

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of December 19, 2025, Special Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Special Session on December 19, 2025, at 1:00 PM in the Crook County Annex, located at 320 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Special Session Agenda

Board Members Present: Susan Hermreck, Brian Barney

Board Members Absent: Seth Crawford

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Assessor Jon Soliz; Chief Deputy Appraiser Shaun Christofferson; HR Director Meghan McKee; Human Resources; and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 01:00 PM.

Public Comment

None

Discussion

1. Review of Core Services for the Clerk's Office, Assessor's Office, and Road Department

Requester:

Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Presenter(s):

Brad Haynes, Road Superintendent

Jon Soliz, Assessor

Cheryl Seely, County Clerk

Details:

Will Van Vactor opened the meeting by explaining the concept of core services in the public sector. He described core services as the essential and mission-critical functions that government departments must provide to serve the community and meet legal and operational responsibilities. These services ensure public welfare, security, and effective administration. He noted that core services are typically legally mandated, essential to mission fulfillment, and necessary for operational sustainability. Key characteristics include alignment with community needs, high public expectation, prioritization in strategic and financial planning, and their role as the foundation of public trust and accountability.

County Clerk Cheryl Seely reported to the Board that her office is committed to maintaining public records in accordance with the law and ensuring elections are conducted efficiently, fairly, and transparently. She noted that while the office does not have a formal mission statement, it strives to provide courteous, high-quality service with the highest standards of integrity. She outlined the office's key responsibilities, including serving as County Election Official, County Recorder, Public

Records Officer, Clerk of the Property Value Appeals Board, passport acceptance agent, and notary. She highlighted core services such as recording and archiving property and legal documents, conducting elections, issuing marriage licenses and domestic partnership certificates, maintaining military and mining records, and supporting the Board by preserving official records. She also explained the office's role in administering the Property Value Appeals Board, coordinating petitions and hearings, and reporting outcomes. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of providing local passport services. She noted that performance is measured by accuracy in recording and election administration, and highlighted key partnerships with the Assessor's Office, Finance Office, Oregon Secretary of State, and other stakeholders. Finally, she addressed budget considerations, including fluctuations in recording revenue, election security, and future election funding needs.

Cheryl Seely shared a quote from Oregon Secretary of State Tobias Read, who recently completed a statewide tour of county clerk offices. The quote emphasized that county clerks are on the front lines of democracy, protecting elections, safeguarding public records, and ensuring every Oregonian's vote is counted, while performing vital work that often goes unseen but is essential to daily life in the state.

Commissioner Hermreck thanked Cheryl Seely and commended her for her presentation during Secretary of State Tobias Read's visit, noting that her responses were clear and concise and that the partnership was well represented. Cheryl expressed that it was an honor to present alongside Secretary of State Tobias Read and that she appreciated the opportunity to engage with both political parties. She noted that it was rewarding to see strong public turnout and thoughtful questions, emphasizing that public interest and inquiry help promote understanding of the work her office does.

Commissioner Barney asked for an update on the digital recording of documents project and inquired whether the work had been completed. Cheryl explained that the digital recording and records access efforts are ongoing and nearing a public rollout. She reported plans to launch the Property Records Alert System (PROS) around January 1st or 2nd and noted the importance of announcing the program through the county website and a press release to encourage public sign-up. She shared that the county's Digital Research Room is already available online, allowing the public to search the index for free and purchase documents electronically, which has reduced staff time and improved efficiency. Cheryl also reported learning of a new Point and Pay feature that allows customers to receive a payment link rather than providing credit card information over the phone, a tool the office plans to implement to further streamline services and enhance customer convenience.

Assessor Jon Soliz reported that his office's mission is to serve the public by administering assessment and taxation of all taxable property in compliance with Oregon law, emphasizing fairness, accuracy, integrity, and proactive communication. She explained that the office determines real market and assessed values for all property, maintains ownership and tax lot records, prepares the annual tax roll for nearly 19,000 accounts, and provides services mandated by state statute and administrative rule. Core functions include appraisal of all property types, reappraisal of underperforming or damaged properties, submission of the annual appraisal plan, and defending property values before appeals boards or tax court. The office also maintains assessment records, processes exemptions and special assessments, calculates tax rates, and certifies the property tax roll for collection and distribution to taxing districts. She highlighted performance metrics including timely and accurate certification of the assessment roll, compliance with statutory ratio studies, and efficient public and agency service. Key partnerships include county departments, state agencies, taxing districts, title companies, and the public. Budget considerations noted were costs for continuing education, reduced grant funding, and rising technology expenses

necessary to maintain office operations.

Commissioner Barney asked why the CAFFA grant has decreased. Assessor Jon Soliz explained that this is a statewide issue affecting all county assessment offices. Fees collected, primarily from the County Clerk's Office, have not increased in roughly 25 years despite rising costs and inflation. Previous attempts to raise these fees through legislation faced opposition, and the CAFFA grant covers only a small portion of expenses. Efforts are ongoing with the OSATCA group to propose a fee increase in the upcoming legislative session to help stabilize funding.

Commissioners discussed the 18–20 special taxing districts overseen by the office. It was clarified that this oversight is mandated by the state and does not generate any administrative fees or revenue for the county. While managing these districts can be time-consuming, especially when issues arise, the office provides the service as part of its responsibilities. The tax rates for these special districts are set by the individual district boards. Once established, the rates remain in effect. The office monitors these rates to ensure accuracy and confirms any changes with the districts to prevent errors.

Road Superintendent Brad Haynes was unable to attend the meeting, so County Manager Will Van Vactor asked the Board of Commissioners whether they preferred that he present the Road Department's core services or postpone the presentation to a later date. The Board elected to move the Road Department's core services presentation to a future meeting to help conclude the core services review process.

Will Van Vactor outlined the next steps in the core services review process, which include continuing the review of core service descriptions for all departments. Upcoming reviews are scheduled for January 16 for Fairgrounds, OSU, the Museum, and January 22 for Juvenile Services and the District Attorney's Office. The Road department will be added to one of these future dates. Departments will refine their core service descriptions based on feedback received, and once all reviews are complete, the full set of core services will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for acceptance.

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

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 01:41 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant