

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of January 21, 2026, Regular Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Regular Session on January 21, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the Crook County Annex Meeting Room, located at 320 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Regular Session Agenda

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

Board Members Absent:

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; County Counsel Eric Blaine; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Finance Director Christina Haron; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Deputy McGrath; Jail Commander Andrew Rasmussen; Sheriff John Gautney; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Community Development Director John Eisler; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Community Development Department; Senior Planner Katie McDonald; Natural Resources Coordinator Tim Debootd; Permit Technician Jamie Vaughan; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Administrative Services Manager Katrina Weitman; Assistant Building Official Terry Weitman; Senior Permit Technician Ashley Leslie; HR Director Meghan McKee; Human Resources; Building Official Randy Davis; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Permit Technician Sherry Reinks; Fire Marshall Russ Debootd; Tawndy Byrd; Julie Thompson; Laura; Mike Ervin; Gail Merritt; Director of Commerce & Tourism Deb Shaw; Tourism Development Specialist Andrea Weaver; Jessica Barnes; Tim McGrath; Brad Wilson; Kelsea Luebbers; Traci Utterback; Michael Ellis; Jack Utterback; Joe Elmore; Clayton Rhoden; Lori Desjardins; Theresa Wilson; Spencer Emerson Smith; Ivan Smith; Dylan Wilson; Michael Warren; and members of the public.

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

Public Comment

None

Consent Agenda

1. Approve Minutes

2. Order 2026-02 Acceptance of Ready to Read Grant Funds

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to accept the consent agenda as presented. Brian

Barney seconded. Discussion: Commissioner Hermreck commended the administrative assistant for her hard work in bringing the meeting minutes up to date, noting that this effort is greatly appreciated. She shared that prior to serving as a commissioner, she often found minutes to be as much as a year behind, and emphasized the significant improvement that has been made. Commissioner Hermreck specifically recognized Breyanna for doing an excellent job and expressed appreciation for her current efforts in maintaining timely and accurate minutes. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

Discussion

3. Swear in of Corrections Deputies Jeffrey Richards and Kyle McGrath

Requester:

Stephanie Wilson, Administrative Division Manager

Presenter(s):

John Gautney, Sheriff

Details: Sheriff Gautney attended the Regular Session to formally swear in Deputy Kyle McGrath. Sheriff Gautney noted that Deputy McGrath had previously taken the oath in December in order to begin fulfilling his duties, and that this ceremony served as the official and formal swearing-in. Sheriff Gautney also presented Deputy McGrath with a challenge coin and explained that new employees are issued a challenge coin upon hire. He described the coin as displaying the badge on one side and the department patch and core values—honor, service, justice, and integrity—on the other. Sheriff Gautney explained that employees are encouraged to carry the coin at all times, and outlined the challenge tradition associated with it. He stated that the coin is intended to promote pride, accountability, and a sense of belonging throughout an employee's career.

4. Sheriff's Office Yearly Update

Requester:

Bill Elliott, Undersheriff

Details: Undersheriff Bill Elliott attended the Regular Session and presented the Sheriff's Office annual statistics. He reported that approximately 2,363 reports were written in 2025, representing a slight increase from 2024. Crime statistics included 321 person crimes, 304 property crimes, 1,548 community crimes or problems (an increase), and 151 sex crimes (an increase). The Sheriff's Office recorded 328 arrests, including 73 felonies, 235 misdemeanors, and juvenile arrests, reflecting an approximate 33 percent decrease from 2024. Jail activity included 1,088 bookings, a five percent decrease, with demographics of 861 male and 227 female inmates. DUI bookings totaled 225, showing an increase. Assultive arrests totaled 243, a 23 percent increase, which Undersheriff Elliott noted may be linked to state policy changes and mental health impacts. The jail recorded approximately 36 use-of-force incidents, with suicide attempts decreasing to one and suicide watches totaling 21. Calls for service totaled just under 16,000, representing a five percent decrease. With 12 deputies, this

equates to approximately 1,300 calls per deputy annually, which was noted as significantly above the national average of 600 to 800 calls per deputy. Additionally, approximately 37,000 individuals were screened at the Justice Center. Confiscated items included knives, pepper spray, tasers, and firearms. Ninety-four incidents required additional deputies, though only 81 of those incidents had been flagged by the court. Key takeaways emphasized the heavy workload in relation to current staffing levels, increasing mental health-related demands, and ongoing staffing and funding concerns.

5. Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Report

Requester:

Deb Shaw, Director of Commerce & Tourism
Andrea Weaver, Tourism Development Specialist

Details: Director of Commerce & Tourism Deb Shaw and Tourism Development Specialist Andrea Weaver attended the Regular Session to provide a quarterly Chamber of Commerce update. Deb introduced Andrea in her new role with the Chamber, and she came from Parks and Rec. Deb provided an overview of the Chamber Board of Directors, including current vacancies and the process for filling them, and shared the Chamber's vision for 2026. She highlighted the various events offered by the Chamber and reviewed membership information, including both longstanding benefits and newly added offerings for members, such as expanded social media promotion, lobby and LED sign advertising, and marketing support. Andrea Weaver discussed Explore Prineville, outlining its role as the local Destination Marketing Organization in promoting tourism, accessibility initiatives such as VertiCAT golf equipment at Meadow Lakes, partnerships with Visit Central Oregon and Datify for visitor data, and programs that support local businesses and the community. She also noted that Transient Room Tax revenue for 2024–25 totaled \$290,043, a 3% increase from the previous year. Strategic goals for the Chamber and Explore Prineville include maintaining financial stability, promoting the region as a four-season destination, improving data collection, fostering regional collaboration, and positioning the Chamber as the first choice for living, working, and playing in Prineville.

Commissioner Hermreck complimented the presentation and shared her thoughts regarding the Courthouse Christmas light display. She noted that social media feedback had been critical and expressed her interest in serving on the committee to help update and enhance the display. Commissioner Hermreck suggested improvements to make the area "sparkle" more and indicated she has several ideas to contribute.

6. Fair Board Candidate Recommendation

Requester:

Casey Daly, Fairgrounds Manager

Presenter(s):

Gail Merrit, Fair Board Chairperson

Details: Fair Board Chairperson Gail Merritt and Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly

attended the Regular Session to request consideration of the appointment of Linda Smith and the reappointment of Mike Kasberger to the Fair Board. Both individuals were previously nominated and unanimously voted on at the January Fair Board meeting. Gail Merritt was also noted as having been re-elected as Chairperson of the Fair Board.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to the Board of Commissioners to recommend Mike Kasberger and Linda Smith to the Crook County Fair Board Order 2026-03. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

7. Fairgrounds Indoor Arena Restrooms Project

Requester:

Susan Hermreck, County Commissioner

Presenter(s):

Susan Hermreck, County Commissioner

Details: Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly attended the Regular Session to request the Board's consideration for emergency repairs to the indoor arena restrooms, noting that the facilities have reached the end of their serviceable life and are showing significant issues during larger events. Casey reported recurring problems, including water on the floor, and stated that the restrooms have not been substantially updated since the 1980s and 1990s. Inspections were conducted by Marshall Bex and Lou's Plumbing, with an estimated repair cost of \$200,000 to \$250,000, which could be funded from the existing \$2 million grant, though it may nearly deplete the remaining balance. Casey emphasized the urgency of the repairs ahead of the spring event season, including the Hospice Auction and the annual Junior Livestock Sale, and highlighted the need for functional restrooms to accommodate attendees.

Commissioner Hermreck expressed full support for the emergency restroom repairs, emphasizing that the situation constitutes a sanitation and health concern. She noted her personal experience at the Hospice event, describing the facilities as unsafe, and acknowledged the efforts made during the livestock auction, including cleaning teams. Commissioner Hermreck stressed the urgency of completing the repairs as soon as possible.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to order and resolution number 2026-04, which is authorizing the emergency procurement of repair and renovation services for the fairgrounds restrooms, plumbing, and related fixtures. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

8. Public Records Request Update

Requester:

Seth Crawford, County Commissioner

Presenter(s):

Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor attended the Regular Session and presented an interim adjustment to the public records request at Commissioner Crawford's request. The proposal involves designating the county manager as the interim records custodian, transferring the public records requests from the legal department to administration. This shift is intended to align with statewide practices and enable the legal department to concentrate on critical legal services. Public access rights and statutory timelines remain intact. Administration will manage the entire process, with the County Counsel available for legal guidance. The interim measure, while introducing a learning curve and additional workload, is reversible upon the adoption of a new policy or by board action.

Commissioner Crawford expressed support for the proposed interim adjustment to public records administration, noting it aligns with ongoing discussions. He emphasized the need for Eric to focus on crucial tasks and highlighted that transitioning these duties to administration is a common practice as identified by OGEC and other sources. Commissioner Crawford appreciated the effort in drafting the ordinance and stressed the importance of maintaining transparency for Crook County citizens.

Commissioner Barney inquired if Eric had reviewed the proposed order, expressing some initial concern over the legal counsel's responsibilities. He indicated that the new process might address these concerns but deferred to Eric for further comment.

The discussion focused on a potential interim adjustment to public records request administration. County Counsel Eric Blaine presented a draft memo with unresolved questions. Key points included shifting the responsibility of receiving, acknowledging, and processing requests from the legal department to administration. The County Counsel will still provide legal advice, particularly for complex cases or appeals. The objective is to streamline processing while maintaining transparency and compliance with legal requirements. Roles and responsibilities, such as fee determinations, statutory compliance, and third-party notifications, were clarified. Existing requests will transition to administration unless they are near completion.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to approve the temporary modification to Crook County Public Records Request Policy Pending Formal Policy Update, order number 2026-06. Brian Barney seconded. Commissioner Barney and Commissioner Hermreck expressed appreciation for Eric's work and understanding of the necessity for the order, highlighting its benefit for his role. Eric was thanked for his effective job performance, particularly for clarifying questions during the discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

9. Letter of Support for CMHP Funding

Requester:

Susan Hermreck, County Commissioner

Presenter(s):

Susan Hermreck, County Commissioner

Details: Commissioner Susan Hermreck attended the Regular Session to discuss a letter of support in response to Pacific Source's planned \$500,000 funding cut to mental health programs. The reduction would severely impact services in Crook County, leading to increased mental health incidents in jails and emergency rooms. The letter, addressing Pacific Source and potentially the Oregon Health Authority, was carbon copied to Todd Shields of Prineville St. Charles and Sheriff John Gautney, due to their vested interests. It was also shared with the Jefferson Board of Commissioners, who face similar funding cuts, urging collective action. Commissioner Hermreck sought a motion to send this letter supporting sustained funding for mental health programs.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to send the January 21st, 2026 letter to Pacific Source the Letter of support for the CHMP funding. Susan Hermreck seconded. Commissioner Crawford emphasized the importance of addressing mental health service funding cuts. He criticized the State of Oregon for closing state hospitals, resulting in increased numbers of individuals with mental health issues being placed in jails instead of appropriate facilities. Commissioner Crawford highlighted the widespread impact in places like Portland and other cities, stressing the need for local action to support affected individuals and improve the situation.. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

10. Public Hearing: Second Reading of Ordinance 357 An Ordinance Amending Titles 1,17, and 18 of the Crook County Code, and Declaring an Emergency

Requester:

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Details:

The meeting proceeded with a public hearing for the second reading of Ordinance 357, amending Titles 17 and 18 of the Crook County Code and declaring an emergency. John Eisler, the Community Development Director, introduced the session. The Crook County Board of Commissioners convened on January 21, 2026, at 10:09 a.m. to conduct the second scheduled public hearing. The ordinance relates to Land Use Application Number 217, 25000323PLNG, marking a legislative amendment to the county code.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to read by title only. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

Commissioner Crawford read into the record the script for the second hearing of Ordinance 357, which amends Titles 1, 17, and 18 of the Crook County Code, declaring an emergency. Today, the Board of County Commissioners will be considering a recommendation from the Planning Commission to approve the enclosed code amendments. A couple... a complete copy of the staff memo and code amendment is available at the County's website for the Planning Department. The Board of County Commissioners may elect to uphold, modify, or reverse the Planning Commission's

recommendations. The Board may modify, uphold, or revise these recommendations, and this is the second of two hearings the board will hold. The de novo hearing follows standard legislative land use procedures, focusing on criteria from the Crook County Code, Comprehensive Plan, Oregon Administrative Rules, and Revised Statutes. Commissioner Crawford conducted a check for ex parte communications and conflicts of interest, declaring none. The hearing procedure requires testimony and evidence to address applicable standards, with the record remaining open until the second hearing. Appeals are possible per ORS-197 and OAR661. Participants intending to testify must register their intent either in person or online, and all testimony must adhere to procedural requirements.

Community Development Director John Eisler attended the Regular Session to provide the second reading of Ordinance 357, highlighting minor housekeeping changes and the removal of provisions related to manufactured dwellings, as requested. Key changes included updating the ordinance caption, adjusting penalty processes to exclude the circuit court, and revising subdivision review procedures to ensure transparency and efficiency. Other significant updates addressed land partitioning, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), exclusive farm use zones, and recreational vehicle regulations. John proposed a comprehensive definition for "dwelling unit," emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between dwelling units and accessory structures for proper land use planning. The proposed definition aligns with state building codes and aims to support responsible growth management. Eisler encouraged collaboration with the City of Prineville to ensure consistency and suggested further public engagement to refine policy understanding.

Commissioner Crawford reiterated his concerns about additional regulations in Crook County, arguing they might unnecessarily increase oversight. He stressed the importance of citizen engagement, particularly involving builders before implementing changes. John Eisler acknowledged adherence to procedural requirements for public works and Planning Commission meetings, highlighting his commitment to public processes. He pointed out that changes originated from planning staff's identification of worsening issues. The discussion focused on the need for clearer definitions of habitable spaces to prevent misunderstandings, such as specifying stove requirements.

Public Comment:

Jack Utterback, a builder since 1989, expressed agreement with the sentiment that no additional regulations are needed in Crook County. He emphasized that the state already imposes significant regulations on building. Jack highlighted the increasing housing costs, noting that many people cannot afford homes. He mentioned that allowing a second dwelling on properties should not be problematic and reiterated that further regulations would be unnecessary.

Brad Wilson, a Crook County resident for nearly 55 years, voiced his concerns at the meeting regarding proposed language in Ordinance 357. He questioned the necessity of specifying fire sprinklers in Title 17 amendments, citing his research that found no state requirement for fire sprinklers in detached one- and two-family dwellings,

suggesting county overreach without state mandate. Brad also challenged the proposed definitions in Title 18, particularly regarding dwelling units and kitchens, arguing that the language could lead to increased costs and limit property owner rights. He urged that instead of imposing more restrictive measures on accessory buildings, efforts should be directed towards expediting and expanding Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) adoption to address housing shortages. Brad noted that the proposed amendments could increase code compliance burdens, contradict state goals for affordable housing, and hinder development in rural areas. He suggested dismissing the amendments or delaying adoption for further public consultation, emphasizing the need to align policies with the conservative values of Crook County residents.

Julie Thompson opposed the regulatory changes, aligning with Seth and Brad's perspectives. She argued against further regulation in Crook County, highlighting the already high housing costs. Julie noted the difficulty for young people to afford homes and advocated for supporting additional dwellings. She criticized regulations concerning how people cook and countertop space as unnecessary, considering them a waste of time and money for both residents and the county.

Traci Utterback expressed agreement with Brad's points and voiced concerns about excessive regulations. She highlighted differences between Crook County and Deschutes County, emphasizing a desire to avoid the detailed rules seen there. Traci argued that additional features like dishwashers or laundry facilities in outbuildings are practical for local lifestyles, such as during canning season or for handling pool towels. She criticized regulations, like specific lighting requirements, as impractical for rural living. Traci reiterated agreement with other speakers against imposing unnecessary rules in Crook County.

Dylan Wilson echoed previous comments, aligning with Brad and others. He highlighted the lack of public participation in the meeting despite the importance of the issue, noting the absence of many contractors and builders. Dylan emphasized the need for better public notification and engagement to ensure that community members are informed about changes before they occur. He expressed concern that decisions could be made without sufficient public input, leading residents to encounter unexpected rules.

Ivan Smith questioned the origin of the proposed regulations, asking if county employees were creating these rules. He expressed concern about the motivation behind the new regulations, implying skepticism about their necessity. Ivan's remarks were brief, indicating unease with the process.

Clayton Rhoden asked if only in certain parts of the county you can have an ADU and some parts you can, and he also inquired how long this has been in effect.

Community Development Director John Eisler clarified that ADUs are currently allowed in non-resource areas of Crook County, such as Powell Butte, but not on resource lands due to state regulations. Implementation has faced challenges like water source requirements. John endorsed reevaluating ADU permissions to potentially expand them

beyond Powell Butte where infrastructure makes sense. He emphasized the importance of clearly defining what constitutes a dwelling versus an accessory structure to facilitate ADU integration. John also acknowledged that building accessory structures instead of full ADUs can save costs but noted the trade-off in fees that fund essential services and infrastructure. He supports efforts to relax state rules to make housing more affordable.

Commissioner Hermreck and John Eisler discussed the need for adequate emergency services and infrastructure when increasing residential density through ADUs, initially limiting them to Powell Butte. Susan noted the cost of assisted living and proposed ADUs, like mother-in-law quarters, as a solution for aging parents. John emphasized evolving household dynamics and advocated for Crook County to influence state dwelling standards to support safe, affordable housing amid migration. He stressed the importance of responsibly managing ADUs with proper infrastructure in place. Both acknowledged the need to revisit and potentially expand ADU policies to meet community needs.

Lori Desjardins expressed a preference for less regulation, criticizing the detailed specifications for plumbing fixtures and counter space as excessive. Lori humorously noted that such specifications describe their dream barn. Lori inquired about the implications of defining an outdoor kitchen under current regulations. Specifically, they asked if having an outdoor kitchen would result in additional fees or permit requirements, and whether County definitions might impact what constitutes a dwelling. Lori acknowledged the need for clarity in dwelling definitions, indicating cautious support for revising red tape if it addressed inconsistencies, especially concerning outdoor kitchens.

John Eisler addressed public concerns about the definition of occupancy, emphasizing that the definition includes an "AND" condition impacting plumbing fixture requirements. He clarified that to avoid classification as an independent living facility, one key element, such as a kitchen or bedroom space, must be omitted. This ensures dependency on the main dwelling, in accordance with structural codes and state law. John explained the legal nuances, highlighting the flexibility within the framework and noting that all four conditions must be met to trigger fixture limitations. This understanding is crucial for compliance with occupancy definitions and facility planning within Oregon's regulatory environment.

Dylan Wilson expressed concerns about the open-ended interpretation of what constitutes a "reasonable space for a bedroom." He highlighted the potential for subjective assessments, such as simply placing a mattress in a space. Wilson pointed out that this ambiguity leaves significant room for interpretation by the Planning Commission and Building Department, potentially affecting compliance and enforcement.

Brad Wilson clarified that his intention is not to obstruct but to seek a clear path forward for the community regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). He noted that adding more restrictions could hinder family support. Wilson acknowledged that John's

occupancy definition aligns with the state's, except for the omission of the eating aspect. He expressed willingness, alongside other citizens, to collaborate with the Planning Commission to revisit the process and find a mutually beneficial solution.

Russ Debootd, Fire Marshal for Crook County Fire and Rescue, addressed questions about the origin of fire sprinkler requirements. These requirements can stem from various codes, including the Residential Specialty Code, Oregon Fire Code, Oregon Structural Specialty Code, and the Uniform Alternative Construction Standards (UACS). The need for fire sprinklers in subdivisions has been a practice in Crook County since the early 2000s, particularly when developers cannot meet access or water supply requirements. Russ explained that subdivisions often choose between installing water systems or utilizing sprinkler systems as per UACS. He emphasized the significance of early notifications about these requirements during the subdivision review process to avoid a disconnect between approval and code compliance. Russ also discussed alternative pathways for meeting fire code requirements and the intent behind recent review process changes to enhance transparency for developers. He discussed the effectiveness of sprinkler systems in saving lives, notably in remote areas with limited fire services, highlighting their importance for improving survivability. The sprinklers act as a critical solution, especially with the challenges posed by modern construction and furnishings.

Building Official Randy Davis discussed alternative methods to fire suppression as raised by Russ Debootd. He questioned why suppression systems have been chosen as the standard for the county, noting that alternatives like additional gypsum installation or the compartmentalization of dwelling units could introduce significant costs. These alternatives involve creating fire-resistant areas to limit fire spread, often requiring exterior fire-resistive construction. Randy observed that the cost of these alternatives usually exceeds that of a standard NFPA 13D sprinkler system, which operates at about 250 gallons per minute with a minimum of one sprinkler head activating.

Russ Debootd clarified the nature of the NFPA 13D home fire sprinkler systems, highlighting key differences from commercial or industrial systems. The 13D system is minimalist, designed primarily to enable occupant evacuation rather than suppress fires. It typically involves one sprinkler head running for about 10 minutes. Installation can be versatile—tapping into wells, municipal systems, or using a pressure tank in the garage with water storage. These systems use plastic PEX tubing rather than steel pipes, making them less expensive while effectively promoting safety. Russ acknowledged the financial investment but noted its cost-effectiveness and high impact relative to other alternatives.

Commissioner Crawford, sought clarification on whether viable alternatives to the NFPA 13D home fire sprinkler system were available and should be considered. It was noted that alternatives are covered under the Uniform Alternative Construction Standards (UAC), yet the 13D system remains the chosen solution due to its cost-effectiveness

and impact. Randy Davis explained that alternatives like commercial compartmentalization entail complex and costly requirements, such as additional gypsum and managing penetrations. The discussion emphasized a collective interest in building affordable homes while meeting safety standards. No additional questions were raised for Russ Debootd, who was thanked for his contributions and explanations.

John Eisler explained that the language in the Subdivision Review Committee regarding covenants and deed restrictions has been longstanding. The recent additions provide examples of the types of restrictions that have been applied for decades, ensuring developers are informed in advance. These changes do not introduce new regulations or requirements but clarify existing practices for better transparency.

Brad Wilson expressed appreciation for Russ Debootd's explanation about fire code requirements and noted the lack of a single source detailing the necessity for fire sprinklers. He suggested that codifying these requirements would remove ambiguity and discretion in enforcement, potentially leading to a straightforward mandate for fire sprinklers. While acknowledging alternative measures, Brad emphasized that listing specific requirements in the code could benefit county staff. He understood from Russ's comments that sprinklers are identified as the most likely choice among available options in line with state law.

Russ Debootd, the Fire Marshal, explained that fire codes offer a variety of exemptions, but historically, Crook County has focused on home fire sprinkler systems rather than other options. These decisions are primarily made by developers during the planning stage, affecting all future homeowners. Homeowners typically have no say in the fire safety configurations, as these decisions are made prior to home sales and are documented in land use approvals and included in the Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). While developers can request alternative fire safety methods, these options are seldom chosen due to their higher costs and the need for collaboration between the building official and the fire marshal. Russ stressed the importance of early discussions in the planning stage to avoid homeowner dissatisfaction and ensure that code requirements are clear before property purchases. In Crook County, the collaboration between the fire marshal and building official is crucial, as it can affect homeowners' plans, such as the ability to have open-concept homes. This decision-making framework underscores the need for transparent communication between developers, county officials, and potential homeowners. For a comprehensive understanding, exploring zoning laws and land use planning is recommended to grasp their impact on community development and fire safety standards.

Randy Davis highlighted the flexibility granted by the Uniform Alternative Construction (UAC) standard in Crook County, allowing for the selection of one or more fire safety options. Though the language permits more restrictive measures, such as requiring fire suppression and additional fire-hardening measures like non-combustible roofs and hardy siding, the county often opts for fire suppression systems. This choice balances cost, ease, and consistency across subdivisions. Randy noted that while the UAC offers

various options like compartmentalizing residences, fire suppression is the most attainable and commonly selected alternative. Developers can propose other methods, but the predictability of suppression systems makes them preferable.

Public Meeting Closed at 11:45 a.m.

Commissioner Hermreck and Breyanna addressed Dylan Wilson's public comment on the challenges of disseminating public notices and engaging the community in meetings. Commissioner Hermreck noted the decline in readership of traditional outlets like the Central Oregonian and emphasized the need for better outreach, especially in rural areas like Paulina. Commissioner Hermreck mentioned that the administration team is going to start posting these items on Facebook. Breyanna highlighted the availability of notifications through the county website, which allows residents to sign up for updates on all county meetings. Notifications are also distributed via three mailing lists, the county's website, local newspapers, and bulletin boards. Both stressed the importance of public participation, expressing the desire to improve attendance and engagement in meetings.

The commissioners deliberating as a board and emphasized the importance of proactively addressing fire safety and insurance concerns, especially given the current conditions on the West Coast. A need to revise definitions within Title 18, Section 18-08, notably for kitchens, was expressed to enhance clarity. The challenge of engaging the public in planning discussions was acknowledged, with suggestions to improve outreach and participation by reconsidering meeting schedules and notification methods to accommodate residents' working hours. The commissioners advocated for a collaborative approach with the city but stressed that the county should maintain its decision-making autonomy. They agreed that current dwelling unit and kitchen definitions require updates and will continue to be interpreted as is until amendments are enacted. The board proposed sending these concerns back to the Planning Commission for further review, with encouragement for increased public input. They highlighted the value of modifying and approving Ordinance 357 by removing amendments related to structural definitions in Chapter 18-08 and remanding them to the Planning Commission. These points underscore the importance of clear public communication, maintaining effective collaboration with local entities, and refining policy definitions to ensure precise governance.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to Pass Ordinance 357, with the exception of withdrawing, definitions 18.08 and sign out of the meeting. Susan Hermreck seconded. Discussion: John pointed out the need for additional housekeeping language. He noted that draft must reflect the final decision and be prepared for signing outside the meeting. Seth agreed, amending the motion accordingly to allow the ordinance to be finalized and signed after the meeting. This ensures procedural compliance and allows for the ordinance to be accurately updated with the agreed changes. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to remand to the Planning Commission the portion

of Ordinance 357 slash file number 217-25-000323-planning, for the following reasons, which would be to re-evaluate the definitions as stated in Chapter 18.08. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

Manager Report

Details:

County Manager Will Van Vactor commended John and his team for addressing long-standing issues and initiating important conversations. Appreciation was also expressed for public input in identifying topics needing further exploration. Reflecting on past frustrations with the Oregon land use system, the manager noted today's discussion as a positive demonstration of the system's potential for beneficial outcomes in Crook County. Will thanked all participants, emphasizing John and his team's efforts in driving these discussions forward.

Commissioner Barney expressed appreciation for John and the staff's efforts in addressing code violations and emphasized the need for clearer definitions to guide public understanding of regulations. He highlighted the importance of specificity to eliminate confusion while noting that the goal is not to impose additional burdens on citizens but rather to clarify allowable activities.

Commissioner Crawford expressed the hope for productive discussions at the Planning Commission with increased local citizen input, aiming to achieve a better outcome.

Commissioner Hermreck expressed gratitude to John, acknowledging the frustrations involved in the process.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Hermreck noted plans to visit La Grande with Seth to learn about upcoming Eastern Oregon legislation for the short session. She mentioned an expectation to have more information by Friday.

Commissioner Barney None

Commissioner Crawford reported collaboration with Benz's office on safe spaces and an additional route in Juniper Canyon, receiving positive feedback from Senate and House leadership. Plans include Seth and Susan visiting with them to engage further and gather specific input from Juniper Canyon residents to communicate the importance of these projects to the federal government.

Public Comment

Mike Ervin suggested providing explanations about the consent agenda during meetings for better public understanding. He noted that items are voted on without discussion, which can cause confusion for those not attending work sessions or reading agenda packets. Commissioners agreed, acknowledging that many consent agenda items are routine and lack context for the public, leading to misunderstandings. They agreed to offer more information to ensure public clarity.

Brad Wilson thanked the commissioners for the meeting and the discussion of the issue. He expressed hope for collaboration between the county and the public to reach a resolution. Additionally, he suggested that Commissioner Crawford engage with the electricity provider in Juniper Canyon for insights on a second point of access, even recommending a letter to facilitate this communication.

Executive Session

11. None scheduled.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to Adjourn. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 12:01 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant