

Board of Commissioners Meeting
October 18, 2017

Present: Commissioner Steve McClure
Commissioner Jack Howard
Commissioner Donna Beverage

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

Public Comments

Zoning Public Comment

Niki Welter, 69819 Deer Drive, Cove, stated that they purchased property sight unseen in Cove after quite some time looking. They did not know that they could not have fence where it is currently installed. A complaint about the cul-de-sac fence was made by a neighbor that primarily lives in Portland. The Union County Planning Director told them to take the fence down so that the cul-de-sac can be used for an emergency vehicle turn-around. No one else comes down that driveway and the ambulance has been able to turn around in the space several times over the last year. It is almost impossible to hire someone right now to remove the fence or re-fence the area. She requested that the County allow the fence to remain where it is installed.

Commissioner Howard asked Mrs. Welter if she had talked to the Planning Commission about the issue. Ms. Welter stated that she talked to the Planning Director, Scott Hartell. Lee Welter stated that Mr. Hartell explained to them that it is a right-of-way in case they want to continue Deer Drive down the hill at a later time, but the next property line is a pasture and the shop is in the middle of that right-of-way. Mr. Welter stated that if anyone needed access to that area, they could use Antles Lane.

Commissioner Howard stated that it is important for the process to work its way through and commended Mr. and Mrs. Welter for working through the Planning Commission. He suggested that they talk to Mr. Hartell about rights to appeal. Mr. Welter stated that Mr. Hartell told them to come to the Commissioners with their concerns.

Commissioner McClure stated that he would talk with Mr. Hartell and then get in touch with Mr. and Mrs. Welter.

Mrs. Welter stated that it is difficult to get someone to move fence and it would be great if they could wait to make changes.

Communication Public Comment

Michael Rosenbaum, 1402 First Street, La Grande, stated that his career history included work with the Oregon Highway Division, Oregon Department of Forestry, and U.S. Forest Service. Since retirement he has worked as a Forestry Technician Lookout and has spent many years thinking about fires. He was under the impression that nothing could happen here since it is in a city, but there have been changes to intensity and frequency of fire, as well as climate changes. He had never seen winds from the Northeast, but this year smoke came in from Montana and Canada. In regards to fire preparation, cell phone emergency

alerts are not adequate. If cell phone networks go down, he has no idea if there is a radio station that will provide information about weather, emergency instructions, and how to evacuate out of cities. He cannot count on the idea that nothing will happen here; fire is totally unpredictable and moves fast. He would like the County to make citizens aware of radio stations to check for updates and where evacuation routes are so they know what to do, where to go, and how to do it. He suggested that the County could consider providing the information through an insert in the newspaper or a fridge magnet to citizens. He knows that the Emergency Manager, JB Brock, does a really good job, but everyone needs to know what to do if a catastrophe happens. He stated that he did not represent any agency and his comments were on his own behalf.

Commissioner Beverage thanked Mr. Rosenbaum for his comments. She agreed that Mr. Brock is doing a good job and the County is working with the U.S. Forest Service, but the County can always do better.

Elected Officials, Department Head, and Employee Comments

Community Corrections Flooring Project

Travis Miller, Community Corrections Director, stated that upon further consideration of flooring quotes for his department, he would recommend hiring Baker City Carpet Express as it submitted the lowest quote.

Commissioner Beverage moved approval of hiring Baker City Carpet Express for flooring installation in the Community Corrections Department office space in the amount of \$14,850.16. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Snow Removal Policy

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, stated that he presented the 1993 Union County Snow Removal Policy at an earlier Commission meeting. There were some deficiencies in the policy so he worked with staff from the Sheriff's Office, Emergency Services, and Public Works to update and improve the policy. He proposed an updated Snow Removal Policy and asked for feedback from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Howard thanked Mr. Wright for taking another look at the policy. He would like to see a triage approach defining priorities when they compete with each other. It would be interesting to include some prioritization and access for ambulance routes in how they will be serviced. School bus routes are a standard access method in measuring effectiveness for being open. The policy states that the County "may notify the public of hazardous driving conditions"; he did not know how much the County would want to commit to making that notice happen. He knows there are other protocols in place in terms of who is responsible at what time; that information could be integrated in terms of notice to the public. To an earlier comment made, relying on the radio instead of cell phones is a good point because there have been some major cell outages with 911 that are recurring unpredicted. Some information about how the County cooperates with private agencies or businesses would be interesting, such as radio stations. It would be appropriate not to advertise in the newspaper that the radio would be used, but to use the radio to say this is where you will go to get information. Referencing those kinds of partnerships might be

useful. He would love to see the Sheriff's Office collect data on the type of calls received and where they come from so that an incident map can be created. He has talked to the Sheriff's Office about that in the past and knows it can be done.

Commissioner Beverage stated that the policy covered things well and she liked that there was flexibility in the policy.

Commissioner McClure stated that Public Works' first priority is the safety of the public, which implies that they will make sure that ambulances can respond to emergencies. Priorities are those that are life-threatening, which is stated clearly in the policy. Radio notification may not be in the policy, but it is used all the time and could be specifically defined. The County has been very aggressive in communicating road closures on the radio so that citizens could get home. Radio is a good means of notification for the community. Mr. Wright stated that radio stations are used because they have a wide coverage area and is the best information resource for the public. School districts also use the radio to provide notice to the public so it is a common place to get updated information.

Mr. Wright stated that he needs the policy to include some flexibility so that he can react to whatever the conditions may be. Conditions are unpredictable and he needs to have the decision making authority to pull resources and direct his crew to areas most needed. Commissioner Beverage agreed that Public Works needs flexibility in the policy because conditions can change hourly.

Mr. Wright stated that the policy should reflect the importance of having school bus routes open so that students can get to school and back home safely. The majority of the time, school bus routes are the same routes that are the most used by the public, which helps people get to and from work. Having roads cleared by 6:00 a.m. has worked well; clearing the roads too early can cause roads to be blown in again and then Public Works is not serving the public as they should be. Having crews plowing snow for twelve hours a day is enough because they need some time in between to rest before getting back out there; last year they worked 45 days straight. There are general winter hours, but defining it in a policy would impede flexibility to run earlier or later when needed. He stays in good contact with dispatch to let them know when snow plowing has ended so that they can call when there is a need. It is important to have involvement from the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Services in creating the policy so that it is manageable and workable for all partners and helpful to the public. The policy covers social media, but it could be revised to include communication through radio stations.

Commissioner Howard would like Mr. Wright to capture his suggestions from the meeting minutes and include them in the policy.

Commissioner McClure stated that it is important to note that there are times that Public Works will be overwhelmed with weather conditions and it is almost impossible to keep ahead of that. That should be recognized; you do the best you can, but sometimes it is useless to continue plowing when conditions are severe. Mr. Wright agreed and added that the safety of citizens is so important, but the safety of his crew is also important. He will not put his crew in jeopardy on the roads in 80 mph winds and zero visibility. There are times

when they have to wait it out and tell the public to stay home because there are 600 miles of roads to keep clear. The public should be prepared to be off the roads for three to five days.

Commissioner Howard stated that winter conditions are a reality of climate change. Severe winter events are one thing, but now there are months of absolute stress on the system. The public needs to be aware of the fact that this is dealing with a crisis in terms of how the County pays for these costs. He was unsure how he would write that when it is not good news. Mr. Wright stated that his crew understands it and is well prepared for those conditions. Commissioner Howard stated that it is hard to explain the challenge of a stressed system with equipment breaking down or the County being out of cash. Mr. Wright stated that his main directive as a Public Works Director is snow removal and if needed, concessions to road maintenance will be made because snow removal is the first priority.

Commissioner Howard hoped that the Snow Removal Policy would be aimed at people with disabilities and those who are especially stressed about needing resources or access to special care. Mr. Wright stated that when the public calls and say they need to get out, the first question is, "Is this an emergency?" He directs every effort and resource towards emergencies, which includes working with Emergency Services and the Sheriff's Office. When dispatch needs an ambulance, his crew is shifted to those roads to make it happen. This protocol is reviewed with his crew every fall and includes the Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Wright asked which changes Commissioner Howard would like made to the Snow Removal Policy. Commissioner Howard stated that he would like the policy to reflect his earlier comments and include data collection, communication and partnerships with businesses.

Administrative Matters

Court Order 2017-37, Appointment to the Union County Fair Association Board of Directors
Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that the Fair Board had some turn over, leaving four vacancies on a seven member board. Vacancies were advertised and current members were encouraged to recruit new members. Mary Jo Meyer and Lori McKay applied to serve; if appointed, terms would be effective immediately. Commissioner Howard stated that approval would reflect the Board's desire to move quickly in filling vacancies. **Commissioner Howard moved approval of Court Order 2017-37. Commissioner Beverage seconded.**

Public Comment

Fred Alexis, Mt. Glen Road, La Grande, stated that he had served on the Fair Board for five years. There are a few safety issues at the Fairgrounds that he brought to the attention of the Fair Board at that time, but they remain unresolved. Lighting in the commercial building is not adequate. There is uneven pavement surface; he witnessed two seniors fall due to the hazard. The small stage stairs are rickety and there is no handrail. He shared his concerns about potential lawsuits with the Fair Board, but nothing has changed. He stated that members of the Fair Board at the time suggested he could fix those items, but he did not want to take on the responsibility of ensuring it was done to code. He would like the safety issues to be reviewed and resolved.

Commissioner Howard stated that the Fair Board would be meeting the following evening; an excerpt of minutes from this meeting would be presented at that time.

Commissioner McClure asked Mrs. Burgess if the County Safety Committee inspected the Fairgrounds. Mrs. Burgess stated that the Safety Committee focuses on County workspaces and employee safety. She added that the Risk Management consultant from the liability insurer, CityCounty Insurance Services, could inspect the Fairgrounds. Fairground safety concerns are concerns that the Fair Board would focus on and address in their maintenance plan.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the County carries property insurance on the Fairgrounds and the Fair Association carries liability insurance.

Roll Call on Court Order 2017-37: Commissioner Howard, yes. Commissioner Beverage, yes. Commissioner McClure, yes. Motion carried unanimously.

Regional Infrastructure Projects

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that at the last work session Commissioners discussed projects for submission to the Business Oregon Regional Infrastructure Fund; capital projects that support job retention and creation would be eligible and submission would be due the end of October. To be competitive, projects need to be well-defined and developed. One potential project discussed was the completion of road paving and drainage at the Baum Industrial Park.

Commissioner Beverage stated that the Baum Industrial Park infrastructure improvement project was ready for submission. Commissioner McClure stated that the project was worth submitting; the road work at the Baum Industrial Park needs to be done and would make it a more saleable piece of property.

Mrs. Burgess stated that businesses within the Park submitted letters of support for the project and a lot of the work to move the project forward had already been completed. Commissioner McClure asked if cost estimates would be needed; Mrs. Burgess stated that they would be needed and could be pulled together before the deadline.

Mrs. Burgess stated that she did not know if the Commissioners had other projects they were considering. She noted that at the work session John Lackey talked about a project that would include a culinary institute.

Commissioner Howard stated that he made a call to a culinary institute and the proposition sounded very expensive and problematic for this area. He stated that based on his fellow Commissioners' recommendations he would be comfortable submitting the Baum Industrial Park project.

Commissioner McClure stated that he did not think that John Lackey's project proposal could be ready in time to meet the deadline.

Public Comment

John Lackey, 701 Penn Avenue, La Grande, stated that the fund was set up for public and private enterprises and one requirement is public support. When the County submits an application, it is endorsing the project. Due to the tight timeframe, he was unable to provide additional information for the Commissioners, but Regional Solutions is willing to look at the application on a preliminary basis. The public sector has the disadvantage of not having a commitment or endorsement from a governing authority. This project would help address college housing needs, as well as provide training for food service and cosmetology.

Commissioner McClure stated that he could not in good faith endorse a project without knowing more about it. He would be remiss as a County Commissioner if he made a decision without seeing a complete project. He noted that it may be a disadvantage, but the County did not create the deadline or have the ability to change it.

Mr. Lackey stated that the County's decision to endorse the project would not be irrevocable. The County could back out at any time, even after it receives information about the project. He stated that private enterprise needs to be supported in Union County. There is a developer that wants to spend millions of dollars here; he has already purchased the property and the project needs some assistance. All the information is not always available to make decisions. He requested a letter from the Commissioners indicating that they are willing to look at the project and make a decision about endorsing it later. The project is at a disadvantage without a recommendation by a governing authority, which almost defeats the project from the beginning.

Commissioner Howard concurred with Commissioner McClure; a business plan for Mr. Lackey's project would be useful in making a decision about supporting it. He agreed that there is a housing need for college students.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Beverage moved approval of the Consent Agenda, which included Claims Journals from October 4, 5, 10, 11, and 12; and Union County Budget Meeting minutes from June 7 and 8, 2017. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Ballot Measure Timelines

Mrs. Burgess stated that there had been some discussion at the last work session regarding whether the County might revisit the ban on marijuana businesses. Potential opportunities to refer the question to the voters during 2018 elections are on March 13, May 15, September 18, and November 6. The County will fund the May and November elections regardless of ballot measures. The March and September elections would be special election dates with costs covered by whoever brings forth ballot measures; if the County chooses to place a ballot measure on those election dates then it would incur an additional cost over what it will already have for the May and November elections. The filing deadline for the May election is February 23 and the filing deadline for the November election is August 17. Those deadlines are earlier than in the past due to a new challenge period requirement.

Commissioner McClure stated that if this topic was put to the voters, February would be too soon. Commissioner Howard concurred. Commissioner McClure stated that the Commissioners have not agreed to place it on a ballot for the voters, but if that happens then it would be no sooner than the November 2018 election.

Ignite Entrepreneurial Center Presentation

Lisa Dawson, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) Director and Christine Jarski, City of La Grande Economic Development Director, made a presentation on the Ignite Entrepreneurial Center in La Grande.

Ms. Jarski stated that The Ignite Center (e-center) is a partnership between NEOEDD and the City of La Grande. The e-center received Business Oregon Rural Opportunity Initiative funding to develop programs within the project. The mission is to serve small businesses from concept phase through the lifespan of the business. The center will open in March 2018 as a dynamic and highly visible center that will provide resources, classes, networking and mentorship opportunities, and a gathering place for entrepreneurs. The center will also offer short and long term office space and access to shared office equipment.

Ms. Dawson stated that there is potential for interns from Eastern Oregon University to assist entrepreneurs at the e-center. Other discussions with potential key resource providers are ongoing. During the first phase, they would prepare the building and offer services on the first floor. The second phase would expand the space to include the second floor if enough money is raised. She stated that they were seeking a letter of support to be used in accessing additional funding. Current funding includes assistance from Business Oregon, the City of La Grande, and potential e-center memberships. The sustainability of the center will come into play when the second floor is available for longer term leases.

Commissioner Howard asked how this would be different than an incubator model. Ms. Dawson stated that incubators have a graduated rent structure that is designed with incentives to move out. E-centers generally do not have a graduated rent structure that forces businesses out of the facility, but instead the business moves out as a result of its growth. E-centers offer educational opportunities, but they are not required. Ms. Jarski stated that the e-center would support entrepreneurs throughout the business's life cycle, whereas incubators provide support only through the startup phase.

Commissioner McClure asked if the e-center would teach entrepreneurs how to compete with online shopping and market their product outside of Union County; he encouraged the inclusion of that component. He asked what happens to established businesses when a new business is supported to compete and offer the same service. Local businesses need to have customers outside of the area. Ms. Dawson stated that the e-center does not provide that type of learning opportunity as well as it could. Ms. Jarski stated that there are some local e-commerce based businesses that would be good examples and mentors; she added that the e-center would share other accessible resources with entrepreneurs. Ms. Jarski stated that they will look to existing business to help guide that program offering.

Commissioner Beverage liked the idea of using an intern from the university as a staff member at the e-center. She also liked that anyone in Union County could use the center

and it would not be limited to people in La Grande. She was in favor of providing a letter of support.

Commissioner McClure stated that the e-center was a wonderful idea; he would like to see it recognize and encourage businesses to think about how they will compete with online businesses. He also liked that the e-center would be visible and accessible.

There was a consensus to provide a letter of support for the Ignite Entrepreneurial Center.

Next Meeting and Location

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to take place at the Joseph Annex Building on November 1, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment

Commissioner McClure adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston
Sr. Dept. Specialist II