figure out which ones might work best.

#### Constituent Inquiries

There were no constituent inquiries.

### **Elected Official, Department Head & Employee Comments**

#### Livestock District Petition

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that the process to consider the Livestock District petition for annexation from Joel Rice would be restarted. The first step is for the Commissioners to adopt a court order to set a hearing. The next step would then be for staff to provide notice of that hearing under the statutes to discuss the boundaries. The soonest that the hearing could be scheduled would be March 15. Both Mr. Hartell and county counsel would be in attendance at that meeting to address any technical questions. Mrs. Burgess read Court Order 2017-03 for the Commission’s consideration. **Commissioner**

**Howard moved approval of Court Order 2017-03 with a hearing date scheduled to take place on March 15, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. Commissioner Beverage seconded.**

Commissioner Howard asked if attachment one conformed to the original attachment one; Mrs. Burgess stated that it did.

Commissioner McClure stated that the Commission made a tentative decision on the petition, but after receiving some new information felt the process needed to be restarted.

Commissioner Beverage stated that the hearing would be to discuss boundaries.

**Roll Call on Court Order 2017-03: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

JB Brock, Emergency Manager – Staff Report (Weather)

JB Brock, Emergency Manager, submitted a detailed report to the Commissioners regarding recent weather events between December 9, 2016 and January 18, 2017. Data was obtained from the National Weather Service (NWS) and shows recorded wind, visibility, and temperatures for the current year and previous ten years. Data for this year is as follows:

- High winds/gusts over 40mph were experienced on 16 days; the average over the previous ten years is 7.1 days, an increase of 225%. The area is at 467% of normal for gusts of 50mph+ and 1500% of normal for gusts of 60+mph. The average number of days over that time period is less than one day and this area experienced three days so far.
- This area experienced visibility of less than or equal to one mile on 15 days, as compared to four 4 days over the last ten years. It can easily be quantified that we had significant blowing snow over that time period.
- The high temperature was below 32 degrees on 24 days; the average for that same time period is eight days, an increase of 296% over what would be considered normal.

Mr. Brock stated that although we know the weather was bad, this data documents that this was a unique event. All snow received was available for drifting because there were no temperature increases. FEMA looks for record snowfall as it relates to costs for snow removal, and that creates a challenge in qualifying for assistance. The area received record wind, moving the event into a different category and making the recovery of funds more challenging. This information was sent to Oregon Emergency Management to articulate that while we did not have record snowfall, this was indeed a notable event that caused significant issues for the Public Works Department.

Commissioner Howard asked about the report's date range. Mr. Brock stated that the report covers December 9, 2016 through January 18, 2017; this reflects the first date that Public Works began plowing efforts and the date that the initial report was generated. Mr. Brock

stated that in retrospect, weather events continued into January 19, but the report still provides a good snapshot.

Mr. Brock stated that the area is forecasted to have below average temperatures and above average precipitation for the next 8 to 14 days; this is the same weather pattern that the area has had most recently. In conversations with the NWS, they cannot currently see anything in the short to midterm forecast that looks like a significant event, but forecasts are best guesses and could change. The 30-day forecast is essentially the same; there are equal chances of above versus below average temperatures and precipitation. The 3-month forecast for February through April indicates that there will be a pattern of higher precipitation for that time period and an equal chance of high or low temperature. That generally means that temperatures will remain near average, but there could also be an anomaly event especially when there is an equal chance of both.

Commissioner Howard asked if there was a potential of replicating floods like that in 2008 and 2009.

Mr. Brock stated that there are equal chances that it could or could not replicate those years; Emergency Management prepares for flood potential every year. High water is an annual event considering this valley was once a lake. There are some greater risks this year, especially in the near and short term with ice-choked rivers and creeks, and borrow and drainage ditches that are blown in with snow. It is very likely that we will have high water issues; the challenge is when and where so he has been coordinating closely with communities that traditionally have flooding issues. There is always a chance that everything comes out just right and there are no issues; right now the forecast looks good for that. Highs in the 30's allow for a little bit of thawing, but we are getting lows in the 20s and freezing up at night. The challenges in the short term are low elevation drainages; Little Creek is one that typically has trouble when there are cold weather events. This is why he is coordinating closely with the City of Union and looking at those issues.

Mr. Brock presented the FEMA snow assistance policy; it will be a challenge to meet those requirements for snow removal because there was no record snowfall. Union County could potentially be eligible for assistance of a 48-hour snow period if it can meet the criteria of record snowfall; that could possibly be extended to 72 hours. Even if Union County were to receive assistance, there is only a 24-72 hour window for which it could receive assistance and this was a much longer event. Within that time period, the county would have to meet the expenditure requirement of \$90,000 based on population and the threshold set by the state. The statewide threshold is \$5.5 million for snow removal, not including straight time because that is considered normal duties. ODOT expenditures apply to that threshold as well as cities and counties, which would be beneficial. The cost threshold is for each event, not for the duration. Although the county is unlikely to receive amounts for the duration of events, the fact that this has been an ongoing event has been documented. The state is doing an initial damage assessment (IDA) for two separate time periods; one around December 9 and one around mid-January. Each IDA time period has a separate \$90,000

threshold for the area and \$5.5 million for the state. He has been collecting expenditure data from cities and the county's Public Works Director for submission once complete.

Commissioner Howard asked if adjacent counties were filing. Mr. Brock stated that Baker County made a declaration and Malheur County had significant issues, but he was not sure about Wallowa County's damages or costs.

Mr. Brock stated that in addition to the snow assistance policy, there is also a severe weather option, for which the county would more likely qualify. Snow removal costs are treated differently when there is a severe weather declaration. The county would only be eligible for emergency category snow removal, such as clearing roads to resolve power outages. He is reviewing options to determine the best fit and will have some input, but ultimately FEMA and the state will choose which declaration to pursue.

Commissioner McClure stated that there had been times when the county qualified for assistance, but it's usually based on Portland's conditions. Mr. Brock agreed and added that when there are issues in the I-5 corridor, the county is much more likely to be successful. The county still has to meet the threshold, but as it stands now there is no chance of meeting the state threshold without the west side of Oregon. Commissioner McClure stated that it is worth the effort to track and see what happens.

Doug Wright, Union County Public Works Director, stated that he contacted Mike Barry with ODOT to start the process of accessing funds from the Federal Highway Administration. So far, Union County Public Works has spent \$79,000 just in overtime from December 9 to January 24.

Commissioner Beverage asked if costs from outlying towns are included in the \$90,000 threshold. Mr. Brock stated that those costs are included, but it will be a challenge to meet the requirements in the 72-hour window.

#### Mentor Grant Letter of Support

Commissioner Howard stated that the Mentor Grant is up for renewal and he would like the commission to consider submitting a new letter of support. The deadline is January 27 and he offered to draft and submit the letter. Commissioner McClure and Commissioner Beverage concurred that a letter of support was a good idea.

#### Consent Agenda

**Commissioner Howard moved approval of the Consent Agenda, which included minutes from the December 7, 2016 Board of Commissioners meeting and Claims Journals from December 29, January 4, 5, 11, and 12. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **Administrative Matters**

### Court Orders 2017-04 through 2017-12

Commissioner McClure stated the Court Orders up for consideration were all in reference to Commissioner Beverage's appointments; he suggested a consolidated motion to expedite the process. Commissioner Howard stated that he would not object to that.

Mrs. Burgess read Court Orders by number, title, and term expiration to appoint Commissioner Beverage as follows:

- Court Orders 2017-04, Appointment to the NEODD Board of Directors; term expiring December 31, 2017.
- Court Order 2017-05, Appointment to the UCEDC Board of Directors; term expiring January 31, 2020.
- Court Order 2017-06, Appointment to the Grande Ronde Model Watershed Board of Directors; term expiring November 30, 2018.
- Court Order 2017-07, Appointment to the Northeast Area Commission on Transportation as an alternate; term would expire when the appointment is changed to another Commissioner.
- Court Order 2017-08, Appointment to the Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee; term expiring on December 31, 2019.
- Court Order 2017-09, Appointment to the Union County Chamber of Commerce Board; term expiring when the appointment is changed to another Commissioner.
- Court Order 2017-10, Appointment to the Transient Tax Discretionary Fund Advisory Committee; term expiring December 31, 2019.
- Court Order 2017-11, Appointment to the Union County Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee; term expiring July 31, 2020.
- Court Order 2017-12, Appointment to the Blue Mountain Conference Center Board; term would expire when the appointment is changed to another Commissioner.

**Commissioner Howard moved approval of Court Order 2017-04, Court Order 2017-05, Court Order 2017-06, Court Order 2017-07, Court Order 2017-08, Court Order 2017-09, Court Order 2017-10, Court Order 2017-11, and Court Order 2017-12. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **Solid Waste District Matters**

### Union Sanitation Rate Increase Request

Mrs. Burgess stated that the Commissioners would be acting in their capacity as Directors of the Solid Waste District. Union Sanitation submitted a rate increase request for garbage collection in the Union Sanitation Franchise area. The Commission previously approved a rate increase for City Garbage Service; this is a like request. The primary reason for this increase request is due to increased tipping fees at Baker Sanitary. There have been no rate increase requests from Union Sanitation in the last ten years. If approved, that rate would be an increase of approximately 11% for roll carts and 5% increase for drop boxes.

Commissioner McClure asked if these rates had been approved by the Cities of Union and North Powder. Craig George, owner of Union Sanitation, stated that they had. Mr. George stated that the rate increase would pass along the cost that they receive from City Garbage Service for transportation and Baker Sanitary for disposal.

Commissioner Howard asked if rates would increase again next year. Mrs. Burgess stated that the county put out a Request for Proposals, after which the county entered into an agreement for five years with Baker Sanitary, so there would be no increase unless there is an increase in federal permit fees for landfills.

**Commissioner Howard moved to approve the Union Sanitation rate increase with attachment A as the description of rates and services. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Next Meeting and Location**

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, February 1, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the Joseph Annex Building.

Commissioner Howard stated that the Commissioners would have a retreat work session January 27, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the Joseph Annex Building.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston  
Sr. Dept. Specialist II