**CROOK COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MAY 12, 2025**

Crook County Budget Committee met in a scheduled meeting. The meeting was held on Monday, May 12, 2025, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and was held at the Crook County Justice Center, located at 260 NW 2nd Street, Prineville, OR 97754. The principal subject discussed was the budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

Committee Members Present: Commissioner Seth Crawford, Commissioner Susan Hermreck, Commissioner Brian Barney, William “Bill” Anderson, Scott Tibbs, and Steve Brown

Absentees: None

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Manager Will Van Vactor; Budget Manager Jamie Berger; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis; Facilities Director James Preuss; Administration Executive Assistant and Communication Officer Sarah Puerner*;* Administrative Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; County Counsel Eric Blaine; Library Director Sarah Beeler; Sheriff John Gautney; Lieutenant Mitch Madden; Stephanie Wilson; Aaron Boyce; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Jail Commander Andrew Rassmussen; District Attorney Kari Hathorn; Juvenile Director Erika Frickey; Treasurer Galen Carter; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Health and Human Services Deputy Director Camille Day; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Community Development Director John Eisler; Operations Manager Katrina Weitman; Landfill Manager Jacquie Davis; Airport Manager Kelly Coffelt; weed Master Thomas Laird; Steve Waring; Courtney Voss;

The meeting was **called to order at 8:30 a.m.**

County Manager Will Van Vactor provided an introduction of the committee members. The budget committee discussed appointing a chairperson for the committee.

**MOTION** to nominate Bill Anderson as chairperson of the budget committee. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Committee Member Steve Brown votes Aye, Committee Member Scott Tibbs votes Aye, and Committee Member Bill Anderson votes Aye. Motion carried 6-0.

County Manager Will Van Vactor opened the committee meeting with a budget message to everyone. Will explained the budget was developed in context of economic uncertainty, continued organizational restructuring and desire for greater transparency. A budget plan that is conservative, reflects an organization in transition, and focuses on essential services and long-term sustainability. Will presented the numbers for the FY 2026 proposed budget, general fund budget, expenditure appropriations, contingency, and reserves. Will went over strategic goals; budget challenges; budget actions; total budget; personnel changes and costs; capital outlay; fee adjustments; property tax & levy; budget process highlights; and recognition & process. Will extended his appreciation for the budget committee, board of commissioners, staff, and dedication or Crook County employees.

Will explained the potential refund credit because of the unresolved appeal in the Oregon tax court involving centrally assessed value of intangible property.

Jamie Berger presented the general fund, resources and requirements for the proposed budget. Christina Haron explained the non-departments funds, and the account is a catch all for all the county’s items that don’t fit in other departments. Internal Service Departments include administration & board of commissioners, legal counsel, finance, human resources, information technology, and facilities.

**Administration, Will Van Vactor** presented the proposed budget for Administration and Board of Commissioners. The form of governance changed in March 2024 that included a new county manager hired in November 2024. The goal for administration is to deliver the best level of service within available and allocated resources. In FY26 the administration will emphasize finalizing the facilities and communications plans, supporting county-wide efforts to review core services for each department. Will also informed the budget committee of the key performance indicators included in the proposed budget and the live survey currently being conducted to collect data for KPI’s.

**County Counsel, Eric Blaine** presented the budget for County Legal Counsel. Eric also discussed goals for County Counsel that consist of developing and present training as requested, Collaborate with Board, County Manager, and directors to find solutions to offload to and or update processes and practices of other non-legal or non-essential functions, and Transition to exclusively provide legal services and related training

**Finance Director, Christina Haron** presented the budget for the Finance Department. The goals are to continue implementation of new ERP system and updated Chart of Accounts and integration with other County software, Update procedures and policies for new workflow options in ERP and enhance existing internal controls including streamlining Accounts Payable processes, and enhancements to internal and externa financial reporting including utilization of encumbrances and a contract/grant management system included in the ERP.

**Human Resources, Meghan Mckee** presented goals for HR that are update Continued build-out and implementation of NeoGov (HRIS) which consists of Recruiting and onboarding go-live date summer 2025, and System-Wide Go-live date January 2026. Other goals are to Update job descriptions, Update employee Handbook (Target completion: Summer 2025), SHRM Certification, and complete Exit Interviews which are incorporated into NeoGov2025.

**Information Technology, Jamie Berger and Will Van Vactor** presented goals for IT and are to Reassess Strategic Road Map and Continue Implementation, Implement New Department Structure, and Continue HRIS + Finance ERP Software Implementations. The Focus for IT is Building on a strong IT foundation to provide top notch IT service to the organization, to include IT staff and countywide training, further investment in cybersecurity and critical infrastructure needs, and assessment of software stack.

**Facilities, James Preuss** presented the goals for the facilities team to complete a successful commissioning and operation of the new Justice Center, examining all facilities for cost savings throughout the County, Essential to assess and finalize the space requirements of the County, initiate design for Courthouse renovation, and Plan for buildings that will be vacated.

**Sheriff, John Gautney and Stephanie Wilson** discussed highlights, challenges, and services the Sheriff’s Office is currently experiencing. The highlights for the Sheriff’s Office jail is the jail had 1,258 bookings in 2024 with an average of 105 a month, Maintained several programs addressing issues of substance abuse and other societal issues leading toward transition from custody, Court Security consist of 1 deputy and 12,835 people entered through security (Nov-Feb), and recovered 363 knives, 18 cans of pepper spray, 1 taser, and 7 firearms. Law enforcement Patrol highlights are calls for service (CFS) increased 22% (16,710 CFS from 13,677 in 2023), More deputies on the road due to additional FTEs authorized last budget year allowed more proactive patrol time and with focused traffic enforcement we have seen fewer complaints. Increased arrests for impaired driving making the road safer for everyone, Technological upgrades have improved radio communications in the more remote areas, and Replaced aging, high mileage vehicles have improved deputy safety. Parole & Probation highlights are constantly changing environment by the State around the laws of supervision and with the passing last year of HB4002, user amounts of dangerous drugs are now illegal again, the L.E.A.D.S. program is new and funded by the State to help keep drug users accountable and to get into treatment, and Staff levels have remained constant and has keep caseloads manageable at 35-40per PO. Emergency & Special Services highlights consist of continued increase in call outs for Search and Rescue for stranded people in the snow and from July 2024 to current, we have had 32 SAR callouts, have assisted other counties 6 times since July 2024 under the mutual aid agreement. These have been for fire evac and K9 searches. Last year the Sheriff's Office responded to a record number of wildfires in our county. SAR was involved in evacuating residents from danger of fires in our county as well as neighboring Wheeler County. We have a new Emergency Manager who has worked hard and got the CWPP updated and distributed, as well as the EOP for the county. He is continuing to work with other organizations to get the final pieces of the NHMP completed.

Sheriff Gautney explained the challenges that the Sheriff’s office will face in the next fiscal year due to changes. Challenges discussed were courthouse security, training issues for new hires, violent crime caseload, mental health challenges, homeless population, reduction in staff which will increase burnout due to mandatory overtime, high risk trials, HB4002 passing may have impact on P&P, maintain staff morale due to unsustainable funding of Sheriff’s Office, and continued reduction in grant funds from EMPG and Marine Board.

Sheriff Gautney explained the services that the proposed budget amount, the Sheriff's Office cannot maintain the current service levels. If Measure 114 becomes law, the mandated workload for the Sheriff's Office will be increased dramatically on our support staff beyond our current capability.

Scott Tibbs asked about state long term funding and Sheriff Gautney explained that they received the minimum of $150K. Mental health was discussed among the board and funding that the Sheriff’s office receives and doesn’t receive and what options the jail has with mental health inmates. Sheriff's Office needs the 13.5 FTE that were not funded in the proposed budget to maintain adequate service levels in the county. Critical staffing in the Patrol and Jail Divisions just like before the County approved the additional FTEs last budget year. The sheriff discussed that the sheriff’s office is forced to shut down one complete patrol shift if another position is lost from patrol.

**District Attorney, Kari Hathorn** presented the budget for the DA office. Kari explained the services, highlights and challenges that her office faces. Kari explains that a few highlights for her office is being short staffed, no Chief DDA, and turnover DDA’s. Increased costs for training and recruiting. The DA is proposing an addition of an Investigator. The challenges within the DA office are caseloads for the Da which is over 200 cases, DDA cases average 120-150, and no available attorney to appear in court and grand jury.

**Juvenile Director, Jamie Berger and Christina Haron** reported the numbers for the juvenile department’s budget. Christina Haron read on the record notes from Erika Frickey who couldn’t be in the meeting today. Erika’s notes included services and changes to line items that can be made. Juvenile department highlights, challenges, and services were reviewed.

**Assessor, Jon Soliz** presented the budget numbers for the department. Jon discussed highlights that consist of Software Conversion Items and now have field ready use of Mobile Assessor, Maintain Staff/Training top keep the same staff/train them; hired new position this (last) year, and services of market value on all real and personal property, tax roll, 8-5pm open office, and detailed web-based info. Challenges that the assessor’s office faces are switching to a new web search software, data will be the same, with new format, and plan to reach out to some of our “power users” to help them navigate. Services provided are web-based data, in office help, and 100 years’ experience just in the assessment office.

**Clerk, Cheryl Seely** presented the budget for the clerk’s office. Cheryl explained highlights within her office of the new statewide voter registration system (ORVIS) was terminated, completed November 2024 General Election and May 2025 Special District Election is in process, Next FY -May 2026 Primary Election, Archiving and Records Retention committee and Commissioner Journal and Road records -project. Challenges Recording down significantly from a few years ago, staff succession planning, Microfilm of Permanent Records, Space needs, and Preparation for Courthouse remodel. Services the clerk’s office provides are recording, ballot signature verification, public records requests, etc. Other services that are available are the digital research room and the Property Recording Alert Service are coming soon.

**Library Director, Sarah Beeler** presented the proposed fund for the library. Sarah provided the committee with the highlights, challenges, and services for the Crook County Library. The highlights are the increased number of library card holders, complete transition to ADA Compliant and improved Library Catalog, and align services and staffing needs with Strategic Plan 2025-2030, by providing library services throughout Crook County, particularly the thousands of people living up Juniper Canyon. Challenges within the library are staffing issues with double duty of the library director and library operations position, outreach services, promotion of current employee. Other challenges are reducing library hours and choosing staff or services when budgets shrink due to cost increases for personnel and services. The library will lose 2 mid Oregon personnel employees, all vacant positions will be scrutinized and measured against the need to keep service levels high, and Outreach services will be provided by promoting a current 32-hr/week position to full-time Outreach.

**Fairgrounds, Casey Daly** presented the proposed fund for the fairgrounds department. Casey reported the highlights, challenges, and services of the fairgrounds. The highlights of the fairgrounds are the completion of New 3200sf Jockey Room (Caldera Building), Address operational deficit-Reduction of Annual Fair Budget, Increase Event Revenue-Renegotiate Existing Event Contracts, Expand RV Space Rental, Support SB780 & HB2304 Revenue Measures from State Legislature, Pursue Additional Transient Room Tax Revenue, continue upgrades to Grizzley Mt. Pavillion & Indoor and Outdoor Arenas, and Refresh Aging Equipment. The challenges are Increased Energy and Operational Costs, Aging Buildings and Equipment, Meeting Larger Event Space Requirements, Meeting New Venue Technology Standards and Trends, Balance of New Trends and Hesitance to Change, Two Additional Large Arena Facilities in the County. Casey explained the services of the fairgrounds More Cost-Effective Entertainment and Attractions Choices at annual Fair, Fair Premiums and Judges Costs taken on by 4-H, FFA and Livestock Sales Committee, Expanded Open Class Exhibits at Annual Fair, Fairgrounds Personal and Facilities Maintenance Unchanged, and Implemented Event Host to take on Majority of Setup and Tear Down.

**Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb** presented the proposed budget of health and human services. Katie explained public health highlights, challenges, and services. Public health highlights are Prevention & Health Promotion programming, Updated Department Strategic Plan, Increased Communicable Disease coordination to identify and mitigate community risk, and Engagement in regional and state initiatives to advocate for Crook County and secure funding for local priorities. Challenges for public health are Continued management/administrative burden that exceeds current capacity, Siloed, temporary, inadequate funding –largely state & federal grants, Space limitations due to having staff in two buildings, and Rate of internal and external change. Public health services consist of Clinical Preventive Services: Reproductive Health, Immunizations, Communicable Disease Prevention and Response, Public Health Emergency Preparedness, Family Health: WIC, Nurse Home Visiting, Perinatal Care, Prevention & Health Promotion, and Environmental Health. Environmental Health has been a success with stability, experienced staff, and consistent outcomes. The goal of environmental health is to have fiscal sustainability. Mental Health highlights are Mental Health Fund activity recorded in the Health and Human Services Fund starting FY24, Contracted services via a pass-through of federal, state and insurance monies, and Continued engagement of Community Health Advisory Council in accountability and support of Community Mental Health Program services.

**Veteran Services Director Katie Plumb** presented the proposed veteran services fund. The highlights, challenges, and services were explained. Highlights Katies explained to the committee were the increase in new awards and total funds awarded to local veterans. Staffing is a challenge for veteran services due to the office having limited closures when both staff are out of the office. Veteran Services is asking for another VSO because of limitations with just one person. Services provided are to advocate for and assist veterans and their family members in applying for all benefits that may be available to them through various local, state, and federal agencies. Benefits may include Service-connected disability compensation, non-service-connected pensions, Widows’ pensions, Burial benefits, Education, Home improvement grants for handicapped adaptability, specially adapted automobile grants, Vocational rehabilitation, Clothing allowances, and Emergency grant funding.

**Road Department Superintendent Brad Haynes** presented the proposed road department fund. Brad explained to the committee the road department highlights, challenges, and projects. Highlights are the overlay on Barnes Rd from Barnes Butte to HWY 126, 2 miles, Deep Base repairs and Chip Seal, Inhouse thin lift leveling course on Upper Davis Loop from Juniper Canyon Road to Cayuse Road for 2 miles, and Transportation System Plan (TSP) update led and funded by Community Development department. Challenges within the department are the deferred maintenance catch up with revenue stream dwindling, Grant opportunities on hold with federal administration change, and Aging equipment needing to be upgraded and Parts availability is becoming a problem. Brad spoke about the planned projects for the department.

**Community Development Director, John Eisler** presented goals which include update to the TSP, Finalize and implement strategic plan (completed in Q2), research technology enhancements, review, and update department fees, create plan for state of the are community development facility, and update comprehensive plan in FY2025. Community development is a fee dependent department, and permit activity has slowed down, lowering revenue. CDD currently has 8 vacancies. Personnel expenses are down due to not being fully staffed. Building inspectors do need to be trained in blue beams software and making effort to get them trained.

**Landfill Manager, Jacquie Davis** presented the proposed Landfill fund. Jacquie explained to the committee the highlights, challenges, and services. Highlights for the Landfill are Solid Waste Management Plan –Final report completed, successfully passed 4 quarters of SEM testing for methane, Septic agreement with City of Prineville, purchased water truck, Franchise Agreement with Republic Services, Recycling Modernization Act implementation preparation and three free events offered to the community. Challenges the landfill faces are SEM Testing –Drone testing, possible implementation of methane collection and monitoring systems, Additional state required programs, Partial final closure of C&D cell –exterior slope change and keeping disposal costs to the public low. Services consist of the enterprise Fund funded mainly through tipping fees. The Landfill adjusts tipping fees accordingly to cover costs, costs to cover equipment installation for methane collection and monitoring equipment is unknown due to several factors. This would negatively impact the Landfill budget and would require landfill to possibly seek other avenues for funding.

**Airport Manager, Kelly Coffelt** presented goals for the airport to include, complete business plan, implement new business plan (complete), Update IGA with City of Prineville (in process, and to be completed Q2), initiate plan for T-hangar construction project, and initiate plan for runway reconstruction plan. Transfer of all airport related accounts from city to county is currently in progress. New rules are regulations to minimum standards are complete, approved and posted. Received 250K grant from the state for T-Hangars and evaluating options to support the project. Design engineering is out for bid so about 90% complete. The airport received a total of $250K grant for T-Hangar and $250K grant for the Runway project. Both projects are approved. The total for the runway project is a total of $4M and will start in the fall.

**Weed Master, Thomas Laird** presented the proposed fund for weed control. Thomas explained to the committee the highlights, challenges, and services of weed control. Some of the main projects within Crook County are home inspections and new development. The department is responsible for educating the community and public about weed control and prevention. Currently waiting for Forest Service and BLM payments for Fall and Winter work. Weed Control is only a team of one and has a great working relationship with Deb. Have been awarded OWEB and CRWMA grants that help with weed control and wildfire mitigation. The goal is to have all county roads done by May 1st, although dependent on weather conditions.

Budget Manager Jamie Berger and Finance Director Christina Haron explained to the committee other special revenue funds. These funds are apprised of the Clerks Special Revenue Fund, Community College Education Center Fund, Risk Management Fund, Title III Fund, Tourism Fund, Video Lottery Fund, Crook County School Fund, Special Transportation Fund, Surveyor Fund, and Taylor Grazing Fund.

County Manager Will Van Vactor explained to the committee the Capital Projects Fund. Christina Haron explained what the Capital Asset Reserve Fund and Debt Service Fund are and how they are used and operated.

**Public Comment:** None

**Compensation Committee Recommendation:** Will Van Vactor explained to the budget committee the recommendation that the compensation committee has made for elected official compensation. Commissioner Hermreck asked why County Clerk salary was decreased by $255. The compensation committee explained that the numbers were proposed versus what the recommendation was.

**MOTION** to approve the recommendation for elected officials’ compensation. Motion seconded by Steve Brown. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Committee Member Steve Brown votes Aye, Committee Member Scott Tibbs votes Aye, and Committee Member Bill Anderson votes Aye. Motion carried 6-0.

**Budget Committee Discussion:**

The budget committee discussed the current budget situation with the sheriff department and the next steps in helping issues get resolved. The committee discussed that the core services need to be the focus for the next budget year and ensure services are provided.

**MOTION** to any tax base that comes in over the projected 4% for Crook County get allocated to the Sheriff’s department for this budget period. Motion seconded by Steve Brown. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Committee Member Steve Brown votes Aye, Committee Member Scott Tibbs votes Aye, and Committee Member Bill Anderson votes Aye. Motion carried 6-0.

**MOTION** that the budget committee of Crook County, Oregon approve the budget for 2026 fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, as proposed in the amount of $132,182,000.00. Motion seconded by Scott Tibbs. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Committee Member Steve Brown votes Aye, Committee Member Scott Tibbs votes Aye, and Committee Member Bill Anderson votes Aye. Motion carried 6-0.

**MOTION** to the budget committee of Crook County, Oregon approve property taxes for the 2026 fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, in the amount of $3.8702 per $1000 of assessed value for the permanent rate tax levy and in the amount $673,000 for the general obligation bond levy. Motion seconded by Steve Brown. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Committee Member Steve Brown votes Aye, Committee Member Scott Tibbs votes Aye, and Committee Member Bill Anderson votes Aye. Motion carried 6-0.

**MOTION** that budget committee as formed will meet on October 23rd to discuss the next steps to review levels of service across the organization, review any sort of action plans, recommendations, etc. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Committee Member Steve Brown votes Aye, Committee Member Scott Tibbs votes Aye, and Committee Member Bill Anderson votes Aye. Motion carried 6-0.

There being no further business, the meeting was **adjourned at 3:47 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Sarah Puerner / Breyanna Cupp**