

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of December 31, 2025, Work Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Work Session on December 31, 2025, at 9:00 AM in the Administration Conference Room, located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Work Session Agenda

Board Members Present: Susan Hermreck, Brian Barney

Board Members Absent: Seth Crawford

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Counsel Eric Blaine; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Community Development Director John Eisler; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Executive Director Sean Briscoe; HR Director Meghan McKee; IT Director Blaine Cheney; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Assessor Jon Soliz; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 09:00 AM.

Commissioner Barney announced a change to the agenda, removing items 6 and 7. Eric Blaine explained that the financial assistance agreement (CFFA) from the Oregon Health Authority was expected today but will now be distributed to counties next week. He also noted that the local behavioral health services plan should be approved alongside the CFFA, so both items were removed and are expected to be presented together next week. Commissioner Hermreck confirmed that the contracts would be shared with the Board when available, and Eric added that the upcoming CFFA will be a large document, though slimmer than in previous years.

Public Comment

None

Discussion

1. Oaths of Office

Requester:

Cheryl Seely, County Clerk

Details: Cheryl Seely attended the Work Session to provide an update on Oaths of Office for boards and committees. She explained that she maintains a spreadsheet tracking appointments, oaths, and term expirations, and recently reviewed which boards actually require an oath. After consulting with former Assistant County Counsel Bryan Libel, she determined that several committees—including the Ag Extension Service District Budget Committee, Abatement of Dangerous Building Codes Appeals Committee, Fair Board, Housing Works Committee, and Taylor Grazing Committee—do not legally require oaths. Planning Commission also does not require one, but she will

continue administering it for that group. Cheryl noted that special districts will now issue their own oaths at board meetings rather than coming to the Clerk's office. She emphasized that further investigation with each committee will ensure compliance with bylaws and clarified that she will only issue oaths where required.

Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp asked whether a letter is sent to appointees notifying them of their need to take the oath of office. Cheryl Seeley explained that historically, the Clerk's office has not sent such letters or followed up, as they often lack contact information for appointees. Commissioner Hermreck noted that applications and contact information are collected and provided to the boards, and suggested that since the Board of Commissioners makes the appointments, the appointment letter should come from the Board to formally notify the appointee. The discussion focused on whether certain boards should continue taking oaths. It was agreed that the Planning Commission should continue receiving oaths, as it underscores the importance of their role in shaping the future of Crook County. Commissioner Hermreck and Cheryl Seeley noted that Will also supported continuing the oath for this board. They briefly discussed the Fair Board, acknowledging its responsibilities with the budget, and Cheryl offered to continue administering oaths for that board if desired.

2. Property Recording Alert Service (PRAS)

Requester:

Cheryl Seely, County Clerk

Details: Cheryl Seely attended the Work Session to provide an overview of the new Property Recording Alert Service, which went live on the county website. The free service, integrated with the Helion software, allows users to receive email alerts when documents containing specified names are recorded in the county office. Users must create an account, enter the exact names they want to monitor (up to 10), and follow the email instructions to activate alerts. The service provides basic document information, such as type, legal description, and names involved, but does not prevent fraudulent recordings or change the official record. Cheryl explained that the office cannot refuse to record documents that meet statutory requirements, and legislative attempts to allow preemptive prevention have not progressed. Users without email can access the public terminal in the clerk's office or use the online index to monitor records manually. The service is intended to provide early notification, not fraud prevention, and legal advice should be sought if fraudulent activity is suspected.

3. Update on Bowman Museum Staff Organization and FTE

Requester:

Sean Briscoe, Director of Bowman Museum

Details: Sean Briscoe attended the Work Session to provide an update on museum staffing and FTE changes. Due to recent resignations, the museum reorganized positions, combining an Extra Help staff member with the Saturday museum host into a 30-hour administrative clerk role. This adjustment increased the current fiscal year FTE to 2.47, with a projected 2.75 FTE for next year, allowing some cost savings on Extra Help. Sean highlighted the contributions of full-time staff Carter Bond and Becky Smith,

noting their positive impact on visitor experience and community engagement. Commissioners expressed appreciation for retaining Becky and for the growth and popularity of museum programs. No action was required; the update was for informational purposes.

4. Letter of Support to Senators for Delisting Wolves

Requester:

Susan Hermreck, County Commissioner

Details: Commissioner Susan Hermreck attended the Work Session to provide an update on a problematic wolf, OR183, in the eastern part of the county. She explained that the wolf, likely originating from Umatilla or Union County, has been killing livestock and poses a public safety concern. Non-lethal deterrents have proven ineffective. Commissioner Hermreck highlighted the urgency of delisting wolves to allow for removal of dangerous individuals, referencing recent federal legislation and high livestock losses in other regions. She requested a motion for the Board of Commissioners to sign a letter to the Governor, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Wildlife Services, and Senators Merkley and Wyden, urging support for wolf delisting to protect livestock and public safety.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to approve a letter of support to the senators for delisting Wolves. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

5. Letter to Department of State Lands re: Data Center Project Application

Requester:

Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Details: Commissioner Barney and Community Development Director John Eisler attended the Work Session to provide an update on the data center project application concerning property owned by the Department of State Lands (DSL) adjacent to the airport. The property consists of approximately 318 acres, which both the city and county have historically considered valuable for airport expansion, city growth, and water infrastructure. Recently, the city submitted a letter expressing interest in purchasing the property, which the county fully supports. However, a separate application (APP0065856) was submitted by Primville Airport Land LLC, a Delaware-based company, proposing a data center project. Commissioner Barney emphasized that the county cannot support this application due to the strategic importance of the land for long-term airport and industrial development. Commissioner Hermreck agreed with the opposition, and John Eisler added that the City and EDCO have also submitted letters opposing the project. He noted that although the application is for a short-term demonstration project, the potential impacts could be long-term and irreversible, including zoning and incorporation changes, as well as possible restrictions on airport expansion. The Board agreed that a letter of opposition should be sent immediately, reinforcing support for the city's purchase of the property and expressing concerns about the proposed data center project.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved for the Board of Commissioners to sign the letter in opposition to application number APP0065856 from Prineville Airport Land, LLC. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

Manager Report

None

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Hermeck shared a positive update highlighting Brenda Ford, the Community Outreach Specialist for the Crook County Library. Brenda was featured in Rimrock Trails for her volunteer work with teens in the adolescent residential treatment program, where she brings creativity, laughter, and connection through activities like painting, crafts, games, and seasonal projects. Brenda was quoted saying her goal is to be kind and make someone smile. Commissioner Hermreck praised her dedication, noting that Brenda also engages with residents at assisted living facilities and exemplifies excellence in county employees. She suggested sharing the article with HR to recognize Brenda's contributions and concluded by wishing everyone a Happy New Year.

Commissioner Barney None

Executive Session

At 9:29AM the Board of Commissioners convened into Executive Session under the following statute(s): ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.

6. ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.

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: Susan Hermreck moved to direct staff to inform the counterparty that the county approves the proposal as discussed in the executive session. Brian Barney seconded. No disucssion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to authorize the Board of Commissioners to sign the letters, provided that the counterparty does not propose different terms as discussed in the executive session. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

AMENDED MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to authorize the Board of Commissioners to sign the letters outside of a meeting provided that the counterparty does not impose different terms as discussed in the executive session. Brian Barney

seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to adjourn. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 09:39 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant