

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of January 28, 2026, Work Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Work Session on January 28, 2026, 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 Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; County Counsel Eric Blaine; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; HR Director Meghan McKee; Landfill Director Jacquie Davis; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Community Development Director John Eisler; Building Official Randy Davis; Natural Resources Coordinator Tim Deboodt; Assessor Jon Soliz; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Administrative Assistant Mona Glade; and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 09:00 AM.

Public Comment

None

Discussion

1. Barb Wire Pit Mining Lease

Requester:

Brad Haynes, CCRD Superintendent

Details: Road Superintendent Brad Haynes attended the Work Session and discussed a lease agreement with Desert Creek Land, Cattle, and Timber Company for aggregate mining in the Van Lake area. The site, strategically located to cover districts D1 and D2, will support road maintenance and repair. The lease, effective for 10 years with a possible 5-year extension, has been in development for a year and is ready for Commissioner's signature. A joint mining operation with Deschutes County aims to reduce crushing costs, with separate piles for each party's requirements. The initiative will roll into the consent agenda for approval.

2. USDA APHIS Wildlife Services Agreement Renewal

Requester:

Jacquie Davis, Landfill Director

Details: Landfill Director Jacquie Davis attended the Work Session and discussed the need to renew the agreement with the USDA for vector control services, a requirement

under the Solid Waste Management permit. The renewal is for the upcoming year, with a 3% cost increase due to the CPI adjustment, which is covered by the existing budget for contract services. Jackie expressed satisfaction with the services provided by Brian Cyrus at USDA. The renewal ensures compliance with permitting requirements and maintains effective vector control, supported by proper budget adjustments.

3. Community Development Monthly Update for November and December 2025

Requester:

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Presenter(s):

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Randy Davis, Building Official

Details: Building Official Randy Davis attended the Work Session to provide an update on the Building Department's activities, summarizing the permit statistics for November and December. November saw 179 permits with 7 new houses, while December had 143 permits with 6 new houses. Residential permits for shops and other structures were 34 in November and 23 in December. The year-to-date comparison in December showed 1,060 permits issued, indicating steady activity. The department manages approximately 169 to 159 houses under construction. Commercial activity, including projects like Tom McCall's new businesses, has been a positive sign but is starting to slow. Ongoing projects include large commercial developments and retrofits, particularly with server capacity and cooling system upgrades. Meta's buildings are undergoing updates, possibly transitioning to glycol systems for cooling. The Building Department is preparing for pre-final inspections with Ochoco Lumber and planning for ADA compliance and service access. Supply areas near St. Charles are identified as lay-down yards. Other notable projects include work on the old Horseshoe, now becoming the new Cadillac. Overall, the department is experiencing a slight dip in residential and some commercial activity but remains busy with plan reviews and inspections.

Commissioner Susan Hermreck praised Terry and Katrina Weitman for their commitment to preparing early morning permits, ensuring smooth operations for the team. She recounted seeing them at 6:15 a.m. while waiting for Senator McLane and was impressed by their dedication. Randy Davis added that living in Madras with young children, they manage inspections and routing effectively, contributing significantly to departmental efficiency. Randy Daviss and John Esiler expressed appreciation for their hard work and was pleasantly surprised by their early morning efforts.

Community Development Director John Eisler provided a planning update, noting an increase in permits, with 24 in November and 29 in December. Both months exceeded prior numbers, notably during a typically slow season. The department is processing major applications, including a cell tower in Powell Butte, with a hearing on February 11th. Code updates were completed, but the Transportation Safety Action Plan remains paused due to federal grant processing delays. Upcoming tasks involve

aggregate mining applications and discussions with ODOT and RMG Destination Resorts about the Alfalfa and Highway 126 intersection. The county aims to prioritize this project with COAC support, considering potential cost increases soaring from \$3.5 million to \$6 million. Interest in data centers, battery storage, and housing developments is rising. Notable projects include a walking path funded by an ODOT grant and the Spurs sculpture renovation. Additionally, on-site applications held steady, and code compliance saw positive resolution rates. The department continues to manage steady commercial interests despite a slight residential dip.

During the meeting, Seth suggested, though not requiring, that construction traffic from Bend use Alfalfa Road to reduce highway congestion. It was noted this topic could have been discussed during a previous subdivision review committee meeting. The intersection in question is notably busy, and utilizing Alfalfa Road, which sees less traffic, could alleviate pressure. The idea was previously considered in site visits, but implementation depends on contractor agreement.

Manager Report

4. Landfill Update

Details: Will Van Vactor addressed the Commissioners, mentioning he included the landfill quarterly report for their information. He invited any questions, offering to answer them or have Jacquie present further details in a future session if needed. The inclusion was primarily to ensure the commissioners had the necessary information, with no formal presentation planned.

Commissioner Susan Hermreck shared that John Heylin from Republic provided a schedule for waste collection services in Paulina. Starting May 1st, collections will occur on the second and fourth Saturdays. From November 1st, this will reduce to once on the second Saturday. Susan promoted this on Facebook, noting significant engagement. She emphasized the importance of public awareness, especially during the burn season, and hopes the new schedule will run smoothly.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Hermreck reported on attending the Eastern Oregon Legislative Session, where key discussions were held with Senator McLane and others. Senator Nash proposed a 1.25% transient tax increase to fund wolf deprivation and related wildlife programs, potentially generating \$3.4 million, though it falls short of the \$4.5 million needed. Susan expressed concerns about a proposed housing bill allowing high-density development in rural areas and discussed issues like delisting wolves and corner-crossing on public lands. The session also addressed energy concerns, including nuclear power evaluation and advocating for changes to Oregon's state tax to prevent resident exodus. The conversation touched on fairgrounds funding, cougar control, and farm-to-table integration, emphasizing the survival of local farms. Susan highlighted the potential mental health funding loss of \$500,000, which would impact local sheriffs and emergency rooms. The session was deemed a success, with future hosting possibly in Crook County.

Commissioner Crawford reflected on attending the Eastern Oregon Legislative Session, agreeing with Commissioner Hermreck on its informative and interactive nature. He highlighted concerns about the District Attorney's (DA) office, noting that the state covers only half the DA salaries, affecting retention and service delivery. Many counties, like Baker, struggle to fill DA positions due to lengthy trial timelines, which impact justice delivery. Seth also raised issues about mental health, asserting the need for state hospitals instead of jails for treatment. He criticized low and no-barrier shelters for their negative impact on communities, as evidenced in Portland and Bend. Susan has planned to participate in a point-in-time count to assess homelessness, offering \$10 gift cards to participants. He expressed concerns about in-kind assistance potentially enabling homelessness without solving underlying issues. Susan committed to reporting her findings on local homeless conditions.

Seth addressed the carcass disposal program intended for wolf-killed animals. Initially implemented to allow free disposal, ranchers and landowners started bringing animals with evidence of wolf activity. A proposal was discussed to implement a card system to verify eligible participants. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is pushing for the cleanup of bone and attractant piles, enhancing the need for proper identification methods. Will Van Vactor drafted a policy incorporating these cards, which will be reviewed by the Wolf Committee. Seth stated that producing the cards is minimal, about \$100 for 200 cards, and should be funded by the county. Greg Jaekel and others confirming wolf kills in the field will receive the cards to ensure proper vetting. An application system may also be considered for ranchers to apply for participation. This initiative aims to streamline participation, reduce misuse, and effectively deter wolf presence on properties. To enhance the program, exploring technological solutions for tracking wildlife activity and verifying carcass origins could be beneficial.

Commissioner Barney None

Executive Session

5. None scheduled.

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

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 09:42 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant