

MINUTES
UMATILLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Meeting of September 22, 2021
9:00 a.m., Room 130, Umatilla County Courthouse
Pendleton, Oregon
Public call-in phone number: 541-728-0275

Commissioners Present: Chair George Murdock, Vice-Chair John Shafer, and Commissioner Dan Dorran

County Counsel absent

Guests Present: Jennifer Blake, HR Director; UCo Health: Alisha Lundgren, Deputy Director; Kelsi Reyes, Nurse; Lisa Mendoza, Office Manager; Hermiston residents: Ronald Williams, Betty Nobles, Clyde Nobles, Kimberly Nobles, Sam Nobles, Danny Evans, Pauline Evans

Video link or Calling in: Dan Lonai, Administrative Services Director; Tom Fellows, Public Works Director; Bob Waldher, Planning Director; Mark Tanner, Facilities Manager; Michael Ward, Director of Umatilla Basin Watershed Council; Paul McDonough, Hermiston + *see list of video or call-in, copy on file.*

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Murdock 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. 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

Awards/Correspondence/Recognition. 1) Chair Murdock read a letter from Mr. Stratton (Tigard, OR) regarding Steve Churchill (Records) who provided great customer service working through a complex recording situation. Mr. Churchill is a model public sector employee – prompt with replies, handled himself, followed through to resolution.

2) **Challenge Coins program:** Recipients: Stephen Westfall (UCSo evidence tech) (presented by Thomas Roberts) – recognition was read by Commissioner Dorran – great teamwork throughout multiple disaster responses – has gone the extra mile; he’s very dedicated. Recognitions read by Commissioner Murdock for Kelsi Reyes (UCo Health) (presented by Alisha Lundgren and Lisa Mendoza) – all 3 were present. Ms. Reyes has spearheaded working on multiple fronts to bring COVID vaccine to the community – works tirelessly and with commitment. She goes above and beyond putting the needs of the community first. He also read the recognition for Dr. Jonathan Hitzman (public health officer) – he wasn’t able to be present today. Chair Murdock elaborated on his wonderful experience/respect and skills that Dr. Hitzman brings to the county. Commissioner Dorran added appreciation for Dr. Hitzman’s input and professional information.

Minutes – none today.

Additions to Agenda – Chair Murdock requested adding: Umatilla County to consider support for a Viet Nam memorial at the Capitol in Salem.

Public Comments – none.

Business Items

1. West County Homeless Shelter Discussion. Chair Murdock presented. This was initially and previously discussed at the Board's September 8, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Dorran gave initial information – where we got to where we are. HB3115 was passed requiring by 1/2023 municipalities (and the county at large) to establish homeless shelter or place to move transient folks to or it is legal for them to sleep anywhere in a public place. We have to find a solution to homeless issues – otherwise any public places become available for homeless to stay. We are trying to identify solutions. In this case, a group of city managers from Umatilla, Hermiston, Stanfield, and Echo are trying to come up with at least a temporary solution. Representative Greg Smith in the last session determined a source of some funds for the cause. There are currently no warming stations in Umatilla or Hermiston – nor homeless facilities. Also Umatilla County is remodeling the jail to address other issues beyond homeless (addiction, mental health).

The group (coalition) is to determine solutions whereby the suggestion came for one location to satisfy all those cities' legal requirements as a specific spot for homeless housing. A regional facility is an option in this area (and others). After considering other sites and also considering places for warming stations, the site was initially selected (map projected on monitors) as a temporary site. The county owns the site, and Granite construction leases 8 acres (total of 18 acres); there's no desire to void the lease for the remaining 10 acres.

At the Board's September 8, 2021 meeting, motion made by him to approve moving forward with discussions about the 1.5 to 2 acres on the north end on the piece of property for the purpose of a regional homeless shelter, which is in the planning stages at this time. In the meantime, others have offered possible sites. Keep in mind, we still need to have a warming station for this winter. This temporary facility will be a fenced area with a modular including restroom, minimal kitchen area and some separate rooms. Power is available, but there is no water/sewer at this time, probably using pump and haul off sewage. There's no zoning change as this is a temporary facility. It is in the UGB of Umatilla. A conditional use permit is how this would operate.

Another reason for selection of this property is that transportation available with busing through Kayak and others, plus cities have franchises with the taxi companies and vouchers would be available for after-hours needs.

On the Highway 395 side, BLM owns property – they may be under federal status about allowable use of the site; however, that is down the road and a different discussion. The county would prefer use for other projects, but it is an option to consider in the future.

The county isn't the lead on this shelter discussion, but the property is county owned and a solution must be made – we don't want another Portland, Salem, or Eugene situation with homeless. Commissioner Dorran reiterated House Bill 3115 is requiring solutions for homeless.

Chair Murdock pointed out this particular property is focused on the west county. Pendleton has a warming shelter, and also homeless shelter.

Regarding input, Chair Murdock requested whomever wishes to speak to please identify yourself and, due to the large number of people, to limit comments to three minutes.

Ronald Williams, 81675 Lind Road – property owners. Kids are within ½ mile there down to Cooney Lane. Granite runs 10 yard loaders – this time of year running maybe 20 times a day. Need to be aware of that. He suggested maybe selling the property to get it on tax rolls? Possibly subdividing property. There is possibility of light industrial use, which is pretty valuable. He suggested maybe putting a shelter in the south end of Hermiston instead.

Cynthia Trainer, 81187 Sagebrush Rd, owned her property since 2008. Biggest concern is limited resources with Sheriff's Office. Example: bullets shot at sign – late follow-up and then none shortly after. Drug running up/down Sagebrush Road and known meth houses. Shooting on Bensel Rd. and a body found on Bagget Lane. Also, it appears to be transient people are “casing” the area, trespassing, damaging things, etc. She feels this site will lower value of property; it is prime property for businesses – not a good use. This camp location is concern to her – she's opposed to it. She owns two commercial buildings with bus stops there -- with transients mulling around, she feels they are “casing” and also trespassing. Concern also with mental health issues, addictions, and bad actions. She suggested looking at other land – owned by the county could be better use. However, this area she feels is not good – thefts are happening already. She is sympathetic to homelessness, but who will be accountable for issues? She also feels that temporary may not stay that way once it's in place.

Chair Murdock noted the two (homeless) facilities in Pendleton are not county owned – CAPECO owns one and Neighbor to Neighbor owns the warming facility.

Kim Nobles, 81299 Cooney Lane (corner of Bensel) property and noted her family owns property as well (they are in their 80s and some were present). Regarding the Hermiston warming center, she read yesterday there is a place downtown. This proposal in this area she feels a regional idea could mean a lot more homeless. County sheriff patrols this area and response is slow because of the nature of things reported (non-violent). This area would be congregate. She's also concerned about services for homeless not there – they have to get to town. She also has pictures to share regarding gravel pits, noting Granite is blasting with dynamite. This is serious – when trucks are running crushed rock. It's like a freeway; concern about safety issue of homeless, mentally ill. She feels it is an unsuitable location. Walking to get to bus – not a good option. Other ideas – when it's hot, they're going to cool off – need shade and water - law enforcement can't enforce accountability. Plus, she researched about homeless suing – there could be liabilities to the involved cities and to county. Why put \$1 million (as noted earlier) into a “temporary” place? In researching this location, she found there are 23 children in that area. Again, not safe. Plus, she feels the area will expand due to need and possible action by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals regarding regional area places. She also expressed concern this Board took action without input from those neighbors. She requested the Board please table this and re-evaluate.

Commissioner Dorran noted the motion/action on September 8 was to authorize negotiations for 1.5 to 2 acres. This is a prime site, but it is not finalized.

Kim Nobles also pointed out earlier talk of a well / adequate water – a well likely will not be allowed by property owners. She then presented copies of photos for Board review/consideration.

Sam Nobles, 81776 Lind Road. He had two maps to share with the Board. He noted, in Umatilla, a lot of money is received from Amazon – maybe they could help with this issue? There's a senior center in Umatilla not used now that could be converted/used for a warming center. He suggested Umatilla could step forward to make this happen. Also, on the map, county owns property on Bowdin Lane – a gravel pit – not used at this time and could be an ideal place for the short term as it's close to medical and hospital and Umatilla PD and fire station is also close. Also, at the end of Scaplehorn Road would be a good place – off of Highway 730 (which the county took for back taxes) – there is water/electric, close to a park, and also paved area. The point is, a lot better places are available. He would like to suggest considering other options for places better suited – could get something done quickly – maybe 30 days. Homeless would be better served with a better location.

Clyde Nobles, 650 Monroe Street, Umatilla. He's 87 years old. His sister, 83, lives in a house shown on the map in the upper left corner of the property. His brother, Sam, 84 years old, lives just down road. He is concerned about homeless and transients and safety. He has 15 rental properties in that area. He is concerned about living next to homeless camp. Nobles own 60 acres and Granite leases from Hatley. They also own the well on that land. His family would object strenuously to using it for this encampment. If a new well is drilled, the water table will be reduced. He seriously objects to this site.

Danny Evans, 30231 Bensel Road. His property is shown on the bottom left corner of the map – there’s a pond there. Concern during summer when it’s 100 degrees, homeless would need to cool off. He doesn’t want them on his property. Has grandson and their friends are there. His main concern is regarding safety and security. Like the others, he doesn’t think the location is good. He has heard other objections today. He also believes closer to town would be better. In addition, response time from the fire department is slow there and water wasn’t available – his house nearly burned down. He reiterated like others, the Sheriff’s Office is not very responsive there either.

Paul McDonough, 30240 Bensel Road. Echoed the same sentiments of those spoken. Safety aspect is not good – no sidewalk, no lighting, traffic between asphalt plant, Amazon data center – increased traffic plus daily traffic on Bensel and river roads is bad. Regarding busing and taxis, they don’t run 24 hours. Security response will be limited like mentioned before. Also services aren’t available this far out of town. He suggested, like others, to consider other options for property – better suited.

After call by the Chair, there were no others to speak.

Commissioner Dorrان thanked all for their comments; they are important to the discussion. The group working to put this together understands location is going to be difficult, but the bottom line is to find a solution. He would like to reiterate this is a temporary place, but we don’t know what the future brings. At this time, solution must be made; there’s no choice in that.

Chair Murdock asked how would interested parties remain in the loop? The county is not “driving the bus”. Commissioner Dorrان asked all present to provide email, addresses & phone numbers on the sign-in sheet and leave it with security at the main entrance (Melinda Slatt will collect it after the meeting). He also reiterated the involvement of Stepping Stones and the need to address concerns and keeping folks informed.

Ms. Trainer suggested perhaps the Planning Department has a way to provide some type of notice (mail, not virtual, email, phone – especially for a lot of elderly). Commissioner Dorrان pointed out this property will be a conditional use. There is no zoning change, which would be the Planning Department involvement as Ms. Trainer had noted.

2. Umatilla Basin Watershed Council Presentation. Michael Ward, Director, presented. He also noted Tom Fellows, Public Works Director, is involved and also present today. Good news is this project (Hascall and Stanley Creek) is moving on – wrapping up design. He requested acknowledgment by county as owner of this culvert and for action being done there as part of the project. Mostly likely with a bridge or culvert design, which would be hashed out at the 30-60% design phase. This is an annual presentation/report of activities and acknowledgment of Umatilla County’s funding contribution of \$10,000 to the council. The Stanley Creek culvert is owned by the county – as the landowners, the Watershed Council needs an acknowledgment by the county of the work on replacing the culvert – working towards restoring fish passage at the Stanley Creek Culvert.

Tom Fellows advised he will confer with Doug Olsen (County Counsel) on this proper action – recognition of county controls the piece of road.

Commissioner Shafer moved to approve, pending consultation with county counsel. Seconded by Commissioner Dorrان. Carried, 3-0.

3. Removal of Temporary Burn Ban. Presented by Bob Waldher, Planning Director. The county adopted Order No. BCC2021-047 imposing a temporary non-agricultural (residential) burn ban on 6/8/21 and an agricultural burn ban effective 6 /16/21. A request has been made to lift the temporary burn ban on both ag and non-ag burning. Action would coordinate to remove burn bans. **Commissioner Shafer moved to remove the ag burn ban on 9/22/21 at 1200 hours and remove the non-ag (residential) burn ban on 10/1/21 and adopt Order No. BCC2021-073, and to direct staff to issue a press release. Seconded by Commissioner Dorrان. Carried, 3-0.**

4. Removal of Detail Shop & Modular Building. Presented by Dan Lonai, Administrative Services Director. He thanked the Board for taking a tour of the facilities. Approval is requested to remove the detail shop and modular building on the lot (recently purchased) east of the courthouse. A quote of \$7,040 has been received from Rod Anderson Construction to remove both structures. Mark Tanner, Facilities Manager, was also on the line. The quote also includes removing the sign. Lighting would be added at a separate later time. In response to Commissioner Shafer's question about the schedule, Mr. Tanner hoped to fit it into Anderson's schedule ASAP. **Commissioner Shafer moved to approve the quote from Rod Anderson Construction in the amount of \$7,040 as outlined and to have the structures removed as soon as possible. Commissioner Dorran seconded the motion. Carried, 3-0.**

5. Vietnam War Memorial. Chair Murdock talked about a County commitment of \$5,000 to join other counties in Oregon to help create a memorial at the Capitol grounds in Salem. **Commissioner Dorran moved to forward a \$5,000 contribution to this program, and also, when it is finished, that all commissioners visit the site. Seconded by Commissioner Shafer. Chair Murdock also acknowledged all who served in Viet Nam. Carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Dorran – none

Commissioner Shafer - none.

Commissioner Murdock – none

Executive Session – none.

Adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melinda Slatt

Executive Secretary, Umatilla County Board of Commissioners