

Union County Board of Commissioners
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Present: Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo, Chair
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.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no revisions to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Scarfo opened the public comment period and asked public comment to be limited to 3 minutes.

There were no public comments at this time.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

Weed Levy

Brian Clapp, Weed Supervisor, 10507 N. McAlister Road Rm. 3, presented the Weed Levy staff report to the Commissioners for their information.

The Union County Weed Advisory Board has reviewed the weed levy that is up for renewal. Their request is to submit a renewal of the five-year local option levy for noxious weed control in Union County.

The county has greatly benefited from the passage of the levy in 2016 and 2021 and would continue to benefit if the levy is in fact added to the May 19, 2026 ballot.

The levy is in the amount of \$.12 per \$1,000 of assessed value for five fiscal years 2026-2031.

Alan Guttridge High Valley Road, Union, Chairman of the Weed Control Advisory Board, addressed the Commissioners with a little background on the levy fund and thanked the Commissioners for their time.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to support Referral of a 5-year Local Option Levy to Fund Noxious Weed Control. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Anderes thanked Brian Clapp and the Weed Board for their continued work in Union County to control noxious weeds. He appreciates the efforts of the board members for looking at the weed list and revising it each year.

Commissioner Seavert also thanked Brian Clapp for his efforts. He indicated that a lot of people don't realize weeds being that important and crucial. However, for the scenic value of our county and

promoting recreation, especially with having MERA in the county he thinks it is an important aspect that we take into effect of what economic value of keeping those weeds down.

Commissioner Scarfo mentioned the county that has also received fan mail from a constituent thanking Brian for his work throughout Union County.

Commissioner Anderes' hope is that we can get control of another serious environmental and economic threat to Union County as time goes forward.

Motion carried unanimously.

FY 2024-25 Audit Presentation

Chelsea Hewitt, Certified Public Accountants, LLC, presented a brief staff report to the Commissioners for their information. She also gave appreciation to Union County staff who always make their audit run smoothly.

Union County is required to have an audit as a county in the state of Oregon. The county is also required to have what is called a federal compliance audit because the federal awards exceed \$750,000.

Ms. Hewitt provided a condensed version of the audit and referred to the letter to governance that includes adjusting journal entries which are done each year. There was nothing out of the ordinary this year that she would be concerned about. She stated that the county received an unmodified opinion which is the best available.

The next letter that she referred to is the management letter, which is not done every year. This is only if a matter is deemed to be immaterial or inconsequential, but should be brought to management attention. Ms. Hewitt stated that while testing the airport fuel sales, there was a difference between the fuel sales figure from the airport. They have QuickBooks that they run for their accounting, and then the county's accounting software. So, there was a difference between the figures there, as far as what was the actual fuel sales. She believes it is timing and the way it is reported. Being that it was a large enough number, she felt it was important to bring up to the Commissioners. Those two systems should tie together.

There was a positive change in net position of \$3.4 million, which means our net position increased from the prior year to the current year by about 3.4 million. It had also increased last year, so we've had multiple increases over the past several years, which is very positive.

Ms. Hewitt discussed governmental funds, increasing the fund balance to \$465,799. Which again, is very positive. Proprietary funds are going to be the airport, Buffalo Peak Golf Course, and the Solid Waste fund, which also saw a positive increase of \$1.4 million.

The other really positive thing is that Cari Huffman had done a lot of training on the new GASB reporting standard. She had gone to the class, and had her worksheet checked, so there were hardly any changes. That is almost unheard of.

The total expenditures that the county has was \$3.7 million of federal awards this year. This was \$10,000 difference than federal expenditures the county had in the prior year, so it was very comparable.

Commissioner Anderes thanked CPA, Shelley Burgess, and staff for making the audit go smoothly each year.

Commissioner Seavert thanked CPA for their working relationship with staff, which is a part of the success of a clean audit.

Commissioner Scarfo noted that CPA's hard work makes their job very easy.

Administrative Officer Burgess referred back to the airport fuel sales. She has spoken with Kim Rainey, Office Manager, and they are going to work on a process to reconcile that. She also explained that Cari Huffman deserves a lot of credit for all of the preparation work and things that go into being ready for the audit and especially taking initiative on the new standards as they come out.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Seavert noted a minor correction needed in the November 12 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Seavert moved approval of the consent agenda which included the January 7, 8 & 14, 2025 claims journals and November 12 & December 3, 2025 meeting minutes as amended. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Court Order 2026-01: In the Matter of Selection of an Official Newspaper for Union County Public Notice Publications

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-01 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Each calendar year the Commissioners are asked to designate a newspaper for official publications. The county is required by ORS-193 to identify a newspaper that we will use for required publications.

This court order would designate the East Oregonian as the official newspaper. It is the only newspaper available currently in Union County that qualifies for this designation.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-01; In the Matter of Selection of an Official Newspaper for Union County Public Notice. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2026-02: In the Matter of Appointment of a Budget Officer for Union County for FY 2026-27

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-02 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

There is a need to appoint a Budget Officer for FY 2026-27 and Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, is qualified and has agreed to serve. This court order would appoint Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer for the upcoming fiscal year.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-02; In the Matter of Appointment of a Budget Officer for Union County for Fiscal Year 2026-27. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2026-03: In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Fair Board Association Board of Directors

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-03 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Deb Cornford, Jamie Jo Haddock, and Heather Rajkovich have been active members of the Union County Fair Board Association Board of Directors and are due for renewal. All three have expressed interest in continuing to serve.

Their new term will expire on December 31, 2029.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-03; In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Fair Board Association Board of Directors. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Anderes said with our thanks they have done great things the last couple of years.

Commissioner Scarfo is very excited to be around for the beginning of the project.

Commissioner Seavert thanked the committee members and the volunteers that assist with the fair.

Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2026-04: In the Matter of Appointment to the MERA Non-Motorized Advisory Committee

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, read out loud Court Order 2026-04 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Aric Johnson has been serving on the committee as the US Forest Service representative but has recently retired from his employment leaving an unexpired term.

An application has been received from Ben Walker who has expressed interest in serving on this committee. There are open positions representing the general public and a bicyclist.

Tyler Brooks and Heather Murphy have submitted applications expressing an interest in serving on this committee.

With the approval of the court order, Tyler Brooks and Heather Murphy terms would expire on December 31, 2029 and Ben Walker's term would expire on December 31, 2027.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-04; In the Matter of Appointment to the MERA Non-Motorized Advisory Committee. Commissioner Anderes seconded.

Commissioner Anderes thanked the three committee members for stepping up and volunteering. He would also like to recognize Aric Johnson's work who has been around since the beginning of MERA.

Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2026-05: In the Matter of Appointment to the MERA Motorized Advisory Committee
Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-05 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Aric Johnson has been serving on the committee as the US Forest Service representative but has recently retired from his employment leaving an unexpired term.

An application has been received from Ben Walker expressing interest in serving at the US Forest Service representative. Also, committee member Doug Hislop is due for renewal. Mr. Hislop has been an active member and expressed interest in continuing to serve.

Mr. Hislop has a term that will expire on December 31, 2029 and Mr. Walker with a term expiring on December 31, 2027.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-05; In the Matter of Appointment to the MERA Motorized Advisory Committee. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2026-06: In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-06 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The term for committee member Gabe White is due for renewal serving as a Livestock Owner. Mr. White has expressed interest in continuing to serve.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-06; In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2026-07: In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Transient Tax Advisory Committee

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-07 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The term for Alana Carollo and Caitlin Harrold are due for renewal. Ms. Carollo has been an active member of this committee and is interested in continuing to serve. Ms. Harrold was serving as the Union County Chamber of Commerce, but has recently changed employment, so is no longer eligible to serve.

Saajan Chauhan is expressing an interest in serving on this committee and was recently hired as the Executive Director of the Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Both terms have an expiration date of December 31, 2029.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-07; In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Transient Tax Advisory Committee. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Court Order 2026-08: In the Matter of Appointment to the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority Board of Directors

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-08 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The term for MaryAnn Miesner serving as the La Grande City Councilor representative is due for renewal. Ms. Miesner has been an active member of the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority Board of Directors and has expressed interest in continuing to serve.

La Grande City Councilor, Denise Wheeler, has agreed to serve as an alternate for Ms. Miesner on the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority Board of Directors.

Each term will expire on December 13, 2029.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-08; In the Matter of Appointment to the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority Board of Directors. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 2026-01: In the Matter of Referral of a 5-Year Local Option Levy to Fund Noxious Weed Control

Shelley Burgess Administrative Officer, requested to present Resolution 2026-01 to the Commissioners for their consideration. This resolution would refer the matter to the clerk to be on the May 2026 ballot.

Administrative Officer Burgess read out loud Resolution 2026-01 for the record.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-01; In the Matter of Referral of a 5-year Local Option Levy to Fund Noxious Weed Control as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded.

Commissioner Seavert echoed his comments from earlier; he thinks it's a great economic value for our county and have done a great job of not allowing the expansion of invasive weeds in Union County.

Motion carried unanimously.

County Financial Assistance Agreement (CFAA)

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, provided a brief staff report to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Administrative Officer Burgess noted before the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year, the Oregon Health Authority had been negotiating with the counties on a new County Financial Assistance Agreement (CFAA) for the financing of community mental health programs.

The negotiations did not result in an agreement before July 1, so an extension was done to the previous CFAA through December 31, 2025. Union County along with all other 36 counties, accepted the CFAA extension and have been providing services. The negotiations between the Oregon Health Authority and counties has been ongoing with a lead group of county councils and Community Health Program directors.

Administrative Officer Burgess reported that the legal negotiations have concluded and a revised CFAA is recommended for approval. Legal counsel, Wyatt Baum, has confirmed his recommendation to sign once we have an approved service plan.

The new service plan was one of the primary elements of the new CFAA. Each county was to develop their own local service loan plan and a budget using the funds that were going to be made available to each county. Plans were due back to the state in draft form in early December, which the county has submitted. Revisions were requested by OHA. A revised plan and budget was submitted.

Administrative Officer Burges provided the approval letter that was received on January 5 that approved the revised plan and budget.

The agreement will be effective retro to January 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027 and provides \$5,006,526 in funding for Community Mental Health Program services over that period.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to authorize Shelley Burgess to sign the County Financial Assistance Agreement for Financing of Community Mental Health Programs retroactive to January 1, 2026. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

All three Commissioners gave their thanks to those who worked on this; as they understand it is a very lengthy process and a lot of work. They also thanked Barb Seatter and legal counsel, CHD, Shelley Burgess, and AOC.

Motion carried unanimously.

Wolf Delist Support Letter

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, provided a brief explanation before asking Commissioner Seavert to provide more information on the letter of support.

Commissioner Seavert is asking for support from the other Commissioners to sign on to the letter in support of House Bill 845. The bill did pass the House floor last month and is expected to come out of committee and go to the Senate floor in the near future.

With that being said, he would like to let Senator Merkley and Senator Wyden know where we stand on the topic and ask for their support in getting House Bill 845 passed on the national level. It would help to bring back that management of the wolf to the state level and provide Oregon some consistency and management strategies moving forward.

Commissioner Anderes asked for permission for Commissioner Seavert to hand deliver the letter of support to Senator Merkley and Senator Wyden next month; if it hasn't gone through the process of the Senate floor yet.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the Wolf Delist Support Letter as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Seavert added it is not just for livestock producers but is also crucial movement for our wildlife in the area. The deer and elk numbers are struggling; especially mule deer numbers in Eastern

Oregon. He noted that he isn't saying the wolves are the primary culprit of those numbers, but definitely a percentage.

Commissioner Scarfo noted that we have so many wolves in Union County that we gave a few to Colorado.

Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 9 am.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Anderes is preparing for the short session and legislative concepts are starting to flush out into bills. He already has a list on his whiteboard. He is continuing to work on the forest plan. He is having his knee replaced the first week of March, so his vehicle will be at home and not in the county parking lot.

Commissioner Seavert is going to be attending the EO Caucus at EOU on a Wolf Panel. There is a Watershed Conservation easement town hall tomorrow evening in the Misener Room. He also noted that the Safe Communities Coalition is reaching out to grow the program on the prevention of substance abuse and mental health issues in the county.

Commissioner Scarfo attended the LG City Hall at EOU and it was well attended and included community awards. The next one will be in April.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 9:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist