

MALHEUR COUNTY SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Pursuant to Initiative Measure No. 23-64
Meet to Promote Relocating Oregon-Idaho Border Ordinance
January 12, 2026

The Special Meeting of the County Court was called to order by Judge Dan Joyce at 9:00 a.m. with Commissioner Ron Jacobs and Commissioner Jim Mendiola present. The Special Meeting was held pursuant to Initiative Measure 23-64 and Malheur County Meet to Promote Relocating Oregon-Idaho Border Ordinance to discuss how to promote the interests of Malheur County in any negotiations regarding the relocation of the Oregon-Idaho border. Members of the media and public had the opportunity to join the meeting electronically or in person. Present in the meeting room were public members Bob Wheatley, Charles "Chuck" Pike, Paul Skeen; and Malheur County Economic and Community Development Coordinator Taylor Rembowski was present for the first 45 minutes of the meeting. Present electronically was Mike McCarter, President of Citizens for Greater Idaho. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the Argus Observer and those who have requested notice, and posted on the Courthouse bulletin board and County website. The meeting was audio recorded. The agenda is recorded as instrument # 2026-0233

Judge Joyce opened the meeting, asked for any comments from the Commissioners – there were none, and called on Mr. McCarter for comments.

Mike McCarter: Good morning, guys. It's been a long time since I've had a chance to visit a little bit with you and sorry, I didn't make the trip across the state to get over to you. You know, Move Oregon's Border and Greater Idaho is moving into its sixth year and we knew from the very beginning it wasn't going to be an easy process, a short process, or something that was going to be accomplished quite fast. So, we're not giving up on it. We are in discussions with several state senators and state representatives to move forward with a request for a task force in the state capitol to bring up a lot of the issues that we feel are important and how things are negatively affecting Eastern Oregon. So, we're not giving up, we just keep moving forward, keep talking to people, keep working at it. As far as rock solid plans, you know, we don't have anything on board yet. Again, a lot of it's in the discussion process. We've reached out to the Trump administration, and to be honest with you, I haven't heard anything back as yet, and we're not sure how the federal government could help us in this situation, but we at least want to make sure that our state representatives and state senators over there on the US side know what's happening here, that they're aware of what's going on, and to open up those communication lines because if we don't sit down and talk about these things nothing's going to happen, nothing's going to get better, nothing's going to stop there, you know, I think the west side flow is just going to continue to run right over the top of us. So that's about all I got as far as updates goes with it. Do you have any questions for me at all by any chance?

Commissioner Jacobs: I don't have any questions, Mike. Would you just give us a brief overview of how this process has to develop through the state to really get any traction to get going?

Mike McCarter: Well of course going back to the very beginning, if a border change was to take place there has to be an agreement between the state of Oregon and the state of Idaho that they agree with adjusting the border, that, once that agreement is done it has to go back to U.S. Congress for approval. And we believe that if that were to happen, because we're looking at a blue state and a red state, if they both agree upon it, it's not really changing anything number wise in the U.S. Congress or the U.S. Senate, it's not adding any more senators or it's probably shifting one Oregon U.S. Representative to the Idaho side. But then it goes back there for approval. But before we can get to that point, discussions need to be opened up between Oregon and Idaho, official discussions.

A few years back, we had a bill passed in the Idaho legislature requesting, asking, opening it up saying, hey, we're willing to talk on it. That met mute rapport from the Oregon Legislature; they weren't even going to talk about it. Several of us have been over to Salem and walked the halls over there and talked to different representatives and senators and we're slowly building some momentum with them. We had, I think, five state representatives and four senators that were on our side wanting to come forward to open discussions. And of course, before anything can happen, we've got to sit down and talk about this. But right now, it is, I guess it's sort of a feeling in the state legislature, if they ignore what we're asking for, it'll just die and go away. Well, it's not dying and going away. And every time a new issue comes up, i.e. like the gas tax or water rights or wolves or whatever else is going on, it adds a little bit of fuel to the fire in this particular situation that we are not being heard, our representatives are not being heard, and there's been no action taking place on almost anything.

If it wasn't for our new representative, or our new senator, out of Wallowa County, there probably wouldn't be anything talked about wolves and the situation that's going on there. Central Oregon right now is being inundated by them. By the way, they're coming through our neighborhoods here. So, it's not just an Eastern Oregon situation right now. So, I think it's important in that the way government is set up, it is supposed to represent the people and give a voice to the people and for the people and by the people. Right now, it doesn't seem to be quite that way in Oregon.

There is an agenda on the west side, which is aimed at making things better for the people that live in the Portland Metro or the Willamette Valley. And yes, that's where a majority of the people are. So that's understandable with it. But at the same time, our legislature needs to listen to and discuss issues from all across the state from one corner to another. So, we're just going to keep working at it there to try to get it opened up. And it may not be a task force, it may just be a hearing, but if that were to happen, that would allow us to speak up and say, well, if you really don't want us and want to do anything with this or work with this or anything like this then let us go, let somebody else, you know, that wants to work with us deal with it. So, we are also in communications with the legislature in Idaho with it, Representative Judy Boyle representative Barbara Ehardt, we have asked, and will probably try to put together a meeting between Oregon and Idaho representatives here this year, if we can do it. It'd probably be around Baker City or somewhere around there, and we'll let everybody know so that you can come visit, see it, and see what's going on and ask questions.

Commissioner Jacobs: Thank you. That was a good explanation; I appreciate that, thank you.

Mike McCarter: May I add something here? Several of the counties have talked about putting an issue on the ballot to discontinue the mandatory meetings. And back in the very beginning when, in 2000, when we started this process, the only way we could get a vote by the people to find out how people felt in each county was to establish a law, which is the mandatory meeting process that you're working through right now. It has served its purpose. And I know that Harney county passed that measure and discontinued their meetings and you know, the way commissioners meetings are held across this state is that if there's a topic to be brought up it can be brought up in open discussion. It doesn't have to have a mandatory meeting. So, if people want to get together and they want to take and vote, pass a vote to discontinue the situation or, I'm not exactly positive on how the process would go as far as can commissioners bring it forward and discontinue it. I know that I think the commissioners can put it on the ballot, if that's what the people want. But we're not against it at all. We're not in a battle with people across this part of the state at all. We want to, we want to work with them to on it. And so, when we hear objections and, and discourse and disagreements and things like that, that's okay, that's people speaking out. I've got a tough enough skin that I can deal with, you know, those kinds of problems.

The report that came out in the newspaper up in Wallowa County about a fine coming down from the state of Oregon. I think most of you understand how hard it is to work with ORESTAR on campaign financing and things like that. We have reported every friggin penny that's come in and gone out. But in a deep audit, where we were told we were doing everything right, they found something that we weren't doing right. We weren't showing an expense that, you know, that when we have donations that come in through a donation service, they charge you a percentage. We weren't recording that correctly. We were recording it, but just not correctly. So, we got a fine. And I think, you know, that when it comes to ORESTAR things, they're right, we're wrong, and you just fess up and take the payment and pay it. So that's, there was no intent on our part to circumnavigate the Oregon campaign laws at all.

Bob Wheatley: I'm Bob Wheatley from Ontario. My purpose in being here today is to kind of stay in touch with what's going on. I'm really happy that Mike was able to meet with us today. He brought up a couple of things that I really was wanting to have us talk about too. One thing is about these meetings and as he brought up, as Mike said, we've been able to do what was wanted. The purpose of that legislation and that ballot measure was to get us meeting and talking about it and seeing where the people wanted things to go. And we've been through that initial passage. There was a ballot measure not too long ago here which actually would have stopped it from having to be mandatory meetings. And the people actually voted that down, which was nice in some ways, because it shows that there's still a lot of support for the idea of moving the border, but it also, the important thing I think, like Mike said, is that the Greater Oregon, Greater Idaho movement doesn't have anything against that idea that we have to have these mandatory meetings. If I recall properly, and that's one of the things that I wanted to discuss with you today. It seemed like a few meetings back, we had a similar discussion and it seemed like someone had brought up from the group that there might be some ways that the commissioners could address that to where we would still have

meetings, but maybe it wouldn't happen before a year or something. Do you guys recall that kind of a conversation or if there was any, if you know of any things that you could do as commissioners that would ease that on you guys.

Judge Joyce: I don't recall it.

Commissioner Jacobs: I don't either. And I don't know that we have that option, you know, as far as, because it was put on the ballot to determine whether or not the constituents wanted to continue to have these or not and they did want to continue to have them. So, I don't know what options we have other than to hold the meetings.

Bob Wheatley: Okay. Well, I was just, we would, you know, we would support you if there was something that you could do to make it easier on you. One of the things that I wanted to talk about today, just, and I kind of wanted this just to be a discussion and anybody that's here in the meeting that has a comment, don't feel bad about raising your hand or whatever, while I'm, just because I'm sitting here, it doesn't mean that I'm the only one that can talk.

Something interesting happened this past week that I wanted to share with you. There is an online, I think it's actually it's on Facebook. There's a group that is called the Ontario grievance and conversation group and people in the Ontario area can go online there on this Facebook account and they can ask questions and some of it's political. A lot of it's just standard things, you know, I need to find a good mechanic, I'm not familiar with the area, it's a communication forum. So, I know it's sometimes difficult for me to keep track of when our meetings are here. And so, I thought, well, maybe that'd be a good place for me to post a little notice, and maybe there were some people out there that would like to attend the meetings, and maybe they're not aware or don't want to. And so, I posted a little meeting and I thought it was pretty innocuous, and I just said, posted it that the next special meeting of the Malheur County Court to discuss moving the border will be Monday, January 12, and listed the time and the place. And I just said, meet me there to show your commitment to the Malheur county commissioners that you want the border moved. And I just thought, you know, I didn't think much about it, pretty innocuous. Well, actually, in the past week, there were 142 comments made based on that period. And some of them I think you can probably, I wanted to share a few things with you, some of them I think you can probably guess what some of the comments were. But there were some really interesting things that came up. And there was one gentleman that posted and he said, trading one set of masters in Salem for another set of masters in Boise solves nothing. It makes an interesting point there. And another fellow said, why stop with just Eastern Oregon? Take the entire state except Portland and Multnomah County. And another fellow said, and I thought this was kind of interesting, may have come from somebody out of the area, but I'm not sure. It says, remember your friends and sympathizers to the south and west. Washington, east of the Cascades, and Nevada, the entire state, except Clark and Washoe counties. Now, there's a great new state to put on the map indeed. And I think we've all realized that there's been, Eastern Oregon are not the only people that are feeling this kind of attitude from our legislature and from our governor.

Other states are seeing the same thing. Eastern Washington has been compatible with this feeling for a long time. Counties in Northern California have similar ideas and likes and stuff, but I hadn't realized that there were people in Nevada that were looking at this. There have been reports before, and I know Mike has brought this up before, but there are other states too in the Midwest and in the Eastern part of the United States that have similar type of movements. I know there's a movement going on in Indiana and Illinois. Some movements there, in fact, one of the legislatures has introduced legislation that would allow certain counties to move from the one state to the other.

And so, it's not a dead thing, a really great point that I thought brought up that would be important that maybe it'd be something that maybe we can think about broadening these discussions. Talk a little bit about other things that can be done to address the problem that we're all feeling, well, the majority of us are feeling, I probably should state it that way, in Eastern Oregon and I include Central Oregon there as well, but one person brought up and said mail-in voting in Oregon is where your major problem is. The corruption of out-of-state homeless being registered to vote among the university students and foreigners is totally out of hand. Until the mail-in voting stops, Democrats will hold on to their corrupt power over your state. Now, I don't personally totally agree with all of what is stated there. But I think there's a very interesting idea there that maybe should be looked at more than it has been. And just what has been the impact of mail-in voting. And as we know, from reports that we've had from other states, and I know that the U.S. Government is looking at some areas, and certainly in the last election, fraud, voting fraud, was a major topic discussed. But it makes you wonder just how much fraud maybe is there in this mail-in voting. Maybe we need to think about, as a state, going back to actual ballot voting, you show up at the at the polls and place your vote, you have a voter ID, these are all things that have been talked about but we haven't really discussed it in a meaningful way on a local level. Maybe that's something that we could think about doing and would be another reason for us meeting.

Another thing that was brought up that I thought was interesting is someone wrote in, they said, anyone who is interested in learning more about moving the border for a greater Idaho pro or con, and this was part of another discussion that I had placed, and so I made it, I wanted to make people aware that this meeting wasn't just for those who were for moving the border, that this was a place for discussion for those who were for and against it. And I know in previous meetings, we have had members who are on the opposite side of moving the border, and we've had some good discussions. And so, I would like to see us try and get back to more of that type of thing.

One person made this comment, and it says, if it makes you feel any better, the western side of the state constantly calls our side of the state garbage, a drain, and mega cult lovers. And I'm thinking that this person is saying that people on the western side are saying this about Eastern and Central Oregon. And this person goes on to say, they would be happy to see us gone because we are high welfare users and low information voters, so we get no love. Not trying to be inflammatory, but it's not like they want us. I'm always rather shocked by the elitist attitude towards Eastern Oregon, rather than trying to be cooperative and work with us. This is what I think moves the Greater Idaho movement, this attitude right there. Governor Kotek only needs three counties to win. Do you think many feel alienated? If you want changes, you'd better vote. I am not a Trump fan, but I want a

governor who at least cares about my side of the state. So, I kind of take from that discussion, little topic there, is that this is a person that isn't really in favor of moving the border, but they certainly feel that the other side of the state is dominating all the discussion. Especially on the legislative level and from the governor's office.

And kind of tied in with that was another comment that really was questioning why we would want to move the border and it says, we in east, referring to us in the eastern side of the state, to say, you get Portland tax dollars why do you need to feel loved. So maybe something to think about.

