

COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING

MINUTES

March 12, 2014

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners met in scheduled session with Commissioner Anthony Hyde, Commissioner Henry Heimuller and Commissioner Earl Fisher, together with Sarah Hanson, County Counsel and Jan Greenhalgh, Board Office Administrator.

Commissioner Hyde called the meeting to order and led the flag salute.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Heimuller moved and Commissioner Fisher seconded to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2014 Board meeting and March 5, 2014 Staff meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

VISITORS:

None.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Commissioner Hyde read the consent agenda in full. With no additions/changes, Commissioner Heimuller moved and Commissioner Fisher seconded to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- (A) Ratify the Select to Pay for week of 3/10/14.

- (B) 2014 Liquor License Renewals for: Wayside Inn; Scappoose Creek Inn+ ; Bing's Restaurant; Marks on the Channel; Scipio's Goble Landing; Alston Pub; Goble Tavern; and Multnomah Channel Yacht Club.

AGREEMENTS/CONTRACTS/AMENDMENTS:

- (C) Amendment #2 to Oregon Department of Transportation Grant Agreement #29263.

The motion carried unanimously.

COMMISSIONER HYDE COMMENTS:

On Monday, the Board was in Salem working on their various AOC committees. Got a wrap of what bills passed and what didn't pass.

Yesterday, the county signed a contract for a public media campaign. This will be a great opportunity for the county to get information out to the public on many different issues. The Board will be working on a communications plan shortly.

COMMISSIONER FISHER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Fisher wanted to thank Commissioner Heimuller for attending the Clatskanie Kiwanis meeting last night.

There is a Jail levy meeting being held tonight in Vernonia. If this levy passes, he would like to see a committee created for the oversight of the levy funds. Commissioner Hyde agrees and would like to see that committee created whether or not the levy passes.

He was in Salem on Monday for various AOC meetings for discussion on many upcoming issues.

Last night he was in Tillamook for the ESD meeting. They were talking about the Early Learning Centers and we may still be one of those counties selected.

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Tillamook Community College and their School District have set up a curriculum, a type of apprentice program, to help kids prepare for the working world. It's a great idea that seems to be working very well for the students.

While at NACo, he attended a subcommittee on communications. There was discussion on the issue of cell phones and how that causes problems with emergency responders locating 911 callers.

Commissioner Fisher wanted to give a shout out to Senator Johnson and Representatives Witt and Boone for their hard work the past 6 weeks in Salem and the great amount of work they do for this county and the region.

COMMISSIONER HEIMULLER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Heimuller attended the Oregon Consortium meeting on Friday in Salem to continue with work on redistricting the workforce regions in Oregon

A reminder that the Fair Board is busy meeting every Saturday to prepare for the upcoming fair in July.

He was in Salem on Monday for an AOC meeting and then on to the (PTAC) Public Transportation Advisory Committee meeting.

Tomorrow he will be at the NWACT meeting in Astoria.

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The Rainier Senior Center is celebrating their 10th anniversary at their new facility from 1-4 and the Rodeo Court fundraiser is this Saturday at the fairgrounds.

The Board recessed the meeting at 10:20 a.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m. at the Scout Cabin in Vernonia.

The meeting called was back to order.

TOWN HALL MEETING IN VERNONIA - JAIL LEVY:

Present were Commissioner Hyde, Commissioner Heimuller, Commissioner Fisher, Jan Greenhalgh and Andy Moyer. The town hall was hosted by Scott Laird, Vernonia Voice and held at the Vernonia Scout Cabin in Vernonia, Oregon.

Scott Laird thanked the Board of Commissioners for taking the time to attend this town hall. As everyone is aware, the Jail Levy was defeated and the county is now looking for options to keep the Jail open. The Board has been petitioned by the public to put another Jail Operating levy on the ballot for May. The Board is here tonight to take any questions.

Commissioner Hyde thanked the public for attending tonight. He explained the difficult budget realities and that, with no operating levy, the Jail will close. As some background, when the bond measure was passed to build the new Jail, it did not include operating funds and that was well represented at the time. Not knowing what those operating costs would be, the county made the decision to fund the Jail out of the General Fund until those actual costs were determined. Some years later, the County is still funding

the Jail because past attempts for a levy have failed. He also noted that the recent county audit shows that, in 2008, the county had approximately \$12.5 million in discretionary funds but in 2013, only \$6.2 million. Therefore, the 25% of the general fund that goes towards the Jail, is 25% of the decreased amount. It is a very tough time right now and without this levy passing, the Jail will close. To answer a question, there is 9 years left to pay off the Jail.

Commissioner Fisher stated that, during the Staff meeting today, the Board worked on a budget as though the Jail was closed. The Jail is currently operating with some serious liability concerns and we simply cannot do that any longer. He explained some of the things the Sheriff is already doing to cut costs, but it's still not enough. For him personally, this is one of the toughest decisions he's had to make - and he has had to close a school before. People need to decide if they want the Jail - at a cost of \$.58/\$1000.

Question - Is there any smaller level of service at that Jail, i.e. closing off sections? Andy explained that they are already operating at the lowest level possible with very limited staff. This levy would provide 16 staff - 4 per 8 hour shift and optimum is more like 24-25 staff.

Question - What is the cost for bed space outside the county? Andy - the cost will be \$65 per bed, per night - for 10 beds.

Question - Can the county use volunteer help to run the Jail? Andy - Volunteers and inmate labor is already being used wherever possible.

Question - Why Polk County - why not somewhere closer? Andy - Clatsop County is firm that they want their own Jail so beds available there, Washington County has not beds available, Multnomah County is double the cost of Polk, Hamill won't guarantee space and have higher rates and the Dalles have bad weather concerns during the winter.

Question - Is this just a stop gap - deferring the inevitable? Commissioner Hyde stated that it's simple economics with regards to property taxes. The county receives \$.13 out of every \$1 of residential property taxes. That \$.13 costs about \$1.18 is infrastructure, i.e. schools, roads, fire protection, etc. However, it only costs \$.43 from business property taxes. Bring business into Columbia County is key for generating revenue for our county.

Question - Is it true there are some business that have no tax for 10-15 years? Commissioner Hyde explained the enterprise zone benefits and how that attracts business and encourages growth of existing business. We have to be competitive with other counties and states.

Question - What's the reality of the day to day criminals and what will happen to them? Andy explained the current process and, should the Jail close and there are no beds available, most will be cited and released. The 10 beds in Polk County will be filled with the worst offenders - however, those beds will already be taken by the current inmates in for murder, rape, etc.

Question - What about drunk driver? Andy explained that, if a responsible driver cannot be found, then they would be transported to the Portland Detox center.

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Question - What about using ankle bracelets for those cited and released? Community Corrections use the ankle bracelets but they are through a private company and very expensive.

Question - What about Washington State Jails? There are extradition issues involved with transporting over state lines.

Andy Moyer asked that if anyone is interested in touring the Jail, to contact him and he would arrange that.

After some final questions, the Board thanked everyone for attending this meeting and encouraged support of the levy.

There was no Executive Session held.

With nothing further coming before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Dated at St. Helens, Oregon this 12th day of March, 2014.

NOTE: A tape of this meeting is available for purchase by the public or interested parties.

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FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

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By: _____

Jan Greenhalgh

Board Office Administrator

By: _____

Anthony Hyde, Chair

By: _____

Henry Heimuller, Commissioner

By: _____

Earl Fisher, Commissioner