

UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 6, 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

Administrative Officer Burgess requested to postpone the FAA Grant Agreement – RW 12-30 Project as the document is not ready.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Anderes noted that the public comment period is not a time for debate with the Commissioners and to limit comment time to 3 minutes.

Susan Hawkins, 1601 S. Main, Union, City of Union Mayor, addressed the Commissioners. Ms. Hawkins was under the impression that the City of Union was going to be on the agenda today regarding a property (865 N. 2nd Street) in Union that has been foreclosed on by the county. There have been many violations, with approximately nine (9) people living on the property, along with 6 or more travel trailers that people are also living in. The city is constantly towing abandoned and broken-down vehicles, car parts and garbage from the area, which is a high expense. Ms. Hawkins stated that she does not want to start fining the county for expenses, but doesn't know what else to do. The person who owned the property has passed on. She asked for the county's help in removing the people who are illegally staying there.

Celeste Tate, PO Box 113, Elgin, City of Union Administrator, addressed the Commissioners regarding the property at 865 N. 2nd Street in Union. She provided a copy of a letter, photos of the property and court documents for the record. Ms. Tate and the City of Union's attorney Paige Sully surveyed the state of the property on August 19, 2025. They are concerned about the amount of flammable fuel that is on the property. There are tires, household garbage, wood, abandoned and occupied travel trailers. If there were a fire, there is no doubt that it would spread to the neighboring lots. She stated that she is aware the county attorney and city attorney are working collaboratively and the city council is willing to do anything to help with the process; and is hoping for a quick solution.

Ms. Tate also read out loud a public comment submitted to her by Jack and Elisa Lind, 319 W. Elm Street, Union. Mr. and Mrs. Lind are also seeking the Commissioners assistance in removing the people living on the property and cleaning the place up.

There were no further public comments.

Intergovernmental Agreement for Microenterprise Service Delivery

Lisa, Dawson, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District, Joseph, presented the Intergovernmental Agreement for Microenterprise Service Delivery to the Commissioners for consideration.

The NEOEDD would like to propose delivery of microenterprise training services to microentrepreneurs in La Grande, Union County, Baker County and Wallowa County through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding with the City of La Grande serving as the applicant and administrator.

The CDBG funding is available to support owners of businesses with five or fewer employees whose income fits within low-moderate income limits. The grant funding will provide basic business training through curriculums or new subject-specific training. The training will be provided through NEOEDD or a hired content expert to deliver the training.

The intergovernmental agreement has a five-year implementation period, which will allow the City of La Grande to sponsor other CDBG applications if the first year goes well.

Commissioner Scarfo noted that the signature blocks need to be updated, as Senator Nash is no longer a Commissioner. Lisa Dawson has an updated version for signature.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement for Microenterprise Service Delivery as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Seavert noted that this is a grant funded program and there should be no obligation. Lisa Dawson indicated that is correct.

Motion carried unanimously.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

Thief Valley Reservoir Management Agreement

Josh Ford, Parks Coordinator, presented the Thief Valley Reservoir Management Agreement to the Commissioners for their consideration.

This management agreement is an update to an existing agreement between the Department of the Interior (DOI) Bureau of Reclamation and Union County. The term of this agreement shall be for an additional twenty-five (25) years and is fully executed once both parties sign.

There have been no changes to the agreement since it was last adopted in 2000.

Commissioner Seavert asked if the county is in charge of the revenue for fees. Josh Ford indicated that there are no fees to use the area. Commissioner Seavert asked what kind of workload it is for him and his department. Josh Ford indicated that Thief Valley is favorite park because it's the least work - as far as maintaining, bathrooms are checked every other week and parking area grading every couple of years.

Commissioner Anderes asked who is responsible for the safety of the docks. Josh Ford indicated that his office is responsible for the upkeep of the dock.

Commissioner Seavert asked who the responsible party would be if something needed to be replaced or fixed on the dock. Josh Ford indicated that the agreement includes the transfer of responsibility, which would be the “Partner” (Union County).

Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that the Parks Department has been successful in the past obtaining grants to replace things such as the dock, ramp and restrooms. The grant funding is typically available through Oregon Parks and the Marine Board.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to approve the Thief Valley Reservoir Management Agreement with Director Wright given signature authority. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

FAA Grant Agreement – RW 12-30 Project

This item has been postponed until further notice.

Good Road

Doug Wright, Public Works and Airport Director, provided a brief staff report regarding Good Road to the Commissioners for their information.

Good Road is classified as a local collector that serves local residents and is approximately 7 miles long. The road was paved and overlaid many years ago; based on pavement standards falls into the category of “poor and failing condition”. The estimated cost to overlay the section of road would start at \$1.2 million.

To date, many attempts have been made to fill pot holes with little success in attempts to reduce the traveling public from dodging potholes by traveling into the oncoming lane of traffic; which is a safety concern. Without the funds to improve the road, Director Wright recommends converting it to gravel.

Director Wright provided history on Good Road to the Commissioners. Traffic counts were done and the average traffic count is 27 in one day. Some of the other roads like Summerville Road have a traffic count of 491; Spies Road that connects between Cove Highway and Union Highway has a traffic count of 447. He also reported that Owsley Canyon Road had a count of 458.

This information, demonstrates that there is not that much travel on Good Road, which is why it is classified as a local collector road. The unfortunate piece about all of this, no one likes a failing road and all it takes is money to fix it. The question is always asked, “why do you select certain roads to pave, why don’t you select ours”. Director Wright provided information from an ODOT 2012 Pavement Condition Report.

The graph includes maintenance preservation and as the road starts failing you get down into “major rehab”, which costs a lot more funding to rehab a road than to preserve it. With that unfortunately, decisions are made based on priority, ADT, farm-to-market roads, what they’re

serving and which ones we can keep in good condition without falling into the graph of major rehab.

Director Wright indicated the decision stems from revenues, such as Forest Service funding, gas tax and timber receipt funds, which the Public Works Department relies heavily on. That specific revenue declined heavily in the 90's, then SRS came around and boosted it. Since that funding has gone down, road conditions are going down as well. We are in the process of playing catch up and it is difficult with the revenue received today.

There are approximately 150 miles of paved roads in the county; 5 miles are in good condition, 26 miles are fair, 75 miles in poor and 44 miles in very poor. As he mentioned in budget committee, it would be in the millions of dollars to complete this. Director Wright always looks at the pavement condition index, which is an average over a condition rating. In the county, the average pavement condition index is 35%. The target is 95%. The county is always lagging behind to keep up the pavement condition index just to get to 50% in good condition.

For example, Owsley Canyon got caught up in the first round and had to be converted back to gravel. Hard decisions have to be made on what is best for the community, but also what is best for ongoing maintenance.

Commissioner Scarfo asked what the cost is to convert Good Road back to gravel. Director Wright indicated it would cost approximately \$30,000. Commissioner Scarfo stated he is concerned about safety issues raised because of the potholes.

Commissioner Anderes asked Director Wright to discuss the process of pavement to gravel. Director Wright indicated to start in the fall with cooler weather, it is easier for the asphalt to break a part and to follow up with gravel so the asphalt doesn't try to go back together.

Commissioner Seavert asked about the process as well. He believes incorporating some of the asphalt will hold the stability of the road. He would like to see dust control that he has noticed in the valley where grading has been applied. He feels a well-maintained gravel road is preferable to a paved road with multiple potholes.

Commissioner Anderes noted without SRS funding being reauthorized to the Public Works Department for roads funding challenges are going to continue and not get much better.

Director Wright said it comes back to prioritization of roads and being able to keep the good pavement in good condition. Five (5) miles of road in "good condition" was over \$5 million back in 2012. That section of road is starting to develop cracks, and water will infiltrate into that and will start creating potholes. With that being said, he is already planning to go out and chip seal to seal that off.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve the recommendation of Union County Public Works Director Wright to transition Good Road from poor pavement to gravel. Commissioner Scarfo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Scarfo moved approval of the consent agenda which included July 16, 23, 24 & 30, 2025 claims journals and May 20, 21 and June 25, 2025 meeting minutes as presented.

Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Cybersecurity Monitoring

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the Cybersecurity Monitoring document to the Commissioners for their consideration. Jason Fouts, IT Manager is also present.

Jason Fouts, IT Manager, received notice on July 16, 2025 that the county will no longer be able to obtain cybersecurity monitoring through the Center for Internet Security at no cost through an IGA with the Secretary of State. This service has been available at no cost since 2020.

The county's current subscription will expire on August 29, 2025. The cost to renew the service for one year is \$11,772 which was not anticipated and therefore not included in the adopted FY 2025-26 IT budget. Jason does an amazing job with IT needs, with a very slim staff (Jason & Tony) and a conservative budget. The monitoring services provided through the Center for Internet Security has been an essential part of cyber security monitoring for Union County and it would be unwise to forego the level of security we have had in place.

Commissioner Seavert asked if this is his preferred method, and if there are alternatives. IT Manager Fouts indicated that there are other alternatives and has a meeting this afternoon to discuss how other counties are handling this. However, he believes this is the safest option.

Commissioner Scarfo feels that this is an unfunded mandate and is costing the county almost \$12,000. IT Manager Fouts indicated that the late notice of cancellation extended their agreement through August 10th as a grace period and a 10 percent discount for this year only. Next year the regular fee is \$13,500.

Administrative Officer Burgess recommends transferring funds to continue the valuable service. If approved, \$11,772 would be transferred from Contingency funds for renewal of the one-year subscription. As Jason prepares his budget for FY 2026-27, he will include the cost in his budget for this service or a preferred alternative.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve the authorization of utilizing \$11,772 in Contingency funds to renew the on-year subscription of cybersecurity monitoring as presented. Commissioner Scarfo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

FY 2024-25 Audit Agreement

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the FY 2024-25 Audit Agreement to the Commissioners for their consideration.

This is a proposal for service from Connected Professional Accountants, LLC (CPA) to conduct the FY 2024-25 audit. CPA always provides a thorough and timely audit and is requesting an increase in fees of 4 percent in COLA for a total increase of \$1,863.

Approval of the contract with CPA, LLC for the FY 2024-25 audit would be in the amount of \$48,438.

Commissioner Seavert has heard from other boards it is becoming harder to find firms that will do audits for municipalities. He doesn't see this being a substantial increase.

Commissioner Anderes appreciates that it is a local firm, keeping the dollars in the community.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to approve the FY 2024-25 Audit Agreement in the amount of \$48,438 as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ODOT Public Transit Agreement – 5310 Purchased Services and STIF Discretionary

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the 5310 Purchased Services and STIF Discretionary agreements to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The two agreements are between Union County and Oregon Department of Transportation, Public Transit Division. The agreements are for the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027.

Agreement 35919 is in the amount of \$160,000 in Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds (STIF), Discretionary program. The funds will provide for a Regional Travel Training and Coordination Specialist and will be provided to Community Connection of Northeast Oregon (CCNO) through a contract, who will also be responsible for employment and management of the position.

Agreement 35748 is in the amount of \$174,449 in Federal 5310 funds. The funds will provide for public transportation services under a purchase services contract with CCNO for the demand response program.

Commissioner Anderes indicated that a portion of the ODOT funding package doubles the amount of transit payroll tax, and asked if that tax would in fact improve services. Patrick Hemann, CCNO Transit Coordinator, indicated CCNO wouldn't need to utilize 5310 and 5311 that they get from FTA. Which is a match of 20-50 percent; and will help out with quite a bit more routes.

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to approve both 5310 Purchased Services and STIF Discretionary grant agreements as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Real Property

Commissioner Anderes asked if the Commissioners have the ability to go into an executive session to discuss Real Property. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that she had not put an executive session on the agenda this time and was unaware of the conversations Ms. Tate has had with Wyatt. However, Wyatt will be in attendance on August 20 to discuss the mentioned property.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Scarfo announced that Governor Kotek's veto list does not include the waste water project at the fairgrounds. She is expected to sign the bill authorizing the funding. He also noted that the fair went extremely well this year and is excited for next year.

Commissioner Seavert enjoyed the fair and was happy to see an abundance of people attending. It was very well attended this year. He attended a Business Oregon Workshop in Pendleton yesterday and it was also well attended.

Commissioner Anderes reported that a survey will be coming out from Rural Engagement and Vitality Center of Eastern Oregon University related to the childcare initiative he has been working on. There is a need for childcare in our county and a survey is the best way to gather that data. He also reported that Senator Nash will hold a town hall at EOU next Tuesday.

Commissioner Anderes also gave condolences to Wallowa County for the loss of Commissioner Roberts.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 20, 2025 at 9 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Anderes adjourned the meeting at 9:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist