

Board of Commissioners Meeting  
May 17, 2017

Present: Commissioner Steve McClure  
Commissioner Jack Howard  
Commissioner Donna Beverage

Commissioner McClure opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given with all three commissioners present.

**Public Comments**

Fireworks Committee Public Comment

Steve Combs, 505 Jefferson, La Grande, requested continued support for the free Union County Fireworks Show. He stated that at last year's presentation, Commissioner Howard suggested a 5% increase each year. Mr. Combs requested \$2,900 for the 2017 Fireworks show. Other fundraising efforts are supported by local businesses and raffle ticket sales. The committee is also recruiting additional members, as it has dwindled to just four members.

Commissioner McClure thanked Mr. Combs for his efforts. Mr. Combs stated that it is a pleasure to do it each year. They are recruiting more committee members because fundraising is the biggest hurdle.

**Commissioner Howard made a motion to provide \$2,900 to the Union County Fireworks Committee. Commissioner Beverage seconded.**

Commissioner Howard offered his sincere thanks.

**Roll Call: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

Fireworks Public Comment

Lois Barry, 60688 Morgan Lake Road, La Grande, stated that fireworks create an unintended consequence of dogs running away. She suggested that animal control officers and volunteers take dogs to the shelter.

Morgan Lake Public Comment

Lois Barry, 60688 Morgan Lake Road, La Grande, stated that she had suggested at a previous meeting that Union County and the City of La Grande cooperate to repair the access road into the lake. She has never seen the road so bad.

Commissioner McClure stated that he would contact the City regarding her suggestion.

**Consent Agenda**

**Commissioner Beverage moved approval of the consent agenda, to include claims journals from April 26, 27, May 3 and 4 and exclude the March 15 meeting minutes. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

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

Intergovernmental Agreement with Department of Revenue 3612-17

Cody Vavra, Tax Collector, stated that this annual agreement allows the county to contract with the Department of Revenue, which provides mapping development and maintenance. About half of the counties in the state contract with the Department of Revenue for this service. They do a wonderful job and the county has had great service from them at a really good rate.

**Commissioner Howard moved approval of IGA 3612-17. Commissioner Beverage seconded.**

**Roll Call: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Administrative Matters**

Discretionary Fund Grant Recommendation

Mrs. Burgess, Administrative Officer, explained that a small amount of Transient Room Tax funds are set aside for discretionary fund grants; the Discretionary Fund Advisory Committee reviewed an application from the Historic Union Hotel and recommended funding in the amount of \$1,600 for placement of two freeway signs along I-84 and ramp signs. The committee recommended funding at a lower level than the applicant's request because they felt it was not appropriate to fund annual rent for the signs.

Commissioner Howard was concerned about the annual renewal costs and stated that any support for a motion would specifically exclude any annual renewal or maintenance. He was concerned about any disuse if there is no agreement or understanding of how it will be paid each year by the business owner. He asked if the county had supported private businesses with signage in the past. Mrs. Burgess stated that she did not have that information but could do some research for the commission. She stated that applications had been received from Hot Lake Springs, a private enterprise, and added that there is no prohibition in the guidelines to award funds to private enterprises. Commissioner Howard stated that there would be a problem if the county started picking and choosing particular businesses over others. He felt it called for more research and would not vote for it today.

**Commissioner Beverage moved approval of the Discretionary Fund Grant application submitted by the Historic Union Hotel in the amount of \$1,600 as recommended. Commissioner Howard waived the motion to table the item and would not second the motion to approve. Commissioner McClure seconded Commissioner Beverage's motion to approve the application as recommended.**

**Roll Call: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, abstain. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried.**

Intergovernmental Agreement with Grant County

Mrs. Burgess stated that this agreement with Grant County allows Union County to house inmates at Grant County at a cost of \$50 per inmate per calendar day. The Union County Sheriff's Office prefers not to have a guaranteed contract with Grant County because there is not always a need for those beds. This agreement would give Grant County the ability to turn Union County away if beds are full.

Commissioner McClure asked if this would take the place of the Baker County and Umatilla County contracts. Mrs. Burgess stated that this would be an additional option because those contracts are not guaranteed and their rates are higher per day.

Commissioner Howard asked if the contract had been reviewed by county counsel; Mrs. Burgess stated that it had been reviewed by county counsel. Commissioner Howard asked if the local defense bar had reviewed the contract; Mrs. Burgess stated that it had not been reviewed by the defense. Commissioner Howard thought that the county should not move forward with the contract considering the distance to Grant County without review by the defense bar.

Commissioner McClure stated that the County transports to Baker County and Umatilla County; the defense bar does not like it, but they accept it because there is no alternative with limited space in the local jail. The discussion with the defense bar could take place, but it would not change the contract. Video arraignment also may be available for those inmates.

Commissioner Beverage stated that this contract gives the Sheriff a third option. She stated that she would trust him to choose the best option.

Commissioner Howard stated that it behooves the commission to involve all partners in the discussion about criminal justice issues, including asking for a position from the defense bar. It is important information before making a decision that is vital; any interference with the ability of defense counsel to reach their clients is crucial and paramount to his abstaining from voting. He insisted that they be included in this discussion. He urged that voting for this be delayed pending consideration and response from the defense bar; otherwise it would receive his behemoth opposition.

