

**Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**  
**June 7, 2023**  
**Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room**  
**110 N. Court St., Heppner, Oregon**

**Present In-Person:** Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenholz, Commissioner Roy Drago Jr., Roberta Lutcher, Justin Nelson

**Present Via Zoom:** Staff: Roberta Vanderwall, Deona Siex, Eric Imes, Mike Gorman, Robin Canaday, Yvonne Morter, SaBrina Bailey Cave; Non-Staff: Aaron Moss, Kelly Doherty, Jeff Fox, Erika Lasater

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

**City & Citizen Comments**

- Kelly Doherty, Boardman, said she was “checking in to see what staff found out on uploading the audio for the Hispanic speaking, or the audio or Zoom.” She also asked about the audio for the four Public Hearings held to obtain input on writing the new Ambulance Service Area Plan, saying not all of them had been uploaded yet. Ms. Doherty also complained about the Public Health Department and Emergency Management pages on the County website for having outdated information.

**Open Agenda:** No items

**Consent Calendar**

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

1. *Minutes: May 3<sup>rd</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>*
2. *Professional Services Contract with Helion Software, Inc. for Assessment & Taxation Computer Software Services; effective July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024; not-to-exceed amount \$60,132.*

*Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

**Business Items**

Presentation on the Proposed Sunstone Solar Development

Logan Stephens, Senior Director, Pine Gate Renewables

Brianne Hyder, Senior Director, RenUSA

Mr. Stephens provided a PowerPoint presentation on the project, which was originally called Echo Solar. The name was changed to avoid confusion with the town of Echo and the Echo Wind Projects, he said. In addition, the project was later acquired by Pine Gate Renewables.

Some of the information from Mr. Stephens included:

- Sunstone Solar will be the Pacific Northwest’s largest solar facility, as well as one of the largest in the country at 1,200 megawatts.
- The project will connect to the Umatilla Electric Cooperative (UEC) line that runs to Boardman and connects to the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) substation there.
- Under the payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreement, the estimated revenue for each of the first 17 years will be \$8.4 million.
- During the construction phase, 600 jobs will be created.
- Project timeline: development phase: 2021-2026; start construction: 2026; fully operational: 2030.

Commissioner Drago said he assumed the land for the project was marginal farmland.

Mr. Stephens replied yes, it's been in dryland wheat production and not irrigated in 40 years or so. He said they were working through addressing the impacts from taking it out of production and looked forward to sharing that.

Letter of Support to the Department of Land Conservation & Development for the Town of Lexington

Katie Imes, Lexington Town Councilor

Ms. Imes requested the letter to support the Town's application for its Downtown Improvement Plan Project.

*Commissioner Drago moved to approve the letter to DLCD in support of the Town of Lexington's grant application to fund its Downtown Improvement Plan Project. Commissioner Wenzholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Letter of Support to the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, 2023-25 Biennial Plan for the Justice Reinvestment Grant

Dan Robbins, Probation & Parole

Lt. Robbins explained they've received the grant for the last eight years and it's used to fund a Probation Officer position.

*Commissioner Wenzholz moved to approve the letter to OCJC in support of Probation & Parole's 2023-25 Biennial Plan for the Justice Reinvestment Grant. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Order No. OR-2023-3: Authorizing Treasurer to Invest Funds

Jaylene Papineau, Treasurer

Ms. Papineau said this was an annual authorization. It's a requirement for the County to continue to keep funds in the Local Government Investment Pool, she said. Ms. Papineau also provided the relevant Oregon Revised Statutes in the Agenda Packet.

*Commissioner Drago moved to approve Order No. OR-2023-3: In the Matter of Authorizing the County Treasurer to Invest Funds. Commissioner Wenzholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Appoint Members to the Morrow County Broadband Network Consortium Board

Aaron Moss, Broadband Action Team

Mr. Moss reported the first Board meeting will take place June 15<sup>th</sup>. Brief discussion.

*Commissioner Drago moved to appoint Chair Sykes and Commissioner Wenzholz to the Morrow County Broadband Network Consortium Board. Commissioner Wenzholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

**Department Reports**

- The Sheriff's Office Monthly Report was reviewed by Melissa Camarillo.
- The Local Public Safety Coordinating Council Quarterly Report was reviewed by Jessica Rose.

- The Road Department Monthly Report was provided by Mike Haugen.

#### Classification & Compensation Review

Lindsay Grogan, Human Resources Director

Vance Jacobson, Managing Consultant, JB Reward Systems

Mr. Jacobson's last update to the Board occurred on March 1, 2023. The recommendations at that time were to bring employees from the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile in the job market for the region, to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile; and to expand the salary ranges to enable 8-12 years of growth.

Mr. Jacobson said since March, they shifted toward implementation:

- Changes were made in instances where the job or qualifications changed.
- Consolidations occurred to give more clarity on career ladders, and additional career ladder steps were added.
- The new plan guarantees a 5% increase for every employee. Some employees were far below the minimum so they will see more than a 5% increase.
- The resulting implementation costs for the County will be \$670,000. This includes the 5% for every employee; rounding people to the closest step in the newly computed ranges; and adding an internal equity adjustment.
- The County can say its average employee is paid at the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of the market but it doesn't mean everyone is at the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile. New employees will be below and seasoned employees may be above.
- On July 1, 2023 the County/Human Resources can maintain the program without having to do any further remedial actions for internal and competitive equity.
- The benefit package was not part of the salary comparison with other employers in the region.

A conversation then took place about the significant changes made in the Planning Department, such as making the Planning Director the Planning Director/Community Development Director and adding a new position called Principle Planner. The Board agreed further discussion was warranted on the topic.

**Legislative Updates:** None

**Correspondence:** None

**Commissioner Reports:** Brief reports were provided.

**Break:** 10:25-10:32 a.m.

#### **Business Items, continued**

##### Retirement Plan Administration Proposal

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

Jennifer Currin Gutridge, Mercer Advisors

Mr. Ince said while Mercer Advisors (investment advisors for the retirement plan) and Milliman (actuaries for the retirement plan) provide excellent support for their responsibilities with the retirement plan, a large portion still falls on him and the HR Director. Those duties are beyond the scope of our in-house resources, he said. As follow-up from a prior Work Session on the retirement plan, he explained Ms. Gutridge spoke with different retirement plan administrators and found a possible fit for the County.

Ms. Gutridge discussed the search process and said Nationwide can do the job and offers the same amount of pricing. She introduced Bob Eviston with Nationwide, also attending by Zoom.

Mr. Eviston said the actuary will stay the same. Milliman will continue to calculate benefits, determine payout options, start making distributions, and provide the information for the annual participant statements. Nationwide will take on the payroll functions for retirees. He said they will coordinate and work with Mercer Advisors to provide an investment platform with over 1,500 funds so Mercer can manage the assets of the Defined Benefit Plan. After the contracts are signed, the transition will take about 60 days, said Mr. Eviston.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to approve the transition to Nationwide for retirement plan administration, and authorize the Finance Director and HR Director to proceed. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Chair Sykes read the Executive Session citation below and said there was a potential decision or action item following the Executive Session.

**10:58 a.m. Executive Sessions (2):** Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a) – To consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent. (Note: this Executive Session will have a participant via Zoom or phone. Media can contact Morrow County and request the Zoom or phone information.)

### **11:33 a.m. Return to Open Session**

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to authorize the HR Director to make an employment offer to a candidate for the Payroll and Benefits Coordinator position at Step F of the salary range for that position. Commissioner Drago seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

County Counsel, Justin Nelson, commented only one of the Executive Sessions had an action item so that's why there was just one motion made.

### **Signing of documents**

**Adjourned:** 11:35 a.m.