

UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Present: Commissioner Paul Anderes, Chair
Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo
Commissioner Jake Seavert

Commissioner Anderes 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 Emergency Manager Nick Vora under Elected Official, Department Head and Employees Comments to present an ODHS Resilience Grant Authorization for consideration.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Debbie MacLean, presented information regarding an Agriculture Building Exempt Permit applied for in February 2025. She provided copies of the documentation submitted to the Planning Director including a map. The Planning Director has denied the permit stating the site is in the flood plain which she feels is not correct.

Patrick Collins, Manager of Government Relations, OTEC, introduced himself to the Commissioners. He is new to the position and is eager to get things moving forward.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

ODHS Resilience Grant

Nick Vora, Emergency Manager, presented the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Resilience Grant request to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Union County applied for a grant through the Oregon Department of Human Services for establishing Resiliency Hubs at two locations, one would be the county fairgrounds and the other school district bus facility parking area in Elgin. The grant has been awarded to Union County. The agreement document has recently been received.

The county will receive two (2) Conex containers at the county fairgrounds with a steel carport. Inside the containers will be supplies such as generators, shelf food, water, communications equipment and space to store other emergency preparedness items. At the Elgin hub would be similar type materials, just fewer items in quantity.

The grant agreement shall become effective on May 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026.

Administrative Officer Burgess indicated the county received the Intergovernmental Agreement and it is time sensitive. The county is responsible for securing the staging area, which will involve some leveling and electrical work. At the time Administrative Officer Burgess and Emergency

Manager Vora discussed the grant, it was understood that \$20,000 that would need to be received and expended. ODHS will be titling the trailers to Union County, bringing the grant value to \$281,453, which is above the amount we can administratively accept. Because of that, Commissioner authorization is required to accept the grant. There are a couple of areas in the agreement that need clarification before signing.

Emergency Manager Vora noted the time sensitivity is due to the funds needing to be expended by June 30, 2025.

Commissioner Seavert was under the impression that the Conex containers would be set on the ground. Emergency Manager Vora indicated the containers would be on a gravel pad that will be funded by ODHS in the amount of approximately \$20,750.

Commissioner Seavert asked where the trailers fit in. Emergency Manager Vora indicated they are shipping containers. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated the value of the containers include the contents in the amount of \$260,703.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to allow Union County to enter into an agreement with ODHS for the Resiliency Hub Grant as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Anderes thanked Emergency Manager Vora for his work on securing the funding.

Motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Scarfo moved approval of the consent agenda which included May 8, 2025 claims journals and the April 2, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Court Order 2025-11: In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Hospital Facility Authority

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2025-11 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The terms for Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo and Libby Gobin on the Union County Hospital Facility Authority are due for renewal. Both have expressed their willingness to continue serving on the Union County Hospital Facility Authority.

Their new term will expire on April 30, 2028.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2025-11; In the Matter of Reappointment of R. Matthew Scarfo and Libby Gobin to the Union County Hospital Facility Authority as presented. Commissioner Scarfo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2025-12: In the Matter of Appointment to the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority Board of Directors

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2025-12 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The term for Commissioner Paul Anderes serving on the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority Board of Directors is due for renewal. The term for Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo serving as an alternate Commissioner representative is also due for renewal. Both parties have agreed to continue serving with a term that will expire on May 20, 2029.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2025-12; In the Matter of the Reappointment of Paul Anderes and R. Matthew Scarfo as the alternate to the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority Board of Directors. Commissioner Scarfo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Community Dispute Resolution – Grant Recipient

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the Community Dispute Resolution grant recipient recommendation to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Several months ago, the county was notified by the University of Oregon School of Law of the county's eligibility to participate in the Community Dispute Resolution Services for the upcoming biennium. An RFP was published and one application from The Eastern Oregon Mediation Center was received and reviewed by the U of O School of Law and found to be acceptable as an eligible applicant.

The Eastern Oregon Mediation Center is the applicant and is also the current provider of dispute resolution services in Union County. The funds that will be available for the biennium are approximately \$56,960.

Commissioner Scarfo asked for clarification on the motion.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to authorize The Eastern Oregon Mediation Center to receive the grant award in the amount of \$56,960 as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

NACo RELM Grant Agreement

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the NACo RELM Grant Agreement to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The National Association of Counties Research Foundation has approved a grant in the amount of \$50,000 to Union County. The agreement is effective May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026. The grant is to support the project that Commissioner Anderes has been working on to increase access to high quality child care from ages 0-3.

The grant agreement has been reviewed and recommended for approval.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to accept the NACo RELM Grant Agreement in payment to Union County for the amount of \$50,000. Commissioner Scarfo seconded.

Commissioner Scarfo and Commissioner Seavert congratulated Commissioner Anderes on the funding to assist with the project. Child care is definitely needed in our community.

Commissioner Anderes would like to schedule a work session after the budget season for him to update the other Commissioners on the project.

Motion carried unanimously.

The chair called a 3-minute recess.

PUBLIC HEARING: First Reading of Ordinance 2025-02 – In the Matter of Implementing the Authority to Enforce the Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Management Program Delegated to Harney County by the State of Oregon and Declaring an Emergency.

Staff Report

Inga Williams, Planning Director, provided a brief staff report to the Commissioners for their consideration. Also present was Jesse Barnes, Harney County, who will be the designated enforcer.

The intergovernmental agreement with Harney County has been signed making it official on June 1, 2025 which is the first step to the implementation of services. The ordinance for consideration would implement the authority to enforce the wastewater management program delegated to Harney County by DEQ.

Jesse Barnes, or delegated person, under the supervision of the Union County Board of Commissioners, is responsible for the administration and enforcement of this chapter. She is very excited for the partnership and is excited to get things going.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commissioner Anderes closed the public comment period.

Discussion/Action

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to accept the first reading of Ordinance 2025-02; In the Matter of Implementing the Authority to Enforce the Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Management Program Delegated to Harney County by the State of Oregon and Declaring an Emergency. Commissioner Scarfo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The second reading has been scheduled for Wednesday, June 4, 2025 at 9:30 am.

PUBLIC HEARING: Ordinance 2025-03 – In the Matter of an Ordinance Revising the Union County Transient Tax Ordinance 2020-01

Staff Report

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, provided a staff report regarding Ordinance 2025-03 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The Commissioners held a work session on August 14, 2024 to discuss the current allocation and distribution process of transient room tax. The Commissioners have the authority to revise the ordinance if needed. Discussed was a more streamlined approach and dedicated funding for attractions as well as support for county agencies impacted by tourism and events.

The Commissioners do not have the ability to change the “amount of tax” or “who” it applies to. However, they do have the ability to change the allocation. Following that work session, Administrative Officer Burgess has prepared Ordinance 2025-03, which makes the adjustments that were discussed during that work session. The intent would be to distribute the funds based on the allocation in Section III, that is the only section that has been changed of the existing ordinance.

A notice of the May 21, 2025 public hearing was published on the county website along with a copy of the draft ordinance. No comments were received.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Commissioner Anderes closed the public comment period.

Discussion/Action

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to accept the first reading of Ordinance 2025-03; In the Matter of an Ordinance Revising the Union County Transient Tax Ordinance 2020-01 as presented. Commissioner Scarfo seconded.

Commissioner Scarfo was a little concerned because Commissioner Seavert was not present as a Commissioner during the August 14 work session. Commissioner Seavert indicated that Administrative Officer Burgess provided a copy of the work session documents for him to review prior to the public hearing and also gave him an update on the discussion.

Commissioner Anderes indicated the changes address the things that would potentially attract people to our county and also recognize hard work for some individuals.

Motion carried unanimously.

The second reading has been scheduled for Wednesday, June 4, 2025 at 9:45 am.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Seavert attended county college last week. He also had a tour of the Oregon Department of Emergency Management new building. He will be attending the mid-year meeting for Oregon Cattlemen’s Association on Friday in Baker City. Also attending the La Grande FFA banquet Wednesday evening.

Commissioner Scarfo reminded everyone to have a safe Memorial weekend. He noted that there will be a La Grande City Council meeting on June 4 at 6 pm, if you plan to attend show up early there will be a lot of public comment.

Commissioner Anderes appreciated all of those that showed up to the budget meeting last evening, things seem to be moving along. He is looking forward to a time where we can hold a work session to go over the things he has been working on for childcare, it has been an interesting process. He will be attending the GRH employee appreciation event this afternoon.

Commissioner Anderes also recommended hosting a staff appreciation BBQ in June. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated it was held on a Wednesday in previous years in hopes that most staff would be able to attend. A proposed date of June 25 at 11:30 am was noted.

Executive Session – ORS 192.660(2)(b) Personnel

The chair called an Executive Session at 9:57 AM.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2025 at 9 am.

The next special Commission meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2025 at 9 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Anderes adjourned the meeting at 10:41 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist