

UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Present: Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo, Chair
Commissioner Jake Seavert

Absent: Commissioner Paul Anderes

Commissioner Scarfo opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was given with two Commissioners present. Commissioner Anderes is excused due to a medical procedure.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no revisions to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Imbler FFA Presentation

Titus Topliff, FFA Student, Cove, introduced himself to the Commissioners and presented his speech on agriculture in Union County. Students are required to present a certain amount of times before the state convention. Both Commissioners thanked him for coming in

Beth Upshaw, Union, provided documents to the Commissioners regarding the home located on 865 N. 2nd Street in Union. Ms. Upshaw does not live near the home, but she does live in Union. She thanked the Commissioners for allowing her to speak and taking time out of their busy day. She went over the documents explaining each page in detail. She then stated that the property is owned by the county, and if someone were to get hurt on the property she believes the county would be responsible. Her request is for the Commissioners to take more action on the property and not wait until November. She feels the adjacent property owners that live close to 865 N. 2nd Street in Union deserve better, as does the city of Union.

Vacation of Abandoned Portion of Palmer Junction Road – continued from February 18, 2026

Staff Report

Inga Williams, Planning Director, and Phillip Tracy, Assistant Planner, explained that there were no changes or updates since the last meeting. Therefore, a new staff report was not required.

Planning Director Williams indicated that the clerical error previously discussed on the application has been corrected.

Discussion/Action

Commissioner Seavert confirmed with Public Works Director Wright that he has seen every document related to the vacation and approves. Director Wright indicated he has reviewed the documents and agrees that the vacation is allowable. A memo from him dated March 4, 2026 was included in the record.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to accept Resolution 2026-02; In the Matter of a Resolution Vacating an Abandoned Portion of Palmer Junction Road as presented. Commissioner Scarfo seconded.

Commissioner Seavert said that it makes sense when you look at the maps and a lot of the little portions of that realignment have been vacated throughout the years, this is just another section.

Commissioner Scarfo appreciates the work from the Planning Department staff and clarifications.

Motion carried.

Public Comment - continued

Commissioner Scarfo indicated that there was 3-minutes before the next public hearing and asked if there were anymore public comments from the audience.

Vivian Young, La Grande, asked that during Good of the Order, the Commissioners name the meetings they will be attending rather than an acronym. The audience doesn't know what the acronyms stand for.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Seavert moved approval of the consent agenda which included the February 18, 24 & 25, 2026 claims journals and meeting minutes of February 4, 2026 as presented. Commissioner Scarfo seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: Second Reading of Ordinance 2026-01: In the Matter of an Ordinance Amending the Union County Zoning, Partition, and Subdivision Ordinance to Revise Articles 12, 13 and 21 to Provide Clarification and to Include the Addition of a Temporary Workforce Housing Conditional Use

Staff Report

Inga Williams, Planning Director, indicated there was no request for additional changes to the ordinance and the articles since the first reading of the ordinance on February 18, 2026. However, due to the confusion regarding the wedding venues, she would remove the housekeeping proposal for that section. She had provided new documents which were intended to be easier to follow.

Commissioner Seavert knows that we have received public comment related to the ordinance. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that she would read during the public comment period so that it is a part of the record.

Commissioner Scarfo indicated with all of the housekeeping items, he would like to see the ordinance go through the Planning Commission before it is approved by the County Commissioners. Planning Director Williams confirmed that the Planning Commission has reviewed and approved the housekeeping items.

Public Comment

Commissioner Scarfo opened the public comment period.

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, read out loud the first public comment submitted via email by Darilyn Brown on February 24 in regards to the Commissioners' consideration of Ordinance 2026-01. Ms. Brown attempted to locate information pertaining to the ordinance on the county website, but was unsuccessful. She is attempting to understand the best ways to be apprised of issues being addressed by the Commissioner and how to participate in the public process.

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, read out loud in its entirety the second public comment submitted via email by Michael Rysavy on March 4. Mr. Rysavy provided a copy of his comment for the record. The full comment was included in the record and is attached. His request was to have the workforce housing apply in addition zones.

Discussion/Action

Director Williams indicated that she did look at the R1 Zone even though the Planning Department doesn't have much to do with it up to this point. It does say that in the purpose that its for industrial or public uses, but the only industrial use she can see on the map as a conditional use is a utility facility. There are no other industrial uses in there. It doesn't mean R1 wouldn't be a good place to put temporary workforce housing.

Commissioner Seavert asked how long would it be if the Commissioners directed Director Williams to go back to the Planning Commission for review, and then come back to the Commissioners to incorporate the suggested changes into the ordinance. Director Williams indicated with the entire process, it would take about 3 months.

Commissioner Seavert would like to continue on with the original Ordinance 2026-01 and propose to direct the Planning Department to go back to take a look at the R1 to make sure that is the direction we want to proceed. Director Williams will bring it back to the Planning Commission looking at the R1 Zones and where they are located, and how it would impact the adjacent properties.

Administrative Officer Burgess indicated based on the testimony submitted today, the Commissioners can direct staff to pursue the appropriate steps to consider the R1 Zone for Temporary Workforce Housing. This would take care of giving her the direction that she would need to start the conversation with the Planning Commission, notices, etc.

The Commissioners have approved the first reading of Ordinance 2026-01, and based on the conversations at the first hearing, Director Williams mentioned that she did withdraw the changes to the language with the wedding venues.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to and close the public comment period and postpone any action on Ordinance 2026-01 until March 18, 2026. Commissioner Scarfo seconded.

This would allow further time for the Commissioners to review and also give Commissioner Anderes time to take part in the decision.

Motion carried.

The third reading is scheduled for March 18, 2026 at 9:20 am.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD AND EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

COAR Grant Acceptance Authorization

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, presented the COAR Grant Acceptance Authorization to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The Union County Airport was recently awarded the COAR Grant by the State Aviation Board in the amount of \$150,000. Director Wright is requesting delegated authority to be able to sign the Airport COAR Grant Acceptance authorization on behalf of Commissioner Anderes.

Director Wright noted that the grant is for the Southwest Hangar Taxi Lanes-Phase II construction project. He also added that he has been working with Administrative Officer Burgess to fund the 3rd taxiway.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to authorize Director Wright signature authority for the COAR Grant Acceptance Authorization as presented. Commissioner Scarfo seconded. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Court Order 2026-09: In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Budget Committee

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-09 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The term for Budget Committee member Mathew Miles is due to expire. Mr. Miles has been an active member of this committee and has expressed an interest in continuing to serve.

His term will expire on December 31, 2028.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Orde 2026-09; In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Budget Committee. Commissioner Scarfo seconded.

Both Commissioners thanked Mr. Miles for volunteering for this committee, he is wonderful to work with.

Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 9 am.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Seavert noted that the short session is about to wrap up. He also stated that he is disappointed in our community referring to the Commissioners reacting to issues as if they are ignoring them and that is not the case. There is a valid reason that we are doing so, and he would ask for a little patience in our community.

Commissioner Scarfo noted that he has been out to Union and received a tour from one of the Planning Commission members and is not just one or two, it is about a dozen. The City of Union has some major problems going on out there with a lot of these areas.

Commissioner Scarfo also noted that the fairgrounds 1 percent from lottery funds looks like it is going to pass, which is very good news. What the one percent means is that fairs across the state are now getting \$53-55,000 for operations which will increase to \$275,000, which is a humungous step for us in Union County.

The other one that went through is horse racing funding, and announced that the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show will be receiving \$1 million dollars. Next on his list is the Elgin Stampede Community Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 9:51 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist

Jake Seavert

From: Dry Creek, Inc. <drycreek.inc@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 7:37 AM
To: Paul Anderes; Jake Seavert; Matt Scarfo
Cc: Shelley Burgess; Inga Williams; Eva Henes
Subject: Temporary Workforce Housing - Public Comments - Ordinance 2026-01

Chair and Commissioners,

I submit this written testimony to request that Union County amend its Land Use Code to expressly allow **Temporary Workforce Housing** as a Conditional Use in all zoning districts that allow Industrial Uses as a Conditional Use, including the **Rural Center (R1) Zone**.

This comment is submitted for inclusion in the public record and to preserve standing in any future administrative or judicial proceedings.

1. Purpose of Proposed Amendment

Union County's Rural Center (R1) zone expressly states that it is intended to provide minimum standards for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, or public uses in rural communities. Many industrial and infrastructure projects in Union County require temporary workforce accommodation during construction, expansion, or seasonal operations.

At present, the Code lacks clear, predictable standards governing temporary workforce housing in industrial contexts. This creates uncertainty for property owners, project developers, and the County itself.

A defined code pathway will:

- Support industrial and economic development
- Provide clear life-safety standards
- Avoid ad hoc interpretations
- Reduce risk of inconsistent approvals
- Protect surrounding properties through objective criteria

2. Proposed Code Amendment (Model Language)

I respectfully propose the following addition to the Union County Land Use Code:

Temporary Workforce Housing may be permitted as a Conditional Use in any zoning district that allows Industrial Uses as a Conditional Use, including the Rural Center (R1) Zone, when such housing is accessory to an approved industrial, commercial, public works, or infrastructure use. Temporary Workforce Housing shall be subject to objective development, utility, sanitation, and safety standards as adopted by the County.

This language ties workforce housing directly to approved projects and preserves conditional use review authority.

3. Recommended Building and Infrastructure Standards

The next necessary step is for the County to establish objective construction and infrastructure standards.

I recommend that Union County adopt **RV Park Development Standards** as the applicable infrastructure model for Temporary Workforce Housing.

Rationale

RV Park codes already regulate:

- Potable water demand per site
- Sewage capacity and disposal
- Electrical load and pedestal requirements
- Site spacing and separation
- Shower and toilet fixture ratios
- Health and sanitation standards
- Fire access and life safety

These standards are:

- Already codified and widely used
- Infrastructure-based rather than structure-based
- Designed for transient or temporary occupancy
- Compatible with modular units, RVs, park models, or temporary cabins

Importantly, RV Park standards are performance-based and scalable. They provide objective engineering criteria such as:

- Gallons per day per site
- Sewer generation assumptions
- Power load requirements
- Spacing between units
- Required restroom and shower counts

These are the same public health and safety issues implicated by workforce housing.

4. Legal and Policy Basis

Union County has authority under Oregon land use law to regulate uses and adopt clear and objective standards. Where industrial uses are permitted as conditional uses, it is reasonable and legally defensible to allow temporary workforce housing as an accessory use.

Failure to provide a clear pathway may:

- Inhibit industrial development
- Create inconsistent administrative decisions
- Increase exposure to land use appeals
- Shift housing impacts into unregulated or informal conditions

Adopting objective RV Park-based infrastructure standards strengthens the County's position in any future LUBA or circuit court review by demonstrating that:

- The County adopted rational, safety-based criteria

- The standards are objective and measurable
- The regulations are tied to legitimate public health and safety concerns

5. Requested Action

I respectfully request that the Board of County Commissioners:

1. Direct Planning Staff to draft amendments allowing Temporary Workforce Housing in all zones permitting Industrial Conditional Uses, including R1.
2. Direct Staff to evaluate adoption of RV Park infrastructure standards as the applicable building and utility framework.
3. Schedule a public hearing to review proposed code language and technical standards.
4. Delay the proceedings until staff have been directed to update Rural Center R1 with the Temporary Workforce Housing language and developments standards have been set.

6. Standing and Impact

As a property owner and operator of industrially-related uses within Union County, including property located within the Rural Center (R1) zone, I have direct and substantial interests that may be affected by the absence of clear workforce housing regulations.

The lack of defined standards creates uncertainty in development rights, infrastructure planning, and investment decisions. Adoption of the requested amendment directly affects those legally protected interests.

For these reasons, I request that this testimony be made part of the official record.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Rysavy

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Michael Rysavy
President/Owner
Dry Creek Inc