

IN THE COUNTY COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF GRANT

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September 23rd, 2020

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.

9:00 am -- Call to Order. Present were Judge Scott W. Myers, Commissioners Jim Hamsher and Sam Palmer, Administrative Assistant Kim Puckett, Roadmaster Alan Hickerson, Tammy Workman, Joe Bennett, Frances Preston, Reporter Logan Bagett, Reporter Steven Mitchell, and Pastor Cockrell. A Pledge of Allegiance was given to the United States Flag. The invocation was given by Pastor Gary Cockrell.

CLAIMS. The court approved claims.

AGENDA. MSP: Hamsher/Palmer-- to accept the agenda as presented.

ANNOUNCEMENTS. Judge Myers performed a wedding on Tuesday Sept 1st in the Courtroom. On Sunday September 6th he went to the Malheur River Ford Trail to perform another wedding. Monday the 13th he attended the Emergency Food & Shelter Committee Meeting discussing the guidelines and how to distribute the CARES Act Funding to the Food Banks. September 13th he participated in the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) Legislative Committee Meeting via phone. He guided a staff member from AssettWorks who contracts with City County Insurance for appraisals on County Buildings, assessing the properties for insurance purposes. Myers went to the Road Department when bids opened for the Snow Plow contract in the Granite/Sumpter area and also attended a Safety Committee Meeting.

Commissioner Palmer met with Senator Findley at a campaign event held at the Squeeze Inn. He also continued with weekly conference calls with Senators, State Representatives, and Commissioners. Palmer stopped by the Fairgrounds to check in on the floor progress and said it is looking great. He talked with Mindy Winegar, Fairgrounds Manager, about potential future projects that could make things look better. He had a phone conversation with Karen Budd-Falen with The Department of Interior in Washington D.C. regarding the Murderers Creek Project he is working on, and was advised to speak with some other people about what it going on. Palmer was invited by an Adams County, Idaho. Commissioner and Washington County, Idaho Commissioner to attend a presentation by Dr. Angus McIntosh a Public Land Expert in Weiser Idaho. This also fits into the project that he is working on. He spoke with Stuart Levenbach, Senior Advisor at the Whitehouse also regarding the Murderers Creek Project. They are trying to get agencies together in hopes to get something moving forward on it. Palmer talked to Tim Williams from the Department of Interior about Murderers Creek and was given some contact information of other people to reach out to. Palmer has a call into Barry Bushue and William Crozier, Head of Intergovernmental Affairs at the Whitehouse. He went to the Street Fair

downtown and it was very well attended. Palmer spoke with Mt Vernon Mayor Kenny Delano regarding Covid-19 funds that the County has. Palmer will attend the Mt. Vernon City Council meeting in October to possibly come up with ideas to move some of that money to Mt Vernon businesses. Alek Starlotos called yesterday regarding his campaign for Congressional District #4. Commissioner Palmer sent our condolences to the Judy Kerr family for the recent loss of her husband Bob.

Commissioner Hamsher continued taking part in regional calls with the Governor's office every Wednesday afternoon, some of the meetings had been delayed due to County Commissioners handling issues with Wildland Fires in their local areas. He has been attending weekly briefing calls with State Representatives, Senators, and Commissioners from Eastern Oregon. Hamsher also participated in the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) Steering Committee Meetings and received a lot of useful information. He also held a Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC) meeting and discussed preparing a letter for comments on the proposed amendment to the 21 inch rule. Hamsher attended a National Association of Counties (NACO) Public Lands meeting via phone and a briefing call about the proposed latest Corona Virus relief bill. The other CARES Act funding didn't allow for any revenue replacement that was lost because of Covid-19, the next one will allow for this if the bill passes. Senator Findley stopped by his office to discuss issues affecting this area. He had the honor of attending the first Graduation for Oregon RAIN Projects, individuals who are learning to start their own business, and he was glad to see some locals graduating from the program. Hamsher has also been talking about some targeted grazing being looked at for some of the urban interface areas, where they could reduce the fine fuels and clean up those areas/communities by getting more cattle out there or any other livestock. He received a letter from the NACO Public Lands Steering Committee that he was re-appointed. Judge Myers congratulated him.

MINUTES. MSP: Myers/Hamsher-- to approve the amended August 26th minutes as presented.

ROAD DEPARTMENT. Alan Hickerson, Roadmaster, requested approval from the court to purchase a Western 2-way snow plow. Last week mechanic Joe Bennett informed Alan that one of the main town snow plows has an issue with its hydraulic system and finding parts for the hydraulic system is becoming increasingly difficult. The Road Department would like to replace the existing snow plow with a reliable electric powered snow plow before winter comes. The Western Pro Plus Series 2-way plow would be purchased from Utility Equipment for \$8,894 and will come out of the 5-40-000- Capital Outlay-Heavy Equipment budget line. **MSP: Palmer/Myers --to approve the purchase of the Western 2-way snow plow \$8,894 and surplus the old one.**

Treasurer Julie Ellison entered 9:15 am

Judge Kathy Stinnett & Tristina DeRosier entered 9:22am

JUSTICE COURT. Judge Kathy Stinnett discussed with the court the need to hire a half-time Office Assistant. This position was approved earlier in the year and is within the court's approved budget. Stinnett indicated that she understood that her request comes at a time when there are serious budget concerns, and appreciates the opportunity to present the case for why the Court should consider granting her request under the current budget circumstances; the point being that it will cost the County more money, both in the short term and long term, to not fill the position. The collection report numbers were presented as evidence, and she shared some of that information with the Court. Her goal is to collect 90% of everything that is imposed, and she is statutorily required to take some kind of

action to enforce her judgments. In the case of violations where there is no jail time considered, that means imposing fines, however, the revenue received is a bi-product of the system. We do not cite people to produce revenue; judgments are imposed that include revenue, and enforcement is required. Changes on both the State and Federal levels during the past 10 years have affected the Court's ability to enforce judgments. Caseloads and fines imposed have steadily increased, while collection rates have decreased. Prior to the events of Ferguson, Missouri and the changes that have resulted in collection processes, the collection rate in Justice Court was 90%. Those rates have steadily decreased to less than 50%. In addition, the Oregon Legislature passed a bill in July of 2020 that has eliminated a courts ability to enforce traffic ticket judgments with a suspension of driving privileges. The court is currently working on adapting to new collection processes, but they are much more cumbersome and time-consuming. Justice Court works most closely with Law Enforcement Departments, the District Attorney's Office, various Defense Attorney' offices, Circuit Court, and Parole and Probation; each of those offices has at least 4 staff, and more modern software. It is a constant struggle to keep up in the world we are required to function in with just 2 people. She stated that there is currently about \$715,000 in the court's accounts receivable, and if even 10% of that could be collected it would pay for the additional position. Without the added help, the accounts receivable numbers will continue to rise. Discussion was had regarding how the fines that Justice Court collects are distributed to those who receive a share. Stinnett mentioned all of the duties that Clerk, Trista Strong is responsible for; Strong added that just when she begins to feel comfortable with some of the processes, they change, requiring more training. Stinnett said that she is confident that if allowed to hire for the position, she can produce more than enough revenue for the position to pay for itself. **MSP: Myers/Palmer --to lift the moratorium on hiring if the position is budgeted and if there is a formal request for filling a position to take it on a case by case basis. Myers suggested to allow for this position to be filled.**

TREASURER. The court reviewed Resolution #20-30. **MSP: Hamsher/Myers --to approve and sign Resolution# 20-30 in the matter of adopting supplemental budget for general fund \$192,000. Revenue – Cash on Hand \$192,000. Expense – CARES Act Reimbursement \$192,000.**

ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COUNTIES (AOC). The court reviewed the annual dues for the AOC. **MSP: Palmer/Myers --to approve and pay the annual dues for AOC in the amount of \$25,326.34**

BLUE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE. The court reviewed out of district agreements #2019-2020 and #2020-2021 between Grant County and Blue Mountain College. The services to be provided by the College will be in support of a program consisting of offering classes in the following areas; Career & Technical, Lower Division Transfer, Early College Credit courses and other reimbursable Adult Continuing Education (ACE). **MSP: Myers/Hamsher--to approve and sign agreements #2019-2020 and #2020-2021.**

PAYROLL DEFERRAL. Laurie Wright, Human Resource Manager, discussed the Presidential Memorandum deferring payroll tax obligations. On August 8, 2020, President Trump signed a Memorandum deferring certain payroll obligations, in this case the employee's 6.2% portion of Social Security. The deferral is for September-December, but is only a deferral at this time. The deferred taxes will be required to be withheld beginning in January and ending in April of 2021. If an employee's 6.2% social security tax is deferred through the end of the year, then their paychecks beginning in January would have 12.4% taken out for social security in order to repay the deferral. Wright said there have

been several employees who advised her that they do not want to participate in the deferral. After reading several email threads from across the State and reading new articles it appears that participating in the deferral is voluntary and the decision can be made from an employer to not participate. She spoke with legal counsel and asked for an opinion on this. Dominic Carollo said he was unable to find a definite answer, but recommended the County Court make a decision on whether or not to participate. The computer system is set up in such a manner that whatever is decided will need to be for all employees. Many entities, including AOC, have opted not to participate. Wright is asking the County Court to make a decision whether to participate in the deferral program, or to decline to participate. **MSP: Hamsher/Palmer --to opt out of the payroll deferral.**

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST POLICY. The court members discussed the potential need for clarification or changes in our Public Information Request Policy.

PUBLIC COMMENT. The court accepted public comment.

10: 38 am Adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Puckett
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 Kim Puckett at 541-575-0059 or puckettk@grantcounty-or.gov ****