

Board of Commissioners Meeting  
October 5, 2016

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

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

Commissioner Howard stated that the commission would take public comments regarding Animal Sheltering Services at 10:30 a.m. General comments should be made at 9:00 a.m. as they won't be relevant later.

Commissioner Davidson stated that there may be people who plan to attend the 10:30 a.m. time-specific agenda item; the commission should allow those comments at that time.

Commissioner Howard stated that the other commissioners are welcome to challenge any decisions he makes.

### **Public Comments and Concerns**

#### Public Comment

Margaret L. Mead, 57744 Foothill Rd, La Grande, agreed with Commissioner Davidson that comments should be allowed at 10:30 a.m. When the meeting was scheduled two weeks ago, a comment was made that there would be some discussion regarding what would be allowed in public comments. She called Commissioner McClure last week to ask when public comment parameters would be made known, but the parameters were never given. People should be allowed to speak, not to rehash the history, but because some comments would be relevant.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Leslie Rooper, 2514 N. Second, La Grande, stated that she worked at BMHA in 2006-2007, including eight months running the shelter when the director stepped down. What is happening there now is sickening. She currently holds a license with the Veterinarian Board for the State of Oregon. Some policies that were implied when she worked at BMHA are no longer being implied; this would include limiting operations like Animal Control's drop-off of animals. There have been some complications at BMHA and it needs to be easier for everyone to work together. It is necessary to have a shelter, but things have to change. She is willing to volunteer and help get things to how they were and to get things lined out. There have been a lot of negative things going on at BMHA, which falls back to the care of animals and quality of their treatment. She has seen these things personally. From a veterinarian standpoint, continuing the shelter without making changes would not be healthy for the animals.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Jerry Gildemeister, 809 S. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, La Grande, asked if he should offer his comments at this time or wait until 10:30 a.m. He would like to reiterate things that were covered a year and a half ago; as far as he knows, very little has been done. Commissioner Howard stated that Mr. Gildemeister would be on good ground presenting his comments at 10:30 a.m.

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

No comments were offered.

**Consent Agenda**

**Commissioner Davidson moved approval of the Consent Agenda, which included minutes from the August 3 and September 7 Board of Commissioners Meeting and Claims Journals for September 21 and 22. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Administrative Matters**

**Court Order 2016-32, Appointment to the Union County Community Advisory Council (LCAC) for the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO)**

Lorcinda Johnston, Dept. Specialist, stated that there was a need to appoint a member to the LCAC for the EOCCO. Douglas Osburn applied to serve and resides in a community that is served by the EOCCO. His term would begin immediately and would expire December 31, 2019.

**Commissioner McClure moved approval of Court Order 2016-32. Commissioner Davidson seconded.**

Commissioner Howard stated that Mr. Osburn's application comes on the basis of his status as a military veteran; veterans deserve special representation and recognition of their service, especially in healthcare.

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

**Update on 1601 7<sup>th</sup> Street, La Grande, Foreclosure**

Lorcinda Johnston, Department Specialist, stated that the county's legal counsel provided an opinion to the commission outlining options that the county could consider to proceed.

Commissioner Howard stated that legal counsel indicated that the process had moved forward to foreclosure. He was uncertain if the foreclosure filing had taken place.

Linda Hill, Tax Collector/Assessor, 2102 Scorpio Drive, La Grande, stated that the foreclosure process was completed and the property was deeded to the county the previous Monday. When the county takes the deed, her office refers it to Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, who acts as the county's property manager.

Commissioner McClure asked about the property's value; Ms. Hill didn't have that information but stated that it is a bare piece of ground on a very small lot. Commissioner McClure's understanding was that the City of La Grande had a lien on the property in excess of \$50,000 that was not extinguished in the foreclosure process; he asked if it was worth more than that. Ms. Hill stated that it would be worth quite a bit lower than the lien. Her understanding is that the city realizes that the lien is more than the value of the lot and they want to work with the county

within the allowance of the law. There are some specifics in the law that stipulates what can be done with tax-foreclosed properties.

Commissioner McClure stated that the complaints are about tents on the lot; the city could not remove them because the property was in limbo. He stated that the letter from the county's legal counsel suggested two options for the county: post a 'no trespassing' sign and have it taken care of by the police or go through the civil process. The civil process takes longer and is more expensive. The first option includes removing them forcibly and creates all kinds of issues. He knows the city would like it to be taken care of it. The county can deed the property to another government entity if they use it for public purposes. This has been done recently in Elgin and North Powder. If the lien is greater than the county could recover, then it would be hard to sell unless the lien is forgiven. He thinks the county needs to discuss the best way to handle it with the city and it needs to be expedited. There have been a lot of complaints from that neighborhood about the situation. The other process to consider is the criminal process that would include posting "No Trespassing" signs; the city would be charged with enforcing the no trespass law since the property is inside the city.

Commissioner Howard stated that he talked to legal counsel two weeks ago about the most expeditious and fair process; at that time, it was considered to post 'no trespassing' signs within 24 to 48 hours. There is a human element to think about; they are real people with real issues. He is encouraged that the community has stepped up to provide some specific assistance in terms of housing relocation and emergency shelter. The human equation is being worked through and some of the conflict of a forceful removal will be avoided.

Commissioner McClure stated that if the county wants to take care of it, then 'no trespass' signs should be posted and it should be turned over to the city police. Commissioner Howard added that the county can make sure Social Services are involved as well. Commissioner McClure stated that the county needs to make sure it's in compliance with the law.

Commissioner Davidson thinks the commission should consider option two outlined by the county's legal counsel, which includes sending a letter to the former property owner and other occupants to put them on notice that they need to vacate the property, then follow up with assistance and vouchers. If the county is going to move in an expeditious manner, the county should start there and have a meeting with the city regarding the lien. The weather is changing and nights are getting colder; if the county can find another place for those people to live, it would be better for them and it would clean up the situation in the neighborhood. It would be beneficial all the way around. Commissioner Howard stated that the county was in good shape as there had been some identification of housing options.

Commissioner McClure stated that since Commissioner Howard is on the Housing Board, it would be appropriate for him to approach the city and report back to the commission with a possible solution. He agreed with Commissioner Davidson that it needs to be resolved as humanely as possible while addressing the concerns in the neighborhood. It would be difficult for him to approve the trespass and eviction process without trying to do something for those people first. Commissioner Davidson stated that a letter would be appropriate because it would show

the occupants that the county is serious and deliver a message to the neighbors that the county is dealing with it. Commissioner McClure concurred.

Commissioner Howard stated that he would be happy to talk to the city. The process had been going on for 18 months. The key for him is that there had been some specific housing resources identified and specific steps were being taken to move into that. Some of the issues will resolve quickly as occupants get their housing; the trespass option might make the most sense after that point. He does not want to see this happen again in this way. He is not pleased with the length of time the process has taken or how it has been a problem for neighbors.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he grew up across the street from that location; he knows the neighborhood and the people that are concerned about it. He does not think a letter would be inappropriate; it might help reinforce to the occupants that the county wants to help them and is serious about the issue.

Commissioner Howard stated that there was a consensus to send a letter to the occupants.

Commissioner Howard recessed the meeting until 10:00 a.m.

**PUBLIC HEARING, Second Reading: Good Road Legalization**

Scott Hartell, Planning Director, 1001 Fourth Street, La Grande, stated that the commission held a public hearing on September 21 and took testimony for the Legalization of Good Road, following ORS 368.201 – 368.222. The commissioners toured the property with Mr. Hartell and the Public Works Director on October 3. He is requesting the commission to make a tentative decision to proceed with the legalization process, then move forward with a survey. Then the commission could make a final decision at the commission meeting on November 2 at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner McClure stated that he toured the property with about 15 to 20 neighbors. There was an explanation of what the county was doing and the Cemetery District explained why they were requesting a vacation of the upper road. He did not hear any concerns from the neighbors about legalizing the road; the concerns from the neighbors were about the quality of the road. It makes sense to legalize the road where it is. He asked if the Cemetery District wanted to vacate the other right-of-way; Mr. Hartell stated that they do. Commissioner McClure stated that the county should legalize the road where it is, have it surveyed, and then help the Cemetery District go through the process.

**Commissioner McClure moved to approve the proposed Legalization of Good Road as presented. Commissioner Davidson seconded.**

Commissioner Davidson asked how long the survey would take; Scott Hartell stated that it could be done by the end of October. He added that the commission could come back on November 2 at 10:00 a.m. to finalize the decision. Commissioner Davidson stated that it would be a continuation of the hearing.

Commissioner Howard asked what the commission was voting on since the court order included a tentative decision. Mr. Hartell stated that he requested a tentative decision because he didn't want to incur the cost of a survey if the road legalization would not take place. If a tentative decision is made, then staff will proceed with a survey and re-notification does not have to be made. The court order would then be prepared and available for consideration when a final decision is made. Commissioner Davidson clarified that the commission was not voting on the court order, just approving a survey for the legalization of a section of Good Road; Mr. Hartell agreed that was correct. Commissioner Howard thought that part was clear, but his question was in reference to the court order's third phrase, "whereas the Board of Commissioners on October 5, 2016 made a tentative decision." Mr. Hartell stated that the court order references an October 5 decision, but the court order will be for the final decision.

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

Commissioner Howard recessed the meeting until 10:30 a.m.

#### **Discussion of Animal Shelter Services**

Commissioner Howard asked the audience to keep comments focused and relevant to the current discussion; comments about history may not be the most germane.

Commissioner McClure stated that since the last commission meeting, two negotiation sessions with BMHA members John Brinlee, John Rinehart, and Leeann Muse took place and a tentative solution was reached. He asked BMHA members to correct him if he characterized their proposal differently than they understood.

Commissioner McClure stated that negotiations had taken place for about a year. After a meeting with BMHA members the previous week, he felt that a solution was found; this tentative solution has not been approved by the BMHA board or the Union County Board of Commissioners, but it seems to make sense and both parties could live with it. The county would take back dog licensing from BMHA since public money needs to be accounted for through a public process. Contributions, as well as fines and fees that apply to animals through the Justice Court, were discussed. The City of La Grande used to contribute \$10,000 to the animal shelter. Commissioner McClure called City Manager Robert Strobe and asked if he would consider contributing \$10,000; he indicated that it is not in the city's budget, but the request could be made at a city council meeting, if approved, it could be taken out of contingency. The county would guarantee a \$50,000 contribution per year to BMHA based on the revenue sources mentioned. If the county collects more than \$50,000, then the excess would go to BMHA for their operations. Commissioner McClure asked if he stated the tentative proposal fairly; John Rinehart replied, "absolutely."

Commissioner McClure stated that there was a lot of history with BMHA, but he didn't intend to go through it. The county needs to move forward and make BMHA work for the community. There was a recent dog attack on a young lady walking to school and that can't happen in this community anymore; all parties need to work together to find a solution.

Commissioner McClure stated that BMHA made a big change when it moved from a kill facility to a no-kill facility. Operating a no-kill facility costs more money. He stated that he called every city and county in the region and asked how they operate their shelters; it's done differently everywhere. The City of Unity said that when they have animal control problems, they just go talk to each other; he wished that could be done here. In Walla Walla, the Blue Mountain Humane Society contracts with Walla Walla County and all the cities in it plus the City of Milton-Freewater. He asked their director what percentage of their budget comes from contracts with cities and the county; she indicated that 15% of their budget comes from those contracts and the rest is raised through donations. He was told by Ms. Muse that BMHS has a budget of almost \$1 million and have 10 to 12 employees; they've been operating for a lot of years and have done a really good job.

Commissioner McClure stated that the tentative proposal had not been put on paper and he didn't want to do that until there is a concurrence with the other commissioners and they are comfortable with it. He thought a discussion with the commission needed to take place and be followed with any comments that the public wanted to make. He has made it clear to Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart that they may have to answer to criticism about BMHA.

Commissioner McClure stated that there is probably a bit of risk to the county, and until it is up and running it might cost the county a little money. Dog licenses have not been issued in so long and he intends to give dog owners the opportunity to license their dog before fining them. The county will need a computer system to track the licenses and send annual bills to maintain the licensing process. He asked if the state's minimum fee for licensing animals was \$25; Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart stated yes. The tentative agreement stated that the county would collect the licensing fees and then pay BMHA \$12,500 per quarter.

In regards to operations at BMHA, Commissioner McClure does not want the agreement to include in-depth operations. The county will require that BMHA has a management plan working with Union County Animal Control and the community. This would include hours of operation and drop-off of dogs by Animal Control after normal business hours. A separate document is needed to address operations. He invited Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart to clarify any points he made. Mr. Rinehart stated that Commissioner McClure's explanation sounded exactly what was talked about; Mr. Brinlee agreed. Commissioner McClure asked them if they felt it was a fair characterization of the status. He asked if they had polled their board and if they felt they would accept the proposal; Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart stated yes.

Commissioner Howard stated that his immediate concern was having a transition plan until an agreement is reached, if one is reached. Commissioner McClure stated that since January, the county had been paying BMHA \$27 per day for each animal brought in by Animal Control, as required by ordinance. Commissioner McClure asked Mr. Brinlee how much the county had paid them; Mr. Brinlee stated that BMHA had been paid about \$4,500 to \$4,700 per quarter. Commissioner McClure stated that the interim plan is already in place.

Commissioner Davidson asked if the county's payment of \$50,000 would eliminate the \$27 daily fee per dog that the county is currently paying. Commissioner McClure stated that operations need to be separated. The county will manage licensing and enforcement, but once a dog is taken to the shelter, fees will be retained by BMHA. The county would have other revenue streams to come up with the \$50,000 needed for the agreement. Commissioner McClure asked if Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart agreed with that; both stated yes. Commissioner McClure stated that once an animal is taken to the shelter, it becomes the responsibility of BMHA and the revenue stays there.

Commissioner Davidson asked if the county would pay a daily fee when Animal Control picks up a dog and takes it to BMHA to be held. Commissioner McClure stated that the county would no longer pay that fee since it is replaced with quarterly payments; BMHA can collect the fee from dog owner and keep the revenue. Commissioner Howard asked Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart if that was correct; both stated yes.

Commissioner McClure stated that the quarterly payments would include any contributions received from cities. He stated that he will make the pitch to the La Grande City Council and stated that Mr. Strobe indicated that he would support it. The city always contributed until the county and BMHA came to an impasse. Getting the city to contribute would reduce the risk to the county. He thinks that if the county gets aggressive in licensing animals, then the county would be able to pay \$50,000. He added that BMHA believes licensing revenue would be in excess of \$50,000. If it is done right, the contribution to BMHA would be higher than \$50,000.

John Rinehart, BMHA Board Member, 2012 Y Avenue, La Grande, agreed with Commissioner McClure's statement about excess revenue from licensing. BMHA calculated revenue from licensing animals would be about \$90,000, based on the number of dogs in Union County. Commissioner McClure stated that it is highly likely that the agreement would not cost the county anything if licensing is done right. Commissioner McClure stated that the county would make quarterly payments to BMHA and any revenue in excess of \$50,000 would be sent to BMHA.

Commissioner Howard stated that he was concerned about excess revenue being sent to BMHA when the county would have start-up costs to manage the licensing program. Commissioner McClure stated that the county would have to absorb some start-up costs; if the county really wants to make this work, it needs to step up to the plate. In his opinion, after the struggle that the county had for so many years, he'd like to see this work again. It worked great for 17 years without a single complaint and he'd like to get back to that.

Commissioner McClure stated that his discussions with the city have been that if they can't work with the county and BMHA, then they can do it themselves. Mr. Strobe has no interest in doing that and thinks the city has a pretty good deal; Commissioner McClure thinks the city does, too. Mr. Rinehart thinks this is a real bargain for the cities. Commissioner McClure thinks it's the way to do it and would like to expand it county-wide to all the communities at some point. He stated that there was a current agreement with the City of Elgin and asked if

someone from the city was present; Brock Eckstein, Elgin City Manager, indicated that he was present and had an animal control agreement with the county.

Commissioner Howard asked about the agreement's term length. Commissioner McClure stated that the first agreement would end at the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2017. The county could then review how it's working and extend it to a later date. Commissioner McClure stated that the long term issue that needed to be taken care of was ownership of the building, but it is separate issue to address in the future so as not to complicate the current issue. It should be the county's goal to build a relationship with BMHA and go from there. It will have to be a community effort; a lot of things have changed and there are some hard feelings. He appreciates that and has heard both sides of it. He still wants to move forward with an agreement with BMHA and thinks it will work.

Commissioner Howard complimented Commissioner McClure and stated that he has been a great representative for the public in the process.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he was interested in hearing from Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart. He was encouraged that there seemed to be a great deal of agreement on the terms, but the commission needs to hear from the public.

Mr. Rinehart stated that BMHA thinks this is a great deal for BMHA, the county, the community and the citizens of Union County. It would continue the presence of a high-save facility with continued support for Animal Control and where BMHA and the county could work more closely together. The county wouldn't have to worry about that piece of the puzzle, taking the stress off the county. BMHA would work directly with Animal Control to determine times of operation and drop-off times. The financial agreement is huge for BMHA because it would allow the rescue to operate with a consistent and predictable revenue stream; they have not had that for a long time and donations are down. The agreement would also enable the county to better administer and enforce county ordinance and state law. BMHA will have to abide by those, but enforcing ordinance and licensing would be in one place. This would allow BMHA to do more public outreach and public service that they have not been able to do; this is one place where they have failed the last few years. There has not been enough done to let citizens understand how BMHA operates, what they're doing, how it's being done, and reassuring them that it is being done correctly in the best interest of the animals and people. The financial agreement would be a bargain for the citizens and communities in the county; if cities had to do their own animal control, it would be a disaster. Sponsoring and supporting a high-save shelter saves lives and changes lives. There are a lot of stories about lives that have been changed because animal lives were saved and brought into those human lives. The shelter became a high-save facility because state law changed in regards to euthanasia. Before the shelter became a high-save facility, human lives weren't changed in that way. Over 1,000 animals were euthanized then; in the last four years this facility euthanized only 30 animals and only if a licensed veterinarian said it was the only humane option available. These animals have gone into people's lives in the community and have changed them for the better; he sees that as a win-win for the county. One of the biggest reasons the county should continue with BMHA is that they have the experience, familiarity with the headaches, hassles, and difficulties of running a day-to-



day high-save operation. They are highly respected by groups that they work with, like Oregon Humane, Spokanimal, The Pixie Project and several groups in Idaho. They are highly respected by their peers in animal rescue; that would not happen if they weren't doing something right. There are advantages to having a private nonprofit. It is advantageous to the county and the citizens because things can be separated to avoid headaches with dual administration of ordinances and animal control. He stated that he would not deny that there had been concerns in the community and respects that. BMHA has tried to respond to concerns and they will continue to do so. There have been concerns about BMHA's transparency. They revamped their website and update it on a regular basis; all of the minutes and financials are available for anyone to access. There are complete descriptions of fees and why they are what they are. They also enacted numerous cost-cutting measures to operate more efficiently, run with less overage, and be able to better utilize funds coming to BMHA. They have had to turn away animals and some people are very upset about that; the reality is that there are more animals, especially cats, than they can take care of. Quite often they reach capacity and can't take anymore. They can't take sick animals; they have several cats now that have ringworm because they took a cat in that had ringworm that wasn't noticed. They try to get the animals well and never adopt an animal that they believe is sick. He knows there have been cases where people have adopted an animal and they later got sick; people need to remember that correlation is not causation. Just because the animal came from the shelter and got sick does not mean it was the shelter's fault; he thinks that happens a lot. They have every intent to address the community as best as they can. He thinks it is important for the county to continue with the established animal rescue that already exists; they already have a history and know how to run it. The contract is a win-win for BMHA, the citizens, and the county.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he was encouraged by Mr. Rinehart's statements about transparency, the website, and the openness of financial information; that has been a concern of the community. There are state statutes that guide private non-profit operations and he was pleased to hear that BMHA would follow them. He was encouraged by the tone of cooperation and terms of the agreement. If it works financially for BMHA, he thinks the county's financial commitment is manageable, particularly with some contributions from cities that will receive service. The net impact on the budget should be fairly limited when the county gets back to a comprehensive licensing program. He thinks that the county needs to move ahead in drafting and considering an agreement with BMHA. He would still like to hear from people that want to offer public comment. He is encouraged by the fact that the county has reached this position of agreement. He thanked everyone involved; it has taken far longer than anyone would have liked, but a solution appears to be within reach.

Commissioner Howard stated that it was a good opportunity for Mr. Rinehart to state the BMHA website for the record as it would be free advertising. Mr. Rinehart stated that BMHA created a plan to advertise on the website, which would create a revenue stream. They also plan to highlight news and events on the website's splash page. Commissioner Howard asked if BMHA's financials were on the website; Mr. Rinehart stated that BMHA's financials for the last four to five years, up to 2014, were on the website. 2015 financials are not on the website yet since they have not received them from the accountant yet, but they will be added once they are received. All of the minutes since he became secretary are available,

as well as BMHA bylaws. They are trying to restore community confidence in what they do as a rescue and show that they are doing a good job for the community.

Commissioner Howard asked for more information about BMHA's board. Mr. Rinehart stated that they had a fair amount of turnover in the last year and half. There were members who joined the board that did not have the best interest of the shelter at heart. There was some butting of heads as far as which direction the shelter should pursue and how it should work with the county. Frankly, part of that is why it had taken so long to reach this tentative agreement. There were individuals who joined the board that were not dedicated to the mission of high-save rescue and serving the citizens of the county. The BMHA board now has a dedicated core of board members who have been involved with the shelter for a long time; they are known quantities. They know that by working together, they will be able to move forward in a much more positive way than they have in the past. Commissioner Howard stated that Mr. Rinehart's response was kind of a funny answer; it sounded a little odd to him to hear "butting heads" and "known quantities" when they would want diversity and a difference of opinions on the board. Mr. Rinehart stated that they do want diversity and would like to have people with a lot of different viewpoints on the board so they can get a more complete picture of what's going on, but they have had a hard time doing that up until this point. Moving forward, part of the board's goal is to increase that ability to get more viewpoints.

Commissioner Davidson hoped that board members' contact information and terms of service would be posted on the website as well as position openings and a solicitation for applications from the general public; Mr. Rinehart responded by saying "absolutely." Commissioner Davidson stated that there had been some confusion about those specifics, but it sounded like BMHA was making great strides. Mr. Rinehart stated that they were trying to become more professional so that people could see that they are serious about doing it right.

Commissioner McClure thinks it will work, but it will take some effort. He is pleased with the comments from Mr. Rinehart because they address most of the concerns he has heard in the community. BMHA will have to rise to the challenge of doing what the community expects. He is really encouraged to hear that commitment from a BMHA board member showing that they understand what those challenges are. This will take some work from the county, too, with much of it on an administrative level. He wants the agreement to be simple so that it is understandable. The operational document can come from those who will run the programs and then the whole agreement wouldn't have to be changed every time operational tasks need to change. The operational document should be referred to in the agreement; it needs to address issues like how dogs will be sheltered when they are picked up after hours. It has to work for BMHA and the county. If there is goodwill between the organizations, then it will happen. He spent a year working on negotiations and is delighted that there is something in principle that the county can move forward with.

John Brinlee, BMHA Director, stated that he agreed with Mr. Rinehart's statements and added that the information presented reflected agreements discussed.

Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Sharon Boreham, 66041 HWY 82, Imbler, asked how long the county would give BMHA to update their website and demonstrate that meetings are open to the public, where and when they take place, board members' names and contact information. Do they have until June 30, 2017 to make that information available to the public? She would like to know how the current BMHA board will assure the public that they are dependable and doing business correctly, including providing a service to the community and a benefit to animals.

Commissioner Howard stated that the meeting's minutes would be available for distribution, including BMHA. If they give commissioners responses, they will be filtered back to the commission. Commenters will be identified by name and it would be reasonable to expect that commenters could get some responses from other sources. He stated that the commission could send the minutes to the commenters as well.

Mr. Boreham stated that the past BMHA board dissolved because they couldn't take it anymore. For the current BMHA to say that the previous facility was a high-kill facility is totally unfair. The past BMHA accepted all animals. The current BMHA can be called a low-kill facility only because they don't accept feral cats or sick animals. She stated that the feral cats now go to her house and many others. The current BMHA is a low-kill facility because she personally picks up five cats on the highway in just a few days; is that fair to the cats? Is it more humane to put the animals down humanely or let them get whacked on the road or poisoned by people?

Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Donna Brownlee, 2012 Y Ave, La Grande, stated that BMHA could not possibly take in every cat. She once had a request to take in 22 cats in one day. The major problem is people failing to have their cats spayed and neutered and then dumping them; they are allowed to run loose and breed. She called around to some other shelters; Oregon Humane does not accept stray animals. They told her that they have an intake process; if an owner wants to bring in an animal, an appointment is made and a medical assessment is made to determine aggression. They will not take aggressive dogs. The other shelters she spoke to will not take aggressive animals or sick or injured animals either. BMHA is not the only facility that does not accept all animals or take sick or injured animals. Oregon Humane has its own vet facility. Other shelters that have their own vet facility don't allow sick animals to be brought to the shelter portion of the facility.

Commissioner Howard asked if there were provisions for people with low incomes. Ms. Brownlee stated that BMHA does not have low income provisions. Commissioner Howard asked if the vet facility had low income provisions. Ms. Brownlee stated that she did not have that information. She stated that Ontario has an animal spay/neuter program that costs \$10, but they come out of Boise. She called them and asked if people from Union County could participate in the program; they told her that it would cost more in gas to drive there than to have it done locally. She asked them if they would accept animals from this area; she didn't get a definite yes, but it sounded like no. The argument was that it doesn't make sense to drive the animal that far and why would anyone do that. Commissioner McClure asked what that service would cost here locally; Ms. Brownlee stated that she did

not know, but called around a few years ago and thought male cats were \$60 and females were higher. Ms. Brownlee stated that BMHA is not the only facility that turns away sick, injured, or dying animals and it is not the facility that turns away cats because they are at capacity.

Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Sandy McCoy, 66284 Hunter, La Grande, asked the BMHA members if they are at capacity because they are taking from other counties; her understanding is that BMHA takes animals from other counties. Are they at capacity and not able to take animals in Union County because they are accepting subsidized animals from other counties? A \$10 spay/neuter clinic is subsidized in some fashion; that program cannot be run in any county for \$10.

Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Leeanna Muse, 1202 11<sup>th</sup> Street, La Grande, wanted to respond to the issue with feral cats. She, along with Katie, John, and others have gone out and trapped 27 feral cats at one house in one day in Cove. They were all spayed or neutered and three were sick enough that they had to be euthanized. They then all found places to live in people's barns. BMHA does service feral cats, but they are not easy to catch. It takes a lot of people and effort to set and check the traps and have them assessed by a vet. It hopefully encourages people not to continue getting cats and breed them. There needs to be a push for a low cost spay and neuter clinic in this community. If everyone in the room worked together, there could be a fundraiser to have enough money for a low cost spay and neuter clinic as well as trap days. If there were trap days once a month with everyone working together, 90% would be caught and fixed. The sick ones would have to be euthanized, but if the vet says they are too sick to save then it is the most humane thing to do. BMHA recently had a dog that was very sweet, but it attacked and bit an employee unprovoked. The animal had to be euthanized; it is heart-wrenching for everyone at BMHA and not an easy decision to make.

Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Wendy Williams-Case, 64099 Case Rd, Cove, stated that she was on the website and Facebook page. She could see nothing about fees, costs, anything that explains how they come to those fees. BMHA fees are well above what can be afforded by many local people; those fees are based on pure breeds. She thinks that is really bad. Why is BMHA listed under two names and as a 501(c)3 when it has been put forward that it is a private facility? The 501(c)3 status should not apply and should be taken from them. Members of the public have not been very welcome and the operating hours do not reflect the community. She asked if BMHA would, with the county's \$50,000, employ more staff and be open longer hours and weekends when most people can go to the shelter. Will animals be available in the hallway for the public to see and connect with? She got her animal by seeing the animal and connecting with it; if no connection is made, then you keep walking. If people have to look at a picture and request to see it, there could be animals that you never see. She doesn't know if the animals are still kept behind locked doors, but they were in 2011 and that is wrong. What happened to the stainless steel cages where cats were housed in? What happened to the holding room for animals that was used when they were brought in to see if they were sick before they joined the general populace? When she left BMHA, all the cages were gone and there was just one huge room that housed all the cats together. There

was no segregation, so no animal could get treated. What happened to the spay/neuter and release program that was operating with the previous BMHA? The current BMHA is nothing like the previous BMHA. What happened to the money raised through donations for the spay/neuter and release program? When she was asked by a donor about those funds when she was secretary, she was told that there were no funds left. BMHA has definitely split the community in a lot of ways. A lot of things changed that didn't need to be changed. The euthanization process worked; she used to drive up to nine animals to Oregon Humane that would be adopted instead of being euthanized. It was a great program. She doesn't know if animals are still taken to Oregon Humane. There was another arrangement with a shelter in The Dalles; when an animal was in Union County for a long time, it was taken to a place where it might be more adoptable. She used to be very involved with Oregon Humane; when a beagle came in, it was taken south where there was a stronger hunting community. With the previous BMHA, there was open communication and many lives were saved because everyone helped each other within the region. She would like to know why there were two names for the shelter: Animal Rescue and Adoption Center of Northeast Oregon and BMHA. Which organization will be funded with the county's \$50,000? Will they drop one of the names so that it continues to be BMHA? BMHA should be, for the most part, the community's shelter, how it used to be. How are they going to board animals as they advertise on their website? She didn't know they offered boarding services. How can they board animals if they are at capacity? How can they guarantee that a boarded animal will not catch something? There are no guarantees. How can they charge \$19 a day when owners don't know what their animals will come back with? Are BMHA animals given shots on admittance like they used to be for kennel cough or other basic shots? Is there anyone at BMHA that can administer those shots? Who funds that?

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Leslie Rooper, Certified Vet Technician, 2514 N. Second Street, La Grande stated that the spay/neuter program is a necessity. When she ran the shelter, she barked up everyone's tree about it. Now that she is licensed, she is happy to volunteer her time for clinics if a licensed vet can come to the shelter to administer anesthetics. It is something that has needed to happen for a long time. She has heard from the community for a long time that animals aren't visible; people want that connection and want to see the animals. She understands that it creates issues for noise, but there must be a balancing act accomplished to do it. She understands why adoption fees are so high, but the income of the community has to be looked at. She makes a fair amount of money on an hourly basis, but cannot afford to adopt a dog from BMHA. The fees are there for a reason, but need to be based on the income of the community. The best dogs in the world will not be adopted if the fees are too high. She believes some adjustment needs to be made to adoption fees. She stated that an earlier comment was made about not taking in stray or sick animals; in the past, there was an established relationship with a local vet for that. The vet would go to BMHA and BMHA would take animals to them and there was no problem. There were funds set aside for those stray and sick animals. She stated that there was a comment made earlier about other facilities that do not take stray and sick animals. Those facilities are in a larger area and they have a county facility where animals are brought from animal control officers. Union County does not have that here, there is just one building and we need to

make a go of it. Other places have a county facility and a separate shelter. There has to be a balancing act to make it work. She hopes we can get it up and running as it used to be.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Jerry Gildemeister, 809 S. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, La Grande. He prepared a statement detailing the reiteration from a year-and-a-half ago (see attached.) At the time, he offered to broker a deal between the county and BMHA; BMHA answered favorably, but he didn't hear back from commissioners. He is encouraged to hear that Commissioner McClure is finally pulling things together after many years at an impasse. It is extremely important to have the building ownership settled. He cannot agree with the commission to delay that process; it is imperative that it be part of the agreement now. If the county wants to claim ownership of the building, they have not done their job as far as maintenance, repairs, replacement or standard upkeep. If the county is the true owner of the building, then it has been negligent in operating it because they haven't paid any money for anything to be done since 2011 and it has put a tremendous burden on BMHA. If, on the other hand, the county doesn't own it, he hasn't seen any documentation of that. The money came from the Louise McNeeley trust fund, which was given to the county; there is nothing in that 1992 resolution showing that the county owns it. No county money went into the construction of the building. The construction budget was about \$245,000 in 1995; \$161,000 came from the Louise McNeeley trust fund for the construction of the shelter. The funds were disbursed to BMHA under that agreement in 1995 and the balance of about \$85,000 came from BMHA.

Commissioner Howard was concerned that as much as Mr. Gildemeister was a proponent of BMHA operations, he was introducing some factors that would raise answers and responses from the other side. He advised him that if he continued to do that, they would lose track of relevance. He stated that he was very aware of his point of view because he had spent 15 to 20 hours talking to him, despite his claim that the commissioners did not respond to him. He remembers Mr. Gildemeister's document intimately. Mr. Gildemeister stated that Commissioner Howard did not respond and wanted proof that he did. Commissioner Howard stated that Mr. Gildemeister could call him a liar and that would be enough. Mr. Gildemeister stated that there was no response after April 8. Commissioner Howard stated that Mr. Gildemeister could continue with his public comment, but there would be a response to it.

Mr. Gildemeister stated that the other issue is the county's \$27 payment per animal per day. He mentioned that Commissioner McClure stated that he had called other shelters in the region; Mr. Gildemeister thought Bend would be paying more than Union County is. The county is responsible to pay the fair value for that service. He wondered if \$27 was realistic, or if it should be more than that; he suggested the commission research that. Another issue is in regards to dog licensing; the county has not done anything to encourage that. Something to consider is to advertise it in utility bills, ads in the newspaper, and various radio outlets. That would increase the potential of licenses. If all the animals in the county were licensed, it was estimated that it could generate \$90,000; that is probably not at all realistic, but there is potential. If the rate is increased to \$25, it would bring in more money to run the shelter operations.

Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Nancy Gromen, 906 14<sup>th</sup> Street, La Grande, stated that by having the county take over licensing, it would create more work for the Sheriff's Office. Does the expense for the added personnel come out of the licensing fees that they are taking in? Who pays for their time to manage the licensing program? Commissioner Howard stated that the commission touched on it earlier; there would be some fixed costs with the county's responsibilities under statute or ordinance. She asked if that expense would come out of the licensing fees. Commissioner Howard stated that there wasn't anything in writing yet to refer to, but the county would have to absorb some fixed costs as it does now. Accounting for those could be something that the county does in terms of approaching the agreement and letting the public know what is agreed to.

Ms. Gromen referred to financials she found on the BMHA website. She stated that her main skepticism was that in 2012 when John and Leeann took over, BMHA revenues were about \$202,000. The year that they took over, revenue dropped to \$119,000. Comments have been made about spay/neuter programs; that program existed at BMHA in 2011. At that time, they took in almost any animal. Now she is hearing that they won't take in any strays; where do the strays go if they don't go to the county's one shelter? The \$80,000 decrease in revenue is attributable to the change in management. What guarantees does the public have in giving that management team public money to run the shelter? Are they going to do an audit of their financial statements? What proof will the public have that the money is being spent where it should be, such as on animals, shelter and business operations? She agreed that fees are high at BMHA. In regards to the suggestion to look at Bend and Portland, this is eastern Oregon and people here cannot afford \$200 for a dog so they will go somewhere else to get one. She is not alone in her fear of her dog getting loose, taken to the shelter, and being adopted in just two days; that has happened in the past. She would like some guarantees that loose dogs will be at BMHA and accessible to pick up in a reasonable amount of time of five days. She has heard far too many stories from current BMHA (?) about current BMHA that an owner goes to pick up their dog and it has been shipped to Portland or adopted within two days or euthanized within three days. When the county approves an agreement, it would be a great idea to have something in place with some guarantees from BMHA for the public. These topics have been circulating around the community and dividing the community. She applauded the transparency that is becoming available on the website, but she also has concerns about not having access to the members' names, which seem to change often. Her understanding is that John Brinlee is living at the shelter; if the agreement is approved, will that continue and will it be part of the agreement? Turning the building over to the shelter should be in the works, but she is not sure it should be part of the initial agreement. She wants to see proof first because it has been going downhill for the last four to five years. Fees in this area should help the ability of animals to get adopted in the area, not necessarily to supplement BMHA's finances because they are not known. Without an audit or any assurances, we don't know where the money is going, how it is being spent or what it is being spent on. She encouraged the commissioners to be present when there is discussion at BMHA and foul language is used on the part of someone at BMHA. A lot of guarantees would have to come with this new agreement. She really hopes that it works. Since the county is using public money, she really hopes that the county can give the public some assurance that this really

is the best deal and that things are going to work and be different. She agreed with what was said in the past – there used to be so much more at BMHA. Animal Control could go out after hours and put a dog in the shelter and they had access to find owners, but they have been locked out of that. There was a spay/neuter program. There was community education. The gross revenue budget was over \$200,000. She understands that they are now a low-kill shelter and that is a wonderful idea, but she is still concerned. It is not a fair comparison to look at the number of euthanizations done now and those done at the old BMHA. Don't call the old BMHA a high-kill facility because they brought in the feral cats and sick animals and had to put them down. Those numbers are not being added to what the new BMHA is doing now.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Connie Voelz, 62102 Fruitdale Lane, La Grande, stated that mediation between the county attorney, Brent Smith, and the BMHA attorney, Jacklyn Leeds, was held on February 3, 2014 and an agreement was reached. It stated that no new negotiations would continue until three points were addressed; were they addressed? The first point stated that BMHA will be independently audited by a person or organization approved by themselves and the county before June 1, 2014. The second point stated that BMHA will be reviewed by a non-profit expert, agreed to by both parties, for compliance with non-profit law by June 1, 2014. The third point stated that subject to approval of the financial audit and review by the non-profit expert, BMHA and the county will negotiate a new contract in good faith. It stated that there would be no new negotiations until those three points were completed. She asked if those audits were done.

Commissioner Howard asked the other commissioners if they would like respond to questions now or save them for the end. Commissioner McClure stated that he would take questions but would not respond to them now.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Jodi Lambert, 2710 N. Ash Street, La Grande, stated that she was an administrator for the Eastern Oregon Pet Lovers Facebook page. She received multiple messages and emails from people who have had experiences with BMHA. One message was from a person who took a cat to BMHA after it was hit by a car. BMHA told them to let the cat go because they couldn't take it, couldn't afford the vet fee, and they would put it down anyway. The cat just had a broken leg. BMHA staff are rude and freak out if you take an animal to them without calling first. The last time she went to BMHA was when she was asked to pick up a black cat that was missing from a trailer park. BMHA told her it was a stray, so she posted it on the Facebook page. Then Leeann at BMHA said someone was missing a black cat and told her to bring them the cat, so she did. John had a freak out session about her not taking it in; it was not five days. You can't win with them. She works with all the rescues in the region. New Hope in Baker City has never had ringworm, and she is learning from them. She also works with PAWS. Oregon Humane Society in Portland doesn't have to take in sick, injured, or aggressive animals because there are so many other shelters and rescues that will. Union County doesn't have another shelter or anyone else to lean on. For BMHA to turn away animals that need help because they don't have room or can't afford the bills doesn't make sense; she begs everyday on her website for help to pay for sick animals and foster



homes. She pays for all the litter and food for all her foster cats to make sure they are being fed and getting medical attention. If they are sick to the point of being put down, she can't afford it. Walla Walla Humane Society spay and neuter feral cats for free. There is no reason there can't be a low-cost spay/neuter clinic here. Get some grants coming in and give the money to the vets to do it; it's that simple.

Ms. Lambert asked when the last animal license was sold. Commissioner McClure stated that she was absolutely right and it was part of the problem that they were trying to correct. Commissioner Howard thought it may have been years. Ms. Lambert stated that BMHA's website indicates that licensing fees increased; she asked if those fees were included in the adoption fees.

Ms. Lambert stated that no one wants to go to BMHA. She volunteered at Barking Basement for BMHA and saw a lot of things and a lot of stress. She chalks that up to the stress that John and Leeann were under, but to freak out isn't okay.

Ms. Lambert stated that as a person that truly cares, she had some thoughts of what she wanted for a shelter. It needs to be cleaned up, it's a dump. There are so many fixes that are cheap and easy and the community would love to help if it was a welcoming place to go. People should be able to walk down the hallway and see animals. If there is a holding room for animals that are not to be around any other animals for the first five days, then where are they boarding animals? Do they take all the animals to be euthanized to a vet? Are they euthanized on the kitchen floor? Are they licensed to give shots? If there are two BMHA board members that are married, does that cancel out a vote? Does BMHA have a full board? Commissioner Howard stated that he didn't know if she was looking for answers, but being licensed to provide shots is under ORS; he did not know if BMHA staff was licensed or not. Ms. Lambert stated that people just want a nice place for people to go. She can't run a shelter by herself, but if things don't change then there are several people, including grant writers, who will start a non-profit shelter that would be open to the public. She wished BMHA the best but she will not be going out there.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Krista Gately, 308 Scorpio Drive, La Grande, stated that she was a professional in canine behavior and a BMHA board member from 2003 to 2009. She is very involved in dogs competitively and volunteers for numerous pure-bred rescues, currently Cavalier Rescue USA. She has fostered dogs continuously for 15 years. She recently adopted a dog from BMHA. She stated that BMHA said they don't take sick animals; how are BMHA staff trained on the observation of whether or not an animal is ill? Her dog, adopted from BMHA, had the most severe yeast infection she had ever seen, covering the entire body and left ear; he ended up requiring medications to clear it up. He was in the shelter for three days before he was posted on Facebook for adoption. He is a 6-year old French Bulldog and they wanted to charge a \$500 adoption fee for him. She doesn't necessarily think \$500 is a bad adoption fee. It is not uncommon to charge so much for a young healthy dog, but that would be for dogs that are fully vetted and evaluated for temperament prior to adoption. She has had the dog for five months; he was not vetted in any way and did not have a microchip. She paid them \$150 and reached an agreement with John to pay the remainder. She told

him that the dog was ill and would cost at least \$300 to clear up his health issues; he should not expect any more money. She thought that was a reasonable agreement and he agreed with her. Five days later, she got a phone call from John telling her that she had to bring the dog back to BMHA or pay an additional \$350 because they had people who would pay more money for the dog. She is a professional groomer and has many years of working with this breed; she knows the issues that this breed has and has the facility at her house to deal with his chronic skin issues. BMHA's asking for more money is an ethical concern. The other suggestion that John made was that they were thinking about auctioning the dog. In every aspect of rescue and placing dogs, that is 101 unethical; you would never do that. What training do BMHA board members, the director, and staff receive on assessing temperaments of dogs that are adopted to ensure that dogs are appropriate for the average pet home? As a dog trainer, she does dog consultations every day; these are for dogs that come from rescues, shelters, and breeders. She questions if some of these dogs should have been adopted out. The average pet home, by and large, does not have the resources in this community to pay a lot of money to travel to Portland and see a canine behavioral specialist. She has seen some severe behavior issues a couple of times. She knows that a high-save shelter is appealing, but at the same time, are shelter staff educated enough on canine behavior to make good calls in placing dogs as pets to average pet homes? How do they assess their temperaments? What education have they received to do that to make sure they are placing safe animals in the community? One case in particular was an English Cocker Spaniel that she had known since he was a puppy. When she groomed him at one year old, he went bonkers after the owner told her she didn't think he was vicious but he had several bites incidents prior to that day. That dog was surrendered to BMHA and adopted out to a high-risk rescue because he did bite again. She suspected that he had rage syndrome, common in Spaniels. Those are things she has seen personally and knows involves BMHA. Does BMHA utilize qualified reputable pure-bred rescues when pure-bred dogs come in? In the case of her adopted dog, she did not feel they knew enough about that breed to make a good call and good adoption. They told her there was someone ahead of her who wanted to adopt him, but he would mostly be an outdoor dog. Do they use purebred rescues that know the needs of specific breeds more than an animal shelter? What training, if any, do BMHA staff have on animal husbandry, spread of diseases, evaluating temperament, and knowledge of specific breeds? What are they using to educate themselves when a dog comes in that they do not know very much about? Do they read a book or specific breed website to make the best possible placement for that dog? That was not her experience. It would be interesting to know what, if any, ongoing staff and board training is happening at BMHA.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Dr. Terrence McCoy, Animal Health Center, 10302 Wallowa Lake HWY, Island City, stated that there was a lot of unrest in the community; his practice hears it and sees it. Communication between his practice and BMHA has totally fallen away and he hopes that it can start going in the right direction. He has three veterinarians at his practice and there are seven veterinarians in the area. Although he couldn't speak for other practices, his veterinarians would help BMHA but they don't communicate or involve them. His clinic was involved with the shelter since it was at the fairgrounds until 2012. When it was at the fairgrounds, it was a disaster but they were there to help anyway. They have been there for

the police, for emergencies, and the community. He thinks all the veterinarians would work together, but they are not being worked with by BMHA. Veterinarians in the area want things to change. His practice will stand up to set up and help, but it has to be equal. If city and county money is being spent on this, it better be equal, because it hasn't been equal. It is frustrating and disappointing. As long as his practice has been here it has helped the shelter. Some people may not like what was done back in the day, but that was then. If they want to approach him and his clinic, he is willing, with a commissioner and as many vets as are willing to participate, to sit down and work this out with as many people as BMHA wants to have there. His practice used to give free exams and would still do them but BMHA now tells people to go to another veterinarian. His clients come in disappointed and sad that they had to go get their animal from another veterinarian after being his clients for 20 years; it is wrong. Free exams have always been done, but have not been allowed to do it or be involved now. When they say that animals coming out of BMHA have not been examined, it doesn't make sense because if they can't be examined at BMHA, his practice has offered free exams for 30 years. He wants the commission to make sure that the agreement is solid before they approve it because this community believes in its vets. And if BMHA wants help, all they have to do is ask. His clinic hasn't been asked. He challenged the commission to involve the vets; just ask them and they will work with them to put something together. Veterinarians are in the business for a reason, but everybody should be involved equally across the board. He added that his bills should get paid in a reasonable time from BMHA.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Margaret Todd, 609 Y Avenue #15, La Grande, hoped that the commission would do more research before giving BMHA \$50,000. After listening to others during the meeting, it sounded like there was a lot more to take into account before approving an agreement. There are about 20 to 30 feral cats in her neighborhood and they should probably be put down; some are sick, some are pregnant, some have kittens and they are all starving. Something needs to be done. The cats have ruined her flower beds and lawn furniture. The community needs a low cost spay/neuter clinic. In Baker City, they spay/neuter cats and then release them. Right now there are four pregnant cats in her neighborhood; they will continue the cycle of having more kittens and it is very overwhelming. She hopes the commission will do more research and take it into consideration before giving public funds to BMHA.

#### Animal Sheltering Services Public Comment

Connie Carter, 2005 N. Greenwood, La Grande, suggested that the commission have a roster at the meetings so they would know who attended the meeting. She stated that the commission is talking about giving money to BMHA and then allowing BMHA to make money at the facility. If that's what is happening, she doesn't agree with it. She feels that either the county needs to take on operations or BMHA needs to do it without county money. She told the audience that they were awesome because they care and that is a good first step. She reiterated that either the county needs to control the operations or BMHA needs to control it, but she doesn't agree with spending public funds on a private business.

Ms. Carter stated that the meeting room's AED was outdated and it needs to be upgraded. If someone was having a heart attack, she would like to be able to use it.

Discussion: Animal Sheltering Services

Commissioner McClure stated that he heard everyone's concerns at the meeting. If the expectation is that the county will take care of all the problems, then it would cost more than \$50,000. He believes that pet owners have the responsibility to take care of the pet. If your dog gets out and is picked up by Animal Control, you are responsible to resolve that. Why don't people take responsibility for their pets? It is not an unreasonable expectation of the community. If that is not done, then the county has to do something about it. There are dogs running loose in his neighborhood; according to the county ordinance, that is not supposed to happen. If he has an old dog that is about to die, it is not reasonable for him to take that dog to the animal shelter and expect them to take care of it. It is the pet owner's responsibility to have the animal put down humanely and should not be the expectation of the people in the community. One of the county's function as a government is to ensure safety. When a young lady walking to school is attacked by two dogs, it should concern everybody in this community. That can't be permitted because it is a safety issue.

Commissioner McClure stated that BMHA is a private nonprofit, they are not a business; it is trying to survive and provide a service to the community. If everyone works together as a community, it can be like the shelter in Walla Walla. That community has been working for a lot of years and they are very successful; they have great leadership and a large staff. All of those things can happen here, but if we continue to do what we are doing here, the City of La Grande can take back their part of the responsibility and the county can take care of the county. Things can go back to how they were done before, but he doesn't think it would be better. Everyone will have to work together, including BMHA, to make this work. His proposal is on the table. He heard some things that probably need to be put in the agreement, including public safeguards of the money. He doesn't know what the solution is for feral cats. If the community expects the shelter to take care of all the feral cats, then the county would have to pay them a lot more money; if that is the expectation of the community, then okay.

Commissioner Howard stated that he was grateful to be at this point. It is unfortunate that the concerns are being heard at the commission instead of at BMHA, where they properly belong, but there hasn't been an adequate forum for them to be heard. He hears that frustration. There are a lot of operational aspects of a program that have seriously misplaced public trust and confidence for a number of reasons; it will take a long time to rebuild that. As that process goes forward, the commission is fulfilling one of its roles by getting people together to talk and listen. If listening doesn't happen, then the agreement won't be worth anything; it would be a further breach of confidence and trust, including public financing. There needs to be more in the agreements. He was a little concerned that people were reporting a five-day hold. He researched that and did not find an Oregon statute on a five-day hold; he thinks that's a performance standard. For there to be an effective BMHA board of directors, there will have to be some assurances for the public and the public will have to tell the commission if they are being heard. Quite clearly, right now they are not being heard at all. He was encouraged by Dr. McCoy; it is essential to have

that kind of passion for solving the operational problem of spaying/neutering, making it affordable, and addressing fees so that this community truly owns the humane enterprise. He thinks it is crucial that the veterinarians are willing to step in to help and it inspires him. It also inspires him to have a basic core agreement. Some of the operational points have to be addressed. He is happy that a tentative date of June 30, 2017 is being discussed. He is encouraged that the window is short and this is the first target; the commission will try to make things work until June, and he believes they can make it work. That date means a lot to him and it means a lot about making some things work that are not working right now. In regards to some suggestions from the operators of BMHA on how to fix the feral cat problem: they have some solutions and have talked to him about their expertise, including a spay/neuter program and releasing animals into certain areas to drive other feral animals out of the area. He knows they have the expertise and they have his desire to be completely confident in them.

Commissioner Howard stated that he still had some nagging concerns. A gentleman commented that he did not receive a response from the commissioners; Commissioner Howard could calculate how much time he spent working with that particular gentleman. It concerns him if people are going to be accusatory to say the problem is the accusation; that's not what we have here. We have the opportunity to be one of the leaders in terms of having an effective community that takes care of its critters. Who doesn't want to do that? The blame game has to stop.

Commissioner Howard stated that there was a great prospective target date. He is more comfortable knowing that veterinarians are on board and there is a responsibility to work with them on a range of issues, to talk about some of the narrow operational issues and to keep the core agreement in place. He is looking forward to moving ahead with the agreement, looking at it on paper, and getting the public reengaged. He will be listening to the public about what they see on the website for example. It is discouraging to him to hear one thing and then hear another thing. He is an attorney by training and he wants to see what is true, but show me twice, prove me once.

Commissioner Davidson stated that there was clearly a lot of time and effort on the county's part, specifically Commissioner McClure and Mrs. Burgess, as well as by BMHA and their supporters. He is still encouraged and there was a lot of progress from a few years ago. There were a lot of concerns, questions, and points raised at the meeting that need to be considered and addressed. Some of them belong in a financial arrangement and others probably belong in operational agreements. Both the county and the BMHA board and staff have their work cut out to work through these issues. As stated and documented at length: rebuild the relationship between these two entities and the public in regard to the facility and the service. Most of the issues can be addressed by cooperation, communication, and fairness; everyone involved has to commit to that. The financial arrangement is the first step. There are elements raised at the meeting that need to be included and considered. He still thinks the commission needs to move forward with the agreement and work through it. He heard encouraging statements from a board member; if he, the board, and staff keep working to pursue those goals then a lot of progress has been made. His opinion was to

move ahead with the development of the contract, bring it back to the commission for review, and work toward an approval.

Commissioner McClure stated that if the commissioners all agree in principle, then the county will try to work towards the agreement, but it will take some work.

Commissioner Howard stated that it has to be an open process; this is something through the county website as well. The commission will be desperate for public input.

Commissioner Davidson stated that there was a lot of interest in the topic and has an effect on all the neighborhoods throughout the county and everyone's lives. He agreed with Commissioner McClure that there is a large degree of personal responsibility. He would have never considered taking one of his animals that was in need of end of life care to the shelter. Everyone is in different financial straits, but that is a core responsibility as an owner.

Commissioner McClure agreed with Commissioner Howard that it needed to continue to be a public process. The commission will have these discussions again, review drafts, and see if anything is missing as well as work with Mr. Brinlee and Mr. Rinehart and see if it can get to where it needs to be.

Commissioner Howard advised the audience not to be surprised if the commission has an evening meeting on the subject; he couldn't promise that, but it would be an opportunity to have more people engaged in the process.

**Next Meeting and Location**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on October 19, 2016.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston  
Sr. Dept. Specialist II