

Union County Board of Commissioners
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 15, 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 that comments be limited to 3 minutes.

Dr. Daniel Costie, Professor of Public Policy and Administration at EOU, La Grande, addressed the Commissioners. Dr. Costie acknowledged the students of his state and local government class who are here to learn more about what the Commissioners do. His goal at the university is to build a community of scholars, practitioners, and students that are dedicated to ethical, democratic and competent public servants. He also thanked Commissioner Scarfo for the work he did to get the funding for the fairgrounds, and in supporting the possibility of a new childcare space. He is working with Commissioner Anderes and the REV Center to find ways to get more childcare in Union County.

Brooke, EOU Student, originally from Linn County, introduced herself to the Commissioners. She is studying Agriculture Entrepreneurship with a minor in Political Science. She asked the Commissioners if a data center was to come to Union County, what that conversation would look like. The Commissioners indicated that was unlikely because of water limitations, however, any applications would go through a public process via the Planning Department.

Commissioner Scarfo closed the public comment period.

Spring Clean Up Day Funding Request

Alan Brown, North Powder City Councilman, presented their Spring Clean Up Day Funding Request to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The City of North Powder is planning their annual city-wide clean-up day for April 18, 2026. The city will provide multiple dumpsters for the citizen of North Powder to get rid of trash and garbage other than regular household garbage. In addition to the garbage dumpsters, the city also arranges for disposal of metal, old tires, e-cycle, batteries, small household waste containers, along with yard and garden debris.

They estimate the project to cost approximately \$2,500 to \$3,000 and are requesting funds to assist in the cost.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the North Powder Clean Up Day funding request up to \$2,000 with a match from the City of Union. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Administrative Officer Burgess noted that the funding comes from the Solid Waste District.

Commissioner Anderes is happy to see the communities doing what they can to keep their town clean. He also noted that La Grande is also doing a tire disposal day on Saturday, April 25th at the EOU athletics parking lot.

Commissioner Scarfo feels that the spring clean up days are very important in our county. Otherwise we start to see garbage, hazardous waste and tires in our ditches and we don't want that.

Motion carried unanimously.

Cat Trapping Funding Request

Beverly Beach, Cat Utopia, presented the Cat Trapping funding request to the Commissioners along with a brief report. She stated she would like to attend a work session in the future to discuss cat ordinances, which she feels is something the county needs. She has also been in contact with the City of La Grande.

One of the programs that they run is the Trap, Neuter, Return for Feral Cats (TNR). They work with the Animal Health Center, they loan traps and teach people how to trap. Cat Utopia began 4 to 5 years ago doing yard sales to raise enough money to help people fund the TNR. From funds that are raised from donations, Cat Utopia puts \$30 on every female and \$20 on every male. Cat Utopia does not have funding from anywhere other than donations or what they fundraise.

The City of La Grande recently gave them \$1,350 to be allotted to feral cat trapping in the city. That funding will be distributed out in \$30 and \$20 increments also. This will allow for those trapping feral cats and feeding colonies in town to pay \$10. They want them invested to continue to house and feed the animals for their short lives. However, they still want them spayed and neutered. At this time, they are not taking kittens as there are 42 on the waiting list to be brought in. That leaves 8 feral mothers that need TNR within the county and the city.

Cat Utopia is requesting funding in the amount of \$1,500 from the county to assist in the feral cat population. If approved, there would be an account set up at the Animal Health Center where the funding would be distributed in \$30 and \$20 increments for spaying and neutering.

Every cat leaves the Animal Health Center with a tip cut on their ear to help identify if it has been spayed or neutered.

Commissioner Anderes asked to recuse himself as he would personally benefit from the planned trapping area.

Ms. Beach indicated that she would make people aware of planned trappings so if they have a pet in the area to put a collar on it, so if caught, it will be released.

Commissioner Seavert asked what the trend has been like over the last several years. Ms. Beach stated she thought they were making headway, and then another area pops out. Every year they seem to do more and more. It will help eventually.

Commissioner Seavert asked if there are any vaccinations administered during the spaying and neutering process. Ms. Beach clarified that there are not as it would cost more money. The Animal Health Center has been great and only charging them \$70 for a female in a trap and \$50 for a male. A match from the county would help reduce the cost.

Ms. Beach noted that the ordinance requires a rabies vaccine, although she doesn't recall an instance of rabies in Union County.

Commissioner Scarfo has spoken with Ms. Beach about this in length and is thankful for what they have done. He has noticed the decrease in the cat population in the county. In going through the numbers, he noticed that the city has had 58 more cats than the county and has contributed less. Ms. Beach said in her eyes, every animal in the county was in Union County. Commissioner Scarfo doesn't think that the county is the problem.

Ms. Beach stated that Union is a huge problem. Cat Utopia paid out of pocket to rescue 40 kittens because there was no one to help pay for it. Commissioner Scarfo would like to see the communities chipping in on the cost. Ms. Beach believes the county is the county, so they should handle it.

Commissioner Scarfo would like to hold off until budget season to consider. He thanked Ms. Beach for all of the work they do with the budget they have, they are doing an excellent job.

Commissioner Seavert asked if there needed to be a motion. Administrative Officer Burgess clarified if the Commissioners are asking to include this for consideration in the budget, she can just be directed to do that. No motion is needed.

In regard to the ordinances, that is going to take some time. We would also have to include the Sheriff's office.

BLM – Baker Field Office Update

Erich Schow, Assistant Field Manager, provided a brief update to the Commissioners regarding the Baker Field Office. Mr. Schow is filling in for Sarah Sherman who was unable to attend.

The main project going on right now is the Durkee fire salvage. Last November it was sold and their logger is in and out of there as he can, and as weather permits. He is focusing on the Clarks Creek units for public safety, taking timber down so there are no snags.

Mr. Schow provided a document that tracks the percentage of BLM acres within counties and what they manage federally within Union County; and Union County is 1.4% of the field office.

The BLM has a new law enforcement officer by the name of Kirk Hampe from Wallowa County Forest Service. There will be a lot more representation of law enforcement north of Baker City, whereas before they've had officers stationed out of Vale.

The BLM has adopted a new permit system for special recreation permits that is all online. It is meant to be transparent so applicants can take a look and see where the choke points are in the process. If there is a case of the applicant needing to get something to the BLM, or vice versa, there is a timeline.

There are also receiving a lot more applications, mainly for hunter guides but also river boater permits

The Commissioners received a copy of the quarterly report for July and December 2025. The new one is in the draft process and should be coming out soon. When it is available, it will be sent to them.

Commissioner Anderes asked if there was very much windfall this winter. He knows that the Forest Service has been busy with windblown trees and trying to figure out how to salvage those. Mr. Schow stated not so much that he is aware of, especially in the salvage unit itself. The Durkee fire salvage didn't have much blowdown and the logger was able to get in with the filler and basically cut all the units.

All three Commissioners thanked him for his attendance at the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Anderes moved approval of the consent agenda which included the April 1 & 8, 2026 claims journals and March 18, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 2026-03: In the Matter of a Resolution Authorizing Participation in the Assessment and Taxation Grant

Cody Vavra, Tax Assessor, presented Resolution 2026-03 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The Union County Tax Assessor's office is applying to the Department of Revenue in order to participate in the Assessment and Taxation grant. The state grant provides funding for counties to help them come into compliance or remain in compliance with ORS 308.232, 308.234, Chapters 309, 310, 311, 312 and other laws requiring equity and uniformity in the system of property taxation.

This grant is applied for annually by the Tax Assessor's office. Expenditures for the assessment function are certified in the amount of \$1,617,327.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-03; In the Matter of a Resolution Authorizing Participation in the Assessment and Taxation Grant as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Anderes is glad this is available and appreciates the work of the Tax Assessor's office.

Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: Court Order 2026-11: In the Matter of Annexing Property into the La Grande Rural Fire Protection District

Staff Report

Inga Williams, Planning Director, provided a brief staff report to the Commissioners regarding Court Order 2026-11.

Union County received petitions from Barbara C. Wales & Michael J. Wisdom, Douglas N. and Teri L. Garton, Richard P. Minogue and Katherine A Pfister, Sean and Kitia Chambers, and Jesse and Lisa Mallory to annex properties described in attached Exhibits A, B, C, D, and E into the La Grande Rural Fire Protection District with the purpose of improving fire protection.

Union County also received letters from the La Grande Rural Fire Protection District stating it was prepared to annex the subject properties into the La Grande Rural Fire Protection District.

Commissioner Anderes asked if there are any holes in the neighborhood that are still in non-protected areas. Planning Director Williams indicated that is correct.

Commissioner Seavert noted that the properties are way out there, but if the La Grande Rural Fire already approved it; he is in support.

Commissioner Anderes stated in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan the area is identified as Wildland-urban interface. They are also working on a Firewise community up there as well.

Public Comment

There were no public comments the proposed annexation.

Discussion/Action

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-11; In the Matter of Annexing Properties into the La Grande Rural Fire Protection District as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

Mulholland Addition Plat

Jeff Hsu, BGB Surveyors, provided a brief staff report to the Commissioners regarding the Mulholland Addition Plat for their information.

Mr. Hsu explained that he is before the Commissioners to present the Mulholland Addition and Subdivision in Island City. Being a subdivision within the county requires Commissioners approval.

Commissioner Scarfo asked if the Commissioners are the last to sign. Mr. Hsu indicated that is correct. It has been previously approved by Island City Planning & City Council and by the Union County Assessor.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to accept the approval of the Mulholland Addition Plat as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Court Order 2026-12: In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Hospital Facility Authority
Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-12 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Cory Miller has been an active member of the Union County Hospital Authority and is eligible to serve a second three-year term and has agreed to serve. The term for Eric Valentine is due to expire on April 30, 2026 and he has served the maximum number of terms allowed. Jeff Clark has been recommended by the Union County Hospital Facility Authority member and has agreed to serve. His term will begin immediately and expire on April 30, 2029.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-12; In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Hospital Facility Authority as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Seavert thanked Cory Miller and Jeff Clark, and anyone who steps up to serve on on any committee.

Commissioner Anderes also thanked Eric Valentine for his valuable service on the committee.

Commissioner Scarfo sits on this committee and noted that Mr. Miller was moved up to Chair of the committee and congratulated him.

Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 2026-04: In the Matter of Appropriating Unanticipated Funds

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Resolution 2026-04 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Unanticipated grant funds from the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission have become available to Union County after the adoption of the FY 2025-26 budget. Union County desires to accept these funds and utilize them for the intended purpose of jail-based medications for opioid use disorder.

Grant funds will go into the general fund, the Corrections Department and the revenues will go into the CJC MOUD grant line item in the amount of \$149,730. Expenditures will be authorized to the contractual services MOUD line item.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-04; In the Matter of Appropriating Unanticipated Funds as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded.

Commissioner Scarfo thanked Administrative Officer Burgess for her work on this.

Motion carried unanimously.

Wolf Depredation Grant Acceptance – ODA-4699-GR

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the Wolf Depredation Grant to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Union County has received notification from the Oregon Department of Agriculture they have been awarded \$82,204.31 under the Wolf Compensation and Financial Assistant Grant Program. Union County will receive \$33,940.98 for Depredation, and \$48,263.33 for Non-Lethal Prevention efforts.

Funds will be provided to the producers who have had deaths due to wolf predation during last year through January 2026. The Depredation funds provide for full compensation of the market value of predated livestock plus an approximate 2.31 multiplier. The county had applied for a 5-time multiplier, which was the maximum allowed. Due to the amount of applications received by the state; the amount was reduced so they could fully compensate the base values and include a multiplier for all of the losses they did receive.

There were two producers who lost a total of 7 ewes, 1 steer, and 4 cow calves at the 2.31 value.

The Non-Lethal Prevention funds will be recommended for distribution by the Wolf Compensation Advisory Committee based on the applications that are received. Those funds are to reimburse producers for their efforts to prevent and reduce the livestock interactions.

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the Wolf Depredation Grant Acceptance ODA-4699-GR as presented. Commissioner Seavert seconded.

Commissioner Anderes hopes the new legislation, which passed in the short session and made a big change to the transient lodging tax for wildlife, will bolster this account so that we can get to the 5x multiplier for producers.

Commissioner Scarfo said it is very expensive to have wolves here. He would like to see the people that want wolves here to help pay as he knows his tax dollars are going towards this.

Motion carried unanimously.

Letter to ODOE & Idaho Power regarding Weed Control

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, provided a brief description of the letter for consideration.

The Commissioners held a work session on April 8 and discussed drafting a letter regarding weed control happening along the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line. There is a report from the Union County Weed Supervisor and Commissioner Seavert who is on the Weed Advisory Board about concerns.

The letter is drafted to be sent to the Oregon Department of Energy and Idaho Power as a reminder of the concerns and the need to address weed control in Union County.

Commissioner Seavert met with Weed Supervisor Brian Clapp, who had met with a sub-contractor and went over a lot of the concerns and were addressing that. He feels that this letter is a good reminder to let them know we have oversight and are doing everything we can to reduce an outbreak of noxious weeds.

Another concern that was brought up was logging timber along the stretch of line that goes across Kamela, which is not considered under their plan as ground disturbance.

Commissioner Scarfo stated he appreciates this letter especially now that they are breaking ground.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve the Letter to ODOE and Idaho Power as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to be held Wednesday, May 6, 2026 at 9 am.

Commissioner Anderes noted that he will be attending the May 6 Commission meeting by Zoom as he will be attending the NACo Western Interstate Region Conference since he is a board member.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Anderes reminded everyone that there are still tickets available for the Grande Ronde Hospital Gala, which is a week from Saturday. It is for a good cause and supports the local hospital.

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Commissioner Anderes also reported that SRS payments were released. This was the second of three payments because the reauthorization of SRS was made retroactive. There is some discussion and concern the payments are going to dwindle because it is always based on the prior year's payment. Through negotiations they are working to resolve this and are including Congressman Bentz in the discussion.

Commissioner Seavert reminded everyone that Ducks Unlimited will hold an aquatic vegetation demo from 11 am to 2 pm at Ladd Marsh on Saturday. The individual that is demoing has been in operation in Eastern Idaho and has had great success. Commissioner Seavert also mentioned the Elgin FFA banquet will be held in the Stampede Hall at 6 pm next week. North Powder will host their library grand opening on April 25; he got a personal tour from Mayor Frieboes and is happy to see a great addition to the community. Imbler FFA will also be hosting their banquet Saturday, April 25th as well. Lastly, he is heading to Lincoln City to be on a panel in front of ODF&W to represent the counties on the side of wolf compensation.

Commissioner Anderes noted that the Prosperity Group will be in Union County this Friday in the Misener Room from 8-9:30 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 9:54 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist