

Union County Board of Commissioners
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Present: Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo, Chair
Commissioner Donna Beverage
Commissioner Paul Anderes

Commissioner Scarfo opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was given with all three Commissioners in attendance.

Staff Report

Commissioner Scarfo asked Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, to provide a staff report regarding Ballot Measure 31-101.

Administrative Officer Burgess reported that Ballot Measure 31-101 was referred to the voters of Union County on November 3, 2020 as a result of an initiative petition. The measure was passed by voters with 7,435 yes votes and 6,753 no votes, a difference of 682 total votes. The measure requires the Commissioners to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of every February, June and October to discuss how to promote the interest of Union County in any negotiations regarding relocating the state border of Idaho to include Union County.

Civil penalties are provided for anyone who willfully prohibits, cancels or hinders any of the prescribed meetings of the Board of Commissioners. A civil offense against this measure is punishable as a class D violation, subject to a maximum fine of up to \$125 and is enforceable by any peace officer. In accordance to the approved measure, meetings had previously been held by the Board of Commissioners on February 10, June 9 and October 13, 2021, February 9, June 8, October 12, 2022, February 8, June 14 and October 11, 2023.

Public comment opportunities have been offered at each of the previous meetings and written public comments have also been accepted.

At the February 8, 2023 meeting, a motion was passed by the Commissioners to send a letter memorializing the Greater Idaho Movement ballot measure results to State Representatives. On February 9, 2023, a letter was sent by the Commissioners to Representative Bobbie Levy, and Senator Bill Hansell officially informing them of the November 3, 2020 ballot measure results.

Written comments have been received for this meeting this evening, and will be read out loud if the Commissioners would like.

Public Comments

Commissioner Scarfo asked that those providing public comment limit their comment time to 3 to 5 minutes.

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, read aloud public comments submitted via email.

The first public comment read out loud was submitted via email on February 5, 2024 by Dr. Matthew Cooper, 302 C. Avenue, La Grande, in opposition to moving Idaho's Border to include Union County. He referenced an article in the La Grande Observer, "Lawmakers discuss Greater Idaho movement in an October 24, 2023 edition. The article stated that the actual meeting between lawmakers Judy Boyle, Barbara Ehardt, Vikki Breese-Iverson and Mike McCaw was closed to the public and the press. He doesn't approve of "secret meetings" and wants to know how this improves democracy. He expressed concern that Greater Idaho proponents are supported by right wing "think tanks" with murky motives and funding.

The second public comment read out loud was submitted via email on February 13, 2024 by Cathy Webb, La Grande, in opposition to moving Idaho's Border to include Union County. Ms. Webb is unable to attend this evenings meeting and would rather celebrate the 165th anniversary of Oregon's statehood, instead of degrading it with discussions that fester divisiveness. She listed six Oregon policies she strongly supports.

The third public comment read out loud was submitted via email on February 14, 2024 by Maxine Hines, 307 2nd Street, La Grande, in opposition to moving Idaho's Border to include Union County. Ms. Hines is celebrating Oregon's birthday and Valentines Day by promoting all of Oregon staying Oregon.

The fourth public comment read out loud was submitted via email on February 14, 2024 by Polly Helm, Union County, in opposition to moving Idaho's Border to include Union County. Ms. Helm also shared the song lyrics of *Oregon, My Oregon*.

Vivian Young, La Grande, addressed the Commissioners with her congratulations to Oregon on their 165th birthday in statehood. Ms. Young also provided cupcakes to meeting attendees.

Curt Howell, La Grande, addressed the Commissioners with his comments in regard to Moving Idaho's Border. He provided an update on the state legislature, which is also included in the letter shared with the Commissioners. Mr. Howell stated that the Commissioners have only done the bare minimum required by 31-101 to hold meetings, and congratulated them for avoiding paying a fine stipulated in the measure. He insisted that they become more engaged in a robust public discussion with residents and themselves to move the border as written in 31-101.

Gene McCurd, 64247 Orchard Lane, La Grande, addressed the Commissioners with her comments in opposition of moving Idaho's Border to include Union County. She came to the meeting today not prepared to provide comment, but felt compelled to speak today. She has lived here most of her life, minus the time that she moved away to work and raise kids. She understands that our voices aren't being heard, and would like to see that we can work together, rather than moving apart from each other.

Matt McCaw, Powell Butte, Move Idaho Border Spokesperson, addressed the Commissioners with a brief legislative update regarding the relocation of the border. Mr. McCaw does not reside in Union County, however, makes it a point to attend these meetings to answer any questions anyone might have.

Grant Darrow, Captain of the Greater Idaho Movement in Union and Wallowa Counties, 708 Poplar Street, Cove, Oregon, addressed the Commissioners with his comments in favor of the Greater Idaho Border Movement. Mr. Darrow provided a little background on his residences in Oregon. He indicated he has lost all faith in Oregon government and sees it as comparable to the Nazi's in Germany.

Commissioner Scarfo closed the public comment period.

Commissioner Remarks

Commissioner Beverage indicated that the Commissioners are aware of the legislative issues that are currently in the house. She stated that the Commissioners are constantly working for Union County and their citizens.

Commissioner Anderes referenced EOCA, who currently includes 15 counties that work together. He referred to the October 23, 2023 meeting in Baker City, which he was not invited to and did not know about until he saw it on social media. He is tracking legislative activities. He has sent multiple letters to the Governor of Idaho with no response.

Commissioner Scarfo did not have any remarks at this time.

Next Meeting Date

The next special Commission meeting on this topic will be held on Wednesday, June 12, 2024 at 9 AM.

Adjournment

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist