

**MINUTES**  
**UMATILLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
Administrative Meeting of December 29, 2021  
9:00 a.m. (Google Meet)  
Umatilla County Courthouse, Room 130

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**Commissioners present:** Chair George Murdock, Vice-Chair John Shafer, and Commissioner Dan Dorran  
**County Counsel:** Doug Olsen  
**Guests:** Alisha Lundgren, Deputy Director of UCo Health; Dan Lonai, Administrative Services Director; Tom Fellows, Public Works Director; Jerry Baker; Curtis Engbretson; Jack Bellinger

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Pledge of allegiance.

Chair Murdock called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Additions/Changes to Agenda: Chair Murdock moved the County Manager discussion item up to #3 in deference to those on-line.

Chair Murdock asked for any public input for other than business agenda items. None were heard.

**Business Items:**

1. Westland Irrigation District. Presented by Commissioner Shafer. The county has been in talks with Westland Irrigation District for pumping capacity since the county acquired pumping capacity from the Columbia River. The District is interested in acquiring an option to use a part of that capacity during the irrigation season. The option is before the Board for approval, along with associated agreements for acquiring Westland’s canal crossing, and use of the Umatilla River through Westland facilities for recharge testing on the depot. He outlined actions to consider. He noted two individuals were on-line, Curtis Engbretson and Jack Bellinger, if they would like to answer questions or comment. Mr. Engbretson had nothing to add. **Commissioner Shafer moved to approve an Option Agreement and authorize the Chair to sign. Seconded by Commissioner Dorran,** with comments. Thanks to Commissioner Shafer for his work on this. It constitutes a utility by the county and there are other items as well. Items as needed can be negotiated in the coming years. Commissioner Shafer also appreciates the partnership. **Carried, 3-0.**

**Commissioner Shafer moved to approve Assignment and authorize the Chair to sign. Seconded by Commissioner Dorran. Carried, 3-0. Commissioner Shafer moved to approve Agreement for the Umatilla River Recharge Component and authorize the Chair to sign. Seconded by Commissioner Dorran. Carried, 3-0.**

Commissioner Shafer thanked the guests and advised they could stay on-line if desired.

2. DLR Contract. Presented by Commissioner Dorran. For the past 10 months, the courthouse planning and needs assessment committee has been meeting, at which time the committee has reviewed and toured the current county facilities and discussed needs and deficiencies. A new step is to conduct a more formal study and assessment for planning for the county’s courthouse needs. The AOC-OJD Court Facilities Task Force has set deadlines for the interest and application for funding for planning

grants. The local committee is interested in submitting an application for a grant. A proposal for assistance in making the application has been received from the DLR Group. The local committee has reviewed the proposal and recommends it to the Board for the county to contract with the consultant to assist in the process. Today's action is to review the proposal and authorize the contract with DLR Group in an amount of \$20,639. This will get Umatilla County in line along with Region 5 courthouses; at this time is only the study/planning phase.

Chair Murdock to counsel, Doug Olsen: he chairs the state committee which will ultimately decide on all actions regarding courthouses in the state. Mr. Olsen indicated that since Commissioner Murdock will be chairing all the meetings and he is part of making selections, it would be a conflict. Chair Murdock declared a conflict of interest.

Commissioner Shafer asked if the county spends \$20,000+, what's the next step? Commissioner Dorrان replied that before spending \$20,000, there's a deadline of January 10 to submit a letter of intent to the AOC-OJD committee to get on a list for consideration with a deadline of 1/24. Due to the expedited schedule is one reason DLR was brought on to facilitate. He also noted funding of 50% county/50% AOC/OJD to study and plan if a new courthouse is necessary in the county or to remodel. The analysis would determine that. The local committee has reviewed/toured and noted the courthouse is in a critical area of deficiencies.

Chair Murdock noted on behalf of the AOC/OJD committee, the counties received a letter about this process.

Commissioner Shafer's biggest concern is if additional money is to be spent. Commissioner Dorrان: it depends on DLR's proposal for the study. The county's portion is \$100,000 and AOC/OJD portion is \$100,000 -- it is a match. Again, it depends on the study/plan coming back. Commissioner Shafer has a hard time justifying the expense and the county is at least 10 years out. Commissioner Dorrان: until the process is started, it will always be 10 years out. Chair Murdock clarified, it varies -- if the legislature doesn't allocate funding, then it pushes the time back. Commissioner Dorrان: There's no way to know precisely how far out -- it has to go out for legislative bond. Also, if other counties are ahead, then that changes the time too. Many have dropped out since they couldn't obtain local approval. There are variables we can't control.

Commissioner Shafer: Umatilla County is one of only three counties in the state who has two "courthouses" and so would it be a third courthouse? He is not convinced this is the time for a contract of this nature and the expenditure. Commissioner Dorrان The 2008 (or thereabouts) study of courthouses showed the Stafford Hansell building was inadequate; the courthouse was farther down the list. And, Commissioner Shafer commented the newer Stafford Hansell building was ranked higher inadequate than the courthouse, which is 50 years old. Again, too many unanswered questions for him as well as where is funding coming from? Commissioner Dorrان: from the general fund. The \$100,000 is earmarked from ARPA funding and then more dollars are coming in next year. Commissioner Shafer is not on board for spending that money. **Commissioner Dorrان moved to authorize the contract with DLR group in an amount not to exceed \$20,639 to assist in the application for planning grant funding. Died for lack of a second.**

3. County Manager. Mr. Olsen presented. In 2019, the Umatilla County Charter Review Committee made a number of recommendations, one of which was to have a county manager. At the time of the report at the August 7, 2019 meeting, the Board voted not to forward the question of adding the charter requirement of appointing a county manager to the voters. As part of that discussion, the matter of appointment of a county manager was deferred to the future. The matter was reviewed in September, 2019, with staff to provide additional information on the status of county managers in other counties. The information was compiled. The matter is now before the Board for further discussion. The

discussion of appointing a charter review committee was raised by Commissioner Murdock. Commissioner Dorran to Chair Murdock: there are two different discussions. Commitment by the Board for additional discussion of a county manager and the charter review (separate). He feels it is a discussion about a county manager at this time. He would like to see ground rules set regarding that position for a Board conversation. He suggested possibly having a presentation on duties of a manager/administrator. It was noted a manager could be appointed outside the charter.

Chair Murdock, for today, discussion is only that the Board wants to move forward to carry out the integrity of the process. To respect the committee, discussion is needed. Mr. Olsen clarified: the recommendation of that committee was to put it in the charter. However, the Board can appoint the position as an employee and not be part of the charter as a requirement. There is a voter aspect if it is in the charter. Chair Murdock felt it is of sufficient magnitude that it should be the will of the voters. Mr. Olsen agreed that is an option. There could be an election for the voters about a county manager outside of charter amendment. It would be like an advisory vote – “do you want a county manager?” At this time, there isn’t a charter review committee, but the Board can talk to those on the committee who would like to discuss it. Commissioner Shafer is in favor of the manager discussion, but outside the charter, and agreed with a process to define moving forward. Chair Murdock: the advisory vote is not just whether to hire a county manager or not, part of the definition to make includes how the folks of Umatilla County will be represented. In addition, Mr. Olsen added it is also if there would be full- or part-time commissioners, which would require a charter change. Chair Murdock promotes the conversation with the Board and charter committee (or some members) to determine next steps and also about an advisory vote. Mr. Olsen summarized: next step would be to set up a meeting with former members? Jerry Baker (on-line) advised he would be willing to meet again with the Board, but not sure he wants to spend another 18 months on that committee. Chair Murdock proposed setting up as a work session. Mr. Baker agreed, with a date to be in the near future. **Commissioner Shafer agreed as well about setting up a meeting and made the motion to set up a meeting with the Board and those former Charter Review Committee members that are interested. Seconded by Commissioner Dorran. Carried, 3-0.**

Chair Murdock asked Alisha Lundgren to update on COVID cases. She advised last week, there were 86 cases – a significant increase in the last couple of days. This week (only this week, which starts on Sunday), there are 228 cases. The health department is making adjustments to staffing to manage workload coming in. The state has counted 13 omicron cases. CDC says about 93% of cases in this region (OR, WA, ID, AK) would be attributed to omicron. It looks like next week will be high as well. It’s too early to tell this week what high numbers are attributed to. The stats show some onset dates were due to pre-Christmas; however, it’s still too early. In response to Commissioner Dorran’s question, she advised nothing adopted or changed in Oregon with CDC changes. The county follows Oregon guidelines out of OHA. Chair Murdock noted the President’s recent comments this isn’t a federal issue -- it is a state issue. Ms. Lundgren noted no response from OHA and most meetings this week have been cancelled.

4. Creation of Position – Public Health. Presented by Ms. Lundgren, Deputy Director of UCo Health. The health department recently received a grant award with the COVID-19 School Based Health and Recovery Funding. This funding supports creation of an office assistance II position to support the school based health centers to increase capacity for services being delivered at these locations. Approval is sought to create an .8 FTE Office Assistant II position (18-month duration grant). **Commissioner Dorran moved to approve. Commissioner Shafer seconded. Carried, 3-0.**
5. Health Officer. Presented by Ms. Lundgren. As a Local Public Health Authority, UCo Health is required to have a Health Officer, per ORS 431.418. This position has typically been filled through a contract. It is proposed this position now be created as an employee position at UCo Health and appoint

the currently contracted Health Officer, Dr. Jonathan C. Hitzman, MD, to this position (since he has retired from private practice). The current contract with Professional Locum Associates, LLC, will terminate effective December 31, 2021. A job description for the proposed position has been drafted. Funding is out of all public health budgets – it is spread throughout (some general fund, OHA funding – 9 to 10 budgets). Mr. Olsen noted the anticipated financial impact with this change is about \$10,000 a year. Chair Murdock felt that Dr. Hitzman is excellent in this role, especially during COVID times. Umatilla County is fortunate to have him as Health Officer. **Chair Murdock moved to approve creating the Health Officer position and appointing Jonathan C. Hitzman, MD as the Health Officer for the Local Public Health Authority at UCO Health.** Commissioner Shafer also commented on Dr. Hitzman’s great work in town halls – credibility during a pandemic. **Commissioner Shafer seconded.** Commissioner Dorran asked for clarification regarding funding. Mr. Pahl advised it would be between \$3,000-\$5,000 general fund impact and the rest would be spread throughout Health department budgets. **Carried, 3-0.**

6. Public Health Program Manager. Presented by Ms. Lundgren. UCo Health is receiving additional investments from the legislature, through the Oregon Health Authority to support public health modernization. This investment created several positions to perform this additional work. To help oversee the work, a proposal is being made to create a supervisor position, the funding of which is being fully provided. A regional component is also included for which Umatilla County will be the fiscal agent. There is no general fund impact. Approval is requested to create the position of Public Health Program Manager, Range 30. **Commissioner Shafer kudos for finding funding and he moved to approve. Commissioner Dorran seconded. Carried, 3-0.**

Chair Murdock talked about streamlining contact tracing staff. Ms. Lundgren noted the positions are now full-time permanent staff vs. temporary. He asked if the county would go to OHA for additional help in contact tracing? Ms. Lundgren advised with increases/surges, internal protocols are in place for when to seek out OHA help; case numbers determine this. She reached out to OHA yesterday with increased work projected over the next two weeks. Three levels were set internally, and yesterday was step 2, thus the OHA request.

7. Filming of Mortgage Books. Presented by Dan Lonai, Administrative Services Director. Request is made to scan and film the remaining mortgage books. The books are stored in the basement and take up a small office there. Upon filming, the books can be destroyed and the space can be repurposed. The cost of filming is \$6,249.84; funds are available in the Records Archive budget. Approval is sought to purchase the service of filming the county’s mortgage books from Technical Imaging Systems (TIS). TIS has been utilized for many other items as well. **Commissioner Shafer moved to approve. Commissioner Dorran seconded. Carried, 3-0.**
8. Road Gate Permit. Presented by Tom Fellows, Public Works Director. The County received an application for placement of a gate on County Road No. 562 (Whiteman Road, Milton-Freewater area), which has been signed by all of the impacted property owners (farming operations). The gate would be placed on the east end of the road past its intersection with Powerline Road. That portion of the road receives minimal maintenance and is used to access farm fields. Property owners are complaining of trespassers and debris dumping. Authorization is sought to place a gate and sign the permit agreement. **Commissioner Dorran moved to approve the gate. Commissioner Shafer seconded. Carried, 3-0.**
9. Sign Materials Payment. Presented by Mr. Fellows. Approval is sought for payment of sign materials purchased as part of the county’s bridge weight limit postings as well as regular stock on-hand. Due to recent increases in load limited bridges postings, it’s become necessary to purchase extra sign materials. Due to the amount of \$5,612.10, it is before the commissioners to approve. There have been sharp price increases and added numbers of bridge postings making this order larger than normal. After

requesting multiple quotes prior to order, the lowest price was from Traffic Safety Supply. This is a budgeted purchase and funds are available. **Commissioner Dorran moved to approve payment. Commissioner Shafer seconded. Carried, 3-0.**

10. Reclassification of Position – CDDP. Presented by Kim Beck, Community Developmental Disabilities Program Manager. Request is made to reclassify the current eligibility position to an auxiliary program coordinator position. With the addition of Veterans Services, additional staff for the DD program, and additional requirements from the state contract, support and coordination of programs other than case management have not been at an optimal level to meet the goals of the department’s strategic plan and the County’s mission. The reclassified position would provide needed support and coordination. It is anticipated the cost would be less than \$20,000 annually and funds are available through the state, already in the budget (no general fund impact). This request has been prior reviewed with the liaison Commissioner, HR Director, and Finance Director. **Commissioner Shafer moved to approve reclassifying the Eligibility position to Auxiliary Programs Coordinator, effective 1/1/22. Commissioner Dorran seconded. Carried, 3-0.**
11. Property Transaction. Presented by Commissioner Shafer (for Dale Primmer, Community Corrections Director). Community Corrections is in need of larger facilities in Hermiston. The current offices are not adequate to house current staff and services. Replacement in the Hermiston area has been researched and a potential site has been identified. The purchase of the property is before the Board for review and approval. **Commissioner Shafer moved to adopt BCC Order 2021-082 (purchasing real property from Veterans of Foreign Wars, Hermiston). Commissioner Dorran seconded with comments about the remodel aspect. The motion carried, 3-0.**

The remodel/renovation needed was raised. Mr. Pahl advised his understanding from Mr. Primmer is the cost for any needed renovation will be paid out of the Community Corrections budget. The purchase amount will be back to the County, or a period of time not to exceed 7.5 years. The remodeling would be accomplished using work crews for a lot of the manual labor. Chair Murdock added it is critical the intent and discussion be part of record that the county maintenance staff would not be utilized for renovating/remodeling. **Commissioner Shafer moved the county maintenance staff will not be utilized for renovation/remodel of the old VFW building (Hermiston). Seconded by Commissioner Dorran. Carried, 3-0.**

12. County Offices Reconsideration. Presented by Chair Murdock. At its last meeting, the Board made the decision to reopen County offices beginning January 3, 2022. In light of the report from Public Health to expect a spike of new COVID cases in January, and state action, especially the courts, to delay reopening and extend distancing, the matter is now before the Board for possible reconsideration of its decision. Based on the current status, **Commissioner Shafer moved to keep county offices at the status quo and postpone opening to a later date to be determined. Commissioner Murdock seconded. Commissioner Dorran opposed. Carried, 2-1.**

Commissioner Comments. Chair Murdock thanked all for opportunity serving as Board Chair in 2021. In addition, he would encourage leadership to carefully consider the meeting between the Board and charter committee members and to give thought to a facilitator and the agenda prior to scheduling a meeting. Commissioner Dorran suggested an agenda discussion item at the Commissioners’ 1/3/22 staff meeting (consider the joint Board/charter committee members’ meeting agenda).

Executive Session – none.

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

*Melinda Slatt*, Executive Secretary, Umatilla County Board of Commissioners