Commissioner McClure stated that he had no problem with Commissioner Howard's suggestion, He requested that the Sheriff's Office present this to the commission; Commissioner Beverage concurred. Commissioner McClure would like the Sheriff's Office to explain what they are doing and what contacts they have had in the process. He would like to table the topic.

Mrs. Burgess asked whether contact with the defense bar should come from the Sheriff's Office or the commission. Commissioner Howard stated that he felt comfortable with Mrs. Burgess doing that.

#### Buffalo Peak Golf Course Advisory Committee

Mrs. Burgess stated that a number of applications were received for this committee and some interviews were conducted.

Commissioner Howard requested time for a constituent to provide testimony about the need to have diverse representation of different activities and uses at the golf course.

#### Buffalo Peak Golf Course (BPGC) Public Comment

Alex Duffy, Grande Ronde Valley Disc Association, stated that his group would like to see the installation of a disc golf course at BPGC. It will not generate a ton of revenue, but is not a huge expense either. It would add value to the course and bring people in from the freeway.

Commissioner Howard asked Mr. Duffy if he would be interested in serving on the BPGC Advisory Committee. Mr. Duffy stated that he would be interested.

Commissioner McClure requested Scott Marcum, BPGC Golf Pro, 598 East Dearborn Street, Union, join the discussion so that he could make comments and ask questions.

Commissioner McClure stated that the commissioners' expectations of the committee were still unclear. He was pleased with the expectations that candidates shared during interviews, which did not include operations. It was clear during interviews that candidates' expectation was to work with Mr. Marcum to come up with new ideas to increase revenue. Candidates also expressed an interest in serving as ambassadors. Commissioner McClure asked Mr. Marcum if he had any concerns about the applicants and asked if he felt it would help to have a committee. Mr. Marcum stated that he had no concerns with the applicants and noted that he is advised by people every day; he listens to recommendations and ideas all the time. Commissioner McClure stated that the committee would be a way to pass those recommendations to the commissioners to enact changes that would make sense.

Commissioner McClure stated that the commissioners are taking a serious look at ways to reduce the deficit to \$50,000 or less per year; it will not be easy but he encouraged everyone to take a hard look at how to get there. He was unsure if anything could be done about the debt service, but the commission has some control over operations.

Mr. Marcum stated that the committee could help spread the word about golf course activities. He stated that at the public meeting in Union, he noticed that there was some misinformation about the golf course, but the committee could help clear that up. Commissioner McClure stated that the previous advisory committee was very effective in doing that and noted that the current applicants had some enthusiasm and would also help in the same way.

Commissioner McClure stated that there were no applicants that he would not appoint. Commissioner Beverage concurred.

Commissioner Howard thought that it was imperative for the golf course finances to be addressed in a professional manner by a separate group that would work with Mrs. Burgess to address financial operations for a five-year plan.

Commissioner McClure agreed that the vision for this committee was not to oversee financials. The financials should remain with the commission, Mr. Marcum, and someone with knowledge to establish a five-year financial plan. Mr. Marcum stated that the county tried that in the past and spent \$30,000 for a business plan; they followed the plan for three years but the golf course suffered and had to start over to regain support.

Commissioner McClure stated that there was a lot of history and knowledge at the county and the intention was not to spend \$30,000. He added that the golf course needs a budget and business plan; someone local could be brought in to do that. It is important to start drawing parameters to control costs and stop the bleeding. Hard work is still needed to increase revenue and all three commissioners have made that commitment. He believes Mr. Marcum will get the support he needs because the commissioners understand how important the golf course is and they want it to be a higher priority. He stated that he wanted to create a committee that would not be difficult for Mr. Marcum to work with. It would be modeled after the MERA committee and Mr. Marcum would facilitate meetings. He thought that commissioners would be glad to help if

needed. He agreed that the financial aspect needed to be looked at, and would probably be more important for Mrs. Burgess to be involved in that process.

Commissioner Howard asked if there was a preference to have Mr. Marcum chair the committee. Commissioner McClure stated that Mr. Marcum would not chair the committee, but would act as staff and attend every meeting. Commissioner McClure stated that when the MERA committee first began, he attended meetings for two years and thought that the commissioners would need to be involved in the BPGC committee for at least that long.

Commissioner Howard suggested that the commission establish the committee chairman. He would like to see the chairman position filled by Peter Wordelman, who has a background in business and knows the history of the golf course. He stated that the commission could indicate a preference for the chairmanship.

**Commissioner McClure suggested that a motion be made to appoint applicants that had been interviewed to the Buffalo Peak Golf Course Advisory Committee.**

**Commissioner Howard waived the objection under Roberts Rules of Order to accept a motion from the chair and seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Beverage stated that she would like to add applicants that were unable to attend interviews, identified as Tony Malmberg and Ken Shelton.

Commissioner Howard felt it was proper procedure to proceed on the motion and then consider adding names later since it would be a substantive change to the motion.

Commissioner McClure stated that the motion was to appoint Jeff Oveson, Karen Phelps, Peter Wordelman, Greg Mills, John Chambers, Harry Bigler, Tim Jederberg, and Ralph Patterson to the BPGC Advisory Committee.

**Roll Call: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Commissioner Beverage made a motion to appoint Ken Shelton and Tony Malmberg to the BPGC Advisory Committee. Commissioner McClure seconded.**

Commissioner Howard stated that there seemed to be pressure to get things done, but there is a process set up to vet things. He stated that as this committee was being put together, it wasn't forming the way he would like with a natural healthy process of taking time. Specifically because there was an interview process, adding names in this context was a bad process and spoiling what was trying to be done to include more voices, time, consideration, and public involvement. He opposed the addition of Ken Shelton and Tony Malmberg in this way.

Commissioner Beverage stated that she would agree to hold more interviews if they were scheduled.

**Commissioner Beverage withdrew her motion to appoint Ken Shelton and Tony Malmberg to the BPGC Advisory Committee.**

Commissioner Beverage stated for clarification that Mr. Marcum would schedule meetings. Commissioner McClure stated that Mr. Marcum's role would be to facilitate the process of the committee while the committee has discussions. Mr. Marcum would then be available to share parameters or concerns, but not to run the meetings. Commissioner McClure stated that the committee would elect its chairman.

### **Building Inspector Update and Budget**

Brian Don, Union County Building Official, provided an update and a review of the proposed FY 2017-18 budget for the Building Department.

Commissioner McClure asked about the inter-fund transfer. Mr. Don stated that it reflects management of the department to include the City Manager, Finance Department, and a new Human Resources position.

Commissioner McClure suggested that a discussion may need to take place about moving the department to office space in the old courthouse; it could be done for less than the \$89,000 that is currently budgeted. Mr. Don agreed it was a lot of money and added that the discussion could take place with the City. Commissioner Howard thought it was a brilliant idea and immediate savings could be realized; he would like to see the county proceed with that discussion. Commissioner McClure thought it would make sense. Mr. Don asked if the commissioners were offering space or were considering taking over the program from the State. Commissioner McClure wanted to leave it open for discussion and was not advocating for either option. Commissioner McClure stated that this transfer has always been an issue with the county because the county doesn't charge for those kinds of transfers. Commissioner McClure asked if Mr. Don would be upset if his office space was at the county. Mr. Don stated that they need more room.

Commissioner McClure asked about the status of electrical inspections. Mr. Don stated that there is a contract with the State to provide that service; attempts to attract and keep someone in that position locally were unsuccessful considering the salary offered. Commissioner McClure asked about the salary; Mr. Don was unsure but thought it was about \$5,400 per month and noted that the salary for the same position is \$70,000 to \$80,000 per year on the west side of the State.

Commissioner Howard asked if there was potential to talk to the La Grande School District about training programs since the area has a shortage of electricians. Mr. Don stated that most of the training takes place at Blue Mountain Community College.

Commissioner McClure stated that the argument about salary didn't make sense. Mr. Don stated that the City's Labor Union would have to be convinced to do a salary assessment for the position and then increase the salary. Commissioner McClure stated that when the county finds that job responsibilities have changed, then the description is updated and the salary is realigned. Mr. Don stated that salary changes are under the purview of the Labor Union. Commissioner McClure stated that if salary is a problem, then it needs to be addressed so that a local electrical inspector would be available.

Mr. Don stated that the State is paid from permit fees. Commissioner McClure asked if the State was being paid more than a local electrical inspector would be paid. Mr. Don stated that the estimated cost for this service provided by the State was \$120,000; this amount was increased

due to residential plan reviews that are sent to the State. Mr. Don stated that his office is now conducting residential plan reviews, but couldn't in the past because of the work load from the La Grande School District and commercial projects. Commissioner McClure asked if Mr. Don felt the school projects were an anomaly; Mr. Don stated that was correct.

Commissioner Howard requested that Mr. Don report back by September with consultant fees, estimated salary, and benefits to show a five-year rolling average of a comparison between consultants and a salaried position.

Commissioner McClure stated that he was told that commercial plan reviews were farmed out. Mr. Don stated that he was licensed to do those and provides that service.

Commissioner McClure asked if fees were competitive and adequate. Mr. Don stated that fees had not been changed since 2010 and were falling a bit lower than area jurisdictions. He added that in the process of adopting the e-permits program, errors in the local fee methodology calculations were identified and fee modifications were expected.

Mr. Don stated that there is enough work for a three-quarter time electrical inspector; that person would need to be multi-certified in other fields including plan review. A second building inspector has been hired; he is training for a residential electrical inspector certification and will work towards certification to be a limited or specialty electrical inspector. Mr. Don stated that this position was needed because he couldn't keep up with the workload over the last year. The new position will service all residential plan reviews and the State will no longer provide that service. Electrical inspections will continue to be provided by the State.

Commissioner McClure thanked Mr. Don for his time in presenting the proposed budget and requested quarterly updates in the future.

**Next Meeting Date and Location**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on June 7, 2017 at the Joseph Annex Building.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston  
Sr. Dept. Specialist II