

**CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MINUTES
OF APRIL 9, 2025, WORK SESSION
Open Portion**

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of Commissioners met in a regularly scheduled Work Session on April 9, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the Administration Conference room located at 203 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 and Communications Officer Sarah Puerner; County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Extension Office Manager Rebecca Keegan; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; Finance Director Christina Haron; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; HR Director Meghan McKee; Administrative Assistant Mona Glade; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Community Development Director John Eisler; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Natural Resources Manager Tim Deboodt; OSU Agent Scott Duggan; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Deputy Director Camille Day; Prineville Review; Mike Ervin; and members of the public.

WORK SESSION

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

Public Comment: None

Discussion item #1: Crook County Extension: Livestock & Field Program Update:

Requester: Rebecca Keegan

Details: Rebecca Keegan and Scott Duggan from the OSU Extension Office provided an update on livestock and field programs in Crook County. In 2024, 181 ranchers were certified through Beef Quality Assurance, and 14 workshops were held, reaching 271 participants. Additional outreach included 17 farm visits, 205 contacts, and educational programming for 400 fourth graders through Boots & Roots. Workshop topics included hay management, calving, wolf conflict, and virtual fencing. Publications and articles covered key agricultural issues and appeared in regional outlets. Scott also discussed veterinary training and highlighted a castration clinic in Warm Springs. Commissioners raised questions about virtual fencing costs, usage, and the need for BLM and Forest Service involvement in addressing fencing burdens on local ranchers.

Discussion item #2: 2025 Crook County Wolf Grant Agreement:

Requester: Ellie Gage

Details: Commissioner Crawford requested to discuss the Crook County Wolf Grant Agreement; however, the item has been removed from the agenda for now. He noted that there are several questions that need clarification and will be working with County Counsel to gather more information before any decisions are made. Commissioner

Crawford also expressed his willingness to coordinate a meeting with Eric, Ellie, and other relevant parties to move the discussion forward.

Discussion item #3: Sheriff's Office Monthly Update:

Requester: Bill Elliott

Details: Undersheriff Bill Elliott provided the Board of Commissioners with the March 2025 statistics from the Crook County Sheriff's Office. Overall crime was down 26%, while arrests increased by 17%, with 8 felony and 33 misdemeanor arrests. Property crimes rose 32%, sex crimes increased 30%, and community crimes dropped significantly. Mental health-related calls slightly decreased. There were 1,347 total calls for service, a 4.5% decrease from the previous year. Jail statistics showed a 9% increase in bookings, 24 DUIs, and a 44% increase in assault cases compared to the previous year. Elliott highlighted the need for adequate jail staffing, citing a recent DUI crash involving children that required multi-agency response and extensive resources. To help manage workload and reduce overtime, a patrol deputy will be temporarily reassigned to the jail, potentially saving over 100 hours of overtime after another staff member went out on FMLA.

Manager Report: None

Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Hermreck invited Stephanie O'Neal, Crook County's Public Health Modernization Manager, to speak about National Public Health Week, which is being celebrated throughout the county. The focus of the week is on building stronger, healthier communities through partnerships, people, and policies that impact daily life. Events include a Chamber Perk, a community partner thank-you breakfast, and the "Warm & Fuzzies" appreciation event at the Health Department. Stephanie also shared plans for long-term community impact projects, such as planting wildflowers at Stiker Park and installing a mini library to promote literacy. Public Health is also using the week and social media engagement to gather community feedback. Commissioner Hermreck noted she will participate in the upcoming Crook County Visioning Workshop, alongside several community leaders.

Commissioner Crawford is collaborating with County Manager Will Van Vactor to launch a six-week "County College" this fall, aimed at educating residents about local government. He also testified in support of Senate Bill 9, addressing DMV testing delays and the high number of out-of-area applicants in Crook County. Additionally, he and Commissioner Barney attended the Ways and Means Committee meeting in Warm Springs to advocate for rural fire and fairgrounds funding, both of which are moving forward positively.

County Manager Will Van Vactor stated that the Wildfire risk map was revoked by the Oregon Senate, and it passed unanimously. The board discussed the outcome and what is in the future with the map.

Commissioner Barney reported that the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan has completed its final public open house and is now moving toward final approval. Public comments

will be accepted until April 21st. County Manager Will Van Vactor noted that while the original contract targeted completion in May, the timeline may need to be extended due to uncertainty around FEMA's review process. Despite this, the project remains on schedule.

County Counsel Eric Blaine informed the Board of a late addition to the agenda regarding an amendment to the Participating Provider Agreement with PacificSource. Although the County approved the original amendment in early April, PacificSource determined the approval was received too late and has since issued a revised version with a new effective date of April 1st (changed from January 1st). The updated amendment is now being submitted for approval, with the date being the only change.

MOTION to approve the updated 2025 amendment to the Pacific Source Community Solutions participating provider agreement. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment:

Mike Ervin shared his recent experience attending a legislative hearing at the state capitol, expressing disappointment in how members of the public were treated. He traveled to Salem to testify on House Bills 3075 and 3076, but the agenda was unexpectedly changed to a work session, and no public testimony was allowed. He noted a lack of communication and respect, including the committee chair not engaging with attendees, leaving the public waiting for hours without explanation. Commissioners Hermreck and Crawford echoed similar frustrations from their own experiences, including delayed hearings and lack of notice when trying to testify on other bills such as HB 3349, HB 3350, and the transient tax bill.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 9:46 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Puerner / Breyanna Cupp