

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2022
Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room
Heppner, Oregon

Present In-Person:

Chair Jim Doherty
Commissioner Don Russell
Commissioner Melissa Lindsay
Karen Wolff, Board Staff
Justin Nelson, County Counsel

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance 9:02 a.m.

City and Citizen Comments

Ken Brown, Boardman Rural Fire District (BRFD)

Mr. Brown thanked the Board of Commissioners for engaging a mediator. In the mean time, Mr. Brown wants the Board to approve the licensing process on their ambulance. They needs Board's approval to do that.

Chair Doherty said there is a request to the mediator and this could be added. Is this for the certificate of need? Mr. Brown said yes. It will take 3-4 months to complete the licensing process and they would like to get started now. Commissioner Lindsay said she understood that this process has already started. Mr. Brown said it has not been declined. OHA will not do anything without the Board's approval. Mr. Nelson said the subject was tabled earlier waiting for more documentation. Mr. Brown said they are only asking for licensing of the ambulance. They understand the ASA (Ambulance Service Area) is yet to be determined.

Chair Doherty said this is an important subject. There are other people who would like to have been online for this discussion. Just taking this as comment today.

Mr. Nelson said he will respond to BRFD counsel to get this moving forward.

Commissioner Russell asked Mr. Nelson what kind of information are we looking for? Then Mr. Brown knows what to prepare. Mr. Nelson said any documentation. There was no documentation submitted previously. Demonstratable need.

Mr. Brown asked that now there is mediation, can the County get the Health District to stop sending nasty letters every week. Commissioner Russell said we are not their boss. They are run by an elected group, just as we are.

Open agenda

Commissioner Russell would like to discuss the contract with the ASA mediator.

Consent calendar

Commissioner Russell would like to remove Accounts Payables.

Commissioner Lindsay move to approve the Consent Calendar minus Accounts Payables: Payroll Payables; Minutes August 31, 2022; Purchase Pre-Authorization – Midland Pugmill; Order No: OR-2022-11 In the Matter of Appointing Members to the Morrow County Board of Property Tax Appeals. Commissioner Russell seconded. Unanimous approval.

Business Items

Accounts Payable

Commissioner Russell questioned the payable to Chair Doherty. Have any of these items been inadvertently paid on VISA statement? Commissioner Russell would like to review the recent VISA statement for Chair Doherty.

Commissioner Russell moved to approve the Accounts Payables. Commissioner Lindsay seconded. Unanimous approval.

ASA Mediator Contract

Commissioner Russell said he has a contract from Elizabeth Heckathorn for ASA (Ambulance Service Area) mediation. Forwarded it this morning to County Counsel for review. She has requested a \$552 retainer. Commissioner Russell asked that we approve the \$552 retainer to be paid upon approval of the contract by County Counsel.

Commissioner Lindsay would like to have the contract come to the Board to review. She is OK with paying the retainer so we don't lose this opportunity, pending signatures.

Commissioner Russell will email the contract to the other Commissioners. The retainer will be in the Accounts Payable next week. Commissioner Lindsay asked to have this on the consent calendar next week. Approved by consensus to bring this to the Consent Calendar next week.

First Reading. Ordinance No. ORD-2022-3

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director deferred to Stephanie Case, Planner II (online)

Ms. Case read the full title: Ordinance No. ORD-2022-3 An Ordinance amending the Morrow County Subdivision Ordinance and the Morrow County Zoning Ordinance, Articles 1 and 9.

First Reading: Ordinance No. ORD-2022-4

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director read the full title: Ordinance Number ORD-2022-4 An Ordinance Amending the Port of Morrow Interchange area Management Plan.

Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Payment Election

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

Mr. Ince advised the Commissioners that AOC (Association of Oregon Counties) has asked us to select our allocation of SRS funds from the Federal Government. He recommends that we use the same allocation formula as last year. Title I (Roads and Schools) 85%, Title II (Projects on Federal Lands) 12%, and Title III (County Projects) 3%.

Commissioner Russell moved to approve the allocation of the Secure Rural Schools payment Title I = 85%, Title II = 12%, Title III = 3% and submit. Commissioner Lindsay seconded.

Commissioner Lindsay said Mike Gorman, Assessor/Tax Collector is working with the RAC. Mr. Gorman said hopefully we have some local applications. The money rolls over if not used.

Unanimous approval.

ASA Mediator

Mr. Nelson advised the group that he made copies of the draft ASA Mediator Agreement and they are available to the public in the back of the room. Online people may request a copy electronically.

Umatilla County Support

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director has shared this subject early in the process. Umatilla County has filed for Contested Case status on an Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) wind farm application. The State has decided to disregard the local ordinances in select sections and instead directly apply State Wide Planning Goals. Some evidence of Local Support would be helpful to UC. Is the Board interested in looking at this further? Is this a matter of policy the Board wants to address?

Commissioner Russell said he is all for local control. He would like to hear from UC that they want our support.

Commissioner Lindsay agrees and asked what the next step would be. Ms. Mabbott said she and UC Planning are trying to figure out the proper path. Ms. Mabbott will talk with UC and get with County Counsel on what process to follow.

Chair Doherty agreed that we want to look at what would be needed. Local control always.

Solar PILOT Project

Brian Walsh, Avangrid Renewables, Director, Development - WEST

Commissioner Russell said we may want to do an Executive Session in the future.

Commissioner Russell declared he has a Potential Conflict of Interest due to his financial interest in a company named Windwave, a provider of fiber optics, as advised by the Ethics Commission. As far as he knows, there is no contract and as far as he knows there is no discussion between Windwave and Avangrid. He will continue to participate, but has advised of his Potential Conflict Interest.

Commissioner Russell is not sure that we qualify for an Executive Session. Mr. Nelson said since this is an overview of the PILOT program, it is an open session. Mike Gorman, Assessor/Tax Collector said the PILOT program is specifically for Solar projects.

Mr. Walsh shared his laptop screen on the Zoom meeting for all to see, with a presentation on the Tower Solar Project, which is north of the Boardman Airport, both on the north and south sides of the transmission lines. Mr. Walsh informed the group that Avangrid Renewables, which is headquartered in Portland, OR, is a subsidiary of Avengrid and part of the Iberdrola Group. They have thermal, wind, solar and biomass projects.

Tower Solar Project is not large enough to gain the same level of benefit from an SIP (Strategic Investment Program) agreement compared to the PILOT (Payment-In-Lieu-Of-Tax) program. Mike Gorman, Assessor/Tax Collector said they are eligible for SIP but they have not submitted an application. Mr. Walsh said the SIP is intended for larger projects. They are asking for PILOT.

Chair Doherty asked about the comparison of the two programs. Mr. Walsh said the SIP does not provide the same level of benefit as PILOT.

Mr. Gorman said he is not familiar with other solar projects in the SIP Program except Wheatridge, which was wrapped up with wind. Most are RRED (Rural Renewable Energy Development) or PILOT.

Chair Doherty asked if battery storage is part of the project. Mr. Walsh said no.

Chair Doherty asked if they are connecting to the planned AWS plants. Mr. Walsh said they do not have that in the project right now.

Mr. Walsh asked for approval of the PILOT program.

Chair Doherty said we have some work to do to be able to move forward. Chair Doherty is talking to Echo Solar presently.

Chair Doherty declared that he used to lease pasture that was at this site. That partnership no longer exists, so there is not a Conflict Of Interest at this time.

Commissioner Russell discussed with Mr. Gorman. It was discussed that if there was solar and battery storage, they should pay the full amount. If no battery, a lesser amount would be acceptable. The tax goes to Taxing District proportionally, based on their tax rate. This project is planned for 120 megawatts, \$660,000 to \$840,000 would be the payment from Avengrid over the life of the agreement, depending on the final agreement. The land is owned by the Port of Morrow, who will receive lease payments that will exceed \$500,000 per year. Mr. Walsh said it is unusual to have solar on industrial zoned land, which is more expensive land.

Mr. Walsh said there is some urgency. Chair Doherty asked Mr. Walsh for a timeline. He said they have a customer need by September 20, 2022, which is part of why they have asked for PILOT. He said that the Pacific Northwest is one of the most expensive places to build renewable energy.

Chair Doherty said what he is hearing is that Commissioner Russell and Mr. Gorman are comfortable with this proposal. Chair Doherty would like to wait until September 14, 2022 for final decision. Mr. Nelson said he has not had much time to review the agreement.

Chair Doherty has reviewed the agenda for AOC Days at the Pendleton Roundup next week, and there will not be a conflict with our usual Board meeting. All agreed we will have a full meeting and can review this next week.

Commissioner Russell said as part of his due diligence he talked with Sherman County and Gilliam County officials. Gilliam County used the RRED Zone and Sherman County used the PILOT Program.

Department Reports

Sheriff's Office Monthly Report.

The Commissioner accepted the written report that was submitted.

Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC)

Jessica Rose, online

Ms. Rose pointed to the IMPACTS Grant award for the county to use in mental health program for high users of hospital and jail.

Correspondence

Chair Doherty briefly reviewed each document.

Commissioner Lindsay suggested we consider September 28 to do a tour in the morning and meeting in the afternoon. Chair Doherty will consider.

Adjourn 10:36 a.m.