

**Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**  
**July 21, 2021**  
**Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room**  
**Heppner, Oregon**

**Present In-Person**

Chair Don Russell, Commissioner Jim Doherty, Commissioner Melissa Lindsay, Darrell J. Green, Greg Close, Mike Gorman, Roberta Lutcher, Dan Robbins, Richard Tovey; Non-Staff: Doug McKay

**Present Via Zoom**

Staff: Lindsay Grogan, Katie Imes, Christy Kenny, Kate Knop, Tamra Mabbott, Ian Murray, Justin Nelson, Sandi Pointer, Nazario Rivera, Linda Skendzel, Vickie Turrell; Non-Staff: Sheryll Bates, Erika Lasater, Debbie Pedro, Karen Pettigrew, David Sykes

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

**City & Citizen Comments:** None

**Open Agenda:** No items

**Consent Calendar:**

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

1. *Accounts Payable & Payroll Payables*
2. *Minutes: June 23<sup>rd</sup>*
3. *Request to Issue Credit Card for the Emergency Manager with a limit of \$1,500*
4. *By making no recommendation, the following Liquor Licenses from Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) will automatically renew: Love's Travel Stop #650 (Tower Road, Boardman), Off-Premises Sales; and Marker 40 Golf Club (Toms Camp Road, Boardman) for both Limited On-Premises Sales and Off-Premises Sales*
5. *Oregon Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Division Agreement #35077, Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Vehicle Expansion – Funding for Five Public Transit Vehicles; effective July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2023; not-to-exceed amount \$371,899 with a local match of \$92,975*
6. *Reappointment of Aaron Palmquist to the STIF Advisory Committee representing Irrigon/Low Income; term to be July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024*
7. *Two Sheriff's Office Vehicles to State Surplus: 2014 Dodge Ram 1500, Vehicle Identification Number 1C6RR7KT4ES381190; 2010 Ford F150, VIN 1FTFW1EV2AFB14146*
8. *OLCC Temporary Sales License Application from Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo*

*Commissioner Doherty seconded. Unanimous approval.*

**Business Items**

Umatilla National Forest Lands Temporary Closure

Darrell Green, Administrator

Doug McKay, Heppner District Ranger

Mr. Green welcomed Mr. McKay and thanked him for attending the meeting. He explained the County received an email from the Sheriff's Office on July 16<sup>th</sup> that all Umatilla National Forest and Federal Forest Service properties were closed to the public. He said this led to questions about the impact to Morrow County Parks and forest areas. Mr. Green also suggested the

discussion include ways the County and Forest Service can more effectively communicate when similar actions occur in the future.

Mr. McKay offered the following: The Umatilla National Forest Supervisor, Eric Watrud, determined to take a rare and unique, and hopefully, one-time action to close the forest. It was based on current wildfires and a new lightning-caused wildfire that was spreading rapidly. The Elbow Creek fire took a big run in the first burning period of 8,000-9,000 acres and in light of the very large fires in Klamath and Lake Counties where there wasn't a general forest closure in place, and a new start that contributed significantly to that fire and its threat to local communities, Mr. Watrud decided to close this one. It was not an easy decision and we didn't have a lengthy discussion about it. He would have had a lengthy discussion with the Regional Forester about doing this. It was a late-night decision and we, and the rest of the forest leadership team, woke up to the news. The ramifications for the local communities are something we immediately started discussing, as well. Right now, there is the possibility for people with legitimate needs to be on the forest to request a waiver through the office. To date, I've issued 11 waivers, all for grazing permittees. We're very concerned we don't have an impact on the local economy. With public closure, we're trying to mitigate more fires that weren't started by lightning. I apologize on behalf of the Forest Supervisor that there wasn't time, in his opinion, to have those conversations with the counties. We can talk today about how we improve that. The District Ranger in Ukiah, Paula Guenther, and I had a discussion a few days ago about the impact of closing the 52 and 53 Roads. We requested the Forest Supervisor pull those out from the closure since we receive Federal funding as scenic byways. He agreed and those roads are no longer part of the closure.

Chair Russell asked how the public was notified of the closure and if the Forest Service was notifying people currently in the forest that they had to leave.

Mr. McKay said it wasn't an enforcement closure, it was an informational one and signs and notices were going up now.

Commissioner Doherty talked about the efforts in recent years to improve the working relationship between the Forest Service and the County. He said, over the years, discussions took place with Mr. Watrud and his predecessors about the importance of involving the County, from early notification through after-action report. He said he'd like to think Morrow County was part of the team.

Mr. McKay said the County was considered part of the team but he woke up to the news about the closure and contacted the County shortly thereafter. He added he drove to Heppner Tuesday from Silver Lake, his previous assignment and the area of the Bootleg Fire where his family had to evacuate Monday night to Portland.

The Commissioners stressed the need for local fire-fighting resources in the event of fire. Mr. McKay outlined the resources that will remain stationed in the area. He said he believed an agreement was needed for notification prior to decision-making; mutual aid agreements were mentioned later in the discussion.

Mr. McKay said from fire suppression to recreation, he looked forward to building a more robust partnership and helping Morrow County manage the recreation growth that is here now and will continue. Chair Russell thanked him for appearing and providing the report, saying it was appreciated.

Morrow County Parks General Manager, Greg Close, provided a brief update to the Board. Of note, campfires are no longer allowed at any County Parks, and all fire equipment and vehicles are up and running.

#### PGE Strategic Investment Program (SIP) Community Service Fee Fund

Mike Gorman, Assessor/Tax Collector

During April's Budget Committee Meetings, there was some confusion about the \$612,626 in this fund when it should have been capped at \$500,000, said Mr. Gorman. After looking into the matter, it was found the \$112,626.44 come from an income tax component of the SIP program that also gets distributed to the affected districts. He said this can affect all SIP exemptions so he, the Treasurer and Finance Director decided to create a new general ledger line for the sake of transparency. Various discussions.

#### Revised Minutes of June 2, 2021

*Commissioner Doherty moved to accept the revised minutes of June 2, 2021. Commissioner Lindsay seconded. Unanimous approval.*

#### Building Project Updates

Morrow County Government Center Building in Irrigon:

- Masonry is delayed but work continues on other projects to avoid delaying the move-in timeline.
- A meeting took place last week with Department Directors/Elected Officials about the move-in process. Everyone was also able to tour the new building.
- Furniture and technology people are actively engaged so these areas don't cause delays during the move-in process. The new project manager is very detail-oriented and is holding everyone accountable.

Sheriff Station 2 Building:

- Painting and drywall completed.
- Siding, stairs and ceiling installed.
- Man-door installed but waiting on the roll-up doors.
- Electric and water not turned on yet.

**Break:** 10:24-10:38 a.m.

#### **Department Reports**

- The Juvenile Department Quarterly Report was reviewed by Christy Kenny, Director
- The Loop Quarterly Report was reviewed by Katie Imes, Coordinator
- The written Emergency Management Quarterly Report submitted by Undersheriff John Bowles was reviewed
- The Parole & Probation Semi-Annual Report was reviewed by Lt. Dan Robbins

## **Correspondence**

- Letter from the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners to the Governor's Natural Resource Policy Director and the Director of the Oregon Water Resources Department regarding the American Rescue Plan Act appropriations to Umatilla County for water related work
- Letter from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to Morrow County regarding the Conditional Letter of Map Revision for the Willow Creek Floodplain Improvement project
- Morrow County 4-H July Newsletter

## **Commissioner Reports**

Reports were provided by the Commissioners.

**11:55 a.m. Executive Session:** Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(d) – To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations

**1:20 p.m. Closed Executive Session**

**Signing of documents**

**Adjourned:** 1:30 p.m.