

**Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, March 1, 2023**  
**Morrow County Government Center**  
**Irrigon, Oregon**

**Present In-Person**

Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Roy Drago Jr., Commissioner Jeff Wenzholz, Roberta Vanderwall, Roberta Lutchter, Kevin Ince, Justin Nelson, Lindsay Grogan, Benjamin Tucker, Tamra Mabbott

**Present Via Zoom**

Linda Skendzel, SaBrina Bailey-Cave, Jaylene Papineau, Paul Gray, Robin Canaday, Jennifer Jenck, S. Baker, 27 non-staff participants

**Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance & Introductions:** 9:00 a.m.

Chair Sykes said the Board's new schedule of two meetings per month started today. The schedule will be meetings on the first Wednesday in Heppner and the third Wednesday in Irrigon. However, the locations were switched for this month to accommodate a request from the Circuit Court to use the Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room today.

**City & Citizen Comments:**

Kaleb Lay, Community Organizer, Oregon Rural Action, said they had questions about the Congressionally Directed Spending item on the agenda. Should those questions be asked now or when the Board gets to that item, he asked. Chair Sykes said to hold them until that point in the agenda. He added the Board does not normally take public comment outside the City & Citizen Comment portion of the agenda. He added, in the future, if Mr. Lay sees an agenda item and has questions, please make arrangements ahead of time instead of using the public comment section to discuss items listed on the agenda. Chair Sykes said he would make an exception today and allow Mr. Lay to ask questions at that point in the agenda.

**Open Agenda:** No items

**Consent Calendar**

*Commissioner Drago moved to approve the following items in the Consent Calendar:*

- 1. 2023 Oregon Department of Agriculture, Wolf Compensation & Financial Assistance Grant Program Application; and authorize Chair Sykes to sign on behalf of the County*
- Commissioner Wenzholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

**Business Items**

Review Wage/Compensation Analysis by JB Reward Systems

Lindsay Grogan, Human Resources Director

Vance Jacobson, Managing Consultant, JB Reward Systems

Mr. Jacobson was contracted to conduct a review of the County. His report to the Board included a PowerPoint presentation on the following topics: Competitive Assessment; Internal Alignment Assessment; Reconstruction of Salary Ranges; Pay Equity Analysis; and Updated Decision Support for Salary Administration.

Mr. Jacobson said he found:

- Salary ranges for all employee groups were in the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, which means 60% of the market pays higher wages than the County
- Salary ranges need to be wider from low to high and they should enable 8-12 years of growth

He went on to expand upon his findings and provide more detailed recommendations. The Commissioners then undertook a lengthy question and answer session with Mr. Jacobson. They learned the budget impact would be approximately \$750,000. Finance Director, Kevin Ince, said, in his opinion, the budget can afford this, if this is where the Board chooses to put its strategic priority and emphasis. The County is lacking clear strategic prioritization, he said, adding he was not being critical. If this is done from a pay equity perspective and making sure we can retain, attract and fill vacant positions, and if this is an identified need and strategic priority, this is perfectly reasonable and can be accommodated in the budget, he said. Later in the discussion, he said the action today could be to approve the plan for purposes of planning and the budget, with the ultimate approval to come in the future.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to direct staff to move forward with the plan here, with the top range of up-to-the-60<sup>th</sup>-percentile for the budget, effective July 1, 2023. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Letter of Support, Port of Morrow Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) Grant Applications  
Lisa Mittelsdorf, Executive Director, Port of Morrow

Ms. Mittelsdorf reviewed the four projects the Port will submit for CDS funding.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to approve and sign the letter in support of the Port of Morrow's requests for CDS funding. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5339 Grant Application for Buses and Bus Facilities  
Benjamin Tucker, Transit Manager, The Loop/Morrow County Transit

Mr. Tucker explained he and contracted grant writer, Nick Ducote, worked on the application and just learned it will need to include a zero emission plan for vehicles. Mr. Ducote said that conversation hasn't started at the County level but a basic plan of intent to transition could be drafted before the March 10<sup>th</sup> deadline. He also said there was a prior discussion with the Board about the required matching funds and he confirmed it was 10%, not 20%. Discussion took place about the feasibility of an electric vehicle fleet with the long distances travelled in the County. It was agreed further analysis will be needed.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to move forward with the application as-is, with an addendum to address the no emission vehicle transition; and authorize Chair Sykes to sign on behalf of the County. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

City of Boardman Pedestrian Path Project, Access Easement Request

Benjamin Tucker, Transit Manager, The Loop/Morrow County Transit

At the January 18<sup>th</sup> BOC Meeting, the Commissioners asked Mr. Tucker to report back regarding the differing sidewalk plans by the City and the County at the County's proposed transit facility location. Mr. Tucker said he met with the City of Boardman on February 17<sup>th</sup> and a new plan

beneficial to both parties was agreed upon. He then reviewed the City of Boardman's request for an Access Easement.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to approve the City of Boardman Access Agreement to allow sidewalk construction on lots 300 and 400 on Columbia Avenue; and authorize Chair Sykes to sign on behalf of the County. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

**Break:** 10:50-10:55 a.m.

#### Audit Services Request for Proposals (RFP)

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

Mr. Ince recommended, as a best practice, to post an RFP for audit services since the County has been with current auditors since the mid-1990s.

*Commissioner Drago moved to authorize Kevin Ince, Finance Director, to proceed with issuing the RFP for Audit Services. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### Review County Submissions for Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) Grant Funds

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Ms. Mabbott requested permission to move forward with her CDS application. She said it had support from the Cities of Irrigon and Boardman and would be the next phase of addressing the nitrate issue that looked at opportunities to extend city water systems. Mr. Ducote added it would take the County from the testing, surveying and study phase to starting some solutions. In order to evaluate alternatives, he said, design work would need to take place. Ms. Mabbott said the new application included some test well work, if it's not covered in the current round (\$1.7 million anticipated for both Morrow and Umatilla Counties).

Ethan Akers, Boardman resident Zooming in from a conference room in Boardman arranged by Oregon Rural Action, asked about the \$1.7 million: How many wells would be tested and what information would be collected?

Staff clarified the funds have not been awarded to the two Counties yet because this CDS grant requires a separate application process through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). That process can take quite some time, according to Mr. Ducote.

Regarding the 2023 funds, Mr. Lay asked, "What questions we're trying to answer regarding the testing that you're looking for, how do you envision that?"

Contracted water consultant, Ronan Igloria, with GSI Water Solutions, said it would be a broader testing process building off the work already collected from the previous funding request. This new application focuses on the anticipated outcome from the previous request – identify well clusters or areas within the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area that could viably be served by extending or connecting to existing public systems. Once that's been delineated or identified, it's going back and having a budget and do confirmation or follow-up sampling within those areas and potentially putting some test wells that go deeper to collect additional information as we move into the final planning and initial design concept phase.

Mr. Lay then asked what alternative options were being considered for people not eligible for city hook-ups?

Chair Sykes said since it was so early in the process, that question was impossible to answer. “You don’t know, what you don’t know,” he said. That’s why Morrow County committed funds for a water engineer and the CDS money. There are different solutions in different areas. As the process moves forward, that question will be answered. That’s the purpose of everything we’re doing right now. Ms. Mabbott and her people can’t answer these things until they have a clear picture on where to move next, he stated.

*Commissioner Drago moved to accept the proposal going forward with the EPA and the CDS, and to sign the letter of support to Senators Wyden and Merkley. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### Neighborhood Approach for Code Compliance

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director

Stephanie Case, Planner II

Katie Keely, Compliance Planner

Ms. Mabbott said the Planning Department would like to launch a “Neighborhood Approach to Code Compliance” philosophy, particularly for three neighborhoods with code and solid waste violations. Those neighborhoods are the West Glen Subdivision, Wagon Wheel Subdivision and the Gun Club Area. The new approach involves sending letters to all the residents in the neighborhood so they know they are all subject to the same rules. There may be some abatement funds available and Ms. Mabbott said she wanted to gauge the Board’s support for using those funds. After hearing presentations from Ms. Case and Ms. Keely, the Commissioners encouraged them to pursue this approach and report back. They also asked staff to work with Mr. Ince to determine whether or not there were restrictions on the use of abatement funds.

#### Review Compensation Board Recommendations

Lindsay Grogan, Human Resources Director

Ms. Grogan provided a summary of the Compensation Board’s recommendations:

- 10% increase for all Elected Officials (Assessor, Clerk, Commissioners, Justice of the Peace, Sheriff, Treasurer) with the exception of the Commissioners
- Increase the Commissioner position to \$79,000
- 5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all Elected Officials

Discussion. Ms. Grogan said she had a rough estimate of the total fiscal impact of the recommendations but hadn’t had time to include it in the Agenda Packet: \$196,000 for one year.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved for a 10% increase for all Elected Officials and to follow the past history of a 2.5% COLA. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Ms. Grogan asked if the Board wanted to elaborate on the stipend for the District Attorney. She said she wanted to bring this to the BOC because there wasn’t an area for it to be brought forward. The current stipend is \$11,000, she said.

Mr. Nelson talked about the reasoning behind counties paying D.A. stipends, whose salaries are paid by the state. He then requested the same increase just approved for the other Elected Officials.

*Commissioner Drago moved to consider the D.A. stipend being eligible for an increase of 10% and a 2.5% COLA. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### New Circuit Court Building Update

Chair Sykes

Chair Sykes said this has been an ongoing project for a few years. He said he's taken the project on and has been working Judge Daniel Hill, Heppner Mayor, Corey Sweeney, and others to get the project culminated. It is coming to a head soon with the current legislature and he, Judge Hill and Mr. Nelson planned to testify in Salem. Chair Sykes said DLR Group conducted a feasibility study of the Courthouse and understand the legislative process in Salem. He asked permission to have DLR Group provide an analysis on the building sites in Heppner under consideration, up to \$10,000. He also asked the Board to sign the letter to the Public Safety Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. Ince commented the County had over 90% of the required matching portion held in reserve and, as a caveat, he had to assume it would roll forward into the next budget year.

*Commissioner Drago moved to approve expending up to \$10,000 for DLR Group to provide an analysis of potential building sites for a new Circuit Court Building in Heppner; and to approve and sign the letter drafted by Chair Sykes. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### **Department Reports**

- The Public Safety Coordinating Council Quarterly Written Report, submitted by Jessica Rose, was reviewed.
- The Sheriff's Office Written Monthly Report, submitted by Administrative Lieutenant Melissa Camarillo, was reviewed.
- The Accounts Payable Report was provided by Mr. Ince. He asked to move the report to the third Wednesday of each month to capture activity for the entire month; the Board agreed by consensus.

**Correspondence:** None

**Commissioner Reports:** Brief reports provided

**Signing of Documents**

**Adjourned:** 12:30 p.m.