

Union County Board of Commissioners

Joseph Building Annex Conference Room

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Present: Commissioner Paul Anderes
Commissioner Jake Seavert

Absent: Commissioner R. Matthew Scarfo, Chair

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

AGENDA REVIEW

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, requested to add Title III SAR Vehicle under Administrative Matters.

Commissioner Anderes noted that today's meeting has a revised agenda to include the Caterpillar Road Grader under Elected Official, Department Head and Employee Comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vivian Young, La Grande, first provided a Cat Utopia update to the Commissioners regarding 96 cats that are currently being fostered all around the county by volunteers. She said that Cat Utopia is looking forward to the work session that was mentioned regarding cat ordinances.

Ms. Young also provided public comment on the agenda of the last Commission meeting. She said there were notable agenda items, but what really stood out to her was the good of the order when one particular Commissioner shared news on HB5204. Copies of the single page house bill were made available after the meeting. The reported information was that the Union County Fair Water Project was in fact getting the funding. HB5204 also stated that the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show would receive one million dollars along with four other horse racing venues in the state. Ms. Young stated that the Commissioner's response was very "in your face". One of the Commissioners even said they were called liars and wondered if they would get an apology. Her silent answer was no; a thank you in fact. She first thanked the concerned citizen's comment that seemed to have irritated the Commissioners during the June 24, 2026 budget hearing. She believes the questioning led to the Commissioners providing the facts. The second thank you goes to the Commissioner who dug deep to find HB5204 information and shared with the public on April 7, 2026, a promise became law, that Union County would get \$3,539,405. There should have been a celebration, instead it felt like accusations full of frustration, anger, dismissiveness and disrespect. The third thank you goes to the Commissioner who acquired the funding for the fairgrounds and the stock show.

Ms. Young recommended a citizen work session every so often for citizens with ideas could convene to brainstorm with the Commissioners. The fourth thank you went to encourage the Commissioner who was already communicating information to the public, to do so more often; instead of cautiously and seldom. This could become new policy of informative communication in the public interest.

There were no more further comments. Commissioner Anderes closed the public comment period.

ELECTED OFFICIAL, DEPARTMENT HEAD & EMPLOYEE COMMENTS

Fire Conditions Update

Nick Vora, Emergency Manager, provided an update on Fire Conditions in Union County.

Based on the amount of rain we have gotten; it hasn't changed field moistures. The forecasted energy release components (ERC's), are a cumulative measure of the moisture and fuels, and the amount of energy that would be released if it burned. It is above average and projected to go significantly above average.

Based on that, the Fire Defense Board are unanimously recommending Commissioner approval to enter a burn ban under Ordinance 2024-02. If the county were to go into a burn ban, versus being in regulated fire season is all fires outside of city limits would not be allowed. Except for a pellet and charcoal barbeques; no campfires, burn barrels or open burning.

The Fire Chiefs have been monitoring things with recent fires and deployment of local resources and feel it is an appropriate time.

Commissioner Seavert asked if propane was supposed to be mentioned in what not to burn. Emergency Manager Vora indicated that is correct. He will provide clarification.

Commissioner Anderes asked the time sensitivity on the burn ban and whether or not there should be a special meeting on either July 22 or 29. Emergency Manager Vora indicated the Fire Chiefs recommended sooner than later.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to enter a county wide Burn Ban as recommended by the Fire Defense Board and Emergency Manager Vora. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried.

Commissioner Seavert stated it has been dry for a long time and would rather stay on the side of caution.

Caterpillar Road Grader 160-15AWD Lease Buy Out

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, presented the Caterpillar Road Grader lease buy out to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Union County Public Works is requesting to buy out Western States Equipment Road Grader lease. The total buy out is in the amount of \$225,000. The grader is stationed in Imbler and is in good working condition.

The reason for buying out the lease is due to high interest rates and the continued escalation of costs for new equipment.

Commissioner Seavert stated that this is the second grader lease buy out and for the record, cost approximately \$450,000 brand new. Director Wright noted that he has 5 throughout the districts and a spare with one remaining under a lease.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve the Caterpillar Road Grader Lease Buy Out as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Seavert moved approval of the consent agenda which included the June 30 & July 8, 2026 claims journals and June 3 (4-H Budget), June 24 and July 1, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Court Order 2026-15: Appointment to the Ambulance Advisory Committee

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-15 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

The terms of Don George and Ken Patterson are due for renewal. Both have been active members of the Union County Ambulance District Advisory Committee and have expressed interest in continuing to serve.

Their terms would expire on June 30, 2026.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-15; In the Matter of Appointment to the Ambulance Advisory Committee as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried.

Court Order 2026-16: Appointment to the Union County Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented Court Order 2026-16 to the Commissioners for their consideration.

Chelsea Judy has been an active member of the committee serving as a representative of the Business Attraction Owner/Manager community and is interested in continuing to serve.

Her term will expire on July 31, 2026.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve Court Order 2026-16; In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee as presented. Commissioner Anderes seconded. Motion carried.

Title III SAR Vehicle

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the Title III SAR Vehicle request to the Commissioners for their consideration

At the previous Commission meeting, the Commissioners approved Title III applications. One of the applications was for funding to purchase a used vehicle for search and rescue needs.

Emergency Manager Vora put together an RFP with a deadline of Friday, July 17 at 4 pm. If the Commissioners waited to consider the request, the vehicle may not be available.

The maximum amount that is approved under the grant is \$46,000 and the proposal explains the needs of the vehicle. It has been posted on the website, as well as delivered to each of the local dealers. Administrative Officer Burgess and Emergency Manager Vora are requesting authorization to select a proposal if they receive one that meets the qualifications and is within the budgeted amount.

Commissioner Seavert asked if RFPs were sent to specific local car dealerships. Emergency Manager Vora stated he sent RFPs to all three local dealerships at the same time.

The Commissioners thanked Emergency Manager Vora for keeping it local.

Commissioner Seavert made a motion to approve the Title III SAR Vehicle RFP to be governed by Emergency Manager Vora and Administrative Officer Burgess to be accepted up to \$46,000. Commissioner Anderes seconded.

Commissioner Seavert indicated it is a crucial piece of the county and the services that they provide. He also thanked Emergency Manager Vora for all that he is involved in.

Commissioner Anderes noted that Title III funds come from SRS which was authorized last fall.

Motion carried.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Seavert has been collaborating with Senator Nash, Chief of Staff Isaac Insko who are putting together a regional housing tour and one of his stops is Union County. The tour would be in support of a SB1578 that he introduced during long session. The bill would allow Additional Dwelling Units (ADU) on farm use land to help with shortages of housing in rural eastern Oregon.

Commissioner Anderes gave a heartfelt thank you to those who are fighting fires in our region. He also thanked those who have advocated for the Union County Airport and receiving jet A fuel.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to be held Wednesday, August 5, 2026 at 9 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Scarfo adjourned the meeting at 9:35 am

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allison".

Allison Moore
Senior Department Specialist