

**CROOK COUNTY COURT MINUTES  
OF JANUARY 12, 2023 SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING  
Open Portion**

**Be It Remembered** that the Crook County Court met in a Special Public meeting on January 12, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. in the Administration Conference room located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Court Members Present: Judge Seth Crawford, Commissioner Jerry Brummer and Commissioner Brian Barney

Absentees: None

Others Present in Person or Via WebEx: Legal Counsels Eric Blaine and John Eisler; Administration Executive Assistant Sarah Puerner; Deputy Andy Pearson; Lieutenant Bill Elliott; Mike Ervin; Wade Flegel; Brooke Snavely with the Central Oregon Daily News and Joni Land with Oregon Public Broadcasting.

**SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING**

The Crook County Court held a Special Public Meeting convened under ORS 192.640, on Thursday, January 12, 2023. The principal subjects that were discussed were a declaration of local drought emergency and a request for the Governor to declare a drought emergency pursuant to ORS 536.740.

The meeting was **called to order at 1:30 p.m.**

**Public Comment:**

Mike Ervin, who is a citizen of Crook County, asked the question, "What does a drought declaration really mean for the County?"

County Judge Seth Crawford and Commissioner Brian Barney addressed the question. Once there is a drought declaration, it allows farmers and ranchers, and those who are reliant on the water, to apply for various State grants. This also opens the possibility to obtain special permits to pump groundwater in place of stored water and to use active wells and things of this nature. It also qualifies for Federal and State disaster programs.

Wade Flegel, who is a citizen of Crook County, was curious if this was going to be a request to the Governor for declaration.

Commissioner Brian Barney stated that it is a request to the Governor and added that the County has reached out to the Ochoco Irrigation District, which is a supplier of water for Prineville and the surrounding areas, and the Irrigation District has provided a letter with some of the hardships regarding the drought. This is the fourth consecutive year that Crook County has applied for a drought declaration.

End of Public Comment.

The County Court found that the Crook County agricultural and livestock industries, recreation, and related economies are suffering widespread and severe economic damage, potential injuries, and loss of property resulting from extreme weather conditions within the County. Annual water supplies that are available for irrigators and ranchers within Crook County are a function of winter snowpack for water storage in Ochoco and Prineville Reservoirs and natural flows in the Crooked River and its tributaries.

The January 9, 2023 Oregon Water Conditions Report showed that Crook County is the only county in the State with areas still in the D4 – Exception Drought category since last summer. Current conditions in the Crooked River watershed are equal to or less than 30% of the average and reservoir storage is only 10% full. These conditions result in loss of economic stability, pasture shortages, decrease in feed production, shortened growing season, reduction in recreational opportunities, and decreased water supplies for Crook County agricultural and livestock producers.

The Crook County Court determined that extraordinary measures must be taken to alleviate suffering of people and livestock and to protect or mitigate economic loss, and to be responsive to the threat of wildfires.

The Crook County Court proclaimed that a severe, continuing drought was declared within Crook County and the Crook County drought Emergency Management Plan has been implemented.

**MOTION** to approve Order 2023-06 in the matter of declaration of local drought and request to declare a state of drought emergency for Crook County, Oregon. Motion seconded. No further discussion. Motion carried 3-0.

There being no further business before the Court, the meeting was **adjourned at 1:42 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Sarah Puerner**