

**CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MINUTES
OF FEBRUARY 12, 2025, WORK SESSION
Open Portion**

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of Commissioners met in a regularly scheduled Work Session on February 12, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the Administration Conference room located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

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

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; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Airport Manager Kelly Coffelt; Finance Director Christina Haron; Museum Director Sean Briscoe; Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis; Facilities Director James Preuss; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; Extension Manager Rebecca Keegan; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; District Attorney Kari Hathorn; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Assessor Jon Soliz; Sheriff Gautney; Natural Resources Manager Tim Deboodt; Clerk Cheryl Seely; Library Director Sarah Beeler; Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Assessment Technician Linda Pepper; Dan and Dusty Stenkamp; Reaza Hacker; Mike Ervin; and members of the public.

WORK SESSION

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

Public Comment: None

Discussion item #1: Introduction of Dan and Dusty Stenkamp of Muck Septic to County Administration:

Requester: Jacquie Davis

Details: Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis attended the Work Session to present Dan and Dusty Stenkamp from Muck Septic to the Board of Commissioners. Dan and Dusty Stenkamp have entered into an agreement with the County to transport septic waste from the Crook County Landfill to the City of Prineville.

Discussion item #2: Introduction of Reaza Hacker and 4-H Program Update:

Requester: Rebecca Keegan

Details: Extension Manager Rebecca Keegan introduced Reaza Hacker to the Board of Commissioners during the Work Session. Reaza provided an overview of her background and discussed the current needs of the 4-H program, highlighting a significant gap in leadership for the Cloverbuds age group, which includes children aged 5-8. Currently, the program has 50 registered Cloverbuds but no leaders to guide them. Reaza's primary goal is to recruit leaders for this group to help them learn the basics of 4-H. She also expressed a desire to expand program offerings, potentially through

camp, to better engage this age group in areas like animal science and family consumer science. Additionally, Reaza aims to encourage participation in programs outside the county and has been conducting all-leader meetings, which have garnered positive community interaction and feedback.

Discussion item #3: Ag Extension: Mid-Year Budget Presentation:

Requester: Rebecca Keegan

Details: Extension Manager Rebecca Keegan attended the Work Session to present and discuss the current year's budget for Ag Extension, outlining significant achievements and future plans. These efforts and challenges highlight the Ag Extension's commitment to expanding and enhancing its services despite staffing limitations, continuing to impact the community positively.

Enrollment and Community Programs:

- The 4-H Program concluded its enrollment on February 3rd, registering 444 youth members and 110 volunteers, including about 100 new members.
- The SNAP-Ed Coalition's Green Bags initiative has collected 4 tons of food, distributed to 133 households, and is on track to surpass 5 tons in 2025, providing a total of 8,334 meals. This program has also established a hub at Pioneer High School.
- Educational Classes have been successful, with 173 attendees in a Livestock/Pasture Management Virtual Fencing class, 70 participants in a Calving Class, and 194 attendees across four Master Gardener classes.

Facilities and Outreach:

- Maintenance work, such as sealing and repainting the parking lot, has been completed.
- The High Desert Newsletter is now available for free electronically, with the latest issue completed last week.

Upcoming Plans and Challenges:

- Extension is planning vehicle purchases and continuing diverse programming, including 4-H, Master Gardeners Training, the Open Campus/Juntos Program, Livestock/Pasture Management, SNAP-Ed, and the Better Bones and Balance Program.
- A significant challenge is limited staffing, prompting a request to add a part-time administrative support staff member to improve front desk communications and assist with various programs.

Discussion item #4: Bowman Museum: Mid-Year Budget Presentation:

Requester: Sean Briscoe

Details: Museum Director Sean Briscoe presented at the Work Session, detailing the Bowman Museum's current year's budget and ongoing projects. He highlighted key accomplishments and outlined future initiatives, underscoring the museum's commitment to enhancing visitor experiences and educational services. However, he also noted ongoing challenges, including staffing limitations and aging infrastructure and technology, which the museum is diligently working to address.

Completed Initiatives:

- The museum successfully hosted 27 programs this year, significantly increasing attendance with 19,523 visitors including over 623 students from local schools.

- Phase 1 of the Ranchers Memorial was completed, involving cleaning the exterior property and beginning artifact restoration. A concert was also hosted at the Ranchers site.
- Four new exhibits were launched at the Belknap Exhibit Center, including two traveling exhibits from the Oregon Historical Society, a showcase of local doctors, and works by a local artist.

Current Projects and Updates:

- Upgrades are underway for the museum lobby and other exhibits, with new additions such as a stuffed beaver.
- The Belknap Exhibit Center is planning new future exhibits, and the Herb Garden is set for completion in spring 2025.
- The museum is working on increasing the bookstore space and updating its website to improve user experience and public engagement.
- There are ongoing efforts to assist county officials in designating the Crook County Courthouse as a historical landmark.

Technology and Infrastructure:

- Plans to upgrade technology include new projectors and audio equipment, along with enhancing the digital collection for online access.
- Phase 2 of the Ranchers Memorial will involve interior cleaning, with Phase 3 focusing on creating a dedicated exhibit.

Staffing and Organizational Changes:

- The museum made a staffing adjustment by converting an administrative assistant position to part-time (32 hours), allowing the hiring of an additional part-time (20 hours) museum host. This change has been implemented without increasing the museum's staff costs.

Goals for the Next Fiscal Year:

- Upgrade technology to better serve visitors and improve educational outreach.
- Prepare for Phase II of the Ranchers Memorial.
- Increase community engagement and student outreach.
- Provide digital access to the museum's collection.

Discussion item #5: Annual review of recommended updates to Crook County Fiscal Policies from Finance Committee:

Requester: Christina Haron

Details: Finance Director Christina Haron attended the Work Session to discuss recommended updates to the county's fiscal policies, which are embedded in the budget document to ensure fiscal stability. These policies cover a broad range of financial operations including accounting, auditing, financial reporting, internal controls, budgeting for operations and capital, revenue and expenditure management, asset management, cash and investment handling, debt financing, and pension funding. These guidelines are crucial for shaping budgetary and financial decisions across the county. Key amendments proposed include updating terminologies such as replacing "County Court" with "Board of Commissioners" and "County Judge" with "Board of Commissioners Chair or County Manager." Adjustments were also recommended for the minimum net working capital requirements for the Landfill and the Crook County Road Agency, updating references to grant funding requirements to align with the Crook County Code, and enhancing the language used to describe the capitalization of assets

and improvements. These proposed changes are scheduled for final approval on the consent agenda for February 19th.

Discussion item #6: Employee Promotion from DDA I to DDA II:

Requester: Kari Hathorn

Details: District Attorney Kari Hathorn attended the Work Session to seek the Board of Commissioners' approval for the promotion of a current Deputy District Attorney (DDA). DDA Deuel, who is managing a full felony caseload and meets the job specifications for a DDA II, has demonstrated exceptional performance. In addition to her professional accomplishments, Paxton has significantly engaged with and contributed to the community, taking on roles such as coaching local teams. Her dedication and outstanding service have made her a deserving candidate for this promotion.

MOTION to allow Will Van Vactor authority to sign off on a Personnel Action Form promoting a DDA I to DDA II. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Discussion item #7: Sheriff's Office Update: Annual Review and January Comparative Statistics:

Requester: Bill Elliott

Details: Undersheriff Bill Elliott attended the Work Session to update the Board of Commissioners on the monthly and annual statistics for the Sheriff's office. He detailed the changes in crime rates from 2023 to 2024, noting significant variations in specific crime categories. The total calls for service in 2023 were 13,713, which increased by 22% to 16,764 in 2024. Additionally, he provided a breakdown of the crime statistics and the number of calls for service for January 2025.

Manager Report:

Will Van Vactor delivered updates to the Board of Commissioners on several key issues, providing insights and potential action items:

Departmental Updates

- **Legal –**
 - County Counsel's office has hired outside counsel to assist with approximately 18 dog nuisance cases. This is consistent with prior conversation the Board had with County Counsel Eric Blaine as part of the goal setting meetings earlier this year.

Facilities & Infrastructure

- **Heat in Finance Building –** Thanks to the Facilities Department, heating is fixed in the Finance building just in time for cold weather. Wesley Hall was here late Friday, and the County really appreciates getting this repaired.

Budget & Financial Updates

- **Audit Representation Letter –** The representation letter was provided to the auditor on February 3, 2025, regarding Crook County's financial statements.

- **Budget Update** – Departments are currently working on workforce plans and 5-year plans. Each department's requested budgets are due February 25th.

Policy & Legislative Updates

- **Health-Veteran Services** – House Bill 2395 requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to distribute moneys for county veterans' service officers to counties that have a population of less than 30,000 and are or will be unable to maintain operations of county veterans' service officers due to budget decreases. The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs has suggested contacting our representative, Vikki Breese-Iverson, regarding this legislation.

Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Hermreck noted that she has two letters concerning legislative matters: one expressing support for Senate Bill 777 and another opposing Senate Bill 747. She emphasized the importance of these letters in representing the county's stance on these legislative proposals.

Letter of Support - Senate Bill 777- This bill aims to address compensation for livestock and working dogs affected by wolf depredation. It focuses on securing funding for these compensations, and we are in support of it. Eastern Oregon Counties have also endorsed this senate bill.

MOTION to sign the support letter for Senate Bill 777 concerning funding for wolf depredation. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. During discussion, Commissioner Crawford mentioned that he will be speaking on this topic tomorrow. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Letter of Objection - Senate Bill 747- This bill pertains to fertilizer regulation and targets properties over 200 acres, aiming to reduce nitrate levels in the water system. However, it poses a significant burden to farmers and represents another challenging imposition on the agricultural sector.

MOTION to sign the letter of objection for Senate Bill 747. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Crawford reported on a productive trip to Salem where he met with the governor to discuss water issues north of town and the impact of predators on the community, offering her a new perspective on the matter. He also raised concerns about the need for increased funding for district attorney offices. Additionally, he mentioned that the ARC has advanced a bill permitting local counties to determine their own regulations for hunting bears and cougars with dogs.

Public Comment: None

At 10:26 a.m. the Board of Commissioners convened into Executive Session under the following statute(s): ORS 192.660(2)(d) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations; and ORS 192.660(2)(h) Consulting with Counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At the conclusion of the Executive Session, the Board of Commissioners convened back into Open Session, inviting members of the public into the meeting room.

MOTION for staff to proceed as directed in the Executive Session. 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 authorize County Manager Will Van Vactor to execute any necessary documents to effectuate what was discussed in the Executive Session. 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 delegate authority to County Counsel has discussed in the Executive Session. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was **adjourned at 11:23 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Puerner / Breyanna Cupp