

MINUTES
UMATILLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Meeting of July 5, 2023
9:00 a.m., Room 130, Umatilla County Courthouse
Pendleton, Oregon

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Commissioners Present: Chair Dan Dorran, Vice-Chair John Shafer, and Commissioner Timmons
County Counsel Doug Olsen

Guests Present: Mark Tanner, Umatilla County Maintenance Manager, Jennifer Blake, Umatilla County Human Resources Director, Stephanie Barnett, Umatilla County Pay and Benefits Administrator, Robert Pahl, Umatilla County Chief Financial Officer; Eric Watchrude, Forest Supervisor for the Umatilla National Forest, Darcy Weisman, Public Affairs Office, Bart Auslan, Acting Ranger for the North Fork John Day Ranger District, Andy Steele, Acting District Ranger for Walla Walla,

Video link or Calling in: Dan Lonai, Umatilla County Administrative Director

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CALL TO ORDER: Chair Dorran called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He reminded all that the meeting is a public forum and there is a call-in option provided. There is time on the agenda to provide input (or for hearings) to provide comment. The meeting is being video and audio recorded and minutes will be taken. Also, meetings are now live-streaming. Comments will become part of the meeting record and ask that they be three minutes or under. If persons wish to speak before the Board, please identify yourself and state where you live in order to be heard on the record – also note if you are speaking on behalf of others.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chair Dorran

Awards/Correspondence/Recognitions. Commissioner Timmons is honoring Cecil Jones for Employee of the Quarter. He is conscious of cleaning up after a job and always willing to help no matter, always pleasant to talk to, willing to come in after hours for emergency jobs. His kindness and hard work is greatly appreciated.

Chair Dorran astounded by the patriotism and the people that come out for all of the events in Umatilla County, he has been going to the Stanfield parade and fireworks for 50 years and was the biggest crowd, happens throughout Umatilla County, want to give a shout to all of the populous of Umatilla County, happy 4th of July.

Minutes – Commissioner Timmons moved to approve the minutes from the 05/23/2023, 05/07/2023, and 05/21/2023 Board meetings. Seconded by Commissioner Shafer. Carried, 3-0.

Additions to Agenda – None.

Public Comments and Recognition of Visitors - None

Business Items

1. Forest Service Update - Presented by Eric Watchrude, Forest Supervisor for the Umatilla National Forest. The Umatilla National Forest wants to be a good neighbor and a key part of that is checking with community leaders, appreciate the back and forth that we have and today is just a check in about our planned activities for this coming year and any particular interest or concerns as elected leaders or hearing from constituents. Darcy Weisman handles communication so that as elected leaders you are not surprised when things come up and making sure that you are equipped with information, appreciate the sharing of concerns, wants and needs from constituents. Any overall projects or interest or concerns that you have for Umatilla National Forest?

Commissioner Timmons asked if you are having more road closures? Mr. Watchrude responded that roads are essential and to manage the national forest, must utilize it and have access to it. Access is key. The Umatilla National Forest approach that we have taken for a long time is that when designing certain projects that if there is a section of road that has particular environmental concerns like dumping mud in a creek, we might look at mitigating that environmental damage that is extremely limited. Most of the roads that we have on the National Forest have been here for a long time and don't require a lot of maintenance to keep those open. It is the public that helps keep that maintained by cutting wood out. If there is going to a section of road that is going to be closed that we check in with the county commissioners with the same intent of having no surprises, want to make sure that you are equipped with information, no current ongoing activities with that but do have some road maintenance on some major routes to keep those open

Commissioner Dorran thanked the forest service for their response with the Hat Rock fire and thought that BLM could have called you earlier but your response upon contact was very impressive and the people and equipment that you sent was well used. Coordination doesn't always go as well as we would like to see it but know there is a chain of command for that and really do thank you for that. Secondly, you brought up maintenance dollars, where did you end up budget wise overall for forest management for 2024/2025?

Mr. Watchrude said that the year budgets for following years had not been yet allocated to us, we have already submitted but we are anticipating a flat budget for fiscal 2024 and 2025. In Umatilla County specifically we had the 2020 record floods and we have received supplemental funds to do some repairs that occurred from floods, 2021 we had a record fire year across the Umatilla National Forest mostly on the northern end and there has been supplemental funds for that as well. Though the budget is predicted to be flat the opportunities to do maintenance and repairs things like facilities and infrastructure and think there will still be opportunity to do that. Thank you for the acknowledgement for the Hat Rock Fire, gets back to being a good neighbor, when the community is at risk from our perspective it doesn't matter who truck it is, working with fire districts, Oregon Department of Forestry, BLM making sure that we are providing that protection for life and property and they have the same objectives as well.

Mr. Steele, presented as the acting District Ranger. There is a new incoming district ranger, there was a news release for that, Johnny Collin and he is no stranger to the Umatilla. Mr. Steele will be the acting district ranger for probably about a month or so until we get a start date set for Johnny and then Mr. Steele will return to role as the recreation staff still based out of Walla Walla. The big project that we have going in the planning stage is Tiger-Mill project that includes and has surrounding lands around the Mill Creek Municipal Watershed, across state lines and several county lines. They are hoping to have a signed decision on that in early 2024 and implementation

will go out in many years, there will be some timber sales from that but a lot of what we are doing there is mitigating some more extreme fire risk through thinning and prescribed burning that is not something that happens all at once, especially when you are talking about burning within the watershed, it will take a decade or longer for all of those activities to come to fruition.

Commissioner Dorran asked if on the road reconstruction and construction as well as the upper bridge, is that part of the project scope or is that fall into the project segments? The two access roads to get up to Tiger-Mill. Mr. Steele responded that there will be some road maintenance work specifically towards the routes that are going to be used to haul, work done to prepare those routes for haul especially around Government Mountain. It is an area that comes up a lot in terms of access that is rougher than want it to be for that intensive of work and there will be contract specifications on what the roads need to look like when we are done, work with District Roads engineer. Commissioner Dorran also asked if there been any discussion of accessing that project on the Mill Creek side on the 65 road? Mr. Steele responded yes.

Commissioner Timmons wanted to know if you are going up Pumpkin Hollow and then take the Government Mountain up and it is a tight squeeze up there, know that there is logging up there, are you going to widen that road or come up the Tiger Mountain side? Mr. Steele said that they don't have a great answer to that right now, not sure if that has been worked out yet for the roads appraisal, If you have particular concerns about that you can shoot me an email and we can get that to the roads engineer. Commissioner Timmons went to the open house for this project and learned you are going to build some roads up there just for access for the project? Mr. Steele indicated there is some limited temp road construction that is primarily associated with the commercial harvest, it is very limited, environmental impacts. They will try to identify areas that have had skid routes or had previous temp roads where the soil has already been impacted and we can go back into that area so we are impacting area new for the first time, temp roads only if is really necessary.

Mr. Steele added that there are other new projects. The past year success which was the Tiger Creek prescribed fire that was right on the edge of the watershed within Umatilla County. A very similar treatment we are hoping to implement for Tiger Mill, in terms of taking a chunk of a few hundred acres of really critical land and doing a burn on that. That burn was last October and there was a lot anxiety around it because of how visible it was and how important it is to people. It was a success, had the effects that we wanted to and it snowed after the last day. This is something that we consider for the other side of that ridge and other Tiger Mill project, the High Buck project and is a signed decision for the last couple years and signed in 2021. The Shamrock Sale Area is the first sale to actually be harvested and Boise Cascade is the bidder on that. Umatilla County and Union County are both within that sale area and they are going to start working in there next week. The sale is going to be about 5 million board feet and will be going down to Elgin, high visibility area, excited to get this project going. The Umatilla Rim Trail does go through the Shamrock Sale area and going to be implementing a closer of the trail during the week from Monday morning to Friday at Noon and then it will be open from Noon through the weekend for recreational use, this will be happening throughout the project. The ongoing discussion to repair the 32 road that is between the North Fork Umatilla River and the Mt. Emily Summit road and are working with the federal highways are part of the follow up from the floods from 2020, anticipation to start work would be next summer and summers to follow.

Commissioner Dorran asked if are you saying that you will put that first part out to bid this fall?

Mr. Steele responded that the bidding and contracting element is a little bit out of his wheelhouse because federal highways is managing the actual work. Start staging this year and then start working next year. The end of the second year which would be like fall of 2025 they are hoping to have a road bed sort of roughed in that could be used for emergency egress if required, like a fire then the residents or the firefighters can use it to evacuate. It will not be open to the general public at that time, it will take probably another year to get it up to standard.

Commissioner Dorran wanted to know as you drift back to your old position with the knowledge that you have gotten from your position now, in the cooperating agency meetings, what is your personal opinion? Do you think we are headed in the right direction? Mr. Steels said that the opinion of the forest service in what we have contributed is that his involvement is the same in that as when he was in his old position, involvement didn't really change that much when he went into the acting district ranger role. Our real desire is to see the recreational access restored there and we do have the trail right away through the south fork of the Walla Walla. When we responded with our comment letter that was the essence of our response that recreational access is our main desire to see restored not only for the public and recreation but because of firefighting response similarly to Hat Rock. Our involvement with the BLM and Fire also includes the South Fork of the Walla Walla and we feel like firefighter safety and their ability to respond in a timely way to something that might happen down there and it is going to be a lot more efficient if there is a trail restored and vehicle access restored. One formal cooperating agency meeting so far, encouraged to see a lot of attention paid to the trail, not sure on language of alternatives, the speed of it being what it is think they are paying attention to that aspect of it that we do have the right away there

Commissioner Dorran was up there about a week ago last Friday and talked to couple of parks and mangers folks, 600 folks had gone through there in two days, close to that 1,500 people per day, scary to see some of those small kids walk across the river. Mr. Watchrude added that access is so important, with the 32 road along the Umatilla River the damage was extensive but with the partnership with the federal highways and the commitment from the ranger district to get that 32 road open, going to be a few years to get that open but happy there is a plan. South fork of the Walla Walla it is intermixed ownership, all of the trails owned by the forest service that were damaged by the 2020 floods have been reopened.

Mr. Steele noted that the new Burnt Cabin bridge was put in with Great American Outdoors Act, that has served the Umatilla and other forest around America very well. Commissioner Dorran was amazed by the traffic on it that is coming up and down from the main trail.

Mr. Auslan has been here about two weeks. He is really happy with the field work that is happening on the North Fork John Day Ranger District, as they are in a wild fire crisis. The staff in Ukiah is aware of that and are working hard treating the landscapes, treated over 4,800 acres this year of primarily road fuel treatment, all prepping for the inevitable fire, planning for future projects thinking maybe 7,000 acres for next year. This district realizes how important the range management program is, have twelve grazing allotments within Umatilla County, eight cattle and four sheep and have 13 permittees, 2,500 cows and six thousand sheep out on the range, 120 miles worth of fence, ESA listed streams with fish in them, 1,300 miles of pasture fence, 1,100 upland water developments. Cattle have more forage when there is less trees, encourage to get behind the fuel reduction project. They are also doing some vegetation management, hoping to have the environmental reviews signed this fall

Commissioner Timmons wanted to know where are we at with Spout Springs? Mr. Watchrude responded that it is an important part of the community. The desire as a national forest is to see that ski area open up again, the former owner does not hold the permit anymore and the facilities are now under federal ownership and are currently working through the process of eventually reissuing that permit, so that someone else can operate that ski area again. They did a request for expression of interest for a new operator last summer and we were overwhelmed with responses, received about a dozen formal responses to that which is good information, looking to do something a little more formal after we get some guidance from our property folks, the structure has been sitting vacant for a few years.

An updated on road 54 was provided. The agency completed four miles of the bottom road but there is still nine miles to go, and doing an environmental analysis on the remaining nine miles. Currently working with the contract for engineering design, it is going to be a rebuild, addition have some maintenance funding to maintain the alternate routes that kind of come in from the west side, five or six different roads on that side in contracting right now. There may be some way to flood proof it but it will be in the same general footprint

Mr. Watchrude concluded that checking in on these projects it is so important when it comes to emergencies that we have good relationship, really appreciate it how all commissioners are very accessible.

2. Property & Liability Insurance - Presented by Dan Lonai, Umatilla County Administrative Director. Approval is sought to renew property and liability insurance with CIS and authorize payment of premium in the amount of \$849,912.49. Dan Lonai shared that has increased about 5.3% over last year premium. Commissioner Dorran asked if the access flood is that a cost price risk management analysis. Dan Lonai shared have just been going along as we have. Commissioner Dorran would be interested in what the cost risk ratio would be for 2019 and 2020 for examples. Robert Pahl shared that this coverage would be for the county and wouldn't coverage damage to property that the county doesn't own, wouldn't cover damage due to the floods but could possibly cover the damage to the Stanfield maintenance shop other than that the county didn't accrue a lot of insurable loss. Commissioner Dorran asked if Harris Park and the bridge is covered by this? Robert Pahl was not sure, the bridge probably not. Dan Lonai shared that his understanding of the policy is that the replacement of the roads is not part of the excess flood damage and bridges follow that. Commissioner Dorran shared that he would be curious what that means. **Commissioner Shafer moved to renew property and liability insurance with CIS and authorize payment of premium in the amount of \$849,912.49 . Seconded by Commissioner Timmons. Carried, 3-0.**
3. SRS Payment Election - Presented by Doug Olsen, County Counsel. The deadline is close for the county to elect to receive a share of the Secure Rural Schools Act payment or the 7-year rolling average of timber receipts. Because of the amount of payment, the county recently has elected to receive the 7-year average payment. SRS program payments for 2024 are projected to be greater than 1908 Act 25 percent timber harvest payments for all Oregon counties with USFS land. The proposed amount for SRS for Umatilla County is substantially more than the timber payment. The matter is before the Board to make an election. Under SRS program, the County must also elect which portion of payment to distribute to Title 1 (Roads and Schools), Title II (Federal land projects) and Title III (county wildfire protection projects, broadband access and emergency services) programs. At least 15 percent, and no greater than 20 percent must go to Title II and III.

Commissioner Shafer moved to elect to take the SRS and allocate 8% to title II and 7% to Title III. Seconded by Commissioner Timmons. Carried, 3-0.

4. Gravel Pit Contract - Presented by Doug Olsen, County Counsel. Approval is sought to approve contract with Aggregate Resource Drilling for the drilling and blasting services at the Casper Pit in the amount of \$3.65 per cubic yard. The County issued a request for proposals for the drilling and blasting of the Casper gravel pit. One proposal was received from Aggregate Resource Industries. The recommendation is to award the contract to ARI. **Commissioner Shafer moved to approve contract with Aggregate Resource Drilling. Seconded by Commissioner Timmons. Carried, 3-0.**

5. Maintenance Payable- Electric - Presented by Mark Tanner, Umatilla County Facilities Manager . Approval is sought to approve payable to Double S Electric, Inc. in the amount of \$8,847.50 for electrical materials for the new Hermiston Community Corrections facility. The payable is before the Board for approval due to the amount. This will be reimbursed by Community Corrections. **Commissioner Shafer moved to approve payable to Double S Electric, Inc in the amount of \$8,847.50. Seconded by Commissioner Timmons. Carried, 3-0.**

6. Maintenance Payable- Plumbing - Presented by Mark Tanner, Umatilla County Facilities Manager. Approval is sought to approve payable to Rob Merriman Plumbing in the amount of \$5,410.54 for plumbing services at the new Hermiston Community Corrections facility. The payable is before the Board for approval due to the amount. This will be reimbursed by Community Corrections. **Commissioner Shafer moved to approve payable to Rob Merriman Plumbing in the amount of \$5,410.54. Seconded by Commissioner Timmons. Carried, 3-0.**

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Shafer: None

Commissioner Dorran: None

Commissioner Timmons: Our emergency management is doing a good job and being proactive, including at a fire service meeting last week at Hamleys, which was well attended.

Meeting adjourned by Chair Dorran at 10:02 a.m.

Lori Smith

Executive Secretary – Board of Commissioners