

Board of Commissioners Meeting  
January 4, 2017

Present: Commissioner Steve McClure  
Commissioner Jack Howard  
Commissioner Donna Beverage

Commissioner McClure opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. with all three commissioners present.

Commissioner McClure welcomed Commissioner Beverage. He apologized for not attending her swearing-in ceremony as he was out of town with family. He assured her that he, along with staff and Commissioner Howard, would do everything possible to make her tenure successful. Commissioner Howard congratulated Commissioner Beverage.

The pledge of allegiance was given.

**Public Comments and Concerns**

No public comments were offered.

Constituent Inquiries

Recording of Commission Meetings Comment

Commissioner Howard stated that he had been in discussions with Brent Clapp to provide a live stream feed or digital storage of commission meetings.

Anthony Lakes Concessions Comment

Commissioner Howard provided a letter for informational purposes regarding a concession request at Anthony Lakes. Baker County has requested that a local vendor be preferred over a corporate vendor.

Foreclosure Property Comment

Commissioner Howard stated that there is some interest in what the county is considering with the 7<sup>th</sup> Street foreclosure property in terms of improving it or working with the City of La Grande for a parking lot or some other facility. Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that she was in contact with Robert Strobe, City of La Grande City Manager, after some informal discussions that the commission had about transferring the property to the City of La Grande. She received confirmation from Mr. Strobe that the city is not interested in taking the property and would want it processed and disposed. Commissioner Howard stated that he would like to see Mr. Strobe make that indication in the form of a letter. Mrs. Burgess stated that Mr. Strobe sent the information via email, but she could ask him for a formal letter.

Commissioner Howard would like some follow up. The county also has constituents in the city limits; he lives in La Grande and has concerns about the property getting some equitable value built into it sooner rather than later. He also has a general concern about the county's role in the foreclosure process where property values are affected by potential indecision or inaction by a government agency. He thinks the county could develop some type of communication with the city on the basis of this specific piece of property relating to the foreclosure process, what happens when the property goes into foreclosure, and what should be done to cooperatively develop a piece of property. Leaving it as is probably is not a good policy.

Mrs. Burgess stated that she will follow up with Mr. Strobe. She stated that the county's options were to sell the property through an auction or transfer it to another municipality for public use. She inquired of Mr. Strobe whether or not the city was going to be interested in making that request. Since there had been some informal discussions, Mr. Strobe knew that the commission would entertain that request if it came forward. He had worked with the city's Parks and Rec Department and indicated that they could not adequately utilize the property. His preference was to see it go to auction so that it would end up in private hands.

Commissioner Howard stated that he would talk to the group of property owners that have showed interest in the outcome to see if they have suggestions for the property. There is potential for open spaces development.

#### Commissioner Comment

Commissioner Beverage thanked everyone for the welcome at the county and added that she is ready to work hard.

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

#### Whistle Blower Policies

Commissioner Howard shared some models of whistle blower policies for consideration. Mrs. Burgess stated that she posted the earlier approved policy online as required and it can be revised at any time.

#### Dangerous Dog Signs

Commissioner Howard asked for improvement to uniform dangerous dog warning signs. He submitted a model ordinance and would like to revisit it in about a month.

#### Commission Buffalo Peak Work Session and Commissioner Retreat

Commissioner Howard requested the scheduling of a retreat. Commissioner McClure thought the Buffalo Peak Golf Course (BPGC) work session should be separate and added that work sessions are a good way to get public input. Commissioner Beverage concurred. Commissioner Howard stated that he would keep pulling people together for a BPGC work session to include people interested in commercial services, professional consultants, and the people from the university that helped with a resource development study.

Commissioner Howard stated that he would coordinate an agenda and send to Mrs. Burgess.

#### Ombuds Position Proposal

Commissioner Howard would like the commission to consider creating a new position at the county for an ombuds person. This position might focus on issues or allegations of ethical concerns or people who are not traditionally represented in county services. An ombuds person could also talk about integrating civil rights for people with disabilities into county services and making sure those services are available. An ombuds person could talk freely as a go-between; commissioners are supposed to do that, but sometimes the system works against people's interest. It would not be a full-time position, but perhaps an honorarium position. In regards to funding the position, he suggested that the Commissioners could forgo annual Cost of Living Allowance increases for the next two years.

Commissioner Beverage asked if other counties had created a similar position. Commissioner Howard was not sure but assumed that they had.

#### Livestock District Annexation Petition

Commissioner McClure stated that he had some constituent inquiries about the Livestock District annexation petition. The matter will be addressed at the next meeting and the process will need to be restarted due to a change in legal opinion. Scott Hartell, Planning Director, stated that due to notice requirements, the public hearing would be scheduled to take place on March 1.

#### Public Works Winter Update

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, stated that the area has had continuous storms since December 9 with major drifting in some areas like Imbler and Summerville. The crew has been working 16 hours a day to keep roads open. The snow blower is effective but it takes time. When the whole system is affected in the way that it has been, it takes at least three days to make one lane passible for the public on all roads. He has appreciated the public's patience and receptiveness. There have been calls alerting his department where the problem areas are, as well as calls about vehicles stuck for multiple hours. They have coordinated with JB Brock, Emergency Services Manager, to make sure stranded motorists are okay and help is on the way. There were also some medical emergencies and Mr. Brock assessed situations and helped to resolve those issues as needed. Working in concert with Mr. Brock has been good. When calls come into Public Works, callers are asked if it's a medical emergency and if so, 911 is called. Snow drifts this year have been considerably higher than the graders. The Public Works crew will continue to work drifts and widening roads as soon as they can. The county has received help from ODOT and the City of Elgin, which is very much appreciated; those partnerships are great. They take care of their roads first and then help clear county roads when they have time. Relocating snow has become an issue; the best equipment have been blowers and graders. They are starting a schedule from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to clear roads for buses and work travel. If needed, the crews will work 4:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. Public Works has spent

\$224,000 in personnel overtime and equipment maintenance for snow removal so far this season. There are no budget overages except overtime; contingency funds would backfill that. Commissioner McClure asked if the \$224,000 was in addition to the approved budget; Mr. Wright stated that was correct and added that it has cost the county \$30,000 in fuel alone. There are also costs for parts and tire chains to keep equipment running.

Commissioner Howard asked if FEMA assistance might be available. Mr. Wright stated that he would look to Mr. Brock for that. Commissioner McClure thought it was a good idea to look into that; the county received funds years ago when Portland had a FEMA declaration. Commissioner McClure stated that the Grande Ronde Valley had been hit harder than adjacent counties this year.

Commissioner Howard stated that he was surprised that it would take three days to clear roads and asked if it was due to geography. Commissioner McClure stated that the wind causes more problems than snow accumulation and makes it extremely difficult.

Commissioner Beverage asked if carryover funds were available from previous years of low snow activity. Mr. Wright stated that there are always carryover road maintenance funds; it just means that there is less money for gravel and asphalt to patch roads.

Mr. Wright stated that the three day timeline is with crews working 12 hours a day. The crew needs some down time for safety reasons and sometimes there are no gains made when weather persists. When ODOT closes roads, it would be dangerous for the county crew to drive on roads. In blizzard conditions when the crew can't run, they are in the shop repairing equipment and maintaining roads that are close by. He also works with Mr. Brock during those times to communicate road closures.

Commissioner Howard asked if there were any instances of the county crew being at risk. Mr. Wright stated that they are not put at risk because he makes the call to not send them out on roads. He works closely with Joe Valek in making safety the number one priority for their crew.

Commissioner McClure expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the Public Works crew and knows how difficult a winter like this is. Mr. Wright stated that he appreciated his crew; it is a very good crew and he appreciates every one of them and they have done an outstanding job.

Commissioner McClure stated that photos had been posted on the website. Mrs. Burgess stated that Annette Powers of Emergency Services maintains the Emergency Services website and had posted photos so that the public could visualize conditions throughout the county, which has a lot of interest. Mr. Wright stated it had been helpful to get that information out.

Commissioner Howard suggested that a physical damage assessment be conducted for FEMA. Mrs. Burgess stated that she would have Mr. Brock look into that.

#### B2H Update

Scott Hartell, Planning Director, stated that commissioners had discussed attending a B2H Advisory Committee meeting and asked if that interest remained.

Commissioner McClure asked if BLM had released a date for the Record of Decision (ROD). Mr. Hartell stated that there was nothing to pass forward to the commissioners yet because the date had changed three times. Idaho Power has indicated that they will wait until the ROD is signed before they would resubmit an updated application to the state process.

Commissioner Howard stated that he would be interested in attending the next B2H meeting to thank the advisory committee for their work and assess the status. Commissioner McClure and Commissioner Beverage concurred. Mr. Hartell stated that he would coordinate a date with the B2H Committee Chair.

#### Consent Agenda

**Commissioner Howard moved approval of the Consent Agenda, which included Claims Journals from December 21 and 22. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### Administrative Matters

##### Court Order 2017-01, Selection of an Official Newspaper

Mrs. Burgess stated that the county is required to designate an official newspaper each year for official public notices, most relevant to the foreclosure process. The Observer is the only newspaper in Union County considered general circulation. **Commissioner Howard moved approval of Court Order 2017-01. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

##### Court Order 2017-02, Appointment of Union County Budget Officer for Fiscal Year 2017-18

Mrs. Burgess stated that appointing a Budget Officer is necessary for preparation for the FY 2017-18 budget. **Commissioner Howard moved approval of Court Order 2017-02. Commissioner Beverage seconded.**

Commissioner Howard commended Mrs. Burgess for her work and noted that she is a tremendous asset to the county.

**Roll Call on Court Order 2017-02: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

Resolution 2017-01, Revising Dog License Fees

Mrs. Burgess read the resolution in its entirety. Mrs. Burgess stated that the county was successful in reaching an agreement with Blue Mt. Humane Association, including the transition of dog licensing to the Sheriff's Office on January 1, 2017. In a review of those fees, the county became aware that they conflicted with ORS requirements in regards to unspayed and unneutered dogs. This new price structure would give responsible pet owners a break for spaying and neutering their animals because it helps with stray and unwanted animals. If approved, the proposed licensing fee structure would be effective immediately.

**Commissioner Beverage moved approval of Resolution 2017-01. Commissioner Howard seconded.**

Commissioner Howard stated that the incentive to spay or neuter dogs made sense and wondered if other amounts were considered. Mrs. Burgess stated that the county had been charging \$15 for years, but the licensing program was not active over the last year and a half. Staff felt this was a good amount because pet owners had been paying \$15 and the county may not want to raise the fee after it had not been collected in recent years.

Commissioner Howard would like the ordinance to include the ORS to enable changes to be aligned with ORS when the ordinance is next updated. Mrs. Burgess thought that was a good idea and explained that it would mean that whenever the ORS changed, the county could implement the changes without the commission having to take action.

**Commissioner Howard moved approval to amend Resolution 2017-01 to include free dog licenses for Veterans diagnosed with PTSD. Commissioner Beverage seconded.**

Mrs. Burgess asked how the commission would like to validate that a Veteran has been diagnosed with PTSD. Commissioner Howard stated that self-declaration would be enough.

**Roll call on amending Resolution 2017-01 to include free dog licenses for Veterans diagnosed with PTSD: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes.**

Commissioner Howard asked if the county had considered licensing cats. Commissioner McClure stated that the City of La Grande took it on years ago but it was very controversial and was not implemented.

Dog Licensing Public Comment

Brent Clapp stated that the biggest hassle for pet owners is doing it every year. The program would be more successful if pet owners could pay two years in advance or received a reminder postcard at the end of the year. The program would be more effective if it was easier for pet owners to pay.

Commissioner McClure stated that the county had been looking at software that would help do those things and establishing one renewal date, such as January 1. Then postcards would be sent and renewals could be done by mail and online. The county would also like Animal Control Officers to have the ability to issue licenses in the field. The easier it is for pet owners, the better the program will be.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the challenge with licensing over multiple years is the requirement of proof of a rabies vaccination. There are some details to work out, but the county is trying to make it as easy as possible.

Commissioner McClure would like the Sheriff's office to educate the public and advertise the dog licensing program. Since the program hasn't been functional the last few years, he would not want to blindside pet owners with citations; they should have 90 days to take care of it. Mrs. Burgess stated that the hope was to test the new system before advertising. Once that is ready, then advertising will begin.

**Roll Call on Resolution 2017-01: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Next Meeting and Location**

Commissioner Howard encouraged the public to attend the meeting on January 5, 2017 where commissioners will discuss committee assignments.

The next commission meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, January 18, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. in the Joseph Annex Building.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston  
Sr. Dept. Specialist II