

Board of Commissioners Meeting
May 18, 2016

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

Chairman Howard opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given. All three commissioners were present.

Public Comments

U.S. Forest Service – Title II Acceptance

Arlene Blumton, U.S. Forest Service Title II Coordinator, 3502 HWY 30, La Grande, stated that the Forest Restoration Board made recommendations for Title II funding for year two. They have a full resource advisory committee (RAC) and will meet again in July. A total of \$73,083 is available for funding and six proposals were submitted requesting approximately \$125,000:

1. Mount Emily Recreation Area (MERA) Access Improvement; requested \$26,845. This was considered a high funding priority; it would improve roads from MERA to Indian Rock. It is heavily used by the public and is in really poor shape. Recommended funding is \$26,845.
2. Walla Walla Ranger District Noxious Weed Project; requested \$7,420. It is within Union County on public and adjacent private land and would treat 400 acres of noxious weeds. Recommended funding is \$7,420.
3. La Grande Recreation Youth Crew; requested \$30,740. This would consist of three to four youth students to help develop recreation sites within the La Grande Ranger District. Recommended funding is \$15,000.
4. Fire Prevention Services; requested \$10,600. This is the public outreach program held in schools. Last year they received \$5,300 and they did a good job of running the program with that amount of funding. Recommended funding is \$5,300.
5. Union County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Implementation; requested \$10,600. This would be a continuation of the GIS structural layer that was a federal, state and county project. Recommended funding is \$10,600.
6. Ladd Canyon Forest Improvement Project II; requested \$39,220. This is a timber stand project that lies adjacent to the Beaver Creek Municipal Watershed; it would improve the stand condition, reduce fuel loadings, and benefit wildlife. Recommended funding is \$8,000.

Commissioner McClure asked about the committee that selected the programs for funding. Ms. Blumton stated that the recommendations are initiated by the Union County Forest Restoration Board. Commissioner McClure asked if their recommendation is then sent to the RAC; Ms. Blumton stated that it will be forwarded to the RAC after the commission's recommendation.

Commissioner McClure stated that he would support the recommendations since they had been vetted by the Forest Restoration Board and moved to accept the Title II Funding recommendations. Commissioner Davidson seconded.

Commissioner Davidson stated that the Forest Restoration Board was unanimous in making the recommendations. Several projects were scaled to use the available funding while allowing the projects to be effective.

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

Union County Fireworks

Steve Combs, Fundraiser Coordinator for the Union County Fireworks Action Committee, 505 Jefferson, La Grande, stated that they were seeking financial support for the annual fireworks show at Eastern Oregon University. It has always been a free family-oriented event and is supported by donations and volunteers. They think the event is very important and want it to continue; it is one of the best attended one day events in Union County. Their budget is \$12,000 and includes \$9,000 for the fireworks show. The county has helped with funding in the past; last year they requested \$2,500 and received a boost over that amount. They are seeking the same amount this year.

Commissioner Davidson stated that the county has supported the fireworks show for a long time and it should continue doing so.

Commissioner Howard suggested that Mr. Combs build in a regular increase to his funding request to cover increased costs.

Commissioner McClure asked how much additional funding they received from the county last year; Mr. Combs thought it was about 5%.

Commissioner Davidson moved to provide \$2,750 in financial support for Union County Fireworks. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Constituent Inquiries

Veteran Rental Program Request for Letter of Support

Dwight Dill, Center for Human Development Mental Health Director, 707 Aquarius, La Grande. He added that he is also the Board Chair for Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc. (GOBHI). He stated that GOBHI is applying for a grant through the Oregon Health Authority that would support a rental assistance program serving veterans and youth ages 17-25; funds were allocated by the State Legislature. These are some of the most vulnerable citizens. They are requesting a letter of support that would strengthen the grant application; they are not requesting any financial support from the county.

There is a housing shortage in La Grande and the wait list for housing vouchers is two years. There are a lot of homeless mental health patients, veterans and transient camps in the area. It is difficult to treat mental health when patients are dealing with the stress of being homeless. The grant would provide rental assistance in thirteen counties in Eastern Oregon. Union County currently serves about 2600 individuals in a broader rental assistance program; the new program would expand that service.

Commissioner McClure thinks it is great that GOBHI is taking the lead in this type of community effort; the Union County Veteran Services Officer has had to find homes for homeless veterans in the past. He stated that homelessness is more prevalent here than we think; some camps were found at MERA and people are living in cars. Mr. Dill stated that they found people living in the go cart track area at CHD and at the old Albertsons site. Commissioner McClure recommended writing a letter of support for the rental assistance program.

Commissioner Davidson stated that clearly the county would want to support this program. He asked what type of housing would be included. Mr. Dill stated that the program would have a broad application and include any kind of housing available, such as apartments, mobile homes, and motels. The intent is to scatter those needing assistance and living throughout the community instead of congregating them in one area, which would help integrate them in the community. CHD would provide mental health services as part of the program.

Commissioner Howard stated that currently there are short term emergency housing services available and this program would stabilize long term housing needs. Mr. Dill stated that the program could bridge the two year waiting period until a voucher is available.

Commissioner Howard stated that there was a consensus to write a letter of support for the program and no motion was needed.

Wallowa Union Railroad Authority (WURA) Public Comment

Terry Edvalson, 700 H Avenue, La Grande, stated that at the last WURA Board meeting, the board moved to change their quorum from seven members to five members in the Intergovernmental Agreement. They will present it to the commission at a later time to review and approve. Commissioner Davidson will assist in bringing the two counties together in the agreement. They also plan to request an endorsement from the commission for a Federal Lands Access Program application; funds would be used to construct the first segment of the trail from Joseph to Enterprise.

Budget Public Comment

Lois Barry, 60688 Morgan Lake Road, La Grande, stated that she had concerns to raise before next year's budget was finalized. Based on the introduction of the FY 2015-16 Union County budget, it seems to her that budget line items would continue with current

funding without scrutiny. She questioned if funding for the Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC) was the best bang for the buck. She noted that the most recent economic development listed on the website is the Alicel Grain Storage Facility dated 2007 and their strategic plan is dated 2009; she thinks the message being sent is that nothing has changed for several years. She stated that the goals are a list of boiler plate verbs that are particularly alarming and their activities listed are the same from 2013 through 2015 with no activities listed for 2012 or 2016. She hopes that UCEDC is more active than their website leads one to believe, but she doubts it. She encourages the Budget Committee to consider a better use of county funds; she thinks that much of UCEDC's "communication and connection" goals could be accomplished by the county's new Communication Specialist position when it is filled. She stated that most of the UCEDC videos on their website are not relevant to economic development, but they would be a great addition to the Chamber of Commerce website. She stated that UCEDC's information could be contained and better presented in a link from the Chamber of Commerce homepage. She stated that it is possible that MERA needed extra funding from wind farm revenues, park department and public works department transfers when it was established; now that it is well established and grant funding is available, funds transferred from other departments, about \$40,000 a year, might be better used for other programs. She requested that the commission send her concerns to the budget committee members. She encouraged all budget committee to discuss priorities.

Elected Official, Department Head & Employee Comments

Airport Project Bid Award

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, PO Box 1103, La Grande, stated that the heavy use of jet aircraft at the airport last year created an enormous amount of thrust that blew rock debris into the safety zone and the foundations around the canned lighting are now exposed. When they were doing the overlay project, there was some discussion with the FAA about blast pads and it was determined that it was not needed or the cost would be too high so the project did not move forward. Last summer he brought the liaison from the FAA to look at it again, who agreed that the blast pad was needed. The blast pad is a hard surface continuation that would protect the end of the runway and lighting. Since there was money left over from the airport grant project #19, he got permission from the FAA to move forward with the project. Precision Approach Engineering drafted the plans and specifications and Union County sent it out for bid. On May 3, 2016 two bid proposals were opened:

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| 1. High Desert Aggregate & Paving, Inc. | \$698,400.00 |
| 2. Michael A. Becker General Contractor, Inc. | \$747,667.20 |

Mr. Wright recommended awarding the bid to High Desert Aggregate & Paving, Inc. as they were the apparent low bid. Due to bids that exceeded the engineer's estimate, he requested the FAA to amend airport grant project #19, which would provide approximately \$100,000 in additional funding to complete the project; the FAA agreed to

review that amendment request. Results of that request are not yet known, but in order to keep the project moving forward he recommends awarding the bid with the contingency of the FAA's approval of the grant amendment request.

Commissioner McClure asked why there was such a large discrepancy between the engineer's estimate and the bids. Mr. Wright stated that the FAA concrete requirements are substantial, including an alkalinity test and a special aggregate mix, which increased the cost of the project. Commissioner McClure asked if the consultant was aware of those requirements or if the FAA changed their requirements. Mr. Wright stated that the FAA requirements changed and they implemented a design request into the pavement design. In order to do a modification change, it would need to go back to Washington, D.C., resulting in a delay waiting for that approval.

Mr. Wright stated that these new requirements were shared with the contractors during pre-bid to make sure they understood them.

Commissioner Howard stated that the original engineer's estimate was \$430,000 and the bids were approximately \$697,000 and \$747,000.

Commissioner Howard stated that that the alkalinity test was not site specific; he was assuming that Ladd Marsh might involve some particular issues and asked if that was true. Mr. Wright stated that it is based on the source of quarry.

Commissioner Davidson moved to conditionally award the bid to High Dessert Aggregate & Paving, Inc. in the amount of \$698,400, contingent upon receiving additional funding from the FAA. Commissioner McClure seconded.

Commissioner Howard asked if the commission needed to specify an amount, or if it would be satisfactory to indicate that it would be contingent upon additional FAA funding.

Commissioner Davidson stated that to amend the motion, the commission needed to receive the appropriate amount to meet the obligation over and above what is held in the account.

Mr. Wright did not see the contingency as a high risk, it is just a matter of timing from the FAA; they said it would be better to continue with the project and not risk losing \$500,000 in funding. It would be better to spend that money on this project and move forward.

Commissioner McClure stated that he visited the site last summer and did not realize there would be so many jets; if they had known what aircraft would be brought in, then this project probably would have been included in the original bid. Mr. Wright added that those jets are the aircraft of the future.

Commissioner Howard asked if this was a sign of success at the airport since this need is being looked at. He asked if, as far as what would happen in the future, this project would take care of the rock debris problem. Mr. Wright stated that it would and added that it is a common problem and also common to have a blast pad off the end of the runway with this number of jets and aircraft.

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

Intergovernmental Agreement for Cartography Services

Linda Hill, Assessor, 2102 Scorpio Drive, La Grande, stated that this was an annual contract with the Department of Revenue, who acts as the county's cartographer for all maps and mapping changes, which forms a basis of the county's assessment and taxation system. She estimated the number of staff hours of the cartographer based on history as well as looking forward to mapping changes. Her proposed budget included \$28,000 for this service.

Commissioner McClure asked about the differences between the programs at the county and the state and how they work together. Ms. Hill stated that the state's mapping forms a base map for the GIS mapping program that the county uses. Every time property boundaries change, it must be mapped to a certain standard, which is done in a GIS environment at the state, not the CAD environment that was used years ago. The county identifies the changes, sends them to the state that then makes the changes and notations and emails them back to the county. The county then makes the changes in the county system.

Commissioner McClure moved approval of the agreement between Oregon Department of Revenue and Union County for cartography services in the amount of \$27,960. Commissioner Davidson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Davidson moved approval of the Consent Agenda, which included Meeting Minutes from May 4 and Claims Journals for April 6, 27, 28, and May 5. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Administrative Matters

Court Order 2016-22, Appointment to the Union County Hospital Facility Authority

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that Dale Basso had served the maximum number of terms allowed and there was a need to appoint members. Burr Betts was nominated and agreed to serve and Commissioner Jack Howard was eligible for reappointment. Terms would begin immediately and would expire April 30, 2019. **Commissioner McClure moved approval of Court Order 2016-22. Commissioner Davidson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Court Order 2016-23, Appointment to the Vector Control Budget Committee

Mrs. Burgess stated that members Mary Koza and Chris Roberts were due for renewal and were interested in continuing to serve. Their terms would expire December 31, 2018. **Commissioner Davidson moved to approve Court Order 2016-23. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Juvenile Detention Agreement

Mrs. Burgess stated that the county has a current agreement with Walla Walla County for the detention of juveniles with costs on a per bed per day basis. Umatilla County has a similar agreement with Walla Walla County that requires them to pay a guaranteed base amount each year regardless of the number of beds used. She stated that Union County Juvenile Director, Ben Morgan, had worked with Umatilla County and Walla Walla County to draft an agreement between the three counties that would benefit Union County; Walla Walla County has agreed to this as a one-time incident. Union County has experienced some unusual and extensive detention needs this year that will continue for at least the next several months. Umatilla County has agreed to let Union County use their guaranteed bed space at no cost. The agreement states that if Umatilla County has needs they would still have bed availability at the facility and the number of paid days available to Union County would be reduced. This would be a significant financial savings to the Union County Juvenile Department as the current rate is \$141 per day. If approved, this would allow the county to take advantage of the payment that Umatilla County has already made to Walla Walla County. Walla Walla County understands the situation and Umatilla County has already paid the money. Union County is part of the Juvenile Justice Consortium and they often times help each other; this is a nice concession by both Umatilla and Walla Walla counties.

Commissioner McClure stated that this was very generous of those counties and Union County should express the commissioners' appreciation to them.

Commissioner Davidson stated that it will make a big difference in the Union County Juvenile Department budget.

Commissioner McClure moved approval of the Juvenile Detention Agreement. Commissioner Davidson seconded.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the agreement had been reviewed and approved by legal counsel.

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

Title III Project Applications

Mrs. Burgess stated that both Title II and Title III are provisions under the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding; the commissioners were presented with two years' worth of

funding recommendations under Title III for their consideration. Title III funds come to the county with very specific use requirements; the county must follow a specific process each year to authorize those uses including advertising the availability of funds, acceptance of applications, and categories under which funds can be applied. They can only be used for three purposes:

1. To carry out activities under the Firewise Communities Program; to provide to homeowners in fire-sensitive ecosystems education on and assistance with implementing techniques and home siting, home construction and home landscaping that can increase the protection of people and property from wildfires.
2. To reimburse the participating county for Search and Rescue and other Emergency Services, including firefighting that are performed on federal land after the date on which the use was approved, paid by the participating county.
3. To develop community wildfire protection plans in coordination with the appropriate secretary concern.

Mrs. Burgess stated that advertisements were made and applications were accepted. A 45-day comment period is required before projects can be brought to the commission for consideration; those requirements were satisfied.

Usually, the county has only until September of the year the funds are authorized to obligate them, but because the SRS was a late process last year they extended the deadline to September 2016 to obligate the funds or return them. Applications for review include two years of funding, including funds received last year and funds that will be received this year: \$58,826 in FY 2014-15 and \$63,927 in FY 2015-16, totaling \$122,783 available. Three applications were received:

1. \$24,000 - Union County Search and Rescue: UCSAR Mission Response Reimbursement Category 2 Search, Rescue and other Emergency Services. This application was submitted by Captain Craig Ward of the Sheriff's Department; he would provide documentation showing Search and Request expenditures that were incurred on federal land. He has also requested an allocation of funds to be set aside for future reimbursement.
2. \$11,000 - Union County Emergency Services: Phillips Creek Fire Response Category 2 Search, Rescue and other Emergency Services. This application is for reimbursement of expenditures for services that the county provided during the Phillips Creek fire in 2015.
3. \$86,000 - Union County Emergency Services: Wildfire Response Category 2 Search, Rescue and other Emergency Services. This would allocate funds for future reimbursement of potential upcoming fires.

Setting aside an allocation of funds for future reimbursement allows them to be used in Union County instead of sending them back; they are held in the Title III fund until there are expenses that would qualify for reimbursement. This process has been followed in the past with similar requirements and it has been acceptable to the federal

government. Mrs. Burgess stated that she provides a fund utilization report each year in February.

Commissioner McClure asked if services must be provided on federal lands; Mrs. Burgess stated that they do and added that training on federal land is not eligible for reimbursement.

Commissioner Davidson stated that total available is \$122,783 and a small amount would need to be returned since applications are less than that amount. Mrs. Burgess stated that the commissioners could increase the authorization to account for all of the funding.

Commissioner Howard asked if the approval period was through September. Mrs. Burgess stated that the approval period is through September, but the funds do not have to be expended by that date.

Commissioner McClure suggested that the commission allocate the maximum amount available. Commissioner Davidson stated that the remaining funds to be allocated are \$1,895.

Commissioner McClure moved to approve the Title III authorizations and split unappropriated funds between Search and Rescue and Emergency Management. Commissioner Davidson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner McClure asked how much of previous Title III funds were remaining in the account; Mrs. Burgess stated that there was about \$100,000. Commissioner McClure asked if that amount was available under the old rules and reimbursement criteria; Mrs. Burgess stated that was correct and added that they did not require an obligated by date, only the requirement that funds be used for the purposes specified at that time. Commissioner McClure stated that this is the end of the SRS funds unless Congress extends it.

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

Transient Room Tax (TRT) Funding Proposals

Commissioner Howard called the meeting back to order.

Union County Economic Development Corporation

Tim Seydel, 306 Scorpio Drive, La Grande, stated that UCEDC was requesting \$35,000 for general operations in addition to \$25,070 for the Union County contract; these requests are unchanged from previous year funding. UCEDC business recruitment activities have been supported by Union County and the City of La Grande the past three years. Goals and activities for 2016-17 focus broadly on business retention and

expansion, business recruitment, responding to business interest requests, working with the La Grande Business and Technology Park, playing an active role in economic development efforts in the county and providing technical assistance to businesses within the county.

Commissioner McClure asked if there were any significant changes from last year. Mr. Seydel stated that requests remained the same and matched requests made to the City of La Grande.

Commissioner Howard stated that he noticed that budget requests seem to stay the same and asked if that was due to tradition or if it was just reality. Mrs. Burgess stated appropriations made by the county would vary from year to year based on actual revenue generated from the Transient Room Tax (TRT) funds. It was determined that using an average would be more beneficial to the agencies and the county. Agencies were used to the set amount available, which is why these entities submit flat requests.

Commissioner McClure stated that this goes back to Measure 5, when the county took a hit financially and had to make significant budget cuts. The county discontinued funding for anything that was not mandatory, including the entities that now request TRT funds. Those entities were told that if they found an alternative funding source that was outside of general funds, then it could be added back into the budget. The voters passed a measure to add a 3% tax to hotel rooms; the ordinance stipulated how the tax revenue would be distributed to entities.

Union County Chamber of Commerce

Kristin Dollarhide, 48687 McCarty Bridge Road, North Powder, Chamber Executive Director, stated that the Chamber was requesting \$15,000 for FY 2016-17, which is the same amount requested for FY 2015-16. Support from the county benefits many of the partnerships throughout the county. Their strategic goals include membership, community, communications, and economic development. Union County has a lot to offer in terms of economic development such as Interstate 84, Union-Pacific Railroad, Eastern Oregon University, nearby community colleges, and the absence of system development fees.

Union County Tourism Promotion

Ms. Dollarhide stated that there are lots of exciting things happening and things are looking good. Lodging, food, gas, and arts and entertainment spending increased from previous years. People are stopping, staying and visiting businesses in Union County. New projects include billboard leases near Ontario and Baker City that will feature photos of MERA beginning in September.

Commissioner Davidson asked if there was any TRT data showing if its increase was attributed to occupancy or rates. Ms. Dollarhide stated that the 2014 data can be found

in the Dean Runyan report, which she distributed to the commission. The 2015 report is expected to be available in June.

Ms. Dollarhide stated that advertising partnerships are benefitting Union County and others. There are ongoing efforts to bring in an Agritourism Trail and an Arts Trail in Northeast Oregon. The website was recently updated and they continue to work out the bugs; it has been an important tool for people visiting from outside of the area. The Eastern Oregon Visitor Association has asked Ms. Dollarhide to be head liaison for their trade shows and conferences. This provides her the opportunity to share more about Eastern Oregon and encourage others to visit Union County.

Ms. Dollarhide stated that Union County Tourism Promotion is requesting \$45,000, up from \$42,500 last year. The advertising budget has increased, which includes cooperatively-hosted trade shows with the City of La Grande Economic Development Division. They also plan to create a shorter version of a video created for the Chamber Awards Banquet to be used for marketing on social media and with Travel Oregon.

Blue Mountain Conference Center

Ms. Dollarhide stated there had been a lot of changes at the Conference Center, but they have learned a lot and continue to learn more. The facility is a great asset and is widely used by various groups in the community. She stated that there was a little bit of controversy this past year in regards to transparency and consistency, but they are working through those things and it is doing great. The military is using the center about 46 days a year; overall it is a great partnership.

Commissioner Davidson asked how the additional funding of \$4,000 would be spent. Ms. Dollarhide stated that they have heard concerns about the sound from renters; they would like to purchase a new sound system and soundboard to improve that. Eventually they would also like to improve lighting options and purchase tables and chairs that need replaced due to condition and age.

Commissioner Howard recessed the meeting for Executive Session and called it back to order.

Mrs. Burgess presented a summary of the TRT fund; she proposed funding the same amount as last year. Total requests for FY 2016-17 are \$151,070. Total tax collected this fiscal year through February 2016 is \$133,652, indicating that the county will be at or above the amount collected last year.

Commissioner McClure stated that the total is close to the five year average and would not change anything.

Commissioner Davidson stated that there are other funding sources that could be used for some of the contract services and by giving them \$24,000 from TRT funds would make it an even \$150,000.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the summary she provided included amounts for small city service organizations and Discretionary Grants.

Commissioner Davidson moved to approve Mrs. Burgess's recommendation of funding levels from the TRT fund. Commissioner McClure seconded.

Commissioner Davidson stated that they were specifically considering funding requests from TRT funds as follows:

- UCEDC \$35,000
- Chamber of Commerce \$15,000
- Small City Service \$6,000
- Discretionary Grants \$11,000
- Blue Mt. Conference Center \$14,000
- Tourism and Promotion \$45,000
- Contract Services \$25,070

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

Next Meeting and Location

The next meeting will be on June 1 at the Joseph Annex Building.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston
Sr. Dept. Specialist II