

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of December 10, 2025, Work Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Work Session on December 10, 2025, at 9:00 AM in the Administration Conference Room, located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, OR 97754.

Work Session Agenda

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

Board Members Absent:

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Counsel Eric Blaine; County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; Assistant County Counsel Bryan Libel; Finance Director Christina Haron; Community Development Director John Eisler; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Senior Health Programs Coordinator Alex Greenberg; Budget Manager Jamie Berger; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; HR Director Meghan McKee; Assessor Jon Soliz; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; IT Director Blaine Cheney; Building Official Randy Davis; Paul; Karin; Sue; and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM.

Public Comment

None

Discussion

1. Treasurer's Report for November 2025

Requester:

Christina Haron, Finance Director

Details: Finance Director Christina Haron attended the Work Session to present the Treasurer's Report for November 30th, noting a \$9 million increase over October, primarily due to tax season. She highlighted growth in the county's LGIP account and Zions core investments, with a target of maintaining approximately \$30 million in liquidity. Christina explained that \$5 million of surplus funds were invested in laddered maturities to optimize returns while ensuring cash flow needs are met. She reviewed the general ledger, fund allocations, and investment distribution, noting all accounts reconcile to cash in the bank except for deposits in transit and tax payments. She emphasized that the county holds most investments to maturity to minimize risk and maintain predictable returns. Christina also noted a recent decline in interest rates and described the strategy to lock in higher rates with certain investments before further decreases are expected. The report concluded with an invitation for questions from the board.

2. Calendar for FY27 Budget Process

Requester:

Jamie Berger, Budget Manager

Presenter(s):

Will Van Vactor, County Manager/ Budget Officer

Jamie Berger, Budget Manager

Details: Budget Manager Jamie Berger attended the Work Session to the proposed calendar for the 2027 budget process, noting that the schedule closely mirrors last year's timeline. Key highlights include goal setting in January, department training and submission of budget and personnel requests in February, one-on-one meetings with departments in March, document review in April, and final adoption of the budget in June to meet the July 1 start date. Commissioner Hemreck commented that she likes that the schedule clearly identifies who is involved in each step. The County Manager expressed excitement to kick off the budget season and thanked Jamie for putting the calendar together. The calendar specifies coordination with other commitments, including the NACO conference in February, and aims for a single, all-day budget committee meeting in May to review presentations and make decisions efficiently. The Board requested that this item be placed on consent agenda.

3. Easement for Parks and Recreation Dept. Irrigation Water Line on County Property

Requester:

Bryan Libel, Assistant County Counsel

Details: Assistant County Counsel Bryan Libel attended the Work Session to present information regarding a 6-inch irrigation water line on county property used by the Parks and Recreation Department, located at the RV park. Commissioner Hermreck asked about the necessity of an easement; Bryan explained that the Parks District would like access on county property for maintenance and repairs. Commissioner Seth noted the line extends to the left onto their fields and asked if there are any plans that would stop its use in the future. Bryan explained that the Board previously approved the lease termination and forwarded it to Parks Director Steve Waring for consideration.

Commissioners Seth and Susan discussed potential future development and whether easement language could allow for relocation if needed. Susan asked if the easement could include language to protect the county legally; both Susan and Seth requested documentation on the lease termination and the water line easement. Community Development Director John Eisler suggested that a revocable license might be more feasible than an easement to retain county control, while still guaranteeing water access to the Parks District. The commissioners discussed scenarios where future development could require relocating the line and agreed that the agreement should allow flexibility, provided water access is maintained. Commissioner Barney requested to review the lease and easement agreement beforehand and questioned whether the line is strictly irrigation water, noting that domestic water would be a separate concern. Eric Blaine provided additional clarification on the water line. It was agreed that the

termination of the lease and the water access could be treated as distinct items, and the Parks District would likely be amenable to relocating the line in the future if needed. This is a no-action item; Bryan Libel will follow up with Parks Director Steve Waring to discuss the easement/license and provide more information.

4. Public Health Modernization Draft Plan Overview

Requester:

Katie Plumb, Health & Human Services Director

Presenter(s):

Katie Plumb, Health & Human Services Director

Stephanie O'Neal, Modernization Manager

Details: Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal attended the Work Session to present the draft modernization implementation plan for Crook County Health and Human Services. The plan is intended to outline the core public health services provided to the county, including disease prevention, health promotion, emergency response, environmental health, and community partnerships. It is designed to be long-term and adaptable and is intended as a living guide to be regularly updated to reflect changing community needs, resources, and departmental capacity. Stephanie emphasized that the Board's feedback on the draft is essential as the plan moves toward the implementation phase. Commissioner Hermreck described the plan as the "Bible of Public Health" and asked how it will be reviewed over time. Stephanie explained that once implemented, it will be submitted to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) but updates will occur yearly, ensuring it remains a living document. Susan commended the health department for their hard work and thoroughness in preparing the draft. Katie discussed the implementation and adoption process, noting that there is no immediate time pressure and the plan does not need formal approval today. Stephanie added that she would be uncomfortable adopting the plan at this stage because it is still a draft and encouraged discussion on any areas where the Board would like more detail or alignment with county public health priorities. Commissioners Crawford and Commissioner Barney expressed support, with both commenting "great job" on the draft and implementation planning.

5. 2025-2027 IGA for the Financing of Local Public Health Services in Crook County Agreement #185807-4 corrected

Requester:

Katie Plumb, Health and Human Services Director

Details: Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb attended the Work Session to provide an overview of Amendment 4 to the IGA for the financing of local public health services in Crook County. The amendment corrects an error in the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) language related to oversight of very small water systems. The correction removes the responsibility for very small water systems from Lane I of the agreement. No financial changes were made. Eric Blaine commented that the changes are functionally modest and not substantive, confirming that there is no impact on the Board-approved financial responsibilities. He also explained that having this discussion

in the minutes is helpful to document why differences may exist between the prior agreement recorded with the Clerk and the corrected version in the Health Department's records, ensuring clarity if questions arise in the future. Katie explained that the prior version of the agreement had already been approved by the Board and recorded, and this amendment simply corrects language identified by OHA. Eric confirmed that the amendment does not require re-approval by the Board, but documentation in the minutes provides proper context. It was agreed that Katie will sign the corrected agreement on behalf of the Board, as the change does not exceed her authorized dollar amount. Brian confirmed he had no questions regarding the amendment.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to authorize Katie to sign. Seth Crawford seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

6. Opting out of new Eastern Oregon Solar Siting Rules

Requester:

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Details: Community Development Director John Eisler attended the Work Session and presented a draft order for Crook County to opt out of the new Eastern Oregon solar siting rules. He explained that the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) created new rules that allow counties to either take no action, which subjects them to the new rules; opt out, which preserves current local rules; or develop their own program under Division 23. John recommended opting out to pause implementation of the new rules while the county develops its own program, noting that the rules are complex and that Crook County had previously spent significant staff resources interpreting earlier solar siting statutes. He emphasized that the opt-out is not permanent and can be reversed at any time. John also shared that Crook County received a DLCD grant to update its Goal 5 inventory and develop its own solar siting program, which will involve community input and provide flexibility in establishing agricultural mitigation and community benefits programs. Commissioner Brian expressed support, noting that Crook County should have the opportunity to make its own decisions and be fully engaged in the process. No public comments were raised, and the board agreed that the opt-out serves as a temporary measure while the county develops its own program. This is a no action item and will be placed on the regular session agenda for next week, with John providing an edit to be added at that time.

7. Community Development Monthly Update

Requester:

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Presenter(s):

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Randy Davis, Building Official

Details: Community Development John Eisler attended the Work Session and provided

the monthly planning update for October. He reported 24 pending applications compared to 38 in October of the previous year, noting a slowdown in applications but an overall increase year-to-date. Notable projects include the Hidden Canyon application, the Central Oregon Landwatch appeal of a non-farm decision with a final hearing scheduled for December 17th, and the Verizon Tower in Powell Butte also scheduled for December 17th. John highlighted ongoing code updates, including removing outdated references to the county court, and provided updates on the Transportation Safety Action Plan, which is temporarily on hold pending confirmation of a grant extension. He also discussed the Hegele aggregate mine conditional use permit, clarifying it is for a different pit location than previously considered, and reported that Hidden Canyon Phase 1 is scheduled for February. On city-related items, he mentioned the Grocery Bandit zone lot change, the housing analysis grant, the economic opportunity analysis adoption expected next month, and the new subdivision at Iron Horse. On-site permit numbers were down for the month, with 14 permits issued versus 23 last year, though year-to-date numbers remain strong. On code compliance, 10 new cases were opened and 5 closed in October, with staff continuing to manage a high workload.

Building Official Randy Davis provided the monthly building update, noting consistent permit numbers for October with 204 permits issued, including 13 houses, 44 commercial permits, 118 other residential, and 28 shop-type structures. There are 175 houses currently under construction, 781 other residential permits, and 332 commercial permits, with the department still averaging over 1,000 field inspections per month. Eisler highlighted progress on the Madras Highway Apartments, including wall panel installation, fire caulking mitigation with STI company staff training, and resolution of sound transmission requirements in stairwell walls following state clarification. He noted ongoing challenges with plan comprehension among staff and contractors but emphasized the team's continued effort and adaptability. Eisler also updated on the Empire Solar project, explaining issues with phased submittals for a 103-megawatt project and the need for complete design sets for permitting. He mentioned that renewable energy projects are accelerating due to expiring tax credits.

Manager Report

Details:

Will Van Vactor reported that John, Randy, Chris, and Louis will be presenting on Community Development department, code compliance and sanitation topics at a college session from 6 to 8 p.m. Appreciation was extended to the Community Development team for their efforts preparing for County College as well as Kelly with the Airport for their presentations. Staff were reminded of an HR open house, initially scheduled for 11 a.m. but updated to 9 a.m., and encouraged to stop by. Will thanked HR for their coordination and support in organizing the event.

Commissioner Updates

Details:

Commissioner Barney None

Commissioner Crawford announced that the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program was re-funded for the next three years, with strong confidence that the President will sign the legislation. A press release is planned, expressing appreciation to Congressman Cliff Bentz and his staff for their efforts in navigating the new system and securing the funding. Questions were raised about potential back payments, with initial indications suggesting coverage for this year and next year, though confirmation is pending. Seth also provided an update on County College, noting that attendance has remained strong and participants are gaining a better understanding of county operations, which will help in sharing information with the public.

Commissioner Hermreck shared that on Wednesday, December 17th, at 10:45 a.m., the fourth-grade class from Stein's Pillar will perform Christmas carols in front of the old courthouse and carroll. Last year's audience was small, so this year's attendees, including staff, are encouraged to come and enjoy the performance. While board members are not expected to sing along, they are welcome to hum. The timing is expected to coincide with the conclusion of the final regular board meeting of the year, and a short break may be necessary to accommodate the performance if the agenda runs long.

Executive Session

8. None scheduled.

MOTION: Seth Crawford moved to Adjourn. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Brian Barney votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Seth Crawford votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 10:00 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant