

Union County Board of Commissioners
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 11, 2026

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

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

STAFF REPORT

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, read out loud a staff report regarding Ballot Measure 31-101.

The staff report stated that Ballot Measure 31-101 was referred to the voters of Union County on November 3, 2020 as a result of an initiative petition. The measure was passed by voters with 7,435 yes votes and 6,753 no votes, a difference of 682 total votes. The measure requires the Commissioners to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of every February, June and October to discuss how to promote the interest of Union County in any negotiations regarding relocating the state border of Idaho to include Union County.

Civil penalties are provided for anyone who willfully prohibits, cancels or hinders any of the prescribed meetings of the Board of Commissioners. A civil offense against this measure is punishable as a class D violation, subject to a maximum fine of up to \$125 and is enforceable by any peace officer. In accordance with the approved measure, meetings have previously been held by the Board of Commissioners on February 10, June 9 and October 13, 2021, February 9, June 8, October 12, 2022, February 8, June 14, October 11, 2023, February 14, June 12 October 9, 2024, February 12, June 11 and October 8, 2025.

Public comment opportunities have been offered at each of the previous meetings and written public comments have been accepted.

At the February 8, 2023 meeting, a motion was passed by the Commissioners to send a letter memorializing the Greater Idaho Movement ballot measure results to State Representatives.

On February 9, 2023, a letter was sent by the Commissioners to Representative Bobby Levy and Senator Bill Hansell officially informing them of the November 3, 2020 Ballot Measure results.

The 2025 Legislative Session did see bills introduced requesting a state level task force be formed to explore what would be involved in a board change. The bills did not receive hearings, so did not move forward. There was also a bill introduced that would have required counties to sign affidavits stating they would remain part of the State of Oregon if they received state funding. That bill did not move forward either.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commissioner Scarfo asked that those providing public comment limit their comment time to 3 to 5 minutes.

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, read out loud a public comment submitted via email by Jerald R. Jackman, GreaterIdaho.org on January 31, 2026. Mr. Jackman indicated that he is newly appointed to the NACo Western Interstate Region Board, and is certain that Commissioner Anderes is familiar with the political and geo-cultural division that exists between Eastern and Western Oregon counties. His request is that Commissioner Anderes works in his new position to help resolve this conflict amicably. He advocates for Greateridaho.org, and doesn't see any political alternative than to separate in one way or another from the oppressive chokehold that liberal politicians have over rural and cultural values and lifestyles of East Oregonians. He hopes that the Commissioners will use their positions to address this.

Curt Howell, La Grande, provided a copy of his comments to the Commissioners for the record. He did not read his comments out loud and hopes that the Commissioners will look it over afterwards. He thanked the Commissioners for holding this meeting and allowing people to testify. He has a lengthy list that he offered with many issues he sees as a huge problem within the borders of Oregon. He cannot believe that most people can continue with the egregious attitude we see from Western Oregon voters and their legislative representatives. We cannot conduct our businesses and live free with the burdens placed on us from all of the ultra progressives in Western Oregon. He urges the Commissioners to align with other Commissioners to plead to investigate the possibility of this county becoming under the governance with the state of Idaho.

Beth Upshaw, Union, addressed the Commissioners with her comments related to the Move Idaho Border. She has talked to the Commissioners about the logistics behind these meetings. She was born and raised in Eastern Oregon and grew up on a ranch. She considers herself a lover of this county and region. She is a believer that Oregon is a beautiful state, east and west. For us to dictate that only liberals sit on the west side and none on the east side, she respectfully disagrees. She also knows there are conservatives on the west side just as there is on the east side, and finds that troublesome. Her father was a county Commissioner in Grant county and advocated for Save Oregon. She is asking the Commissioners to do the same, advocate for Oregon. It is a great state.

Matt McCaw, Greater Idaho Movement, Crook County, provided a brief update to the Commissioners for their information. He reported that 13 counties in Eastern Oregon have passed measures asking to either investigate moving the border, advocate for moving the border or flat out moving the border. There has been legislation in the Oregon legislature in both the 2023 and 2025 sessions, that the democratic majority refused to give hearings for the move. Also in 2023 in Idaho, was legislation passed by the house saying they were ready and willing to have border talks with the state of Oregon. Where they are at as a movement going forward, is that it has become clear to their organization that the legislature and the current Governor are not interested in engaging in the discussion about potentially moving the border, regardless of how many counties have passed it. At this point it has become clear, action on moving the border is not going to happen from Western Oregonians. Which is why the Greater Idaho Movement is going to approach the federal government for assistance. The Idaho and Oregon border

movement is not the only movement; it is happening across the country. Mr. McCaw continued to provide examples of counties wishing to separate from the state they reside. They have a federal representative that represents us and that is Congressman Bentz. We have had standing communication with Congressman Bentz and so far he has been unwilling to sit down at the table with the group. Mr. McCaw asked the Commissioners to advocate for their citizens and voters in Union County and ask Congressman Bentz to sit down with leadership and talk about how he can advocate for us at the federal level.

Vivian Young, La Grande, would like to clarify that the ballot measure says to “promote the interest of Union County”. She hasn’t heard any interest today. The letters that were just mentioned by Mr. McCaw, she heard them read as, reporting on the vote; not advocating for moving the border. She thinks a clarification needs to be noted, it is stated that we are for that and that’s what the vote was. The vote was simply to have the conversation about promoting the interest of Union County and how we could benefit. In all these meetings, we never hear that, we just hear about moving the border, and that we should be supporting it. We have had a conversation 3 times a year for 5 years and here we are.

Kimberly Nobles, Umatilla County, addressed the Commissioners with her comments in favor of the Greater Idaho Border Movement and becoming a part of Idaho. Her family has been in Umatilla for 7 generations, who are farmers and own land. The thing that frustrates her the most is the fact that the other side of the state is deciding what we can do with our land and livestock and our livelihood. We have total different opinions on how to live life in Oregon and she is all for becoming a part of the Greater Idaho Movement. She is asking the Commissioners to represent those of us in Eastern Oregon in the movement. She is really tired of getting bills passed from people on the west side that don’t even understand agriculture and living on a farm.

Vivian Young, La Grande, commented that she doesn’t live on a ranch or a farm and wants to understand what the problems are. We need to have an understanding and discuss what is asked for in the ballot measure which is, to promote the interest. She wants farming to be successful, and ranching. She would like to know if there can be a different meeting to have the discussions. She would like to figure this out without having to change her zip code.

Commissioner Scarfo closed the public comment period.

COMMISSIONER REMARKS

Commissioner Anderes indicated there was a small group of Eastern Oregon County Commissioners that were able to sit down with the Governor on Monday in Salem. They did not talk about the Idaho Border Movement, they talked about stewardship agreements, childcare and HB4124; which is making radical changes to the university system to include Eastern Oregon University.

Commissioner Seavert indicated that the Commissioners hear both sides. Both sides feel they are not being heard whether at the local level or the state level, and he would have to concur with that. It is unclear as to the direction we need to take as the next step. He feels like it would be beneficial for both groups to mutually get together and have open and transparent conversation about this without anger and tempers. Without that we are going to have the divisiveness in our

county, like we've seen at the state level. He will bring up this conversation with other Eastern Oregon Commissioners within the next 14 days and find out what their constituents are feeling.

Commissioner Scarfo indicated that this is the 6th year they have had to meet about this topic.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next special Commission meeting on this topic will be held on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 at 9 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 9:26 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist