

**IN THE COUNTY COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF GRANT**

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April 5, 2023 – Regular Meeting of the County Court

Pursuant to notice made to the newspaper of general circulation throughout Grant County, the radio station, county website, and e-mail distribution list, a regular meeting of the County Court was held at the County Courthouse in Canyon City, OR.

9:01 am -- Call to Order. Present were Judge Scott W. Myers, Commissioners Jim Hamsher and John Rowell, Administrative Assistant Laurie Stinnett, Reporter Neil Nisperos, Jim Bay, Ray Wylie, Shelly Wylie, Jim Soupir, Millie Lysne, Shannon Springer, John Morris, Francis Preston, Tammy Workman, Alan Hickerson, Treena Ballard, Crish Hamilton, David Hamilton, Eric Bush, Kay Steele and King Williams. A Pledge of Allegiance was given to the United States Flag. The invocation was given by Kelly Workman.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FORMATION OF THE ROAD SERVICE DISTRICT (RSD). The formation of a county Road Service District would garner the county approximately \$250,000 in additional Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) money that would otherwise remain with the state. Judge Myers read Order 2023-02, outlining the process of formation and the dates assigned for those events. The Court explained the order of events, including the March 1st court meeting when Order 2023-01 was signed, declaring the intention to form a Road Service District. This was followed by public notice of the public hearing scheduled for today, April 5th, when Order 2023-02 was signed, approving the formation of the Road Service District, with a final public hearing scheduled for May 3rd to create the district. Citizens present at the meeting expressed some confusion about the purpose and process of the formation of the Road Service District. Commissioner Hamsher explained that this is not a taxing district, and that other counties across the state have already formed RSDs. Rowell acknowledged that while it was initially a confusing process, he believes an RSD to be favorable to the county. Myers commented that if we choose not to form the RSD, \$250,000 will continue to “vaporize” each year. He read the steps in the legal process and time-frame involved. Myers that the final hearing will be held on May 3rd, at which time the Road District will be formed by Order 2023-03 unless 15% of the voters in the unincorporated areas of the county submit written statements requesting a referendum. Rowell asked that the county post information on the website with supporting documents to clarify the issue; this request was seconded by multiple citizens. Myers noted that signing today’s order did not finalize the issue, pointing to the second hearing. One written request was submitted to the Court, voicing opposition to the formation until further clarification is provided. *MSP: Hamsher/Myers – to approve Order 2023-02 for signature for the formation of the Road Service District. Approval unanimous.*

HAND CHECKS. The Court approved outside of normal claims day, check #s 66306-66308.

MINUTES. Judge Myers moved to approve the minutes of March 15th. Two corrections were requested; the first to make note of the earth-mapping and critical mineral letter of support not being signed until recommended phrasing changes were made and the second a correction of a grammatical error. *MSP: Hamsher/Myers – to approve the minutes with the recommended addition and correction. Approval unanimous.*

MOVE OREGON’S BORDERS. Mike McCarter was present via Webex streaming. He gave an update on current progress in the movement, now called Citizens for Greater Idaho. He noted the progress at the legislative level. They continue to work to promote their issues of concern within the state. On May 15th, Wallowa County will be voting on the Greater Idaho issue, and potentially Crook, Gilliam and Umatilla counties. He noted that the vote is not to physically move the border, but to start the discussion. McCarter stated that the votes of Eastern Oregon don’t count, calling it a battle with the “state” of Portland. He was asked for clarification of the pros of the movement and gave the web address with in-depth information as greateridaho.org. He maintained that it is not a political movement, but a traditional values movement: faith, family, freedom and self-sufficiency, and is a grass-roots movement. Those in opposition to the Greater Idaho movement shared their thoughts. Shelly Wylie and Eva Harris shared concerns and facts about fiscal, economic, and educational well-being. Specific issues of concern included wages, taxes and veterans benefits. Argument was made that those on the west side of the state are not “different” than those in Eastern Oregon and that collaboration is the answer to dealing with these issues. Myers reiterated that, although the meetings to discuss the Greater Idaho issue are held in response to the voter referendum, the Court has not taken a position on the issue and is doing their best not to take a position. He stated that it is a citizen’s issue, not the Court’s, and with county citizens on both sides of the issue, he would like to stay on top of that fence. Letters in opposition to the Greater Idaho were submitted to the Court and are on file.

MALHEUR NATIONAL FOREST. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services’ Aaron Roth and Malheur National Forest’s Colleen Malaney and Silviculturist Zane Murray are among partners and successful recipients of \$1, 974, 231 funding from the Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership Program. The program centers around three objectives: reducing wildfire risk around communities; protecting water quality and supply, and improving wildlife habitat for at-risk species. The Oregon project consists of the Southern Blues Restoration project in eastern Oregon, whose boundary includes Mt. Vernon, John Day, Canyon City and Prairie City. The partners will engage in outreach to landowners to promote a fire-safe landscape and strategic fuel treatment to reduce fire risk to local communities, while improving forest, rangeland and watersheds. The project will also support two local mills and a post and pole plant. Malaney noted that they are one of fourteen projects selected in 2023. Additionally, they will be receiving their next round of Title II proposals for funding recommendations and will follow up with those results later in April.

PROBATION JUVENILE COUNSELOR STEP INCREASE. Director Cindy Tirico requested that counselor Mike McManus be moved from the Juvenile Counselor I position to Juvenile Counselor II, with a yearly budget increase of \$4404.00. She described the duties of each position and noted that McManus has been fulfilling Step II duties for some time. He has worked with law enforcement for 12 years and Community Corrections for 8 years. Myers reiterated that this is not an increase in wages, but a change in position. *MSP: Myers/Hamsher – to approve the step increase for McManus as requested from Juvenile Counselor I to Juvenile Counselor II, effective June 26th, the beginning of the July pay period. Approval unanimous.*

FAIR UPDATES AND PROJECT REQUESTS.

STORAGE SHED AND PICNIC SHELTER AREA - Due to our building codes the bid went up by about \$3600. It has been to the city for approval and will next go to county planning. Hopefully the project will be started by June 1st.

PICNIC SHELTER AND STAGE. The project garnered little interest because of the short deadline attached to the project, and has been put back out for bid without the time constraint. The cost of the building permit is \$1125.10. Winegar asked the Court to consider waiving the building permit fee. *MSP: Myers/Rowell – to decline waiving the building permit fee for the Fairgrounds project. YES (to decline) – Myers, Rowell NO (to decline waiving the fee) – Hamsher*

ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION TO YARD AND STAGE AREA. This project includes moving some of the existing electrical underground, install additional outlets and run electricity to the new picnic area. Four electricians were solicited for bids; S&C Electric was the only bid response for \$37,000.00. *MSP: Myers/Rowell – to approve the award of the electrical bid to S&C Electric for \$37,000.00. Approval unanimous.*

OPENING ACT - ALANA SPRINGSTEEN. Winegar asked for the approval of Alana Springsteen for the opening act for Josh Turner. Winegar noted that she is touring with Luke Bryan this year. *MSP: Hamsher/Myers – to approve the contract with Alana Springsteen for the opening act for the Josh Turner concert. Approval unanimous.*

KEERINS HALL RENTAL AGREEMENT WITH 4H/EXTENSION DISTRICT. Winegar asked for approval of the rental agreement between the Fairgrounds and the 4-H and Extension District. It will be month to month for \$500 per month until the remodel is done. Once the remodel is complete, a long-term lease for \$1500 per month will be submitted. She outlined the terms of the agreement, including water and sewer costs and areas of the building included in the rental/lease. The District expects to be in the building by May 1st. Winegar noted that the Extension District needs to work with OSU on the space use agreement. The asbestos inspector was here Friday; results are expected this week. *MSP: Hamsher/Myers – to approve the agreements for the rental of Keerins Hall at \$500 until completion of remodel and \$1500 long-term rental agreement following. Approval unanimous.*

CAMP HOST. Fairgrounds Manager Mindy Winegar presented the Court with a contract for Debbie Gibson to be hired as the Fairgrounds RV Park camp host from April – September, 2023. *MSP: Myers/Hamsher – to approve the contract for the position of camp host to be filled by Debbie Gibson. Approval unanimous.*

ELECTRIC EYE EQUIPMENT FOR RODEO. Winegar explained that in working with Powder River to redesign the outdoor rodeo arena, they learned about the newest technology for the roping chute. This product is used by Crook County and the Pendleton Round Up. The company, Perfect Timing, will be traveling in June to service the other customers. Winegar would like to get on his list for installation of the product; described as a rope barrier system with a double eye, reflector, stand and release rope. *MSP: Myers/Hamsher – to approve the purchase of electric eye equipment produced by Perfect Timing for \$2450. Approval unanimous.*

CAMP HOST BACKGROUND CHECK. The Fairgrounds discussion closed with Judge Myers offering to follow up on arranging a background check for the camp host candidate.

COURTHOUSE BROADBAND. Emergency Management Coordinator Eric Bush asked Dan Becker (via Webex) to share information about the installation of broadband to the courthouse. The Court has considered whether to move ahead with a quote from Rally for service of 1 gigabyte of dedicated broadband to the courthouse for \$250 per month. Becker noted that GC Digital pays around \$1000 per month and ESD pays \$1600 per month for the same product/service, and recommended that the Court move forward with the Rally installation.

MSP: Myers/Hamsher – to accept the proposal from the broadband provider, Rally (formerly Oregon Telephone Company) to install 1 gigabyte of broadband service to the courthouse for the cost of \$250 per month. Approval unanimous.

FLOOD PLAN. Shannon Springer, Flood Manager for the County, shared proposed changes in the national flood insurance program that will affect all areas of the county except for the Silvie Watershed. The original goal of flood insurance was to reduce hazards to humans and structures. Those objectives of the National Flood Insurance Program has changed, and now involves extreme parameters. These include the requirement of NFIP membership to obtain a federally backed mortgage. Without flood insurance, help from FEMA is not available to those affected. Springer described the program as one that has become a mandatory rather than optional program. The program involves a no net loss premise including restrictions in the placement of fill, restrict the addition of impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt and restriction in vegetation removal within 170 ft of flood-zone streams. It includes significant reduction in development capacity within flood zones; agricultural activities such as grading or filling in protected areas. It may be as far-reaching as restricting the paving of a gravel road or installation of sidewalks. Under the new proposals, the county or city could be liable for the loss of value to properties that are affected by new ordinances. Eric Bush noted that the best prevention of localized flooding is to maintain waterways. Further restriction prevents us from using common sense solutions to protect property and people. Its a public safety issue as much as an environmental issue. Springer urged local citizens and governments to join the coalition and send letters of comment to the contacts listed in the power point.

STRATEGIC AND CRITICAL MINERALS LETTER. Thom Seal requested a letter of support for strategic and critical mineral exploration in Grant County. *MSP: Myers/Rowell - to write a letter in support and distribute to entities recommended by Thom Seal. Approval unanimous.*

COMPENSATION BOARD APPLICATION – TOM OLSON. *MSP: HAMSHER/MYERS: to appoint Tom Olson as Compensation Board member with a term expiration date of June 30, 2025.*

VETERANS SERVICES HVAC SYSTEM REIMBURSEMENT. Veteran’s Services Director Kathleen Hoffman received approval from the Veteran’s Department to install and HVAC system in her office at the L Building when her heating method broke down. She is requesting the County Court to share in that cost by paying half of the equipment and installation. *MSP: MYERS/HAMSHER - to approve the reimbursement of half of the cost of the HVAC installation in the amount of \$3500. Approval unanimous.*

PREDATOR CONTROL. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) budget request of \$40,000 to share in the costs for a half-time predator control position was received on March 13, 2023. On March 28, 2023, the county received a request for a contribution for a full-time predator control position, as requested by multiple county residents. That budget request was \$75,000. Myers suggested looking for contributions from landowners as an additional source of funding for this position. He suggested that we split the difference and encourage other participation. *MSP: Hamsher/Myers - to approve a partial contribution to the increased position in the amount of \$60,000. Myers noted this would be taken to the budget committee for input/approval.*

ZONE 1 FIRE PROTECTION RATE. Judge Myers reported a rumor that there would be substantial increase in the cost of fire prevention on state protected lands. The Court, then, was eager to sign the Memorandum of Agreement for Zone 1 property protection at the same cost of \$.30 per acre as was set in March of 1983. *MSP: Myers/Rowell - to approve the memorandum of agreement with the Department of Forestry, John Day Unit, for Zone 1 fire protection at the cost of \$.30 per acre for the fiscal year of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. Approval unanimous.*

ASSESSMENT & TAXATION GRANT APPLICATION, RESOLUTION 23-12. This state grant provides funding for counties to help them come into compliance or remain in compliance with ORS 308.232, 308.234, Chapters 309, 210, 311 and 312 and other laws requiring equity and uniformity in the system of property taxation. The certified expenditures for the grant application total \$565,227.00. Assessor David Thunell is the contact person for the grant. *MSP: Myers/ Hamsher - to approve the Assessment & Taxation grant application as specified in Resolution 23-12. Approval unanimous.*

12:06 pm MSP: Myers/Rowell - move to adjourn. Approval unanimous.

Laurie Stinnett
Administrative Assistant

****** Please note the court minutes are a summary of the court proceedings. An audio recording of each court session is available, after approval of the minutes, by contacting the County Court at 541-575-0059 or GCCourtAdmin@grantcounty-or.gov ******