

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of January 14, 2026, Work Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Work Session on January 14, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the Administration Conference Room, located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Work Session Agenda

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

Board Members Absent:

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Counsel Eric Blaine; County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Finance Director Christina Haron; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Librarian Kim Bales; HR Director Meghan McKee; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; IT Director Blaine Cheney; Assessor Jon Soliz; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; Melissa Thompson, Chief Behavioral Health Officer for BestCare Treatment Services; Angela Cumming, Program Director BestCare Crook County CMHP; Human Resources; Mike Ervin; and members of the public.

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

Public Comment

None

Discussion

1. Update on Current Contract Negotiations with PSCS

Requester:

Melissa Thompson, Chief Behavioral Health Officer for BestCare Treatment Services

Details:

Melissa Thompson, Chief Behavioral Health Officer for Best Care, outlined significant challenges during her presentation to the board. During the discussion, Commissioner Hermreck inquired about the on-the-ground implications for Crook County, specifically questioning the number of individuals in the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) program. Melissa explained that vital programs like ACT and Wraparound services for multi-system-involved children face potential risks due to funding cuts. Ongoing contract negotiations with Pacific Source for the Community Mental Health Program (CMHP) propose a substantial 17% funding decrease, or approximately \$500,000 less. Seth Crawford asked about the 3% difference between Crook and Jefferson counties, highlighting that Jefferson experienced a 14% cut, while Crook County's cut is at 17%. Melissa clarified that Crook County would need to address this 17% shortfall. If

negotiations do not result in increased funding, Best Care will be out of compliance in providing necessary services. The funding cuts include a 60% reduction in fee-for-service rates and decreases in per-member-per-month (PMPM) payments, mirroring similar reductions in other regions. Initial counter proposals concerning rate cuts were swiftly rejected, and subsequent proposals on PMPM adjustments are awaiting a response.

Melissa emphasized the urgent need to bridge the anticipated 18-month gap before possible Certified Community Behavioral Health Programs (CCBHC) funding can be implemented, as Crook County applies for such funding. She highlighted the negotiation challenges, including the limited understanding from new negotiators and the shift to email communications, complicating discussions. State-wide equity language from Pacific Source fails to address specific needs in Crook County, exacerbating the issue.

Melissa recommended engaging the Central Oregon Health Council to apply pressure and support negotiations. Drafting letters to key stakeholders, such as Pacific Source and the Health Council, to outline community impacts and funding requirements is crucial. Continued strategic discussions and advocacy are vital to secure necessary funding, maintain compliance, and meet community needs.

2. Treasurer's Report for December 2025

Requester:

Christina Haron, Finance Director

Details:

Finance Director Christina Haron presented the Treasurer's report for December. She noted that the current bank balance is approximately \$600,000, reflecting seasonal spending patterns rather than increased revenue, with typically low spending during this time of year. Funds are well-allocated across various accounts, and there are no cash flow concerns at present. Recent investments were made using reserve funds from tax revenue to optimize returns amidst changing interest rates. However, the Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP) rates have decreased from 4.25% to 4.1%. The investment strategy aims to take advantage of previously higher rates, highlighting the importance of strategic financial management in maintaining the county's fiscal health.

3. Update to Library Service Hours

Requester:

Kim Bales, Librarian Team Lead

Details:

Librarian Team Lead Kim Bales discussed changes to operating hours with the commissioners. She highlighted the positive reception of the 8 to 9 AM self-service hours, valued by early risers for book and computer access. Enhanced safety measures, such as doorbells and extra security cameras, have been successfully implemented. On Saturdays, following a trial of reduced hours, Kim proposed extending open hours due to late morning patron traffic. The new schedule would maintain 8 to 10

AM self-service and provide full service from 10 AM to 4 PM, accommodating both early visitors and families arriving later. Commissioner Seth Crawford expressed a desire for consistency, avoiding back-and-forth changes. Kim agreed, confirming that this would be the standard schedule. Staffing levels would remain sufficient with at least two staff present at all times. The commissioners agreed to the proposed changes through consensus without requiring a formal motion, recognizing the benefit to the community.

4. Acceptance of Ready to Read Grant Funds

Requester:

Kim Bales, Librarian Team Lead

Details:

Librarian Team Lead Kim Bales announced that the library received the 2026 Ready to Read Grant from the State Library of Oregon. The grant, amounting to \$9,888, supports early literacy and the summer reading program. Although slightly less than the expected \$10,300, the funding is considered substantial compared to amounts received by other counties. The commissioners discussed formal acceptance of the grant. A motion to accept the grant was suggested but will be replaced on next week's consent agenda. There are no immediate deadlines, as the funds can be used from January 1 to December 31. The board expressed appreciation for the grant's impact on library programs.

5. Amendment Service Contract with City of Prineville

Requester:

Jacquie Davis, Landfill Director

Details:

County Manager Will Van Vactor discussed a proposed amendment to the wastewater disposal agreement with the City of Prineville. This amendment extends the current agreement for another year, ensuring continued disposal of septic material from the county landfill. The existing contract was either set to expire or had just expired.

The City Council signed the amendment at their recent meeting, and a signed copy is included in the packet. County review raised no concerns about the amendment, as it simply extends the duration without substantive changes. Will recommended signing the amendment immediately to ensure the agreement is in place without disruption to septic disposal services.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to accept resolution number 1635, which approves an amendment to wastewater disposal with Crook County and City of Prineville. 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 expressed gratitude to the board for their participation in recent presentations. For public awareness, he noted that goal-setting sessions continue that afternoon. A meeting with the Budget Committee is scheduled to discuss budget assumptions, emphasizing appreciation for everyone's effort in preparing for a solid budget planning process. He also thanked Christina and Jamie for their support in keeping operations on track.

Commissioner Updates

Details:

Seth Crawford provided an update regarding his upcoming trip to Washington, D.C. in February, along with Susan. Due to this trip, he suggested canceling the work session scheduled for February 25th. He emphasized the effectiveness of these trips in advancing initiatives such as Secure Rural Schools, Juniper Canyon Road legislation, and efforts to delist wolves. Meetings with Senators Wyden and Merkley are planned, and he mentioned the opportunity to be part of a group visiting the White House, possibly meeting President Trump.

Susan Hermerck provided an update on travel plans. Next Thursday, she, along with Seth and possibly Brian, will attend the Eastern Oregon Legislative Conference in LaGrande. They will depart in the morning as the conference begins at noon, making them unavailable that day. The conference, held at a local college, involves Eastern Oregon's legislators and representatives, including figures like Vicki and Todd Nash. The aim is to engage with lawmakers ahead of the upcoming short legislative session, despite uncertain outcomes.

Brian Barney None

Executive Session

6. 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 09:39 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant