

**CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MINUTES
OF APRIL 30, 2025, WORK SESSION
Open Portion**

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of Commissioners met in a regularly scheduled Work Session on April 30, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the Administration Conference room located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

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

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Counsel Eric Blaine; Executive Assistant Sarah Puerner; County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Library Director Sarah Beeler; Assessor Jon Soliz; Facilities Director James Preuss; Museum Director Sean Briscoe; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Community Development Director John Eisler; Building Official Randy Davis; Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis; Finance Director Christina Haron; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Appraiser Stephanie West; HR Director Meghan McKee; Clerk Cheryl Seely; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Sheriff Gautney; Natural Resources Manager Tim Deboodt; Linda Pepper; Monty Kurtz; Mike Ervin; Laura York; Jack Rabenberg; Prineville Review; and members of the public.

WORK SESSION

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

Public Comment: None

Discussion item #1: Approval to Accept ODHS Grant for Backup Generator Purchase at Crook County Library for \$164,000:

Requester: Sarah Beeler

Details: Library Director Sarah Beeler attended the Board of Commissioners Work Session to request approval to accept a \$164,000 ODHS grant for the purchase and installation of a backup generator at the Crook County Library, intended to support emergency heating and cooling needs for the community. The total project cost is estimated at \$180,000, with additional funding to be sought through grants. Facilities Director James Preuss presented bid information and addressed long-term maintenance considerations, noting that the project includes site preparation and fencing. While both Commissioners Hermreck and Crawford commended the library's role and Director Beeler's efforts, they expressed concerns about current budget constraints and the need to prioritize core services and long-term fiscal planning. As a result, the Board chose not to take action on the grant at this time.

Discussion item #2: CAFFA Grant Status Update and Request for Commissioner Signature Authorization Outside of Meetings:

Requester: Jon Soliz

Details: Assessor Jon Soliz attended the Work Session to provide an update on the annual County Assessment Function Funding Assistance (CAFFA) Grant and requested an out-of-court signature from a Commissioner to meet the upcoming submission deadline. The CAFFA Grant, submitted to the state each year, allocates revenue back to counties and is specifically designated to support the Assessment and Taxation (A&T) budget. In Crook County, it helps fund approximately 13% of A&T operations, including contributions to departments such as Finance, IT, GIS, the Clerk, and the Assessor. Jon confirmed the grant is on target with the budgeted estimate for the year.

MOTION that Commissioner Crawford or Commissioner Hermreck be authorized to sign the CAFFA Grant outside of the meeting on behalf of the county. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye and Commissioner Crawford votes Aye. Motion carried 2-0.

Discussion item #3: Crook County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) Review & Update:

Requester: AJ Crawford

Details: Emergency Manager AJ Crawford attended the Work Session to present updates to Crook County's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which was last updated and promulgated in 2019. The revisions include changes in governance language from "County Court" to "Board of Commissioners," the addition of the County Manager position, updated mapping and annexes, and general improvements to make the document more user-friendly. AJ noted the importance of catching up on the required two-year update cycle and moving toward a more unified, whole-community approach to emergency planning. Sheriff Gautney joined via Zoom to clarify that the Board of Commissioners must sign the EOP, as they are the authority to declare emergencies, and that the signed plan is required before submission to the State. Following discussion and recommendations from County Manager Will Van Vactor, the Board agreed the plan was ready and directed staff to place it on the next meeting's agenda for approval.

Discussion item #4: USDA Aphis Wildlife Services Agreement for Landfill:

Requester: Jacquie Davis

Details: Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis attended the Work Session to discuss the annual USDA APHIS Wildlife Services agreement specific to the Crook County Landfill. This agreement allows USDA to provide professional wildlife management services to address issues with ravens, starlings, and other wildlife that pose risks to property and public health and safety. The cost for fiscal year 2025 is \$15,300, to be paid from the Landfill Contract Services Fund, not to exceed the stated amount. This agreement is separate from broader USDA services previously presented to the Board and is specific to ongoing landfill operations. The Board agreed to place the item on the next meeting's consent agenda for approval.

Discussion item #5: Changes to Application Process for Museum Advisory Board:

Requester: Sean Briscoe

Details: Museum Director Sean Briscoe attended the Work Session to propose changes to the application process for the Museum Advisory Board, which currently has only three active members and lacks the quorum needed to conduct official business or review new applicants. To address this, Sean requested temporary authorization to recommend applicants for appointment until a quorum is restored. Commissioner Hermreck suggested a collaborative review process involving the Museum Director, County Manager, and the three current board members. County Counsel Eric Blaine confirmed there were no legal issues with this approach and referenced Order 2022-52, which allows the Board of Commissioners to modify appointment procedures when necessary. The Board agreed to move forward with a modified review committee consisting of the current board members, Sean Briscoe, and County Manager Will Van Vactor, who will jointly evaluate applications and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

MOTION for this appointment process the manner in which the Board would like it to be handled is that there be a committee composed of the three current Advisory Board members, Museum Director Sean Briscoe, and County Manager Will Van Vactor to review the applications and to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners as to who should be appointed to the museum advisory board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. Commissioner Crawford added that he would like Will to make sure that best practices with the State are included. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye and Commissioner Crawford votes Aye. Motion carried 2-0.

Discussion item #6: Initial Discussion of Order 2025-11 Ordering the fees to be collected by Crook County for fiscal year 2025-2026:

Requester: Christina Haron

Details: Finance Director Christina Haron attended the Work Session to present the initial draft of Order 2025-11, which outlines the fees to be collected by Crook County for fiscal year 2025–2026, effective July 1, 2025. The purpose of the order is to establish a uniform fee schedule for county services. Christina reviewed Exhibit A, the proposed final fee schedule, and Exhibit B, an informational document showing prior fees and proposed changes. Notable adjustments include increases to Community Development and Landfill fees. A correction was noted regarding a surcharge listed as \$117 instead of the intended \$100, which will be fixed before final adoption. This item is scheduled for further discussion and a Public Hearing during the May 7th Board meeting.

Discussion item #7: Support Letter for Route D - PacifiCorp's Blueprint South Transmission Line:

Requester: Will Van Vactor

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor attended the Work Session to present a draft support letter endorsing Route D as the preferred alignment for PacifiCorp's Blueprint South Transmission Line project. This large-scale infrastructure initiative aims to address existing transmission system constraints and enhance capacity to support Central Oregon's growing population and the long-term economic development of Crook County. Spanning approximately 180 miles and requiring a 250-foot right-of-

way, the project will cross a range of private lands and areas with scenic, cultural, and wildlife significance. Route D, which follows existing transmission corridors, is viewed as the most practical and efficient alternative. While acknowledging local concerns, the Board concurred that Route D offers the greatest overall benefit in terms of regional impact and future infrastructure resilience. The letter of support is due by May 9th and will be placed on the May 7th consent agenda for final approval.

Discussion item #8: Planning Commission Vacancy:

Requester: John Eisler

Details: Community Development Director John Eisler attended the Work Session to inform the Board of Commissioners of a new vacancy on the Crook County Planning Commission following the resignation of Shelby Duncan, effective April 23, 2025. Shelby's term began in January and was set to run through December 31, 2028. In accordance with Order 2022-52, the County will advertise the vacancy for a minimum of one month beginning immediately. Mr. Eisler also noted that the recent application period for a separate Planning Commission vacancy closed on April 29, with six complete and highly qualified applications received. Applicants not selected in the current round will have the option to carry their applications forward for consideration in filling this new vacancy.

Discussion item #9: Community Development Monthly Update:

Requester: John Eisler

Details: Community Development Director John Eisler and Building Official Randy Davis attended the Work Session to provide the Board of Commissioners with the department's monthly update for March. The Building Department issued 186 total permits, including 16 for new homes and 39 for commercial projects, with approximately 173 homes currently under construction and nearly 1,000 inspections conducted monthly. While activity is up compared to last year, it remains relatively slow overall. Notable commercial projects include apartment complexes, the Crooked Tails Veterinary Clinic expansion, and a new taphouse near Gee's. The Planning Department remains busy, with 85 applications received year-to-date and a noticeable increase in activity. Upcoming hearings include Moffat Solar and Lester Zone Map Amendments on May 14, West Prineville on May 21, and TSR North on May 29 and June 18. Code Compliance reported 13 new cases and 6 closed. Mr. Eisler also noted that the Department of Defense is expected to present an update at an upcoming Work Session.

Manager Report:

County Manager Will Van Vactor informed the Board that the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) requested permission to use Crook County's logo on a joint letter opposing Senate Bill 916, which would allow striking union members to collect unemployment benefits. Commissioners Hermreck and Barney had previously submitted individual letters in opposition to the bill, though they were initially unable to upload them to the Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS) due to timing. Commissioner Hermreck confirmed that Communications Officer Sarah Puerner successfully uploaded the letters earlier in the week. The Board reaffirmed its opposition to SB 916.

MOTION to approve the lending of the Crook County seal to AOC for the purpose of a letter in opposition to Senate Bill 916. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye and Commissioner Crawford votes Aye. Motion carried 2-0.

County Manager Will Van Vactor informed the Board that, with Congress now back in session, a new letter in support of Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding will be prepared for the Board's review next week. He also commended Jamie Berger and Christina Haron for their hard work on the budget, noting that the proposed budget is expected to be released by the end of the week.

Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Crawford mentioned that the SRS has made it into the reconciliation bill and that it is moving forward. Also, in reconciliation there are 20-year timber contracts in the national forest. Commissioner Crawford has been working hard on the fair dollars and advocating in Salem and every little bit helps.

Commissioner Hermreck informed the Board that she was approached by Mosaic to provide a letter of support for a \$4 million state bond request. The funding would support the development of a new campus in East Bend, with a target completion date by the end of 2026. Commissioner Hermreck emphasized the importance of supporting this initiative, as Mosaic has expressed interest in partnering with Crook County to establish a public health center once the campus is complete. The letter of support will be directed to Senator Lieber and Representative Sanchez.

MOTION to sign the letter on behalf of Crook County. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye and Commissioner Crawford votes Aye. Motion carried 2-0.

County Manager Will Van Vactor announced that the Administration Department will be mailing 2,500 postcards to randomly selected residents as part of a community survey designed to gather input for the County's key performance indicators, which will inform the final budget. In addition to the postcards, a live online version of the survey will also be available for any members of the public who wish to participate.

Public Comment:

A citizen expressed strong support for the Board's decision to endorse Route D, commending them for recognizing it as the most logical and beneficial alignment. The citizen also informed the Board that Ken Smith had received incorrect information stating the meeting was at the Annex and had been canceled, which led him to leave and return home.

Mike Ervin addressed the Board to commend the strong collaboration and presence of the Crook County Sheriff's Office at Board meetings and praised the Citizen Academy as an excellent program. He raised concern about the recent placement of the Deschutes County Sheriff on the Brady list and asked whether this development could have any impact on Crook County, noting the limitations associated with being on the list.

Commissioner Hermreck acknowledged the question and affirmed the strength and integrity of Crook County's current Sheriff.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was **adjourned at 10:04 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Puerner / Breyanna Cupp