

UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 2, 2024

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

Commissioner Scarfo opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was given with all three Commissioners present.

AGENDA REVIEW

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, requested to add the approval of the Designation of the Mental Health Director for Center for Human Development under Administrative Matters.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jake Seavert, 60042 Wright Road, La Grande, introduced himself as a candidate running for County Commissioner, Position 3. Commissioner Beverage's shoes will be hard to fill. He thanked the Commissioners and staff for all that they do and enjoys coming to the meetings.

Commissioner Scarfo closed the public comment period.

Regulated Use Fire Season Recommendation

Craig Kretchmer, La Grande Rural Fire Chief and Fire Defense Board Chief, addressed the Commissioners with a brief update regarding Regulated Use Fire Season.

On Wednesday, September 18, by the request of the Union County Fire Defense Board, the Board of Commissioners voted to extend the Regulated Use Fire Season from September 30 to October 2. Conditions are still dry and the potential for human caused fires exist; however, cooler temperatures and moisture are anticipated soon.

At this time, the Union County Fire Defense Board recommends ending the regulated fire season. Citizens should still be following burn guidelines and the county burn ordinance.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the recommendations of the Union County Fire Defense Board and end regulated fire season. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Kretchmer stated as Union County entered into burn season, the permitting process has changed. The recommendation is to call the burn line (541-963-4040) to confirm it is a burn day and to have a copy of the burn ordinance whether it is an electronic or paper copy; which will take place of the actual permit. Press releases and updated website information will be forthcoming.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

There were no Elected Official, Department Head or Employee Comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Beverage moved approval of the consent agenda which included September 17, 18, 23 & 25, 2024 claims journals as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Designation of the Center for Human Development (CHD) Mental Health Director

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented a brief staff report to the Commissioners regarding the Designation of the CHD Mental Health Director.

Union County contracts with the Center for Human Development for Public and Mental Health Services. CHD recently went through the process of hiring Barb Seatter as the Mental Health Director. As part of the process, they are required to provide her credentials to the Oregon Health Authority who has to approve her as the official Mental Health Director for CHD.

Union County received notification from the Licensing and Certification Compliance Officer at the Oregon Health Authority, that she has been accepted. Following that approval, it is necessary for the county to recognize Barb Seatter as the Mental Health Director and give her the authority under ORS 426.233, which is the authorization to place holds for involuntary commitment processes.

Administrative Officer Burgess read the letter out loud for the record. This is a process that has been done in the past when a new Mental Health Director has been hired.

Commissioner Beverage made a motion to authorize Designation of the CHD Mental Health Director, Barb Seatter. Commissioner Anderes seconded.

All three Commissioners are pleased to have Barb Seatter a part of Center for Human Development, Inc. She hit the ground running and is doing a fantastic job.

Motion carried unanimously.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Beverage has been working on water related issues. Time is running out on her term, and she wants to be sure that things are tied up before her replacement starts.

Commissioner Anderes noted he attended the grand opening of the LMS Wildcat Center and the GRH Surgi Center. Both wonderful assets to La Grande.

Commissioner Scarfo noted that he attended AOC Legislative Days held in Salem and believes that January will be a whole new ball field with new senators and representatives.

NEXT MEETING

The next special session meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 9, 2024 at 9 AM.

PUBLIC HEARING: First Reading of Ordinance 2024-01: In the Matter of an Ordinance Implementing Measures to Reduce Incidents of Truancy in Union County Public School and Declaring an Emergency

Staff Report

Kelsie McDaniel, District Attorney, addressed the Commissioners with a staff report related to Ordinance 2024-01.

This is an ordinance that was drafted by a group of individuals that consisted of the District Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office, Commissioner Scarfo, Commissioner Anderes and Superintendents within the county over a nine-month period. The group wanted a document that would work and be effective and serve the needs for each community, leaving it open enough for each school district in terms of how they would interpret it.

The only two counties that have something similar are Malheur County and Crook County. In 2021, there was a piece of legislation that gutted the enforcement provision of truancy laws. Essentially, the overarching purpose of that was to reduce the amount of financial punishments that parents were absorbing on behalf of delinquent children. This was part of that same legislation and slipped under the radar until School Resource Officer and different school districts across the state tried to implement it and realized it was no longer on the books and was repealed.

District Attorney McDaniel provided copies of resolutions passed by each city council from Imbler, Island City, La Grande, Elgin, North Powder, Cove and Union. The resolutions were provided to give consent for the passage of Ordinance 2024-01.

Commissioner Anderes thanked District Attorney McDaniel, Sheriff Bowen, Superintendents and school district representatives for their dedication and work on this ordinance. Wordsmithing this ordinance was very tricky and took a lot of talking through.

Commissioner Beverage thanked the group for their hard work, the language is perfect. She is happy to see that the school districts are on board.

Commissioner Scarfo thanked the Sheriff for attending the city council meetings to explain the importance of the ordinance.

District Attorney McDaniel noted if there are questions from constituents, she is happy to answer those. She has done the work before it was repealed and has the experience with the school officials who have used it in their districts. In the 16 years she has been a prosecutor, she has seen a parent receive a fine one time. La Grande school district used it the most because they have the highest population in the county. Very rarely was there anything that would fall within the category of punitive sanctions. Getting the student into court would help figure out if it is the student or the parent that is the problem.

Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time. Commissioner Scarfo closed the public comment period.

Discussion/Action

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-01; In the Matter of Truancy in Union County Public Schools and Declaring an Emergency. Commissioner Beverage seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The second reading of Ordinance 2024-01 has been scheduled for October 16, 2024 at 9:15 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 9:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist