

**CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MINUTES
OF APRIL 2, 2025, REGULAR MEETING
Open Portion**

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular meeting on April 2, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the County Annex Meeting Room located at 320 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Board Members Present: Commissioner Brian Barney; Commissioner Susan Hermreck; Commissioner Seth Crawford

Absentees: None

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Counsel Eric Blaine; Executive Assistant /Communications Officer Sarah Puerner; County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Administrative Assistant Mona Glade; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Finance Director Christina Haron; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Facilities Director James Preuss; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Assessor Jon Soliz; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Modernization Manager Stephanie O’Neal; Clerk Cheryl Seely; HR Director Meghan McKee; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Appraiser Karen Bushnell; Assessment Technician Linda Pepper; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Melissa Hartzell; Adam Mikulski; Katie Slattery; Prineville Review; and members of the public.

REGULAR SESSION

The meeting was **called to order at 9:00 a.m.**

Public Comment:

Adam Mikulski raised multiple concerns regarding Conditional Use Permit (CUP) enforcement and transparency. He cited a lack of weed control on the Vanier property and noted that although a weed control plan is now in place, it had not been enforced previously. Adam also addressed dewatering violations at the Woodward site, stating the CUP requires well monitoring on five neighboring wells by an independent expert, something he believes has not been fulfilled. He questioned why the Planning Department hasn’t enforced CUP conditions and asked what accountability the County has.

County Manager Will Van Vactor responded, noting that Community Development Director John Eisler, who is closely involved, was not present. Will acknowledged the well monitoring condition and stated that Knife River had been reminded of their CUP responsibilities. He also mentioned that complaints and violations, such as parking issues, should be documented and reported to the County for tracking.

Adam expressed frustration with what he sees as a pattern of inaction and lack of consequences, stating that Knife River seems to be waiting for the community to give up. He also raised concerns about transparency around the proposed biomass plant near the Stafford pit, describing it as a “hidden secret.” He criticized the short 30-day notice

window for land use hearings, arguing that the County is aware of major projects well before the public and should provide earlier notification.

Commissioner Hermreck agreed with Adam's point on transparency. Will noted that the County is bound by state-mandated notice requirements but acknowledged the need for better communication. Adam suggested issuing a Notice of Intent earlier in the process to give neighbors more time to prepare.

Consent Agenda:

1. Approval of Annual Financial Assurance Update and Recertification for Landfill
2. Allocate \$13,000 of Title III Funds for Continued Fire Prevention and Noxious Vegetation Control in Juniper Canyon under Firewise Communities Initiative
3. Expend up to \$115,000 of Title III (Secure Rural Schools) Federal funds to purchase and upfit a one-ton pickup for Search and Rescue
4. Community Mental Health Provider Contract 2025 Amendment with PacificSource
5. Oregon Dept. of Forestry IGA for leasing ramp space at Airport for Fire season

MOTION to approve the consent agenda. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Discussion item #6: Employee Recognition Program Update and April 2025 Milestone Anniversary Recognition:

Requester: Breyanna Cupp

Details: Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp attended the Regular Session to provide the Board of Commissioners with an update on the progress of the County's employee recognition program. This month, four employees are being honored for reaching important service milestones: Katie Plumb, Katrina Curfman, and Chad Penhollow are each celebrating 10 years of dedicated service, while Bryce Wobbe is recognized for his first year with Crook County.

Discussion item #7: Child Abuse Prevention Month:

Requester: Terra Tyger

Details: Prevention Education Manager Rachel Visser attended the Regular Session to highlight April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. She emphasized the importance of raising awareness, strengthening families, and working toward the goal of preventing child abuse before it occurs. Rachel shared that in 2023, there were 532 confirmed cases of abuse and neglect in Central Oregon, underscoring the need for continued support. She discussed the roles of local organizations, including MountainStar Family Relief Nursery, which believes every child deserves a safe and nurturing environment, and High Desert, which offers free and voluntary home visiting services. Healthy Families also provides in-home educational visits to track child development for families with children under age three. Commissioner Barney concluded the presentation by reading a proclamation officially declaring April 2025 as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Crook County.

MOTION to approve the proclamation. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck.

No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Discussion item #8: Request for Continued Support from Crook County Board of Commissioners for Rural:

Requester: Melissa Hartzell

Details: Melissa Hartzell, Secretary/Treasurer of the Post-Paulina Rangeland Fire Protection Association, attended the Regular Session to request continued support from Crook County. The Association, a non-profit made up of local ranchers and property owners, has received County support for the past 10 years to help prevent and respond to wildfires on unprotected rangeland. This year, they are requesting \$4,500 to repair and upgrade fire equipment, including the purchase of additional radios and slip-in tanks to improve communication and response capabilities. Melissa described the challenges of the 2023 fire season, during which the Association responded to 11 fires, including Durgan, Crazy Creek, Wiley Flat, and Rail Ridge. Fires disrupted schools, mail delivery, and events, and resulted in losses of grass, timber, cattle, and fencing. Volunteers, including high school students and community members, contributed over 2,700 hours and traveled more than 5,000 miles to support their neighbors. With no formal fire camp, the community relied heavily on local support for meals and logistics. Commissioner Hermreck noted that U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley will be recognizing the Post-Paulina Association at his upcoming town hall meeting on Saturday.

MOTION to approve \$4500.00 for the Post-Paulina Rangeland Fire Protection Association. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Hermreck noted that two House bills are currently moving through the legislature: HB 3349, which would allow the Oregon Department of Forestry to transfer surplus equipment to Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, and HB 3350, which proposes \$1 million in funding support for these associations. She reported that both bills are progressing well and have received positive attention so far.

Discussion item #9: Consider Approval of Order 2025-08 In the matter of the appointment to the Crook County Elected Official Compensation Committee:

Requester: Christina Haron

Details: Finance Director Christina Haron presented Order 2025-08 to the Board of Commissioners, requesting appointments to the Crook County Elected Official Compensation Committee. This follows the Board's March 19, 2025 decision to expand the committee to four citizen members under ORS 204.112. The proposed appointments include Scott Tibbs to fill the vacancy in Position #1 and Stephen Brown as the new appointee to Position #4. The current members in Positions #2 and #3 will continue to serve their existing terms.

MOTION for approval in the matter of the appointments to the Crook County Elected Official Compensation Committee Order 2025-08. Motion seconded by Commissioner

Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Discussion item #10: Collective Bargaining Agreement with American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 75 for July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027:

Requester: Eric Blaine

Details: County Counsel Eric Blaine attended the Regular Session to provide an update on the collective bargaining agreement negotiations between Crook County and the union representing Road Department employees. A tentatively agreed version of the collective bargaining agreement has been reached and, per the ground rules of negotiation, is now being presented to both parties' principals with a recommendation for formal approval. Key proposed changes in the agreement include: Extending the grievance response timeline from 10 to 15 working days; Modifying the conditions under which a 5-8 work schedule may be implemented; Adding June 19 (Juneteenth) as a recognized County holiday; Increasing the annual boot allowance from \$250 to \$300; Raising the minimum monthly 401(k) contribution (if applicable) from \$325 to \$350; Implementing a new wage scale based on the May 2024 compensation study.

MOTION to approve the Crook County Road Department and AFSCME Council 75 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Road Department Union with contract term July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Discussion item #11: Chip Seal Rock Crush Bid Results:

Requester: Brad Haynes

Details: Road Superintendent Brad Haynes presented the results of the chip seal rock crush bid to the Board of Commissioners. Two bids were received, with JSW Unlimited & Construction submitting the lowest bid at \$115,425.00. Brad requested authorization to sign the contract outside of a formal Board meeting to expedite the process. County Counsel Eric Blaine confirmed that, since the contract was included in the original RFP, signing it outside of court is permissible and can help streamline project timelines.

MOTION to approve the Chip Seal Rock Crush bid results in the amount of \$115,425.00 being awarded to JSW Unlimited and to sign out of court. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Discussion item #12: Appointment of a board member for the Crook County Road Agency:

Requester: Eric Blaine

Details: County Counsel Eric Blaine discussed the recent amendment to the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) forming the Crook County Road Agency, which was approved by both the City of Prineville and Crook County on March 25th and 26th. One key change in the amendment is the new board appointment process: the County

appoints one member, the City appoints one member, and those two jointly select the third member. The Board of Commissioners was asked to appoint the County's representative to the Road Agency Board. While the appointment has no direct budget impact, it is necessary for the Road Agency to establish a quorum and move forward with operational matters, such as contracting for audits. Commissioner Brian Barney volunteered to serve as the County's representative.

MOTION to appoint Commissioner Barney to serve on the Crook County Road Agency Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Manager Report:

County Manager Will Van Vactor shared that he and Community Development Director John Eisler recently attended a state agency meeting regarding the groundwater issue. As a result, several state agency representatives will present initial testing results and outline next steps during the April 16th Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Crawford suggested holding an evening session to accommodate working residents. The Board has discussed hosting the meeting at Carey Foster Hall and is evaluating Zoom options for broader access. Will also noted that Transportation System Plan (TSP) open houses will take place on April 16th at Carey Foster Hall. Additionally, Sarah Puerner reminded the Board that April 23rd is a "bye week," and no regular Board meeting is scheduled. Will provided an update on the budget process, stating that department head narratives are due and the budget team is finalizing the recommended budget. He is also working on improving internal processes related to public meetings and public records policy, with a draft expected in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Hermreck shared that she received an email from Lisa Coller in Wallowa County, who will be submitting both testimony and a letter of support for Senate Bill 9. Commissioner Crawford has also agreed to provide testimony in support of the bill. Senate Bill 9 focuses on improving access to drive tests for individuals living in rural areas. Specifically, it directs the Oregon Department of Transportation's field offices to prioritize drive test requests from applicants residing in rural Oregon or more than 50 miles from a DMV office.

MOTION to write a letter as Crook County to support Senate Bill 9. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Hermreck also shared her recent visit to Furnish for Hope, a charitable organization that collects and distributes donated furniture to individuals in need. She praised the organization for its meaningful work, which is entirely supported by donations, and highlighted its role in helping people—especially veterans—furnish their homes. She encouraged anyone who knows someone in need of basic home furnishings

to reach out, noting that many partner agencies contribute to support this important effort.

Commissioner Barney shared that he will be attending the Ways and Means Committee meeting in Warm Springs, where he will testify in support of the CORE3 project as a representative of the tri-county area. He also met with Casey Kaiser from the City of Prineville to discuss multiple topics, including a city-funded proposal to install lights on a building and a request for a 5-foot easement on property across from the airport for upcoming well drilling. A follow-up meeting on the easement is planned.

Commissioner Crawford shared that he will attend the Ways and Means Committee meeting in Warm Springs on Friday, where he plans to advocate for funding related to the Crook County Fairgrounds and the wolf management bill. At Commissioner Hermreck's request, he will also bring up House Bills 3349 and 3350, which support Rangeland Fire Protection Associations. Additionally, Commissioner Crawford recently led a cleanup effort on Juniper Canyon Road, which received positive community feedback and generated interest in organizing another. Although not a formal County event, he is working with community members and County Counsel Eric Blaine on a liability waiver to support future volunteer cleanup efforts.

Public Comment:

Adam Mikulski raised concerns about notification requirements for land use changes, specifically regarding the potential rezoning of the biomass plant site from Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) to Heavy Industrial within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). He noted that EFU zones require a 750-foot notification radius, and asked what the notification distance would be if the property is rezoned to heavy industrial. County Manager Will Van Vactor responded that for heavy industrial zoning, the notification requirement is 250 feet from the edge of the subject property.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 10:12 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Puerner / Breyanna Cupp