

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2017
Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room
Heppner, Oregon

Present

Chair Melissa Lindsay
Commissioner Jim Doherty
Kim Cutsforth, Interim Administrative Officer
Richard Tovey, County Counsel
Kate Knop, Finance Director
Roberta Lutcher, Executive Assistant

Excused

Commissioner Don Russell

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: 9:01 a.m.

City and Citizen Comments: No comments

Open Agenda: Add the minutes of September 27th to the Consent Calendar

Consent Calendar

Commissioner Doherty moved to approve the following items in the Consent Calendar:

- 1. Accounts Payable dated October 5th in the amount of \$51,099.48; Three Payroll Payables Immediates & Electronic dated September 13th; September 26th, and HRA VEBA dated September 13th*
- 2. September 27th minutes*

Chair Lindsay seconded. Discussion – Chair Lindsay noted the amounts listed in the Accounts Payable for expenses related to the going-away reception for former Administrative Officer Jerry Sorte were mistakenly processed through the APs and the amounts in this and a previous AP run will be reimbursed in full by the Commissioners (\$45.47). Unanimous approval.

Department Reports

Fair Office Quarterly Report

Ann Jones, Fair Secretary

Ms. Jones provided her quarterly report and focused on the statistics related to this year's Morrow County Fair (exhibitor totals, gate receipts, etc.). She thanked the Board for the upgrades to the Fair facilities such as the new fans in the Wilkinson Arena, and a Fairgrounds-wide public address system. She said the increased presence of the Morrow County Sheriff's Office was noticed by many people, and appreciated.

Business Items

Discussion – U.S. Forest Service 21 Road Easement

Burke O'Brien, Public Works Director
Matt Scrivner, Assistant Road Master

Greg Close, Parks General Manager

Lori Seitz, Heppner Ranger District, South Zone Engineering Road Manager

Mr. O'Brien provided the following background: When the County acquired the OHV Park, the County did an easement over the existing Forest Service Road from Highway 207 to the Guard Station, about 10 miles. The County has a perpetual easement subject to operating within the parameters of the Forest Service. The reason was for property separation from concerns of an adjoining landowner over the possibility of trespassers. The side benefit was that road is now in better condition than the day the easement was done. The next section of the road that connects to the County Road on Ditch Creek is only bladed once a year because the Forest Service has limited funds. The County could do a better job because it has the equipment on one end or the other. The County has done maintenance on this section before for the Forest Service. A lot of people graze cattle in the area and the road gets rough. Then there is the fall influx of hunters and the problem gets worse. People are complaining because their equipment and trailers get beat up. The road is unsafe when it becomes that bad. Ann Niesen, District Ranger, discussed this again with Public Works when funding through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) became available to counties only. The County can get money for a portion of the 21 Road from Highway 207 to Tupper. This would mean a few new lifts of rock, all will be covered, but the Forest Service can't get any of this same funding. There is an opportunity here to get the funds to do the upgrades to work on this road that the Forest Service hasn't been able to afford to do. This section of road is a major connector for the forest. Public Works personnel feel the County and the public would be better served if this road were to be in an easement situation similar to the earlier one. The County can always get out of it if we have to. Doing this would benefit the entire Road System. The County has worked well with the Forest Service in the past.

Ms. Seitz said she supported what Mr. O'Brien said and that the County can do a better job than the Forest Service is currently doing. The Forest Service is only able to blade the road once a year and it gets "washboarded." The Forest Service considers it a major arterial access road and agrees with the County doing this. It frees up \$5,000 in the budget to be used elsewhere, she said.

Mr. Scrivner said that piece of road is the only connector from south County from one side to the other. The County received a few grants from FLAP in the past from the OHV Park to Tupper. The County's match was putting the rock down and the grant paid for crushing. The 16 miles the County is proposing taking on will mean additional blading each year but it will be offset as we receive grants each year.

Mr. Close said when the road is in good condition, it's the fastest route to get to Heppner. It's important, especially for fire trucks.

Commissioner Doherty said this would be a perpetual easement with the County doing maintenance and spending County funds, correct? Mr. O'Brien agreed.

Chair Lindsay asked if the easement could be given back if the County doesn't want it any longer. Mr. O'Brien said if obligations can't be fulfilled by either party, there's language in there for either party. Ms. Seitz said they (the County) have all the authority to make decisions, but the Forest Service has the underlying easement still. Mr. O'Brien said this should not be taken lightly because it is adding roads to the Road System and that's huge, but this has been talked about for at least 15 years. With the Forest Service not able to access the FLAP funds, it's a big deal. The road is a major connector and is important to recreation, livestock growers and emergency services. The Forest Service has rock pits which we've used before and they've been good to work with. This doesn't mean the County is taking over the road and running the Forest Service off.

Commissioner Doherty moved to allow Morrow County Public Works to work with the U.S. Forest Service to draft documents for Morrow County to acquire the entire 21 Road and incorporate it into the County's Road System for maintenance and road authority, and for the ability to use U.S. Forest Service rock sources. Chair Lindsay seconded. Discussion: Chair Lindsay said people will want to understand, we have your assurance this doesn't take roads we could grade more often, this doesn't take dollars from that. Mr. O'Brien said it bothered him and was his primary concern in the past – if the County can't take care of what it has, but with the new gas tax bill and FLAP it's a different set of circumstances now than in the past. He added he wanted to hold off the request to see how the gas tax went. Chair Lindsay asked if the County has equipment for handling the extra 16 miles. Mr. O'Brien said yes, it's really not a big project. Unanimous approval.

Department Reports

Administrative Officer Monthly Report

Kim Cutsforth, Interim Administrative Officer

Ms. Cutsforth summarized her activities since taking over as Administrative Officer on a temporary basis. For example, time has been spent meeting with Department Heads and Elected Officials; attending outside County-related meetings; reviewing the submissions from the Request for Proposals for North End Facilities Planning; reviewing County Administrator applications; and researching location for a Public Works yard in the north end of the County.

Treasurer's Monthly Report

Gayle Gutierrez, Treasurer

Ms. Gutierrez reviewed her report on interest rates, outstanding checks, and the Pooled Cash Report. She said the Investment Policy she sent to the State Short Term Fund Board is scheduled to be reviewed on October 10th, with an answer to follow in about a month.

This week's Agenda Packet included an email from Ms. Gutierrez clarifying the September 20th minutes where a discussion took place on the March Allotment Payment to Community Counseling Solutions (CCS) that was overlooked. Excerpted from those minutes:

“Kim Cutsforth, Interim Administrative Officer, explained when the Finance Director was closing the year in September, she noticed the March payment to CCS had been missed. This correction will be attributed to last year’s books, she said. Chair Lindsay said the process has been changed so that manual checks, such as these, that are processed in the Treasurer’s Office will now go through the Accounts Payable process as well.”

Ms. Cutsforth said she may have handled the explanation incorrectly and thanked Ms. Gutierrez for the clarification. Chair Lindsay said her attempt at an explanation was incorrect, as well.

Ms. Gutierrez’s email stated, “...On those payments, I fill out a claim form and submit them through the regular AP process. I do not do manual checks for those payments. I missed filling out a claim form for the month of March. I am unaware of any processes, concerning manual checks, that have been changed in a formal manner. I am aware that the Finance Department must have contacted the department heads and told them that they have to go through the Finance Department instead of the Treasurer’s office without my knowledge. The reason why I was contacted first in the past was to make sure I had enough funds in the bank to do the check...”

Finance Director Kate Knop asked to respond to the email. She explained as the contractor with the Oregon Health Authority for mental health-related services, Morrow County passes through 100% of the funds to CCS. In 2015-2016, Morrow County’s auditors identified this contract as being out of compliance, so the omission of the \$122,000 March payment is a material matter to them, she said. CCS did not notice the payment was skipped, instead it was their auditors who inquired. Ms. Knop went on to discuss a meeting in May with Ms. Gutierrez and the County’s former Administrative Officer where it was agreed, during the interim, manual checks will be redirected to Accounts Payable and follow standard claim forms for transactions with review and approval by the Board (with the exception of taxing district payments). Ms. Knop said she did not send a blanket email to departments about manual checks but deals with them on a case-by-case basis. She added some Department Heads have used manual checks as a way to get payments out more quickly and disagreed with Ms. Gutierrez’s assertion that Department Heads seek her out for available balances on funds only. She concluded by saying all claims should be presented for Board review and she thought that was the understanding after the May meeting.

Chair Lindsay directed staff to hold further conversations to formalize the process for manual checks.

County Counsel/District Attorney Quarterly Report

Richard Tovey, County Counsel/Deputy District Attorney

Mr. Tovey reviewed Co-County Counsel/District Attorney Justin Nelson’s report. Discussion then centered on Mr. Nelson’s memo item about the budget for the Victim Assistant. His memo stated the Budget Committee voted to keep the Victim Assistant budget “the same” by funding it through grants and the General Fund. However, the Commissioners stated their recollections differed, it was to be supported through grant funds only. After discussion, Ms. Knop explained

one of the grants for the position will see an increase of about \$26,000, but since that exceeds 15% of appropriations for that budget, the Budget Committee will have to convene by the end of October.

Commissioner Reports

- Commissioner Doherty said he attended the Blue Mountains Forest Plans meeting. He said some Commissioners have been involved with this process for 15 years or more. The latest plan sent to Washington, D.C. for review by National Marine Fisheries came back looking nothing like what the Commissioners from the region approved. (The Plan covers the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.) The next meeting with the Forest Service will take place October 16th where some of the areas under debate include grazing, sustainable harvest of trees, thinning, and riparian areas. He said all Counties are willing to walk away from the table over these and other issues.

Adjourned: 10:28 a.m.