

Board of Commissioners Meeting  
June 21, 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.

**Executive Session**

Commissioner McClure recessed the meeting for an executive session under ORS 192.660(2)(d) and then called it back to order.

**Public Comment**

**2017 Building Permit Fee Modification**

Brian Don, Union County Building Official, 1000 Adams Avenue, La Grande, explained that the State mandates that building fee methodologies match other jurisdictions throughout the State. Local fee changes are proposed because the methodologies did not meet state standards. These changes will not affect fees charged to customers, but will affect descriptions and where things will be placed. Commissioner McClure asked if the changes were revenue neutral. Mr. Don agreed that was correct.

Commissioner McClure asked if this would allow for the same standards and fees to contractors in all counties. Mr. Don stated that the fees are set by jurisdiction and dependent upon costs to operate the department; local rates have not increased since 2010. Commissioner McClure asked about the surcharge for the State of Oregon on all local fees; Mr. Don stated that the surcharge is mandated by State law and provides funding for the e-permit system and other items at the State.

Commissioner Howard asked if the changes created any confusion about how much local discretion is given to charging fees; Mr. Don stated that it does not create confusion because the permit technicians are already accurate.

Commissioner Howard asked if the public can access the e-permit system to view activity as an open record; Mr. Don stated that it will provide more accessibility to view activity online.

Commissioner Howard asked if any general contractors had reviewed the changes; Mr. Don stated that there is a 30 day comment period available and more information is available on the State Building Codes website.

Commissioner Howard asked if there was any local flexibility in waiving fees for government entities or special districts; Mr. Don stated that the Commissioners would make that determination on a case by case basis. Mr. Don added that the building department is self-supported by permits and when fees are waived, money is taken from other contractors who have already paid their fees. Commissioner Howard stated that the reason for this question is to find out if all available tools have been considered for economic development.

Commissioner McClure stated that in the enterprise zone, the County waives fees but the City does not.

Mrs. Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that in the enterprise zone local jurisdictions are allowed to offer different incentives and opt to add additional incentives; the overall enterprise zone offers the same State incentive of forgiveness of property tax. In the County, building fees have been waived. The City of La Grande has not chosen to do that.

Commissioner Howard stated that the enterprise zone is one opportunity for attracting business development and appreciated that the County has considered this in the past. It takes a good partnership to make this work and he hopes that this might be mentioned at some point.

Mr. Don stated that he has given a discount on fees in the past, but he also has to run a business. He has reduced the fee down to the cost of operation, but that is as far as he can go. He stated that the Commissioners and City Councilors would have to make the decision beyond that.

**Commissioner Beverage moved approval of the 2017 Building Permit Fee Modification. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **Elected Officials and Department Heads**

Commissioner Beverage asked if there was any progress in having a microphone and speaker at commission meetings. Mrs. Burgess stated that more information was needed and she would follow up with it.

#### **Consent Agenda**

**Commissioner Howard moved approval of the consent agenda, which included Claims Journals from June 7 and 8; and Meeting Minutes from April 5 and 19. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **Administrative Matters**

##### **Drive Less Connect Program #30842 Amendment**

Mrs. Burgess stated that this contract is with the Oregon Department of Transportation and is subcontracted out to Community Connection. The current contract is set to expire June 30, 2017; this amendment would extend it for one additional year and result in an increase in funding of \$31,679 for FY 2017-18.

**Commissioner Howard moved approval of the Drive Less Connect Program #30842 Amendment. Commissioner Beverage seconded.**

Commissioner Howard asked if this had been reviewed by legal counsel. Mrs. Burgess stated that the initial contract was reviewed.

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

##### **FY 2016-17 Audit Services Proposal - Union County**

Mrs. Burgess stated that Lewis, Poe, Moeller, Gunderson & Roberts, LLC have been the auditors for some time and do a really good job for the County. The proposed fee for FY 2016-17 is

\$38,055, which includes a 2% increase from the previous year; Mrs. Burgess recommended approval of this audit proposal.

Commissioner Beverage asked when auditing services had last been up for bid. Mrs. Burgess stated that it had been more than five years; proposals for professional services are requested rather than a bid. Commissioner Beverage stated that she knew the agency does a good job, but getting new proposals is something to think about. Commissioner McClure stated that it would not be inappropriate to instruct Mrs. Burgess to put out a Request for Proposals next fiscal year since it is too late for FY 2017-18.

Commissioner Howard stated that he was real happy with the agency. He felt that making people aware by letter that there are opportunities to submit a proposal would be enough. Mrs. Burgess asked if he meant an informal notice. Commissioner Howard stated that it is a little bit of a problem in terms of the particular request because agencies would have to be identified so as not to exclude any, but he doesn't want to open a can of worms either.

Commissioner McClure suggested approving the current audit proposal and then having a discussion in January on how to handle future audits. Mrs. Burgess stated that January would provide enough time to request proposals before the next fiscal year.

**Commissioner Beverage moved approval of FY 2016-17 Audit Services Proposal as presented. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

FY 2016-17 Audit Services Proposal– Solid Waste District

Mrs. Burgess stated that the Commissioners would be acting in their capacity as Board of Directors for the Solid Waste District (SWD). Lewis, Poe, Moeller, Gunderson & Roberts, LLC proposed to conduct the review report for the SWD funds for FY 2016-17; the fee would be \$2,530 and includes a 2% increase over the previous year.

**Commissioner Beverage moved approval of the FY 2016-17 Audit Services Proposal as presented for the Solid Waste District. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Union County Law Enforcement Association (UCLEA) Contract

Mrs. Burgess stated that the UCLEA represents employees of the Sheriff's Office and the County Jail; the current agreement expires June 30, 2017. The new contract would be effective July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2020. She stated that she appreciated that negotiations were very congenial between the County and UCLEA. She requested two language changes and monetary changes included Cost of Living Allowance increases of 2% on July 1, 2017, 2% on July 1, 2018, and between 2-4% on July 1, 2019 based on the January 2019 CPI. The new contract would also add a sixth step to the salary scale and would also increase the incentives available for intermediate and advanced certificates and Associates and Bachelor degrees by 2% in FY 2017-18.

Commissioner Beverage thanked Mrs. Burgess for doing a good job negotiating and stated that the contract looked fair for both parties.

Commissioner McClure stated that the increases were anticipated in the budget and will not cause a reduction of services to the community.

**Commissioner Howard moved approval of the UCLEA Contract effective July 1, 2017. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Animal Shelter Contract**

Mrs. Burgess stated that she and Commissioner McClure had been working with BMHA President John Rhinehart and BMHA Director John Brinlee; it has been positive and concerns have been addressed. In December 2016, Commissioners approved a contract of up to five years but because it is still early and five-year budget funding is uncertain, a one-year contract is recommended. Changes in this contract include proof of BMHA's IRS filing by June 30, instead of April 1, which allows for them to file as late as the May 15 deadline. The other change would eliminate hours open on Saturdays, since they have found it to be a low traffic day and not cost effective.

**Animal Shelter Contract Public Comment**

John Rhinehart, Blue Mountain Humane Association President, 2012 Y Ave, La Grande made a presentation about the animal shelter. He stated that the contract should be extended because major changes took place over the last year, they have cut costs to be more efficient, positive changes were made to the Board membership, the website was redesigned, and it engages with the public in a better way.

Commissioner Howard asked if the website was being paid for and maintained by Mr. Rhinehart; Mr. Rhinehart stated that there is one staff member that assists with adoption posting, but he maintains the other portions. Commissioner Howard noted that there were only two dogs listed for adoption on the website. John Brinlee, BMHA Director, stated that there are only two dogs available.

Commissioner Howard noted that the website's President's Desk page was last updated January 2017 and the News & Events page was last updated April 2017; he stated that it is a sign that the website is decaying and asked if there were problems keeping it updated. Mr. Rhinehart stated that there had not been a lot of newsworthy items recently. Commissioner Howard stated that the concern is that people visiting websites view a lack of updates in a negative way and as old news.

Commissioner Beverage stated that the adoption fees seemed high and asked if they were comparable to other shelters in the area. Mr. Rhinehart stated that their fees were comparable, and even less than some shelters. Commissioner McClure asked how they compare to Walla Walla. Mr. Brinlee stated that he was not sure how their fees compared. Commissioner McClure stated that it must be working since they only have two dogs available for adoption.

Commissioner Beverage asked how long dogs are kept at the shelter. Mr. Brinlee stated that normal shelter time is one to three weeks, but they have had one dog for two months.

Commissioner Beverage asked if they spay/neuter cats; Mr. Brinlee stated that they do not spay/neuter cats because it is too expensive. He stated that he works with someone in Idaho that accepts some cats from them; they may be willing to come here on a monthly basis and provide the service for low cost since it is too expensive to have it provided by local vets.

Commissioner Beverage noted that they currently have 2.5 employees and asked what they had before. Mr. Brinlee stated that they had five staff members before and now have four employees including himself.

Commissioner Beverage asked if the shelter was closed on Fridays and Saturdays. Mr. Rhinehart stated that they are closed on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Mr. Rhinehart stated that the shelter can only operate with the County's support and added that it appears that they may run in the black for the first time in five years.

Commissioner Howard asked Mr. Rhinehart what he meant by saying that "it appears that" they may run in the black. Mr. Rhinehart stated that during January through April 2016 they were operating with more employees than they needed, but have since cut costs; they will not know for sure how much those changes will impact their financials until they have had a full six months to one year to evaluate. Commissioner Howard asked if their projected budget for FY 2017-18 shows that they will be in the black. Mr. Rhinehart stated that they did not vote on a budget in their annual meeting. Commissioner Howard asked if they had a projection of decreasing deficits in the next six months or an increase of revenues over the next two years. Mr. Brinlee stated that they did not have projected financials. Commissioner Howard stated that he could not take on face value that it appears that they will run in the black.

Commissioner McClure asked if the change in relationship with the county had an impact on donations. Mr. Brinlee stated that donations had not increased.

Commissioner McClure asked how they would characterize their relationship with the public. Mr. Rhinehart stated that he believed the relationship had improved and complaints were not coming in like they used to.

Commissioner McClure asked Mrs. Burgess how dog licensing was going. Mrs. Burgess stated that the aggressive pursuit intended was impeded when there was a change in staffing, but there has been an uptick since advertising. She added that the new software is being used and they are working to expand it to offer online licensing.

Mr. Rhinehart suggested having an ordinance for cat ownership similar to dog ownership that would include rabies vaccinations, spay/neuter, and licensing. It would increase responsible pet ownership and increase revenue. Commissioner McClure stated that it could be considered and would be a public process, but cats are hard to control. Commissioner Howard stated that he supports a cat ordinance.

#### Animal Shelter Public Comment

Connie Voelz, 62012 Fruitdale Lane, La Grande, stated that the new contract states that photos of impounded animals must be current but she was not able to find them. Mr. Brinlee stated that the shelter does not post photos of impounded animals on the website because people claim dogs that do not belong to them. Photos are not posted until they are available for adoption. Commissioner Howard stated that there is a State holding period of five days. Mr. Brinlee stated that they usually hold for five days, but hold dogs for a longer period on a case by case basis.

Ms. Voelz stated that the shelter would be in default of the contract if they do not post photos of impounded dogs and felt that that language in the contract should be changed.

Ms. Voelz noted that the contract also states that BMHA will provide a report listing all dogs delivered to the shelter. Mrs. Burgess stated that the Sheriff's Office provides that report. Ms. Voelz noted that the language should be changed to reflect that.

Ms. Voelz asked when a financial report showing the number of dogs, licensing, citations, and donations would be available if it is due June 30. Mrs. Burgess stated that the County will review revenue generated in the Animal Control fund from the County's monthly revenue expenditure reports, which are available at any time. Mrs. Burgess stated that at the end of June 30, if the County has more than \$50,000 in revenue from specific line items within the Animal Control fund then it would pay the excess to the shelter.

Commissioner McClure stated that the County had not exceeded \$50,000 during the first six months, but it could next year. He added that the County did not take an aggressive approach initially so that dog owners would have time to get their dogs licensed, but there can be more work to advertise it better.

Animal Shelter Public Comment

Lois Barry, 60688 Morgan Lake Road, La Grande, suggested to include information about the licensing process and requirements on the shelter website. Mr. Rhinehart stated that that information is on the Animal Control page.

Animal Shelter Public Comment

Margaret Mead, 57744 Foothill Road, La Grande, stated that she was glad to see the shelter's website progress. She asked where dog licensing was being advertised. Mrs. Burgess stated it was being advertised on the radio and posted on the Elkhorn Media Facebook. Mr. Brinlee stated that the information is getting out because people have come to the shelter with paper advertisements. Ms. Mead stated that she does not listen to the radio.

Animal Shelter Public Comment

Ms. Voelz asked if notices could be sent to owners with expiring licenses. Mr. Brinlee stated that they did not have that information since it was lost in an attempt to move it to another system. Mrs. Burgess stated that all new licenses will expire in December and fees will be prorated throughout the year; the cost to notify owners once a month is more than the amount collected in licenses.

Commissioner McClure stated that the County wants to make licensing convenient for the public and there are plans to issue licenses on the spot.

Animal Shelter Public Comment

Donna Brownlee, 2012 Y Avenue, La Grande, asked if the County would have a temporary licensing station in January, or if everyone would have to come to the Sheriff's Office to get dog licenses. She also asked how owners prove rabies vaccination through an online system.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the online system will allow owners to upload documents for proof of rabies and spay/neuter. The County plans to have events in cities to offer licensing on the spot, but licenses will always be available at the Sheriff's Office. There are plans for outreach to make licensing easier and local vet offices have been helpful in providing rabies and spay/neuter certifications for licensing.

Commissioner McClure stated that there had been positive direction in the last six months, but there are more things to work on. He recommended extending the contract for one year and continuing efforts to improve the system. The County needs to get as many animals licensed as it can because it benefits everyone. When there has been enough time to educate the public, then the County will be more aggressive in citing pet owners without licenses.

Commissioner Beverage suggested renewing the contract for one year with a six month review.

Commissioner Howard liked the contract term of one year and appreciated the work that Commissioner McClure had accomplished. He stated that if his vote was dependent upon efforts, he would vote yes, but he is leaning against it. He is deeply concerned about the future of the shelter and cooperation with the public, specifically the inaccessibility of the shelter since it is open only 19 hours a week. He also does not care for the shelter website. He is still hearing things about burned bridges in regards to issues with feral cats and he does not know how that would be rebuilt with the community. He is concerned about having only two dogs on the website; it may reflect good marketing or it could be that because of those burned bridges people are not bringing animals out there. He stated that he is inclined to vote against it, but was not sure that voting no would accomplish anything. He stated that he has the greatest respect for Commissioner McClure.

Commissioner McClure stated that a lot of people had put in a lot of effort into this; it is not completed or perfect, but it is moving in the right direction and he would support it. He agreed that a six month review would be okay.

**Commissioner Beverage moved approval of the Animal Shelter contract renewal with a six month review. Commissioner Howard seconded for purposes of discussion.**

**Roll Call on: Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner Howard, no. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried.**

**Next Meeting and Location**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, June 28, 2017 at the Joseph Annex Building.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston  
Sr. Dept. Specialist II