

**Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**  
**January 4, 2023**  
**Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room**  
**Heppner, Oregon**

**Present In-Person**

Chair David Sykes, Commissioner Jeff Wenzholz, Don Russell, Roberta Lutchter, Justin Nelson, Greg Sweek, Paul Gray, Kevin Ince, Mike Gorman, Melissa Camarillo, Lindsay Grogan, Tamra Mabbott, Jaylene Papineau, April Sykes

**Present Via Zoom**

Deona Siex, Sandi Pointer, Jr. Drago, Heidi Turrell, Debbie Radie, Kirsti Cason, SaBrina Bailey-Cave, Julie Baker, Emily Roberts, Lisa Mittelsdorf, Theresa Crawford, Ronda Fox, Corey Sweeney, Linda Skendzel, Antonio Sierra, Angie Burke, Debbie Pedro, Karen Pettigrew, Robin Canaday, Dawson Quinton, Ryan DeGrofft, Brenda Profitt, Brandy Warburton, Jasmine Garcia, Jamie Stewart, Yvonne Morter

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

Chair Sykes welcomed attendees and introduced himself and Commissioner Wenzholz. He said he held Commissioner Position 3, which according to the rotation schedule established in Resolution R-2017-1, made him next in line as Chair. This would be addressed later in the agenda, he added.

Chair Sykes said as the Board started off 2023, they were looking forward to working with everyone, including those in the private sector, volunteers and employees. Chair Sykes said he and Commissioner Wenzholz were looking forward to accomplishing the tasks of county government that will make this a great county in which to live.

**City & Citizen Comments:** No comments

**Open Agenda:** No items

**Consent Calendar** – Items were taken individually

Accounts Payable & Payroll Payables

Commissioner Wenzholz said he did not have access to review the Accounts Payable so he had a problem approving them. He then asked Finance Director, Kevin Ince, if there was an Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) that required the Board to approve or attest to the Accounts Payable and Payroll Payables.

Mr. Ince said his research indicated as long as the County was operating within procurement delegation of authority policies and with budget appropriations, there didn't need to be a proactive approval before payment. He said he needed to fully vet this with County Counsel, Justin Nelson. He said he preferred to draft a policy to bring before the Board.

Commissioner Wenzholz said if it's not in ORS, he'd like to see the Board move away from approving or attesting to their validity.

Mr. Ince said the County Accountant approves all claims and warrants against the County, which are then presented to the Treasurer for payment. Those are the checks and balances, he said. An existing Morrow County ordinance states all demands against the County will be provide on a monthly basis for review by the Board of Commissioners. He said he agreed with Commissioner Wenholz's perspective. Additional discussion took place about the need for approval this week to avoid late fees, etc.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to authorize the Finance Department to review and pay the Accounts Payable and Payroll Payables. Commissioner Sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### Budget Officer Appointment

Mr. Ince explained, typically, the Finance Director has been appointed as Budget Officer for the upcoming fiscal year budget and preparation.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to accept Finance Director, Kevin Ince, as Budget Officer for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Commissioner Sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### Amendment 5 to Oregon Health Authority Intergovernmental Agreement #173145 for the Financing of Community Mental Health, Addiction Treatment, Recovery & Prevention and Problem Gambling Services

Mr. Ince said the funds from this contract are passed through to Community Counseling Solutions (CCS) and he had Executive Director, Kimberly Lindsay, review the amendment, as well. He explained the \$260,000 going back to the state were funds not expended out of the categories outlined for the award period. Sometimes funds are pulled back and can be reallocated in the next award period, he said.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to approve Amendment 5 to OHA IGA #173145 and authorize the Finance Director to sign and execute the agreement. Commissioner Sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### **Business Items**

##### Review Resolution No. R-2017-1: Establishing a Rotating Chairmanship and Vice Chairmanship of the Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Wenholz said he preferred for the Commissioners to elect a Chair each year. Chair Sykes agreed and staff was directed to prepare a resolution for next week's agenda.

##### Nitrate Emergency Update

Paul Gray, Emergency Manager

Mr. Gray explained former Commissioner Jim Doherty had been in charge of the nitrate emergency and dealt directly with state agencies. Since Mr. Doherty was no longer in office, he requested authority to work with those agencies, moving forward. He said \$130,359.56 was spent of the \$160,000 total budget. Some of the expenditures were being reimbursed by the Boardman Business Coalition, headed up by Debbie Radie, he said. The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Office of Resiliency and Emergency Management will pay for water deliveries from July 2022 through March 2023, on a reimbursement basis. As Morrow County

was now in the recovery phase, the state will take on many of the functions formerly done by Morrow County, he added. He said he wanted to continue working with the Public Health Department to launch the new program that will instruct and educate people in the community about the nitrate situation, and help with the testing. That program is referred to as Program Element 75, he said. Mr. Gray talked about transitioning the testing to the state and said he planned to meet with other agencies to accomplish that. Testing will be more robust and test for many more things besides nitrates, he explained. The more thorough testing will lead to better filters that will filter out more than just nitrates. We're trying to get things back to the state's responsibility, he said.

Chair Sykes asked for clarification on what authority Mr. Gray was requesting. He said it's for the ability to talk to the state. As far as decision making or costs to the County, he said he would bring those before the Board for approval.

Planning Director, Tamra Mabbott, spoke to her department's involvement with water issues. She said Planning's state agency counterpart was the Department of Environmental Quality because they regulated groundwater, whereas OHA regulated drinking water. She then proposed a Work Session with the Board in early February to hear from the County's new contracted water coordinator, GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

Mr. Gray said in his job, he deals with the emergency phase but he anticipated the recovery phase continuing for years. He said he wanted to work with the state to make sure they followed through with what was promised in their workplan letter to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Chair Sykes stated it appeared Mr. Gray was asking for the ability to do his job, to which Mr. Gray agreed. By consensus, the Board agreed and directed him to move forward and manage the resources, as he knew best how to deal with the state.

#### Resolution No. R-2023-1: Morrow County Public Employees Retirement Plan Amendment

Lindsay Grogan, Human Resources Director

Kevin Ince, Finance Director

The item was postponed one week to allow staff the time needed to respond to the Commissioners' questions.

#### Appoint Representatives to the Columbia River Enterprise Zone II and III Boards

Brief discussion about the status of the CREZ II Board – meets to disburse funds from agreements signed prior to its end date. Those funds will continue to be disbursed for the next 15 years.

*Chair Sykes moved to appoint himself and Commissioner Wenholz to the open Morrow County positions on the CREZ II Board. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to appoint Assessor/Tax Collector, Mike Gorman, as the alternate on the CREZ II Board. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to appoint himself, Chair Sykes and the person who will be appointed to the vacant Commissioner Position 1 (yet to be determined), as the County representatives on the CREZ III Board; and to appoint Mike Gorman as the alternate who would serve in place of the third Commissioner until that position is appointed. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

Order No. OR-2023-1: Appoint Representatives to the Columbia Development Authority Board  
After a brief discussion about term lengths, a break was requested to allow staff to update the Order.

**Break:** 10:03-10-13 a.m.

*Commissioner Wenholz moved to approve Order No. OR-2023-1: In the Matter of Appointments to the Columbia Development Authority Board: County Representative – Jeff Wenholz; Alternate – David Sykes; terms to be January 4, 2023 to December 31, 2024. Chair Sykes seconded. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### BOC Committee & Board Assignments

Until a third Commissioner can be appointed to Position 1, the Board agreed by consensus to Chair Sykes taking on the committee and boards assigned to former Commissioner Melissa Lindsay, and Commissioner Wenholz taking on the those assigned to former Commissioner Don Russell (from the list in the Agenda Packet). The exceptions to the list included the CREZ and CDA appointments just made and The Loop Advisory Committee, which would be assigned to Commissioner Wenholz.

#### BOC Meeting Schedule

Commissioner Wenholz referenced a 1981 Morrow County Ordinance, Number ORD-MC-C5, which specified when and where meetings would be held in the County. He said he believed it would be more efficient from a staff-time perspective, to hold meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of each month.

Chair Sykes said the Board’s vision was for a County Administrator form of government where the Administrator handled the “nuts and bolts” operations of the county, while the commissioners focused on policies and the vision for the County. At the same time, he said the Commissioners would have contact with elected officials and department directors to hear their visions and plans for their departments. The Commissioners would do policy formation and the administrative side would carry out those policies, he said. The Board then listened to input from several directors in attendance.

Mr. Nelson summarized the discussion by saying the Board directed staff to return in the next few weeks with an updated ordinance or resolution to set the new meeting schedule to the first and third Wednesdays of each month. The first Wednesday meetings will take place in Heppner and the third Wednesday meetings will be in Irrigon. The Board can add special meetings as required, he added.

#### Vacant Commissioner Position 1

Mr. Nelson said he spoke to Clerk, Bobbi Childers, who recommended individuals interested in being considered be required fill out Candidate Filing Form SEL 101 to ensure they meet the minimum qualifications for office. He said the Board had flexibility in determining the process because it wasn't strictly an application for employment and there weren't requirements on the length of notice. The Commissioners agreed it should be posted to the County website and area news publications for three weeks. They also agreed to continue the discussion next week when Ms. Childers could be present and provide additional input.

#### Interim County Administrator

Discussion took place on past and current practices when hiring temporary employees.

*Chair Sykes moved to offer employment to Greg Sweek as Interim County Administrator, effective immediately. Commissioner Wenholz seconded. Discussion: Commissioner Wenholz stated this was based on precedent laid out by their predecessors. Mr. Nelson said it was by the prior process when Kim Cutsforth was hired as Interim Administrator, and separately Ms. Grogan's comments about current employees moving up (Mr. Sweek has temporary employee status as an election worker and fill-in deputy clerk in the Clerk's Office), that both can lead to the hiring. Chair Sykes stated they wanted to follow the correct process. Commissioner Wenholz agreed and added it was important to get someone in sooner rather than later to oversee the day-to-day operations of the County and to help the County move forward. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Wenholz asked Ms. Grogan if anything precluded the Board from hiring Mr. Sweek. Ms. Grogan replied, no, it was their prerogative. Vote: Unanimous approval.*

#### **Department Reports**

- The Sheriff's Office Monthly Report was reviewed by Melissa Camarillo, Administrative Lieutenant
- Mr. Nelson provided a verbal quarterly report for the District Attorney's Office
- The Fair Office Written Quarterly Report was submitted by Ann Jones

**Correspondence** – None

**Commissioner Reports** – Not provided

#### **Signing of Documents**

**Adjourned:** 11:14 a.m.