

UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 16, 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 Sheriff Bowen under Elected Official, Department Head & Employee Comments to present the School Resource Officer Contract.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

Resolution 2025-25: In the Matter of a Resolution Declaring a Local State of Emergency within Union County Due to Drought Conditions and Requesting the State of Oregon Declare a Disaster and State of Emergency in Union County

Nick Vora, Emergency Manager, provided a brief staff report to the Commissioners regarding Resolution 2025-25 for their information.

Union County is currently experiencing drought conditions with approximately 50% of Union County by area is in Severe Drought (D-2), with the remaining in Moderate Drought (D-1). Although there has been recent precipitation, the county remains in a significant deficit impacting both current and forecasted stream flow and soil moisture levels.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-25; In the Matter of a Resolution Declaring a Local State of Emergency within Union County Due to Drought Conditions presented by Emergency Manager Vora. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Anderes appreciates Emergency Manager bring this resolution forward. He has had numerous conversations with a couple of producers and approving this resolution will set them up for lower interest on their loans.

Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Scarfo asked how many other counties are declaring a drought. Emergency Manager Vora indicated that he knows Baker County has recently. He is unsure of statewide, but is aware that other counties are having the same conversation.

Intergovernmental Agreement for School Resource Officer within La Grande and Union County Schools

Cody Bowen, Union County Sheriff, provided a brief staff report to the Commissioners regarding the agreement.

Several years ago, Sheriff Bowen attempted to bring forth the agreement, however all of the school districts could not meet an agreement when it came to funding. We have

Currently Deputy Justin Hernandez is the School Resource Officer (SRO) in the La Grande School District teaching the BEST Program at all of the elementary schools, but spends a majority of his time at the high school. Deputy Humphries is the SRO for Union, Cove and North Powder. Elgin has always been fairly content with the contract deputies they have out there who pop into the school quite a bit throughout the week.

Imbler is still very interested in the BEST program and wants drug preventative skills available to the students. The new Superintendent has continued to work on that. An agreement for one (1) full time SRO who will be split up amongst the BEST Program and additional services in the La Grande Middle School has been reached. There will now be deputy presence in every school in Union County.

Commissioner Scarfo is happy to see a 4-year contract in place. Sheriff Bowen indicated that it took a lot of time working together. He is very thankful to the SRO's he has on board, it is a very influential position to hold.

Commissioner Seavert appreciates the very thorough contract and agrees having law enforcement presence is important for the youth.

Commissioner Anderes is a firm believer of having a positive, influential person in a child's life to help make a difference. Sheriff Bowen agreed.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Union County Sheriff's Office, and the La Grande, North Powder, Cove, Imbler and Union School Districts and Intermountain ESD for School Resource Officer services. Commissioner Scarfo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Scarfo moved approval of the consent agenda which included July 2, 9 & 10, 2025 claims journals and June 11, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Lease between Union County Weed Control and 4-H & Extension Service District

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the Lease Agreement to the Commissioners for their consideration.

This agreement is a lease renewal between Union County Weed Control and the 4-H & Extension Services District located at 10517 N. McAlister Road, Room 9.

The term of this lease shall be for a 12-month period beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026. Included in the lease is 500 square feet of shop and fenced parking lot space located at 10518 N. McAlister Road.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to approve the Lease Agreement between Union County Weed Control and 4-H & Extension Service District as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

STIF Funding Adjustment

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the STIF Funding Adjustment request to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Our transit provider in Union County, Community Connection of Northeast Oregon (CCNO) has been notified by ODOT Public Transit Division of delays in Federal Transit Agency (FTA) funding in the upcoming fiscal year. The funds are utilized to fund many of the transit services provided to our citizens in Union County.

CCNO has requested that Union County allow the use of STIF reserve funds in the amount of \$44,463 to support the continuation of deviated fixed route services. The hope is that the funding will eventually go through and the STIF funds will be repaid to Union County and placed back into reserve funds for future needs. There is a possibility that it does not happen that way; and if that is not the case the funding would not be returned.

Union County's 2025-27 STIF Plan includes \$190,380 in reserve funds to be used for outreach, marketing and awareness building, and continuation or expansion of transportation services.

This request was brought to the STIF advisory committee via email for their recommendation of the transfer of funds; in which the committee recommended approval.

Commissioner Scarfo thanked Kane Lester and Patrick Hemann for looking outside the box to be able to continue transportation services within the county even with the cuts. He did indicate that he has contacted Congressman Bentz's office for an update on transportation services in Oregon.

Commissioner Seavert appreciates the fact that we have a reserve fund that we can dip into for cases like this. He feels offering transit services to our community is crucial. He also appreciates being kept in the loop.

Commissioner Anderes agrees and doesn't believe that the request is much to ask for; especially for Union County citizens. His hope is that the funding will go through and things will be back to normal and gave thanks to Patrick, Kane and the rest of the CCNO staff.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to allow \$44,463 to be utilized from the STIF Reserve Funds for the continuation of transit services in Union County. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Administrative Officer Burgess mentioned if the FTA does come through as planned, the \$44,463 will be returned from Community Connection and put back into the reserve fund.

Commissioner Anderes asked for an amendment to the motion. Commissioner Scarfo agreed and Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Scarfo reported that John O'Brien has accepted the offer for the La Grande City Manager position. He also reported that there is a bus service looking into returning to provide transportation services between Portland and Boise daily.

Commissioner Seavert reported that the City of Union recently passed an ordinance related to the deer nuisance in collaboration with Oregon Department and Fish and Wildlife. City of Cove has been working through bid acceptance to recoat the inside of the water holding facilities. He attended Elgin Stampede and was very happy to see the amount of people that showed up.

Commissioner Anderes returned from Philadelphia this week for the NACo meeting. A large majority of his trip was paid for by NACo with little expense to the county. Economic Mobilities meetings were informative and he had a good conversation with the Acting Deputy Chief of the Forest Service.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 6, 2025 at 9 am.

Executive Session

The Chair called an executive session at 9:28 am pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(h) legal counsel.

Executive session ended at 9:37 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Anderes adjourned the meeting at 9:37 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist