

**CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MINUTES  
OF JANUARY 8, 2025, REGULAR MEETING  
Open Portion**

**Be It Remembered** that the Crook County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on January 8, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the County meeting room located at 320 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Board Members Present: Commissioner Seth Crawford, Commissioner Brian Barney, and Commissioner Susan Hermreck

Absentees: None

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: Legal Counsels Eric Blaine and John Eisler; Executive Administrative Assistant Sarah Puerner; County Manager Will Van Vactor; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Clerk Cheryl Seely; Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Building Official Randy Davis; District Attorney Kari Hathorn; Library Director Sarah Beeler; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Finance Director Christina Haron; Natural Resources Manager Tim Deboodt; Operations Manager Katrina Weitman; Budget Manager Jamie Berger; Systems Administrator Chelsea Watson; Facilities Director James Preuss; Jay Shaw; James Staniford; Hannah Elliott; Jennifer Orozco; Katie Sexton; Louis Seals; Ashley Leslie; Stephanie Wilson; Terry Weitman; Katie McDonald; Alex Solterbeck; Ben Roche; Linda Pepper; Mona Glade; Elsie Ray; Sherry Rienks; Sandy Kerbow; Julie Lancaster; Jamie Vaughan; Jack Rabenberg; Deb Shaw; Theodore Lyster; Amber Dozhier; Tawndy Byrd; Mike Ervin; Nettie Downing; Nicole Ontko; Gail Staniford; and members of the public.

**REGULAR SESSION**

The meeting was **called to order at 9:00 a.m.**

**Discussion item #6:** Appointment of Board Chair for 2025:

**Requester:** Will Van Vactor

**Details:** County Manager Will Van Vactor attended the Regular Session to discuss the appointment of the Board Chair for the upcoming year. Operating under a system with a rotating chair, the board considered Commissioner Hermreck from seat 1 for the position, but she declined. Consequently, Commissioner Barney from seat 2 was appointed and accepted the role. Commissioner Barney will therefore serve as the chairperson of the Board of Commissioners for 2025.

**Public Comment:**

Dave Nielson, residing in Mill Creek Valley in Prineville, was prompted by his neighbors to voice concerns regarding the potential appointment of Monty Kurtz to the Planning Commission. The community seeks a candidate who aligns closely with their interests, expressing skepticism about whether Kurtz's interests might diverge from their own. Highlighting a strong local sentiment, some residents display bumper stickers proclaiming, "Don't Bend Prineville," underscoring their desire to preserve local customs and culture. Given that the Planning Commission had limited options with only

one applicant available, Dave suggested that the Commissioners should request the Planning Commission to reconsider and seek additional candidates who better reflect the community's values and traditions.

Nicole Ontko, who recently returned to Crook County, has noticed considerable changes in the area, remarking that the town is becoming somewhat unrecognizable. She emphasizes that while growth is inevitable, it is crucial to manage it carefully to preserve the qualities that make Crook County special. Nicole echoes the sentiments shared by Dave, urging local leaders to consider the long-standing values of the community and the recent voting patterns, and to trust in their faith during decision-making processes. In response to public concerns, Commissioner Susan Hermreck encouraged community members to become more actively involved by attending meetings and considering applying for future vacancies on local boards. Nicole, encouraged by her neighbors to apply, is currently seeking more information on the application process and the responsibilities involved.

Commissioner Crawford inquired whether it was mandatory to appoint the three members to the board along with a pro tem. Will VanVactor clarified that the decision to appoint the three members and fill the pro tem position rests with the board. He noted that if the pro tem position remains vacant, there is an option to recruit for it. According to Order 2022-52, the position must be advertised for a period of 30 days before making an appointment.

**Additions/Removals:** Removed item #3 Order 2025-02 In the matter of the appointments to the Planning Commission from the consent agenda

**Consent Agenda:**

1. Approve Minutes
2. Order 2025-01 In the matter of designation of Newspapers of Record
3. Order 2025-02 In the matter of the appointments to the Planning Commission-**REMOVED**
4. Order 2025-03 In the matter of the appointments to the Fair Board
5. Order 2025-04 In the matter of the appointment to the Natural Resources Advisory Committee

**MOTION** to approve the consent agenda as presented with the exception of Order 2025-02 In the matter of the appointments to the Planning Commission. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

**MOTION** to approve Order 2025-02. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. Discussion: Commissioner Hermreck would like to appoint Shelby, Marlo, and George and discuss the pro tem position. Commissioner Crawford states that what hearing from the public is that they would like us to drop the pro tem position for right now. Commissioner Hermreck would like the three positions to be appointed and leave it up to the discretion of the Planning Commission to decide on the pro tem position.

**AMENDED MOTION** to approve Order 2025-02 with the amendment that the pro tem position for Monty Kurtz will be reconsidered by the Planning Commission and brought back at a later time. Commissioner Hermreck moved the Motion. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Crawford Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

**Discussion item #7: Recognize Employees with 5+ years of service to Crook County:**

**Requester:** Breyanna Cupp

**Details:** Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp was present at the Regular Session to honor employees who have reached service milestones between 5 to 9 years. These employees were awarded milestone pins and certificates to acknowledge their dedication and contributions to the organization. The ceremony served as an opportunity to express appreciation for their hard work and commitment, reinforcing the value of their continued service to the team and the broader community.

**Discussion item #8: Review Wolf Committee Position Recommendations and Reimbursement Requests:**

**Requester:** Ellie Gage

**Details:** Commissioner Seth Crawford attended the Regular Session to provide position recommendations on behalf of the Wolf Committee and to speak about reimbursement requests. Both items were reviewed and voted on by the Wolf Committee on 12/18/2024. Reimbursement requests to be paid from the Wolf Committee funds received from Oregon Department of Ag in 2024. Commissioner Crawford stated that David and Hunter were recommended for committee appointments.

**MOTION** to approve Order 2025-05 with the amendment of removing the appointment of the coexist and conservation position on the Wolf Depredation Committee and to approve the modified order outside of the meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Crawford Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Finance Director Christina Haron confirmed that the funds pass through the county and the grant funds come from the State of Oregon. The county hasn't received these funds yet, but they will be received some time in May for fiscal 2025.

**MOTION** to approve a reimbursement request of \$9,305.98 per the Wolf Committee request of December 18, 2024. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Crawford Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

**Discussion item #9: IGA for Septage Treatment with City of Prineville:**

**Requester:** John Eisler

**Details:** Assistant County Counsel John Eisler and Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis attended the Regular Session to present an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with

the City of Prineville. They discussed the recent termination of the County's contract with 2 Springs Ranch, which involved the land application of filtered septage from the Landfill; this contract ended on December 24th. Under the new agreement, the septage currently at the Landfill will now be transported to the City's wastewater treatment facility. John Eisler expressed gratitude towards the City of Prineville for their assistance in this transition. He also commended the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), noting that their representative was exceptionally helpful and that it has been a collaborative effort to resolve the situation. The IGA outlines a 6-month term, after which the County has the option to extend the agreement for an additional six months.

**MOTION** to approve IGA for Septage Treatment with City of Prineville. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Crawford Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

**Interim Manager Report:**

Will Van Vactor took the opportunity to introduce Meghan McKee, our new HR Director, and expressed his delight in having her join the team. He encouraged everyone to extend a warm welcome to Meghan when they have the opportunity. Additionally, he mentioned that he had received an email from the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) requesting a commissioner to serve on the legislative AOC committee. Commissioner Crawford has volunteered for this role, and a response is needed by the end of this week. Lastly, he noted that Commissioner Barney and the County Manager attended the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) meeting last night. They plan to present their findings to the board in a few weeks, and the draft plan remains available for those who wish to review it.

**Commissioner Updates:**

Commissioner Hermreck expressed her pleasure at having Meghan join the team and thanked her for attending the meeting.

Commissioner Crawford welcomed Meghan, expressing great excitement about her joining the team.

Commissioner Barney welcomed Meghan to the County and mentioned that he had received an invitation for the swearing-in ceremony of the governor. He suggested that Commissioner Crawford, as the former board chair, should attend. Commissioner Crawford responded that he would have liked to attend, but a goal-setting session was scheduled for the same day, preventing his attendance.

**Public Comment:**

Mike Ervin revisited the discussion about the pro tem position, noting that it serves as a way for individuals to explore whether they truly want to commit to the role. He acknowledged the challenges young people face in getting involved and expressed uncertainty about how to address these issues. However, he emphasized the need for change, suggesting that providing options and establishing a training ground could be

beneficial. Ervin highlighted the difficulty in attracting volunteers and recommended that creating more accessible pathways could help engage more people.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was adjourned at **10:30 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Sarah Puerner / Breyanna Cupp**