

Union County Board of Commissioners Meeting
September 17, 2008

Present: Commissioner R. Nellie Bogue Hibbert
Commissioner Colleen MacLeod
Commissioner Steve McClure

Call to Order

Chairman Hibbert called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with all three commission members present.

Census 2010 Presentation

Gladys Romero, Partnership Specialist, from the U.S. Census Bureau gave a presentation to the Commissioners about the 2010 Census.

Mental Health Issues in Jail

Boyd Rasmussen, Sheriff, Craig Ward, Captain, and Dwight Dill, Director of Center for Human Development (CHD) came to the Commissioners to discuss the mental health issues that are in the jail and possible solutions for the problem. Boyd stated that he has had discussions with the Commissioners in the past to talk about the challenges in the jail that causes extreme strain on the employees of the jail. These challenges are not only local but they are Statewide. In the last few months there has been a spike in the inmates that have mental health issues and illnesses that are difficult to deal with in Union County's facility. Boyd explained that they have coordinated with CHD to help with the inmate's needs. The problem is at the State level of adequate facilities for the inmates. The challenge is how should it be dealt with in the mean time?

Craig presented a few options of how to deal with the inmates that have mental health issues. Oregon has closed one of the mental hospitals in the State and the idea was to open a larger State hospital but that has still not been done so now there is only one hospital for the mentally ill to go. The jails have become a default facility for housing the mentally ill. This facility was not designed to house the high needs of the mentally ill. It is not big enough and the design is not suitable for these inmates. The staff in the jail is not trained to handle the mentally ill inmates adequately and the facility is not equipped to handle them either. There are usually two corrections officers on staff in the jail and they can control up to a population of twenty-eight inmates. Before the Wallowa contract was in effect the average daily inmate population was twenty-eight. After the Wallowa contract the jail is at matrix of thirty-six almost every day. The insane inmates are high needs people and adds stress on the rest of the facility. There is screaming, pounding, rubbing body waste in their hair and walls, destroying property, and throw things at staff as they walk by. The other concern he has is that the staff is not trained to deal with the insane. Dwight and his staff are trained and appreciate the hard work his employees do. They are at least as

frustrated as the Sheriff's staff is if not more. There is no other place for these people to go besides jail. These inmates are not able to communicate any legitimate physical problems that they may have so those problems may go undetected and untreated. There are two isolation cells and a detox cell which can house one insane inmate each. A significant number of arrests that are made are intoxicated. To comply with State jail standards they have to be put in a detox cell. There is only one and it needs to be kept open when there are intoxicated people brought in. The other two isolation cells are usually used for disciplinary problems for the inmates who have assaulted other inmates or staff and other disciplinary problems. In recent months one, both, or all of those cells have been occupied by insane inmates. It limits the staff's options in dealing with some very real issues with the regular inmate population. Craig explained that there are three ranges of solutions. There is short term, mid term, and long term solutions. The solution needs to be long term which lies with the State Legislature to provide an adequate facility to house the mentally ill. The mid term solution may or may not be a remodel of the corridor and church room in the jail that will add one or two more isolation cells that would be insulated and monitors set up which will isolate them from the general population and be able to monitor them at all times. In the short term they have found that medication works really well but they don't think they need to take medication and it is illegal to force them to take medication without a Court Order. The medical providers in this area that can prescribe that type of medicine are reluctant to do so because there is not adequate monitoring. They would like to partner with CHD to provided adequate monitoring so the medical providers will be willing to prescribe them medication. They would also like to have additional staff to help monitor the high need inmates. When the mentally ill inmates are on suicide watch there has to be a staff person in front of their cell at all times to make sure they do not attempt to kill themselves.

Commissioner MacLeod asked how hard it is to get a Court Order for medication. Dwight Dill, CHD, stated that if they have not been committed it is hard to get a Court Order for medications. These inmates don't always meet commitment criteria because they may be a danger to themselves or others but they are in a secure setting in the jail. If there is a commitment done there is no place to send them.

Commissioner McClure suggested inviting the State Representative and Senator to visit the facility. Seeing the facility first hand helps when they are in Salem of the reality of what is dealt with on a daily basis. He stated that the Commissioners would be willing to make that invitation for them and give them a tour of the facility.

Commissioner Hibbert told Boyd to talk to his counter parts in other counties to give their Representatives and Senators a tour of their facility as well so there are

more people in the State Legislature that are involved and can see the problem first hand.

Commissioner McClure stated that there needs to be a look at adding more cells if possible to the jail. There needs to be bids done to see what the cost would be and look at that cost compared to the budget. Commissioner McClure asked if it would be a solution to have some of the jail staff trained to handle the mentally ill inmates. Craig stated that there is a high level of training required and it can take months or years of training to deal with them. He has considered the possibility but does not think it will work at this time. CHD has sent staff into the jail to help cover some of the situations.

Dwight stated that the best solution is to have a regional secure facility to move these people into a better setting. The temporary solutions are not sufficient treatment.

Craig suggested that he have a contractor come and look at the project and see if it is even feasible and at that time have the Commissioners come to the jail and see what is being suggested and the cost to change it.

Commissioner Hibbert thanked Boyd, Craig, and Dwight for coming and giving the Commissioners a better understanding of the problems in the jail.

Industrial Park Sales Agreement

Dennis Spray, Director of General Services, explained that there was a sales agreement and receipt for earnest money made for Lot 6 in the industrial park at the Airport. James Challis would like to purchase this property and he has stated that it will provide about thirty new jobs. Dennis explained that this agreement is a standard agreement. **Commissioner MacLeod moved approval of the sales agreement between Union County and James Challis. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Idaho Power Agreement

Hanley Jenkins, Planning Director, explained that the Department of Energy has asked Union County to work with them on an application that is being submitted by Idaho Power for a new transmission line that would extend from Hemmingway, Idaho to Boardman, Oregon. In the application process each county that the line will go through is asked to sign an Intergovernmental Agreement that involves several stipulations. Union County shall review the energy facility siting documents, identify local and State land use criteria, consult with the Department of Energy on compliance and applicability of the Department of Energy standards and other reasonable activities, and may be required to conduct site visits and attend meetings. The work under the agreement may include the County participation in the BLM environmental impact statement

process. Union County agrees to cooperate with the Oregon Department of Energy. There is an opportunity to pursue amendments to the agreement. The County can be reimbursed up to \$20,000 for these requests and is only on a reimbursement basis. The County cannot subcontract their responsibilities without the Oregon Department of Energy's authority. This intergovernmental agreement is being considered by all of the counties that this transmission line will go through. **Commissioner McClure moved approval of the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Oregon Department of Energy and Union County. Commissioner MacLeod seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Consent Agenda

The August 26 and 28 claims journal, August 28 and September 4 public works claims journal were approved as presented on the consent agenda.

Ambulance Advisory Committee

Court Order 2008-40, In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Ambulance District Advisory Committee was presented for consideration. There was a member that resigned and there were two applicants for the position. Another position has expired and the member is active and willing to serve for another term. The Commissioners appointed Steve Henderson to fill the vacant position. **Commissioner MacLeod moved approval of Court Order 2008-40. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Court Facility Task Force

Amended Resolution 2008-17, In the Matter of a Resolution Establishing a Court Facility Task Force was presented for consideration. Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer explained that there were two changes to the original Resolution which were the appointment of the Sheriff and the Administrative Officer to the Court Facility Task Force. **Commissioner MacLeod moved approval of Amended Resolution 2008-17. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Court Facility Task Force Committee

Shelley Burgess explained that there needs to be appointments to the Court Facility Task Force but all of the recommended appointments have not been turned in yet. The Commissioners decided to hold the Court Order until all the positions are filled.

Memorandum of Understanding

Shelley Burgess presented the Memorandum of Understanding between the Union County 4-H and Extension District and the Union County Soil and Water Conservation District. The Commissioners need to consider this Memorandum because they are the governing body over the 4-H and Extension Service taxing

district. Commissioner McClure explained that the Extension Service District has been going through a strategic plan process and the Soil and Water Conservation has indicated some interest in selling their building. This M.O.U. does not commit the County to anything but it does start the process. There will be an appraisal done on the building and then it will be determined if there is some interest. **Commissioner MacLeod moved approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between Union County 4-H and Extension District and the Union County Soil and Water Conservation District. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Forest Access for All

Brian Addison, 306 Spring Garden, Baker City, OR, 97814, came to the Commissioners to express some concerns he has on the Memorandum of Understanding that the Commissioners signed with the U.S. Forest Service.

Adjournment

The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Wilhelm
Department Specialist