

**CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MINUTES
OF NOVEMBER 05, 2025, REGULAR MEETING
Open Portion**

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular meeting on November 5, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the County meeting room located at 320 NE Court Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Board Members Present: Commissioner Brian Barney, Commissioner Susan Hermreck, and Commissioner Seth Crawford

Absentees:

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Counsel Eric Blaine; Assistant County Counsel Bryan Libel; County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; HR Director Meghan McKee; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Natural Resources Manager Tim Deboodt; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Finance Director Christina Haron; Budget Manager Jamie Berger; Assessment Technician Elise Ray; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; Landfill Director Jacquie Davis; District Attorney Kari Hathorn; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Administrative Assistant Mona Glade; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Administrative Assistant Senior Parker Gates; Appraiser I Stephanie West; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Lieutenant Mitch Madden; Lieutenant Aaron Boyce; Victims Services Supervisor Cate Duke; Community Health Worker II Shelby Fisher; Appraiser III Karen Bushnell; Greg Svelund; Julie Thompson; Adam Mikulski; Karen Mikulski; Dick Zimmerlee; Mary Beyer; Ashley McCormick; Alia Fern; Haley Crow; Anna Logan; Liz Hunt; Jamie Coleman; Laura; and members of the public.

REGULAR SESSION

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

Public Comment:

Mary Beyer addressed concerns about potential SNAP benefit cuts, emphasizing the increased needs within the community, especially for individuals facing mental health challenges. She invited community members to join a lunch to discuss how best to support those in need. Commissioner Hermreck thanked Mary for her insights and appreciated her suggestions for community support strategies. This highlights the importance of evaluating the impact of SNAP reductions and considering community partnerships to address these challenges.

Alia Fern provided updates on SNAP and the professional mental health care services offered by BestCare. She expressed frustration over assumptions made about individuals with mental health illnesses and voiced strong support for BestCare's work. Additionally, she discussed community options available to support those in need affected by SNAP changes.

Additions/Removals: Discussion item #6 has been removed from the agenda.

Consent Agenda:

1. Approve Minutes
2. Approval of Amendment 1 for Central Oregon Janitorial Services, Inc. for the Justice Center
3. Approval of Funding for Four Leased Dump Trucks (Including Two with Sanders)
4. Contract Extension #5 with SMAF Construction for Snow Control

MOTION to accept the consent agenda as presented. 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 #5: Proclamation for #OperationGreenLight:

Requester: Susan Hermreck

Details: Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb attended the Regular Session to discuss Operation Greenlight and present a proclamation. Operation Greenlight is a national initiative led by the National Association of Counties (NACo), partnered with the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers and the National Association of County Administrators. Its purpose is to support veterans by illuminating county buildings, landmarks, and bridges in green during Veterans Day week. This effort aims to honor veterans and raise awareness about resources available to them and their families. By participating, Crook County aligns with other counties nationwide in showing symbolic support for veterans, with no budget impact. From July 1 to October 31, the Veteran Services office engaged 108 new veterans, filed 401 claims, and recorded 353 office visits. Financial achievements included a \$400,000 increase in backpay, with an additional \$200,000 pending. Overall, there were 91 new awards, resulting in \$2,229,912 in annual payments for county veterans. The dedication of Mona, Tom, and the team was highlighted for successfully navigating complex systems and maintaining strong connections with the VA to advocate for veterans. Their work involves appointments and extensive research to ensure timely advocacy. Susan Hermreck read the proclamation, officially declaring Operation Greenlight in Crook County. This participation underscores Crook County's commitment to supporting veterans and enhancing their access to valuable resources.

MOTION to accept 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 #6: Request for Tipping Fee Waiver:

Requester: Tom Everest

Details: This item was removed from the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

District Attorney Kari Hawthorn expressed gratitude towards the Veteran Services officers, highlighting Tom's instrumental role in resolving challenging cases and securing services for veterans. She noted her appreciation for working with their office, having already communicated this to Katie.

Discussion item #7: Signature Approval for 2025/2026 VOCA-CFA Grant

Application:

Requester: Kari Hathorn

Details: District Attorney Kari Hathorn and Victim Services Supervisor Cate Duke attended the Regular Session to ask the board for signature approval on the 2025/2026 VOCA-CFA Grant. Kari shared positive news regarding VOCA funding. The legislature approved the full VOCA grant, contrary to previous expectations of reduced funds. They had budgeted for 80% of the typical amount but received the full funding as in previous years, which supports salaries for two victim advocates in their office. This outcome was influenced by public concern for victims, including children and vulnerable individuals. The grant is finalized and ready for signature by Will as a representative of the commissioners. Additionally, Kari acknowledged Julie Martinez for her 16 years of service and welcomed her successor, Kate. Kari expressed happiness about the funding and the continuation of support for victim services. Commissioner Hermreck apologized for not attending Julie Martinez's retirement and introduced the new victim advocate supervisor Cate Duke.

MOTION to have Will sign the VOCA /CFA grant application 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 #8: 2024 Crook County Health Department Triennial Review

Report:

Requester: Katie Plumb

Details: Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb, Acting Local and Tribal Public Health Manager Liz Hunt, and Public Health Systems Consultant Jamie Coleman attended the Regular Session to present the 2024 Crook County Health Department Triennial Review Report. Jamie provided an overview of county requirements for the local health department and detailed the triennial review, which assesses compliance, program effectiveness, and recommends modifications. Conducted by the Oregon Health Authority, these reviews address auditing and monitoring requirements, highlighting strengths, gaps, and opportunities for additional training for both OHA and LPHAs to improve service delivery to Oregonians. The review process utilizes Program Review Forms to document compliance with Oregon law and contractual obligations. In reviewing 12 program areas, nine compliance findings within three areas were identified. All findings have been resolved and documented without impacting on the budget, though contract compliance remains critical for sustainable funding. The presentation noted leadership and collaboration strengths, particularly with Jefferson and Deschutes Counties, and successes in programs like Babies First, communicable disease management, fiscal controls, and immunization efforts. Minor protocol and documentation issues have been addressed. The review emphasized Crook County's

ongoing modernization and regional collaboration efforts, commending Katie Plumb and her team for navigating complex systems. Appreciation was expressed for the county's dedication to public health, with anticipation for the next review cycle.

Commissioner Hermreck commented on how much paperwork and kudos to everyone and the work that they do. Commissioner Crawford and Commissioner Barney mirrored what Commissioner Hermreck said and thanked the health department and Katie Plumb for all their work.

Discussion item #9: Crook County Fair Board Policy for Filling Fair Board Vacancies:
Requester: Alex Solterbeck

Details: Assistant County Counsel Bryan Libel attended the Regular Session to present the policy for filling vacancies on the Crook County Fair Board. The policy aligns with the Board of Commissioners Order 2022-52. The Fair Board proposed three options for interviewing candidates, with Option 1 being chosen. This approach involves appointing three Fair Board members to individually interview candidates without discussing findings among themselves. Each member will then present their observations at a public Fair Board meeting, where the entire board will discuss and make recommendations based on individual insights. This process ensures a structured and transparent method for filling vacancies and enhances compliance with public meeting requirements.

MOTION to pass the Crook County Board of Commissioners Order Number 2022-52, which will establish a consistent, transparent process for filling vacancies on the Crook County Fair Board in accordance with Crook County Board of Commissioners. 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: Crook County Budget Committee Policy for Filling Committee Vacancies:

Requester: Jamie Berger

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor and Budget Manager Jamie Berger attended the Regular Session and addressed the Commissioners regarding a vacancy on the Budget Committee, referring to Order 2022-52, which specifies that committee members review and interview applicants, then discuss them in a public meeting before making a recommendation. The Budget Committee includes three commissioners and three citizen members. Jamie questioned whether the entire committee should always meet to fill vacancies, as this involves commissioners making recommendations to themselves. Previously, a subcommittee consisting of citizen members and a staff member was approved to handle this process without commissioner involvement, which may be a more efficient approach.

Commissioner Barney likes the idea of the County Manager being a part of the interview process. asked if the process mentioned was similar to the previous year, where he was appointed as the third member of a subcommittee that included the county manager and two citizen members of the Budget Committee. This subcommittee conducted a

public meeting to decide on a recommendation, which Will then brought back to the board for the final appointment. Commissioner Barney confirmed this was indeed the process being referred to.

Will confirmed last year's process, as outlined by Jamie, allowing for the appointment of a subcommittee comprised of a county manager and two citizen members. This can be repeated this year. Although Order 2022-52 is being revised, options remain open, including appointing a board member to the subcommittee. Will volunteered for this role and emphasized the need for direction on filling the current vacancy. It was agreed to proceed with last year's process, with Will tasked to develop a long-term plan.

MOTION to that we will proceed as to temporary, as to the way we formed the committee, the budget committee last year, with the recommendation that we go ahead and write a long-term order for appointing budget members to our budget committee. 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: Funding Request for Contribution to Oregonians for Floodplain Protection:

Requester: Will Van Vactor

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor attended the Regular Session to Provide information and options regarding a \$5,000 contribution to Oregonians for Floodplain Protection for legal action opposing the Oregon Biological Opinion (BiOp), and to recommend the most appropriate county fund source. Oregonians for Floodplain Protection seek a \$5,000 contribution from Crook County to support litigation aimed at halting BiOp implementation. After consultation with the Finance Director and Community Development Director, Will recommended using the Community Support Fund, which has sufficient funds. The proposed hybrid approach involved the Planning Department contributing part of the funds, but there was resistance since it wasn't budgeted and didn't align with their revenue sources. Community Development Director John Eisler opposed using their budget, explaining it lacked direct ties to their operations. Despite this, the consensus was that while involvement was valuable, funding should come from the Community Support Fund rather than planning resources. The litigation, approaching resolution through settlement, involves participation from counties statewide, underscoring its importance for community welfare and protection. The decision aligns with supporting a significant legal matter impacting the county.

MOTION to use \$5000.00 from the community fund to support this organization. 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: Amendment to Order 2025-18:

Requester: Jamie Berger

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor and Budget Manager Jamie Berger attended the Regular Session to ask for an amendment to Order 2025-18. Correction of a scrivener's error on the order adopting the Crook County budget for fiscal year 2026, beginning July 1, 2025. No change in budgeted amounts, only the correction of an appropriation category.

MOTION to accept the amendment to order 2025-18 which is a correction to a scrivener's error on the order adopting the Crook County budget for fiscal year 2026, beginning July 1st, 2025. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Barney Opened Public Hearing.

Discussion item #13: Supplemental Budget Hearing – Order 2025-36 Adopting a Supplemental Budget for Crook County Fiscal Year 2025-26:

Requester: Jamie Berger

Details: Finance Director Christina Haron attended the Regular Session to present Resolution 2025-36 for adopting a supplemental budget for fiscal year 2025-26, requiring a public hearing. The resolution involves appropriating carryover funds from the Title III fund and adjusting the foreclosure and county lands fund. Due to project delays and supply chain issues, funds originally set for completion by the end of fiscal year 25 are being carried over to fiscal year 26 to complete two key projects: the Mobile Incident Command Post for the Sheriff's Office and a search and rescue vehicle update. The projects are essential for operations on public lands, supported by previously authorized Title III funds, but delayed in completion. Discussion emphasized the importance of supporting search and rescue efforts and ensuring the completion of these vital projects. Public comments were invited on these budget adjustments.

Public Comment: None

MOTION that the Crook County Court adopt Resolution 2025-36, a resolution adopting a supplemental budget for Crook County for fiscal year 2025-2026 to accept additional, revenue authorize appropriation transfers and adjust expenditure appropriations as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Closed Public Hearing for discussion item #13.

Commissioner Barney read script to open the Public Hearing for Ordinance 355 at 10:08 AM.

MOTION to read by title only. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Barney read Commissioner Barney discussed Ordinance 355, which amends the Crook County zoning map for MTL1614110001200 and declares an emergency. The Board of County Commissioners will consider the Planning Commission's recommendation. This is the second hearing, conducted de novo, following quasi-judicial procedures. Approval criteria include several sections from Title 18 of the Crook County Code concerning zoning boundaries and amendments. The hearing procedure requires testimony and evidence to target applicable standards. Failure to raise issues could preclude appeals. The hearing record remains open until the close of the second hearing, with procedures for keeping it open further if necessary. Decisions can be appealed per ORS 197 and OAR 661. Testimony order: staff, federal/state/local agencies, applicants, supporters/neutral parties, opponents, concluding with final staff remarks. All participants are encouraged to declare any conflicts, with opportunities for public challenges provided.

Discussion item #14: Second Hearing of Ordinance 355; a zone map amendment:

Requester: John Eisler

Details: Community Development Director John Eisler attended the Regular Session to address a quasi-judicial zone map amendment for a 20-acre parcel in Powell Butte, processed via Ordinance 355. The amendment, recommended by the Planning Commission, is subject to approval by the County Commissioners. This is the second public hearing for the amendment, following the normal ordinance process. The area is deemed committed away from agriculture, aligning with changes to the comprehensive plan initiated in 2000. The process, explained by Senior Planner Katie McDonald and consultant Craig Kilpatrick, is straightforward as most eligible properties have already undergone zone changes. No opposition was recorded, and the procedure moved forward without questions or applicant testimony.

MOTION to approve ordinance 355 a zone map amendment. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Manager Report:

Will VanVactor mentioned a potential scheduling change for the next regular board meeting, initially set for November 26th, the day before Thanksgiving, due to the AOC conference. There are no anticipated agenda items, and department heads confirmed no urgent matters requiring discussion on that date. Given it's a popular travel day, it might result in a light agenda. The board considered canceling the meeting, deciding instead to postpone any discussions to the first December meeting on December 3rd. A notice of cancellation will be sent out and posted on the website.

Commissioner Barney asked that the notice of cancellation be posted and sent out.

Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Barney None

Commissioner Hermreck None

Commissioner Crawford thanked Breyanna and Cheryl for their efforts during the "candy crawl" event, highlighting its success and community engagement. He stressed the importance of continuing such initiatives. Seth also expressed frustration over the handling of discussions with Best Care, particularly concerning a facility across the street lacking supervision. He emphasized the need for restrictions to prevent enabling homelessness and reiterated concerns about police interactions.

Crawford was disappointed that constructive feedback provided was not reflected at a City Council meeting, which voted 4-3 to proceed with the project. Despite limited legal options to change the location, there's a desire to continue collaborating with Best Care to address these issues. It was noted that Melissa from Best Care would attend monthly meetings to maintain communication and explore alternatives. The commissioners emphasized the importance of more robust dialogue and finding solutions that address community concerns.

Public Comment:

Julie Thompson expressed concern over the high percentage of Crook County residents on SNAP, noting an impactful graphic she saw highlighting Oregon's significant SNAP usage compared to other states. She suggested exploring work-to-earn programs for able-bodied individuals, emphasizing the need for well-defined guidelines to encourage workforce participation. Thompson then raised questions about water quality, specifically regarding the use of flocculants in settling ponds by Knife River, and whether these claims are verified or tested due to potential health impacts. The commissioners deferred the water quality inquiry to a state representative present at the meeting.

Greg Sveland from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality responded to Julie by stating that they have received around 25 questions regarding the site and have prepared answers post-sampling plan approval. These responses, addressing common queries such as the use of flocculants, will be posted on their website soon. Greg assured that flocculants are not being used, hence their exclusion from domestic well sampling. The information is expected to be available by Friday at the latest.

Julie Thompson mentioned filing a couple of compliance reports with Louis but has only received responses indicating ongoing investigations, with one report dating back to mid-September. She expressed frustration over the lack of timely updates and inquired about the next steps to expedite the process and understand the investigation's focus.

John Eisler commented that he will check with Louis on the CUP 26 and John will follow up with Louis on this complaint. raised concerns about vehicles parking in unauthorized areas while waiting for dispatch calls, emphasizing that the Conditional

Use Permit (CUP) does not permit such parking under any circumstances. She observed that drivers were not just waiting but also performing tasks like welding on their wash plant. Julie stressed the importance of enforcing all rules, no matter how small, to ensure compliance with larger regulations. She advocated for a definitive response and solution to this issue and expressed intent to follow up with Lewis for final determination.

Adam Mikulski emphasized the importance of compliance with the Conditional Use Permit (CUP), which prohibits certain actions like unauthorized parking. He noted that despite repeated violations, enforcement is lacking, resulting in continuous non-compliance by parties such as TBR, who are working on prohibited days like Sunday. Adam called for action, stressing the need for accountability in adhering to permit conditions.

John Eisler addressed Julie's prior comment by explaining that a complex situation arose with a violation involving Hooker Creek, though they were not the operators. Upon discovering the issue, Eisler issued a letter and imposed a fine. There are two aggregate operations involved, and a meeting was held to clarify facts. The county is committed to addressing clear violations promptly and using full enforcement powers. The status of operations on Sundays is being checked, and the fine amount was inquired about without a specific figure being provided.

During the discussion, Susan Hermreck and Julie Thompson discussed the need for proper parking accommodations at industrial sites, emphasizing that trucks should not park roadside as per Conditional Use Permit (CUP) regulations. Julie raised concerns about discrepancies in water usage practices compared to what is outlined in the CUP and Dogami permits, highlighting unauthorized well drilling and its potential impact on local wells. John Eisler explained the complexities of the CUP and Dogami permit processes, assuring that violations are addressed using available authority.

The discussion also covered inconsistencies between county approvals and state agencies (DEQ, OWRD, Dogami), with questions about backfilling practices and local water resources. John is awaiting legal counsel's interpretation of recent Dogami communications, which could influence enforcement actions. Both Julie and Susan urged for stronger legal measures if CUP conditions continue to be unmet.

The county is committed to evaluating new information from Dogami and pursuing legal routes to enforce CUP regulations, expressing readiness to adapt strategies based on developing circumstances. The discussion underscored community concerns about regulatory compliance, water usage, and environmental impacts.

Karen Mikulski mentioned that she observed a large dump truck from Knife River dumping materials, potentially from settling ponds, along their haul road. This activity occurred near an open cell across from her location, which had been used twice that fall. Karen noted the dumping into an area purportedly reserved for groundwater sampling under the Sampling Analysis Plan (SAP). She questioned if this activity was permissible, expressing concern over whether it aligns with SAP requirements meant to protect

groundwater. Karen wanted it noted for the record that dumping continued despite these potential restrictions.

Greg Sveland responded to Karen by stating that Dogami is aware of the specific complaint regarding material dumping and has reviewed material management practices. Detailed responses are expected in a forthcoming letter. Greg refrained from providing specifics, deferring to Dogami's authority on the operational permit details and what actions are permissible. He emphasized that these finer points are best addressed by Dogami.

During the discussion, it was noted that Knife River does not recognize an area as a mining cell because it has been partially backfilled, a point raised during site inspections. John clarified terms, stating that when open cells have standing water, they are considered mining ponds; upon backfilling above water level, they become mining cells. Karen pointed out that Knife River claimed to be in reclamation, yet backfilling continues.

Karen also reported noise and unauthorized operations starting at 5:30 AM from a mine near Elliott Lane and Sunset Road, noting violations of the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) as operations occurred on Sundays. Despite being informed of restrictions, the mine continued to operate on prohibited days. Fines are mentioned, capped at \$500 per violation per existing enforcement codes.

John Eisler mentioned that there are plans to update these codes under the Goal 5 Comprehensive Plan are underway, supported by a DLCD grant, to address ongoing compliance challenges more effectively. John Eisler explained that a \$200 fine is proposed for operating violations on Sundays, acknowledging that while the fine alone may not prevent future violations, it's part of a broader enforcement strategy. There's a three-strikes rule in place, where operators with three proven violations can have their permits revoked. This policy, previously underutilized, is now being enforced more rigorously. The rationale for the \$200 fine is to incentivize quick payment and avoid lengthy, costly hearings, which drain county resources. Violations are assessed based on existing code and standard operating procedures, as older permits often rely on these standards rather than detailed conditions. Current documentation captures the first strike, guiding future enforcement efforts, and ongoing monitoring and videotaping are essential for documenting additional violations. Understanding and efficiently enforcing code violations ensure compliance and resource conservation. Exploring the effectiveness of enforcement strategies and potential procedural enhancements can improve compliance outcomes, with insights potentially gained from reviewing other jurisdictions' approaches.

Dick Zimmerlee raised concerns about compliance and legal use of land related to a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). They supported previous complaints regarding settling ponds on Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) land, questioning their legality. The speaker highlighted the unfinished reclamation efforts and expressed concerns about the future, questioning how long it would take to complete. They pointed out discrepancies between the county and DOGAMI regarding the expansion of the Woodward site and the

timeline for reclamation. Username emphasized that the county holds authority to address any discrepancies or misconduct by operators like Knife River and can amend or suspend the permit as necessary. They referenced an initial letter from Ed Fitch to support the county's authority in these matters.

Adam Mikulski expressed frustration with the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process, emphasizing gratitude for John's efforts and suggesting further collaboration for insights. The discussion shifted to public health regarding Oregon's water systems, with questions about the involvement of public and state health representatives. Commissioner Hermreck referenced a meeting with the Oregon Health Authority to clarify their stance, while Commissioner Crawford discussed separate talks focusing on funding for dry wells and the delineation between public and private well responsibilities. Concerns about mental health services were also raised, particularly pointing out the reduction of state hospital beds and their impact on care availability. Additionally, incidents of cattle mutilations were reported in Powell Butte and throughout the county, sparking conversations about their effects on community confidence and economic development. The meeting highlighted a need to understand and address the factors attracting people to the area amid these ongoing local challenges.

MOTION to adjourn. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye, Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 1105AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant