

Union County Budget Committee Meeting
Budget Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 20, 2026
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room

Present: R. Matthew Scarfo, Commission Chair
Paul Anderes, Commissioner
Jake Seavert, Commissioner
Matthew Goodwin, Budget Committee Member
Audrey Cant, Budget Committee Member
Mathew Miles, Budget Committee Member
Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer/Budget Officer
Allison Moore, Senior Department Specialist/Recording Secretary

Call to Order

The Chair, Matthew Goodwin, called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Special Funds Presentations

Community Corrections

Travis Miller, Community Corrections Director, presented the Parole and Probation proposed budget to the committee for their consideration.

All of the department's funding comes from the state level and is the same amount as last year because it is a 2-year cycle. Union County receives around .67% of the Department of Corrections, Community Corrections Biennial Budget. The .67% is based on the number of felony offenders supervised by Union County. They are currently only funded through the state to supervise Possession of a Controlled Substance (PCS) misdemeanor offenders and some Domestic Violence misdemeanor offenders; otherwise they supervise felony offenders.

The 1145 funding for the Sheriff's Office is in the amount of \$218,000, which is the same as last year. Another thing that will be funded through the Community Corrections department is the work crew position. It is very valuable to his department as far as sanctions that are not in custody working on projects in the community. The court also takes advantage of the program and sentence people to work crew.

Community Corrections also received funding from the Justice Reinvestment Grant. This budget cycle will be around \$35,964 and coming straight to the county for transitional housing for offenders to get back on their feet.

There are currently two open positions in the Community Corrections department. He will not be hiring at this time due to the number of offenders under supervision. He is keeping them in the budget so he doesn't lose the positions in case numbers increase.

Matthew Goodwin asked about the \$26,000 grant for housing and if it is specific to transitional housing. Director Miller indicated that it is typically used for individuals who are in prison and released and do not have any family local. The county is fortunate enough to have transitional housing through Oxford Houses. There are 4; one woman's and three men's and are clean and sober housing. Dr. Rice through the Eastern Oregon Health and Wellness has a house if needed.

Commissioner Seavert asked for clarification on the high amount in the contingency fund. Director Miller indicated the contingency fund has been saved up over the years. The majority of the funds have come when they were able to charge everybody on probation a monthly supervision fee; as well as good budget management over the years.

Administrative Officer Burgess noted during the time that Director Miller was unsuccessful in hiring, the position was already budgeted and the funds went into contingency. The funds in this fund are dedicated and they can only be utilized for this program and services. In the event that the state does cut back funds, the county would have funds to fall back on to keep the community safe.

Mat Miles referred back to the supervision fees. Director Miller indicated that the Justice Reinvestment Bill during COVID, took away all supervision fees and reduced fees that the department can charge.

Director Miller referred to a new line item in the amount of \$5,000 for Behavioral Health Court and Treatment Court; both very valuable programs. Most offenders that go into treatment court are misdemeanor crimes that cause a lot of calls for service from the PD and the Sheriff's Department.

MERA – Mt. Emily Recreation Area

Josh Ford, Parks & MERA Coordinator, presented the proposed budget for MERA to the committee for their consideration.

The proposed budget for MERA is a lot simpler than previous years as there aren't any projects, big purchases or capital outlay. He indicated that they are catching up on some of the maintenance they've fallen behind on.

A majority of MERA revenue comes from Oregon Parks and Recreation Department ATV Operations and Maintenance Grant Program anticipated to be \$202,426 and is the 2nd year of the grant cycle. There is also an anticipated \$18,000 from the Parking Permit Program and \$23,000 from Transient Room Tax.

The biggest expense this year will be in Personnel to allow him and his staff to be out there getting things done. A line item was added for Professional Services solely for Archaeological Services within MERA. Sites cannot be fixed until an archaeologist comes in and surveys the area first.

Fire patrol is expected to be approximately \$25,000. The amount changes every year and ODF recommends budgeting the same amount this year.

The Parking Permit Program revenue is anticipated at approximately \$18,000. The plan is to use \$7,000 for non-grant maintenance which is specific on the non-motorized area since it has access to ATV funds. \$6,000 will go towards Fire Patrol; \$2,000 towards Contractual Services; \$7,000 overhead of the parking program and the remainder stays in contingency for future projects.

Commissioner Seavert noted that the Parking Permit Program brought in a lot more money than they anticipated. Mr. Ford is mailing out a lot of passes and going through a lot of stamps.

Matthew Goodwin asked where the Archaeologists come from. Mr. Ford indicated they used a number of different people from the community.

Audrey Cant asked if the camping problem from last year are still the same. Mr. Ford indicated once the snow receded there were about 2 a week. However, it seems they are hauling less campers off, which is really helpful.

Commissioner Anderes asked how much use the additional parking at Igo is getting. Mr. Ford indicated it is definitely less than all of the others, but is the prime place for equestrians to go.

Commissioner Anderes also asked if they were able to get QR codes for the parking permits at the bike shops in town. Mr. Ford stated that there aren't currently, but he can arrange it for the future.

Parks Fund

Josh Ford, Parks & MERA Coordinator, presented the proposed budget for the Parks Fund to the committee for their consideration.

The Parks budget is also very simple. They strive to provide the best services to campers and boaters at the lowest cost possible to them.

Revenue in the amount of \$50,000 is anticipated from RV Receipts, while the Marine Board grant is anticipated to be \$9,537. Expenses include Personnel, Dock Maintenance, Snow Plowing and updating picnic tables. Contingency is for future projects that primarily comes from unused RV Receipts.

In regards to Dock Maintenance, the Wolf Creek Dock is going to need to be replaced; especially if the water comes up, the dock gets submerged.

Commissioner Seavert asked how much a dock costs to be totally replaced. Mr. Ford indicated he has only seen the grant that Sean Chambers did and it was approximately \$200,000.

Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that grants may become available for those types of things that will require a match. The hope is that the contingency they are building up would cover that match. The grants are also competitive and there is not a lot of funding.

Public Works

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, presented the proposed budget for the Public Works Department to the committee for their consideration.

Public Works Revenue is significantly higher than last year due to receiving Secure Rural Schools Act funding for fiscal year 2025-27 in the amount of \$1.2 million. There was also savings in Personnel because there were open positions. With the mild winter, there was savings in overtime. He used the light winter to lay approximately \$190,000 in gravel and repairs on the roads that they don't normally have time to get to.

Road Maintenance and Supplies is hovering around \$3 million. The plan is to chip seal about 20 miles worth of roads north of Elgin area. He is also still planning to do Phys Road in full-depth rebuild with oil mat overlay this year, which will cost close to \$1 million.

Capital Outlay is in the amount of \$570,000. They are going to do another grader buyout because the leases are getting so expensive that only makes sense to own the equipment. Once he buys it out, it becomes the county's and will get about 11,000 hours on it before they need to look at some of the older machines.

They are also going to take a look at fuel pump updates; get new software in place and fuel tank upgrades because they are old school when it comes to tracking fuel. It would be automatically split and billed out.

Airport Operations

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, presented the proposed budget for Airport Operations to the committee for the consideration.

The revenue is up in Airport Operations due to fuel sales. With the rising cost of fuel, Director Wright budgeted \$1.5 million for Aviation Fuel Sales. Hopefully it will come down a bit, and can still operate as needed.

Personnel Services is the same as last year with one full time employee, and a part time.

Director Wright doesn't see a lot of need for upgrades at this time, as they have had some major upgrades at the airport recently.

Airport Capital Improvement Fund

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, presented the proposed budget for the Airport Capital Improvement Fund to the committee for their consideration.

Major accomplishments in FY 2025-26 are the completed work on the SW Hangar Development Taxiway & RW 12-30 Shoulder Project Design. Another project completed is the work on the Connect Oregon Grant Project which included new aviation storage hangars, backup generator and fuel system upgrade.

Major objectives in FY 2026-27 are the Taxiway & RW 12-30 Shoulder Project and the design work on the USFS Tanker Expansion project. Director Wright provided a preliminary review of the project to the committee for their information.

Commissioner Anderes asked if the airport is at capacity or close to being maxed out. Director Wright indicated there are at most 6-7 airplanes parked on the tarmac trying to get in and get fuel. They like the Union County Airport because it's easier to get in and out of rather than the Boise airport, where they deal with all the other airlines.

Commissioner Seavert has no problem expanding the airport to get more aircraft with our geographical location.

Weed Control Fund

Brian Clapp, Weed Supervisor, presented the proposed budget for the Weed Control Fund to the committee for their consideration.

Operating revenues from the tax levy are estimated to increase from \$267,800 for FY 2025-26 and up to \$290,000 for FY 2026-27 due to land values increasing. Grants and Agreements revenue is expected to be \$72,644 and refunds from Shop Space rental and landowner reimbursements are expected to bring in \$40,000. There is also an anticipated carryover of \$305,000. Total revenue for the 2026-27 budget is anticipated at \$711,644.

There is a need for a seasonal employee if there is a comparable wage that would entice applicants. He would like to hire someone with experience because he doesn't have the time to train.

Chemical prices are the lowest they have been since 2017. He has stockpiles of herbicides from previous year.

David's Chair

Brian Blais, Veterans Services Officer, provided an explanation of David's Chair and the story behind it.

David's Chair is a track mobility scooter that would be rented out, allowing not just veterans, but anybody in the community with mobility issues to have access to the outdoors. The VFW has proposed to manage the program; but doesn't have the \$7,000 annual maintenance fee for the chair.

Commissioner Seavert asked how often the chair would get utilized. Mr. Blais stated he reached out to local groups that take veteran's hunting and it sounds like they would use it often.

Matthew Goodwin asked if he has seen it in person. Mr. Blais indicated they haven't moved forward with the in-person demo because they wanted to secure the funding first. The bulk of use is on the coastal side of the state.

Commissioner Seavert asked if the chair would be restricted for Union County use only. Mr. Blais indicated all of Eastern Oregon unless that isn't appropriate due to where the funding is coming from.

Audrey Cant asked what the lifetime of the chair is. Mr. Blais indicated that he wasn't sure.

Commissioner Anderes asked if \$7,000 is a one-time fee or annual. Mr. Blais indicated that it would be an annual fee.

Commissioner Scarfo asked if Stu Spence, City of La Grande Parks, would be pitching in. Mr. Blais indicated that he had not as they are in the very beginning stage trying to see if they can make it happen.

Commissioner Anderes asked the urgency of the chair because Administrative Officer Burgess has an idea for funding, but it may take a while to get there. It hasn't been announced to the public, so there isn't an urgency at this point in time. However, hunting season is approaching and would be an optimal time.

Commissioner Seavert stated that he is in support of this; but would like it to be strictly for veterans, not the entire community.

Commissioner Anderes asked how long it would take for the chair to be a part of STIF. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated it would be a year from July when the program would be available. She was looking for a more reliable source of continued funding, which is why she recommended transportation funding.

Matthew Goodwin asked if they would own the chair or if it would be under lease. Mr. Blais indicated it would definitely be a lease.

Administrative Officer Burgess is uncertain who would be the insurance holder and responsible for the liability of the chair.

Matthew Goodwin and Mat Miles both asked if the money has to be upfront. Commissioner Anderes indicated \$5,000 will generate enough buzz that people will start donating to the cause.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to allocate \$5,000 from the Special Transportation Project for partial funding of a David's Chair as presented in the email. Audrey Cant seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Other Special Funds

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, went over each individual Special Fund that wasn't previously discussed. Below is the summary of discussions on those funds where there were questions.

County Schools

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, explained the proposed budget for County Schools to the committee for their consideration.

The County Schools fund is where the county receives forest receipt revenue for the schools. Also received were payments in lieu of taxes from OTEC.

Commissioner Anderes referred back to the SRS payments received in Union County and broke down each payment amount to schools in Union County.

STF

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the proposed budget for STF to the committee for their information.

STF funds are funds that the county receives from the Oregon Department of Transportation Transit Division. The funds are earmarked for public transit, persons with disabilities and seniors. The county developed a STIF Plan with the assistance of the advisory committee.

Commissioner Anderes noted that it is important to note that ODOTs source is from payroll tax.

Human Services

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the proposed budget for Human Services to the committee for their information.

The Human Services Fund is fairly large because the county receives funding from the state for Public Health, Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Treatment and Veteran Services. There are agreements in place with the state in order for the county to receive those funds. Once those funds are received, the county reimburses CHD for the services they provide under contract.

Audrey Cant asked why Contractual Services is up a lot more than last fiscal year. Administrative Officer Burgess budgets the full amount and when the money comes, they deposit into each of the categories for auditing purposes. The county is receiving \$250,000 more this year for all of the programs than there was last year and made available. There is also an increase in Mental Health funds.

Vehicle Reserve Fund

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the proposed budget for the Vehicle Reserve fund to the committee for their information.

There have been funds transferred to accumulate for vehicle replacement. This applies to departments other than the Sheriff's Office. For instance, when Tax Assessor Vavra went over his proposed budget, there was a transfer of \$5,000 in to the Vehicle Reserve Fund to replace a vehicle if needed.

Public Comment

The chair opened the public comment period. There were no public comments.

Budget Committee Discussion & Deliberation

Commissioner Seavert asked if there was a consensus on Cat Utopia. Administrative Officer Burgess provided information related to the Discretionary Fund Grant application as an option. The guidelines are that it can fund tourism activities and attractions, and economic development purposes, or programs that support tourism activities and events and those services impacted by tourism.

There is a possibility it could qualify as quality of the community being that the cats are feral. Administrative Officer Burgess will provide the application to the appropriate party.

There is a possibility that the Commissioners won't take the recommendation of the advisory committee.

Approval of Union County Budget for Publication

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the FY 2026-27 proposed Union County budget to include a \$5,000 allocation for David's Chair. Mat Miles seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

The chair adjourned the meeting at 6:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Moore



Senior Department Specialist