

Board of Commissioners Meeting
January 6, 2016

Present: Commissioner Steve McClure
 Commissioner Mark D. Davidson
 Commissioner Jack Howard

Chairman Howard called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and began with the pledge of allegiance. All three Commissioners were present.

Public Comments

Boardman to Hemingway Public Comment

Irene Gilbert, 2310 Adams Avenue, La Grande, thanked the commission for appointing her to the Boardman to Hemingway Advisory Committee. She stated that although the committee had not yet met, there was already a considerable amount of frustration. After BLM issued the deadline for county comment for January 8, Senators Wyden and Merkley issued a response indicating it was an unreasonable amount of time. They requested a deadline extension, which was granted and moved to January 21. She stated that it seems unreasonable that the B2H Advisory Committee will have met only once before the commission's deadline of January 14. She also stated that maps showing preferred alternatives were briefly displayed by BLM, and then taken down; they indicated that the maps were only to be used by counties in talking with land owners so the B2H Committee does not have access to them. Consequently, impacted land owners may not be aware of how this will affect them. She hopes that the commission will extend their deadline and accommodate the committee because they are in a bind to accomplish their objectives in the amount of time left. She requested that the commission be flexible with the deadline for the committee's submission. She requested that the commission supply the committee with a list of contact names and phone numbers of the impacted land owners.

Commissioner Davidson asked Mrs. Gilbert if she had talked with Scott Hartell, Union County Planner, about the availability of the maps and affected land owners. She stated that she had not talked to him, and that since he is on the committee he should know about it since Committee Chairman Ted Taylor had emailed the information to the whole group.

Commissioner Davidson suggested that the commission send a letter to BLM requesting a deadline extension. In addition, he suggested revising the B2H committee's deadline to submit their recommendation to the commission to January 18 or 19. Commissioner McClure concurred and stated that the commission would do anything it could to be helpful to the advisory committee.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he hoped there would be more meetings before January 20; there is an opportunity to give sufficient notice for additional meetings.

Elgin Properties Public Comment

Brock Eckstein, 1395 Columbus Street, Elgin, thanked the commission for transferring foreclosed properties to the City of Elgin. He stated that they are signing a lease with the Elgin Museum and appreciated the support from the county.

Communication Specialist & Microphones Public Comments

Margaret Mead, 57744 Foothill Road, La Grande, stated that in reference to the proposed Communications Specialist position, she was heartened to hear that things have changed in the last 25 years and that it was time to make some changes. She thinks this position could be beneficial if it is not supervised too heavily.

Mrs. Mead requested that a microphone be set up at commission meetings so that constituents could hear the speakers. She indicated that many times speakers cannot be heard when their backs are facing others, but they can hear the commissioners quite well.

She hopes that in recognition of changes, they do not hear “that’s how we have always done it” as rationale for decision making.

Elected Official, Department Head & Employee Comments

Commissioner Program Responsibilities

Commissioner Howard stated that he would like to have a work session within the next month. He stated that he would love to have someone take Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW).

Commissioner Davidson stated that there are some deletions that need to be made from his list: Community Renewable Energy Association (his term ended) and The Oregon Consortium Board (organization dissolved). He stated that there was no committee he would want to give up, but he would take on GRMW from Commissioner Howard. He stated that he was also interested in the Chamber of Commerce, Blue Mt. Conference Center, and the La Grande/Union County Joint Tourism Promotion Committee as they fit well with his portfolio.

Commissioner Howard stated that the Tourism Committee would be perfect for Commissioner Davidson, but the Blue Mt. Conference Center Board is in the middle of some rearrangement so he would prefer to keep that responsibility for now, as well as the Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner McClure stated that the Administration Role is usually filled by the Commission Chairman, and should now be transferred to Commissioner Howard.

Commissioner McClure stated that he would be open to adding any responsibilities, but did not see any he was not currently participating in. He stated that he was more

than willing to hold a work session and that Commissioner Howard should work with Shelley in setting a date.

Commissioner Howard stated that it would be useful for the public to see the process and suggested an evening or weekend work session, or added to the end of a regular board meeting. He thinks it should be held by the end of month.

Constituent Inquiries

Commissioner Howard stated that the intent of this new agenda section was to allow the commissioners to share constituents' emails or conversations when constituents are unable to attend the commission meeting.

Urban Renewal District (URD)

The commission received a letter from the City of La Grande's Mayor Steve Clements requesting a joint work session.

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that she received a phone call earlier in the week from La Grande City Manager Robert Strope relaying a request from the City Fiscal Committee to hold a joint work session on January 13 at 6:00 p.m. in the Misener Conference Room. She stated that the letter from Mayor Clements explained what the city had accomplished in anticipation for the next budget cycle and their consideration of under-levying the URD. According to their letter, it would impact the amount of revenue that the county would receive; the City would like to discuss with the commissioners whether or not they would be interested in assisting them with the funding of the library with the under-levy revenue.

Commissioner Howard asked what the commissioners might expect at the meeting and how the joint work session would be structured.

Commissioner McClure suggested that Linda Hill, Union County Assessor / Tax Collector, prepare a presentation illustrating what the URD is and how it works; it has been a lot of years since it was initiated. He thinks there are not many people in the community who understand it so it would be good to go through the basics. This is needed to make sure the County and the City are all working off the same sheet of music.

Commissioner Davidson concurred with Commissioner McClure's suggestion to have a presentation by Mrs. Hill. He stated the financial implications to all districts are quite complicated and she understands them better than anyone. He also suggested that the commission get a copy of the URD plan and review it prior to the meeting; the projects that they are supposed to be funding through URD are outlined in the plan. He stated that he would caution the commission in being careful about any representation that would be made. This request, like any other funding request, must be vetted through the budget process and heard by the budget committee, testimony would need to be taken and considered in context with the county's entire budget. The county has other demands and opportunities that are new in this coming year; they need to be

considered along with the requests from the City of La Grande for additional help with their budget. He stated that Mrs. Hill has kept track of the revenue that has been forgone by the county and other districts to the benefit of the URD; that chart would be helpful for the commission to refer to. He estimated that the county has forgone \$1.7 million for the benefit of the City of La Grande over the last 15 years. The commission needs to look at the entire picture and listen to the City's pitch. The time for further deliberation and decision making would be during the budget process.

Commissioner McClure concurs and has no problem talking with the City of La Grande.

Commissioner Howard asked if the commission would like to reschedule the meeting if Mrs. Hill is unable to attend; Commissioner Davidson stated that he would be inclined to reschedule. Commissioner Davidson stated that her information would be really helpful to put everything in context and personally doubts that anyone understands the URD as well as Mrs. Hill; it would be helpful for the commission, the public, city council, and the La Grande's fiscal committee to clearly understand it. Commissioner McClure concurred.

Commissioner Howard anticipated that the meeting would need to be rescheduled, and would be reasonable since the request just came in.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner McClure moved approval of the Consent Agenda, which included Claims Journals for December 9, 10, 16, 17, 21, 23, & 24 and meeting minutes for December 2 & 16. Commissioner Davidson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Administrative Matters

Court Order 2016-01, Selection of an Official Newspaper

Mrs. Burgess stated that the purpose was to identify a newspaper that was in general circulation within the county for the publication of foreclosure and other required notifications. Mrs. Burgess read Court Order 2016-01 in its entirety.

Commissioner McClure asked about the circulation of the Observer and the Nickel newspapers; Mrs. Burgess did not have that information. She stated that the difference was that the Nickel is not a subscribed delivered newspaper and does not qualify as a newspaper under general circulation.

Commissioner Davidson moved approval of Court Order 2016-01. Commissioner McClure seconded.

Commissioner Howard asked what the economic benefit was to The Observer; Mrs. Burgess stated that she does not have the information but could find out how much was spent during the last year. It was her understanding that there was no other newspaper in the county that qualified. **Roll Call on Court Order 2016-01: Commissioner Davidson, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

Court Order 2016-02, Appointment of a Budget Officer for Union County

Mrs. Burgess stated the purpose was to appoint a Budget Officer for the 2016-17 fiscal year, as is the process described by local budget law. Mrs. Burgess read Court Order 2016-02 in its entirety. **Commissioner McClure moved approval of Court Order 2016-02. Commissioner Davidson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Court Order 2016-03, Appointment to Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization

Mrs. Burgess stated the purpose was to appoint additional members to the council in order to get a good balance of OHP members and non-OHP members. This would add two additional members: Jennifer Goodman (OHP member and works with OHP members) and Robert Kleng (works with OHP members). **Commissioner McClure moved approval of Court Order 2016-03. Commissioner Davidson seconded.**

Commissioner McClure stated that there is an issue in Union County that this committee could help with. There has been some discussion about the vacant Evergreen Center and putting it to better use for the community; those who have shown interest and have needs are Parole & Probation and the County Jail (community corrections beds), CHD (mental health care), and a faith-based organization (addiction program). He thinks it is a legitimate need to put forward to EOCCO; the community should ask for help in providing those services that are needed in the community. He stated that it would help solve some problems for the county and community; it is currently vacant and has some security in place already. Commissioner Howard agreed that it was a great suggestion and that he would bring it up at the next EOCCO meeting.

Commissioner McClure stated that the purpose of EOCCO is to reinvest in the community and this program would be a good investment for this community.

Commissioner Davidson agreed that it was a good suggestion; an owner's representative from the Real Estate Investment Trust came out from Illinois last year to find a use for the building. They are motivated to sell and would be willing to discount it substantially, but cannot donate it due to a limitation on needed tax credits.

Commissioner McClure suggested that the county look at the possibility of the state or regional health organization helping with financing. He added that he does not know who the ownership would fall under, but putting it into public use would be a positive thing. Commissioner Davidson stated that there is a need to house the mentally ill in a mental health facility, instead of jail. Commissioner Howard stated that he would report back to the commission in February. **Roll Call on Court Order 2016-03: Commissioner Davidson, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Commissioner Howard, yes. Motion carried unanimously.**

Next meeting and location

Commissioner Howard stated that normally there are bylaws that stipulate times and locations of meetings and he was unsure when they were last reviewed. He stated that

he would like a copy of the county bylaws because he thinks there is a standing rule about meetings taking place at 9:00 a.m. on the first and third Wednesdays.

Commissioner McClure stated that this follows Mrs. Mead's comment about always doing things the same way - maybe there is a better way to do it. He stated that he has never seen a bylaw that stated time and place.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he is not aware of any bylaws, but there may be a resolution that establishes the meeting time and place.

Commissioner Howard stated that the commission will treat it as a standing rule and the commission should look at any bylaws if there are any. He suggested that the commission think about the possibility of moving some meetings out of La Grande sometime in the future as an occasional practice. Commissioner McClure stated that they have done that in the past and it could be done again. Commissioner Howard added that they would need to be aware of staff time, logistics, and cost associated with moving meetings out of La Grande.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston
Sr. Dept. Specialist II