

**CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MINUTES
OF NOVEMBER 12, 2025, WORK SESSION
Open Portion**

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of Commissioners met in a regularly scheduled Work Session on November 12, 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, 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; Finance Director Christina Haron; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Undersheriff Bill Elliott; HR Director Meghan McKee; IT Director Blaine Cheney; Community Health Worker Shelby Fisher; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Facilities Director James Pruess; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Triangle; Jessica Barnes; Matt Miller; and members of the public.

WORK SESSION

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

Public Comment: None

Discussion item #1: Treasurer's Report for October 2025:

Requester: Christina Haron

Details: Finance Director Christina Haron attended the Work Session and presented the October Treasurer's Report. She reported that account balances remain consistent with the prior month, indicating stable financial conditions. The County received slightly over \$5 million in tax collections during October; all required distributions have been made, and the report reflects only retained amounts. As of November 12, tax collections are approximately \$2 million behind expectations; however, this is not a concern at this time, as collections are expected to catch up by the end of the week and into Monday. A final year-end tax collection update will be provided after November 17. Christina reviewed the report format, noting that the first page reflects bank account balances compared to cash accounts and the general ledger, followed by cash allocations by fund, investment balances, and current interest rates. She confirmed there were no outstanding warrants. The Local Government Investment Pool interest rate has decreased slightly due to recent rate changes, though further minor adjustments are expected. Christina noted recent market fluctuations and expressed cautious optimism for improvement. Christina concluded by offering to answer any questions from the Board.

Discussion item #2: Sheriff's Office Monthly Update:

Requester: Bill Elliott

Details: Undersheriff Bill Elliott attended the Work Session to provide the monthly report, noting that overall crime activity was down in most categories, likely due to seasonal changes. Person crimes saw a significant decrease, with only 17 reports, representing a 58% drop. Property crimes, however, increased slightly, with 18 reports, a 27% rise. Community problems were down a little, with 121 reports written, while sex crimes decreased by 28%, totaling 7 reports. Reports on mental health issues (POHs) were down by 1, with 3 incidents in October. Arrests were also down, with 3 felony arrests (a decrease) and 15 misdemeanor arrests (unchanged). Juvenile arrests remained the same, and overall arrests saw a 25% decrease. In terms of jail statistics, total bookings increased by 3%, totaling 85 for the month. DUI arrests were up by 33%, with 15 DUI arrests in October. Assaults, however, saw a significant 57% increase, with 21 reported cases, although no explanation was provided for this uptick. There were 2 incidents of use of force in the jail and 1 case of suicide watch, but no suicide attempts. Calls for service were down by 18% compared to last year, with 1,208 calls, while self-initiated calls, such as traffic enforcement and proactive policing, decreased by 34% due to staffing shortages. The total number of reports written was 166, which was a 6% decrease from the previous month. Cases taken, however, were down by 16%, totaling 77. In the Justice Center, 3,393 individuals were processed, up from 2,755 in September. There were 70 knives, 4 pepper sprays, 1 taser, and 1 gun attempted to be brought into the facility. Additionally, 13 cases required additional deputy responses, while 3 were flagged for security concerns. Undersheriff Elliott noted that year-to-date comparisons with the previous year will be available starting in January. The department is also tracking a rising trend in contraband and security-related incidents at the Justice Center.

Discussion item #3: 2025-2027 IGA for the Financing of Local Public Health Services in Crook County Agreement #185807-4:

Requester: Katie Plumb

Details: Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb attended the Work Session to report that there has been yet another amendment to the contract with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to fund local public health services in Clark County. Four service area budgets were amended, with updates to the communicable disease budget (PEO101), where the full amount for the fiscal year has been awarded and is in line with the original budget. Federal funds from PEO109, which had been rolling over for some time, are expected to be spent by June 30th of this year. These funds are primarily directed towards respiratory response efforts, including COVID-19 and RSV. There was also an increase in the award for budget P4402. Overall, everything is on track with the budget, except for PEO109, which rolled forward slightly more than anticipated — about \$3,000 to \$4,000 more than the original budgeted amount. Despite this minor adjustment, the department is well-positioned financially, with no major discrepancies. The additional funds are seen as a positive development for the fiscal year.

Discussion item #4: Community Health Advisory Council Appointments:

Requester: Katie Plumb

Details: Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb attended the Work Session to provide an update on the Community Health Advisory Council appointments. During the October 6th meeting, the committee reviewed several applications, and four individuals—Tom Evans, Rita Rodin, Emily Jerome, and Grant Havel—received unanimous support from the committee. Their applications were attached for review. Katie noted that Rita Rhoden is a staff member of the Health and Human Services Department. Typically, staff members attend these meetings as non-voting members, as the council advises on health and behavioral health issues. However, this dynamic was not discussed at the October meeting, which Katie acknowledged as an oversight. She clarified that she had spoken with Rita about the situation, and Rita is comfortable either way. If appointed, the bylaws may need to be amended to ensure only one vote per organization. Until that amendment is made, one of the staff members would need to abstain from voting if Rita is appointed.

During the discussion, Commissioner Hermreck suggested that it might be easier for Rita Rhoden to attend the meetings as staff rather than as a voting member. Katie Plumb agreed, stating that this would likely be the best approach moving forward. She added that there is another ongoing recruitment for council members, and if all current applicants are appointed, there would still be one available seat. However, if Rita is not appointed, there would be two seats open. Commissioner Barney confirmed that Rita would still be able to provide valuable input even if she attends as staff, and Katie Plumb reassured the board that her input would not be lost.

The Board discussed whether a motion was necessary regarding Rita's appointment. Katie Plumb clarified that no motion was needed at this point. She explained that unless there was any dissent, the discussion today would suffice, and the staff would update the appointment order for formal adoption at the next meeting.

Commissioner Barney agreed, stating he was comfortable with the process and did not see any need to change the system. The Board confirmed that the appointments would be rolled over to the consent agenda for the next meeting without requiring further discussion, unless there were objections.

Discussion item #5: Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Road Ordinance Draft:

Requester: Bryan Libel

Details: Assistant County Counsel Bryan Libel attended the Work Session to follow up to the September work session where the staff was directed to create a draft Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) ordinance. Brian Libel led the development of the draft, which was shared with the Board for feedback. Will Van Vactor mentioned that Matt Miller had provided comments on the draft which was included in the meeting packet. Bryan walked the Board through the ordinance, explaining its structure. The ordinance begins by prohibiting the use of OHVs on county roads unless a license is granted by the county or the vehicle is used for agricultural purposes. He emphasized that the draft reflects the county's input before considering external feedback, such as that from Matt Miller. The ordinance outlines the requirements for obtaining a license, specifying the types of

vehicles allowed and the safety equipment required. It also details the procedure for the Roads Department to process these licenses, including the ability to impose additional restrictions based on safety concerns, such as times of day or weather conditions. A key part of the ordinance is maintaining recreational immunity, meaning the county does not charge for use of the roads but may charge a fee for staff time in processing the licenses. This distinction helps preserve legal protections for recreational use. The agricultural exemption was discussed in detail, with questions raised about whether agricultural vehicles like ATVs could be used freely on county roads as long as they have a slow-moving vehicle sign. It was clarified that this exemption applies to vehicles used for agricultural purposes, and that they must display the appropriate slow-moving vehicle sign when on the road.

The draft ordinance, along with Matt Miller's comments, was presented for feedback, and the Board was invited to provide input before further action is taken.

The conversation about the OHV ordinance focused on taking gradual steps before allowing widespread use across the county. Commissioner Barney expressed concerns about safety and law enforcement, suggesting more research and cautious expansion. He noted that many people already use ATVs for agricultural purposes and that the state may address these issues soon. Commissioner Crawford expressed support for providing citizens with the opportunity to use county roads but emphasized the need for a structured process rather than an unrestricted "let it rip" approach. He asked whether it would be possible for off-road vehicles, like a Polaris, to be made street legal, similar to how golf carts can be legalized through the DMV.

Matt Miller clarified that while the Oregon DMV and Oregon State Marine Board do not currently have a clear process for licensing off-road vehicles as street legal, there are existing ordinances in rural counties, such as Lake County and Grant County, where OHV use is permitted on county roads with certain insurance requirements. These areas typically have broader OHV ordinances that open most county roads to recreational use, with some exceptions. However, he noted that there is no state-wide pathway to license ATVs or similar vehicles for street use, though there have been legislative efforts that have yet to be passed. Commissioner Crawford then asked if adopting a similar approach in Crook County would address some of the concerns about public access. Matt Miller agreed, suggesting that a more tailored ordinance for Crook County, focusing on specific areas where OHV use makes sense for recreational purposes, might be a better approach than a blanket ordinance.

Staff explained that the ordinance as written primarily addresses commercial use and not private citizens. Expanding it would require additional research, particularly regarding staffing, application processing, and liability concerns. Feedback from CIS raised concerns about increased accidents with broader OHV use, highlighting the need to address both rider and public safety.

Matt Miller suggested aligning the ordinance with state law, including lowering the minimum age for minor passengers to 8 years old or 4'9". He also recommended adding strobe lights or other emergency signaling devices for breakdowns. Commissioner

Crawford supported these suggestions, and staff confirmed that a safety briefing would be required for all drivers, as the ordinance does not mandate a safety card.

The board decided to proceed cautiously, focusing on licensing for commercial use first while researching the potential to extend the ordinance to personal use in the future, with plans to revisit the topic later.

Discussion item #6: Termination of Lease Agreement with Parks and Recreation District:

Requester: Bryan Libel

Details: Assistant County Counsel Bryan Libel attended the Work Session to present and review with the board a draft termination of lease agreement for a 2013 lease between the county and the Parks and Recreation District for 6.73 acres south of the fairgrounds along the river. The property had been leased for ball and soccer fields, and a 2019 easement allowed construction of a water facility, but no significant developments have occurred since. Both parties now agree to terminate the lease and return the property to the county. Staff noted that the original donors envisioned the land as an extension of the fairgrounds rather than for recreational leases. Parks and Rec are cooperating in removing existing materials and cleaning the site, with plans for grass and use as overflow parking. A realistic timeline was proposed, with January 15th as the target for completion, though Parks and Rec requested continued use for Little League season, which staff noted does not create unusual liability compared to regular fairground parking. The agreement references the 2013 lease requirement to return the property in the same condition, and the county will work with Parks and Rec to ensure this. Overall, the termination and return of the property was supported, and the plan allows the county to manage it for parking and community use going forward.

Manager Report:

Will VanVactor- No major updates this morning. A reminder that next week is the AOC conference, so several staff and commissioners will be out of town on Wednesday, November 26th. As a result, there will be no Board of Commissioners meeting until December 3rd. Agenda items for the 26th have not been received, so no issues are expected. Additionally, Commissioner Hermreck noted she will be out December 3rd for NACO Energy Day. Lastly, Will mentioned an invoice was received from Crook County Foundation for use of Carey Foster Hall and a \$5,000 contribution; only the hall use was previously approved in August.

The board discussed an invoice from the Crook County Foundation for use of Carey Foster Hall and a requested \$5,000 donation for the holiday partnership. Commissioners noted that while the hall use had been approved in August, the donation request was not formally made this year. The cost for the 11-day hall rental was calculated at approximately \$5,880. Board members agreed on the importance of supporting community programs but emphasized the need for careful consideration of expenditures early in the budget year. They discussed potentially contributing a partial

amount, such as \$2,500, or capping the total support at \$10,000 to balance support with fiscal responsibility.

MOTION to reflect that, that, donation rate, or however we want to say it to the foundation cap the fee/donation of \$10,000. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye; Commissioner Crawford votes Aye; and Commissioner Barney votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Crawford shared that he has been invited to speak at a logging conference in Eugene in February about the importance of “toting” in natural resource management. While he noted some nerves about the 40-minute presentation, he appreciated the opportunity and acknowledged its relevance given upcoming state issues. He also emphasized the importance of encouraging participation in elections, noting that “elections have consequences” and urging attendees to vote.

Commissioner Hermreck shared that she will be attending the NACo Energy Day on December 3rd.

Commissioner Barney None.

At 10:04AM the Board of Commissioners convened into Executive Session under the following statute(s): ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

7. ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection

At the conclusion of the Executive Session, the Board of Commissioners convened back into Open Session, inviting members of the public into the meeting room.

MOTION to direct council to correspond with the counterparty and to prepare such necessary documents as was discussed in the executive session. Motion seconded by Commissioner Crawford. No discussion. Commissioner Crawford votes Aye, Commissioner Barney votes Aye, Commissioner Hermreck votes Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

MOTION to adjourn. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hermreck. 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 1037AM**.

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp