

Union County Board of Commissioners Meeting
February 17, 2016

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

Chairman Howard opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given.

Public Comments

USFS Title II Funding Recommendations

Arlene Blumton, U.S. Forest Service Natural Resource Staff, La Grande. She stated that the Forest Restoration Board met to review Title II proposals on January 14; Union County has about \$72,792 available. They are recommending five projects to the commission:

1. Ladd Canyon Forest Improvement Project submitted by the U.S. Forest Service requesting \$47,652.
2. Union County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Implementation submitted by Union County Emergency Services (and includes numerous partners) requesting \$10,600.
3. Fire Prevention Services submitted by the Grande Ronde Fire Prevention Association requesting \$5,300.
4. Upper Grande Ronde Watershed Invasive Species Control submitted by the Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management Area (numerous partners) requesting \$5,000 as a match.
5. Pelican Creek Enclosure Fence, submitted by the U.S. Forest Service requesting \$4,240.

Commissioner Davidson stated that the Restoration Board fully vetted the proposals at their meeting and they support them in their entirety. **Commissioner Davidson moved approval of the projects as presented. Commissioner Howard stated that lacking full membership, the commission would waive the rule of seconding from the chair. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Vanpool Proposal

Frank Thomas, Northeast Oregon Public Transit, 2204 East Penn Avenue, La Grande. Jodi Tool, NEO Public Transit Options Coordinator. Mr. Thomas stated that they were approached by a local manufacturer who needed transportation for their employees. The existing public transit system was not a solution because it required syncing with Greyhound, which did not work well with employee shifts. The Drive Less Connect Program doesn't work well locally because they don't have the critical mass of participants yet. Public transit could be a solution in the future. After looking at success in other markets, vanpooling is a viable solution. Vanpools are for groups of 7 or more due to tax incentives. Enterprise Ride Share has been providing this service across the country very successfully. They offer a month-to-month plan and provide the vehicle,

insurance, service, maintenance, and roadside assistance. They also have a guaranteed ride home program so that an employee can leave work before the scheduled vanpool departure time when needed. Based on fuel cost and monthly payment to Enterprise Ride Share, a 7-subscriber vanpool could provide an employee transportation to work 21 days per month for \$8 a day. Overall, it would be less expensive than using a personal vehicle when considering fuel, insurance, etc.

Commissioner Howard estimated that it would amount to \$168 per month per rider. Mr. Thomas clarified that it would come to \$176.14 per month for 22 days. Mr. Thomas added that it becomes more cost effective with more subscribers, such as with a 14-passenger vehicle that would cost less than \$5.50 a day.

Ms. Tool stated that there are incentives to employers who offer vanpools. They are eligible to use IRS tax code 132F, which would give the employer a tax break, as well as giving their employees the opportunity to pay for the service with pre-tax dollars. It would reduce FICA taxes, increase employee morale, decrease fatigue from driving, and increase punctuality. She stated that the only negative is getting people to buy into it because it is a new idea locally, but it has been very successful in other markets.

Mr. Thomas stated that Enterprise Ride Share could come in and make this program work long term in a sustainable way without further investment from the public sector. His proposal includes Community Connection purchasing one subscription beginning in March through the end of the fiscal year. He would need two or three other partners to purchase a subscription so that the program could get off the ground with just three or four riders. He hopes to secure partnerships with local employers. If it works, he could commit an additional four months after this fiscal year ends. If it doesn't work, they will have determined that transportation is not an employment barrier for a small amount of money.

Commissioner Davidson asked for clarification about Outdoor RV participating in the pilot program. Ms. Tool stated that there is potential for Outdoor RV to participate, but it may be a different employer. There is another viable employer in Union County who has 8-10 employees living in Baker County who may take advantage of the program.

Commissioner Davidson asked if the proposal was conceptual. If the county commits money to the program, are there bodies to put in the seats? Mr. Thomas stated that they are not going to speculate and would not actually put cash on the table until there are bodies in seats. Ms. Tool added that there would need to be subscribers before beginning the program. As soon as there is a commitment, the vehicle could be delivered within 24 to 36 hours. Mr. Thomas stated that they are looking for a kick-start to get the program moving, after which it should be self-sustaining.

Commissioner Howard stated that there is potential for other employers to join the program. Making the program known to other employers and getting their buy-in early

is important. Employers want to have access to a better pool of employees. He hopes that Baker County would also partner in this effort. Ms. Tool stated that she sent a proposal to Baker County. Mr. Thomas stated that the plan could be contingent upon commitment from Baker County.

Commissioner Davidson stated that his support is not contingent upon Baker County's participation; he just wants a project that works. Community Connection and Mr. Thomas have a track record with other projects; Commissioner Davidson is comfortable with and has confidence in them. **Commissioner Davidson moved to support the Vanpool Proposal in the amount of \$705.**

Commissioner Davidson requested that Mr. Thomas bring program updates to the commission as it progresses. If needed, the commission could consider supporting the program for a second round. He thinks it will help local employers and sometimes all that is needed is to show that something works.

Commissioner Howard stated that he likes having partners on board; he wants employers to contribute to the program and have buy-in. He supports the complete concept and payment of \$705, except for the fact that he doesn't like the message it sends to employers that the county might be kick-starting the whole program without employers' initial investment.

Mr. Thomas stated that the initial investment he is requesting from employers is getting the information in the hands of employees and helping get the word out.

Commissioner Howard seconded the motion to support the Vanpool Proposal in the amount of \$705. He added that the program needs to be started sooner rather than later.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he assumes employers will participate at some level. He added that Union County's participation should not be contingent upon whether or not Baker County sees the value. He is not sure he would support paying to send employees to work in another county.

Commissioner Howard stated that he feels opposite in that the county should be delighted in finding employment for their residents who would bring paychecks back to their own county. He added that it raises an issue for Union County when thinking about subsidizing Baker County residents. He stated that the reason to support the program is that it helps the overall employment picture; he hopes Baker County will agree.

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

Elected Official, Department Head & Employee Comments

Union County Safe Communities Grant Application

Robin Wortman, Union County Safe Communities Coalition Coordinator, stated that the coalition is in its fifth year of a 5 year SAMSA grant. The coalition would like to reapply grant funding in the amount of \$125,000 per year for the next five years. The commission was provided the grant application, narrative, and budget justification. **Commissioner Davidson moved approval of the Drug-Free Community's grant application. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Constituent Inquiries

"Fake" Emergencies

Commissioner Howard stated that he received a constituent concern from Irene Gilbert regarding "Fake" Emergencies Legislation. He stated that she is concerned that the State Legislature is using emergency clauses to pass legislation that would not otherwise be addressed in a more timely and deliberative manner. He noted that the commission would take note of the concern. He added that Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) might take action or consider it; there is an initiative in process to gather signatures to address "Fake Emergencies."

Commissioner Davidson stated that the AOC doesn't take a position on initiatives and there is a legal prohibition from doing so.

Blue Mountain Humane Association (BMHA)

Commissioner Howard stated that he received a letter from Eddie Garcia; he read the letter in its entirety.

Commissioner Howard stated that he was taking no position on the letter.

Commissioner Davidson stated that Commissioner McClure and Union County Administrative Officer Shelley Burgess have been engaged in negotiations with BMHA, which are continuing. He thinks the commission should await the outcome of those negotiations and move forward with legal counsel's advice and seek a successful resolution to the situation. Commissioner Howard concurred and thinks that is the consensus; it is the sound approach that had been taken since the previous summer.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Davidson moved to approve the Consent Agenda, which included Claims Journals for January 27, January 28, February 3, and February 4. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Administrative Matters

Baum Industrial Park Infrastructure Improvements

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented a work order between Union County and Anderson Perry & Associates for design engineering services for infrastructure improvements to the Baum Industrial Park property that the county owns. Northeast Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee was successful in obtaining \$1,066,000 in funding for this project to develop roads, sewer lines, water, power, fiber optic, and gas lines. This work order would engage Anderson Perry & Associates to do the design work on the project so that it can be sent out to bid this spring and constructed this summer. The county has established an engineer of record every five years; current engineer of record is Anderson Perry & Associates. The county has an agreement with them, but under that agreement work orders are required for specific projects. The project is budgeted in the Economic Development fund. **Commissioner Davidson moved approval of Work Order #2016-01. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Resolution 2016-04, Transferring Appropriated Funds

Mrs. Burgess read the resolution in its entirety. Approval would transfer \$6,200 from the Sheriff's Department General Fund, Materials and Services to the Sheriff's Department General Fund, Personnel Services. **Commissioner Davidson moved approval. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Court Order 2016-08, Appointments to the Tourism Board

Mrs. Burgess stated that the purpose of this court order is to appoint Ruth Rush to the Union County Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee after the resignation of Carl Swanson. Term would begin immediately and expire July 31, 2019. **Commissioner Davidson moved approval. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Next Meeting and Location

Commissioner Howard stated that the next meeting would be held in the same location.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:39 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston
Sr. Dept. Specialist II