Another person made a really great comment here. He says, every single state has a divide between the cities and the rural areas. There is no state that has a single sense of unity. But the fact is that the rural areas depend on the cities for business and tax revenue. And the cities depend on the rural areas for agriculture. And the fact also is that it is a mutual toxicity. You hate Portlanders as much as you think they hate you, probably more actually. But I think there's something to think about there. I mean, a lot of the discussions have gotten to the point when we get together and we start looking at this from both sides of the issue, sometimes it can get kind of heated. And this idea of us hating the other side of the state, and they hate us and they want to dominate us, I don't think that's a true statement, but I think it is something that we need to address and talk about. And again, I'm thinking about, are there ways that since we at this point do need to continue to have these mandatory meetings, are there ways that we can expand a little bit the discussions that we have here and find ways that we can address the issues?

One last comment that I'll make here. I get this a lot when I talk to people. This person says regarding this issue, moving the border, it says, this is a project for undereducated and totally illiterate, learn to read and quit wasting people's time. And then it's generally followed up with this other idea is that wouldn't it be easier for people that want what Idaho has to offer to just move to Idaho. And that's one that I really like to talk to people about because yes, for those of us who live in the city whether it be Ontario, Vale, Nyssa, Jordan Valley, wherever it may be, but especially for the more populated areas of Malheur county, yes, that probably would be a lot easier way for us to do it. Just sell our homes, find a similar place on the other side of the border, just move and let it be. But I tell you, one of the main reasons that I got involved in this movement is because of my desire to help our farmers and ranchers. Malheur county, as you guys know very well, is an agricultural-based county. Without our farmers and ranchers, Malheur county probably would fail to exist, at least in its current form. So, yes, in addressing that point, yes, it would be easy for me personally to move across the border. And we all know people in our localities that have done that. We have had in Ontario, I have a lot of friends and even business people that I have dealt with over the years who have done just that. They sold their homes, moved to Idaho, they closed their businesses, reopened their businesses in Idaho. We've had that happen. And what does that really do to us? I know in Ontario, if you talk to our city council people, that really affects the tax base. And it also, you know, both on the personal side and on the business side. As we lose our businesses going to the other side of the border, we're losing a lot of things. And it's also affecting our businesses who are involved in agriculture. If you think about it, think about how many packing houses, shipping places have moved from Oregon, from Eastern Oregon, or to the Idaho side to

conduct their businesses. I don't see that that's going to stop unless we find some ways to address the issues that are affecting them.

Paul Skeen brings up the issue about the death tax and how it harms our people that have large land holdings and this type of thing, how difficult it is to pass that on to their family members and how much of their worth when they die is taken up by the state unless there are some changes there.

A great example of how we the people can have a voice is the recent campaign that occurred in Oregon regarding the gas tax issue, what went on there. And just as a short summarization of that, I know that everybody here knows about that, but maybe some others aren't as familiar with it. But a short history of that, as you well know, in the last legislative session, legislation was proposed, primarily by the Democratic side, to address the issue of the deficit in funding for ODOT (Oregon Department of Transportation). They were, as we understand it, they were not only millions but possibly billions of dollars short in their funding. And it never was addressed as to what the cause of that was, whether it was misuse of funds or whether it was bad planning, whatever. But because of the domination of the Democratic Party, I think the governor thought she had a slam dunk there and was going to raise fees, not only at the gas pump, but on registrations, a number of things, a broad number of things. But there was enough feedback from the whole state, not just Central and Eastern Oregon, but the whole state, that the legislature actually did not pass that legislation. But it didn't stop there. I believe it was in September that the governor, wanting this to be passed, called a special session of the legislature. And I, this is secondhand, but my understanding was is that the Democratic portion of the legislators were basically made to understand that, folks, you're going to be here until you pass this legislation. You've got the votes, get it done. Well, that's when a campaign was started to try and get a voter referendum on this issue. And in order to get it on the ballot, there was a, they needed this, the group that started, they needed a little over 76,000 signatures, valid signatures in order to get it on the ballot for the people to vote on this. They ended up with over 250,000 signatures. And that was within about a six to eight week time period. Because of the delay by the governor in signing the bill that was passed, it left only about six or eight weeks for people who were opposed to it to try and get a referendum on the ballot to allow the voters to vote on it. And it happened. They did it. We did it. I know in Malheur county, we were very active in doing that. But the interesting thing to me, because I was following this really closely and was waiting for us to get a ballot petition that we could even sign, by the time that we got people who would volunteer to work on this and get the ballots or get the measure out there to get signatures on, they already had over 100,000 signatures on the western part of the state for this. So, it showed to me that, you know, maybe we're not as divided as we think we are. We know that that we are, that there's a big division in the legislature. We know that the governor's office has not had a turnover in over forty years and that it you know it's time for some changes but there are ways that maybe we can work together, make some changes, do some of these things. So, I would really enjoy some discussions and some ideas on these things.

The Greater Idaho group recently posted a notice from one of their members with some ideas on things that we can start looking at. There were several ideas that I'd like to just introduce to you

and again something for us to think about as a group. It says, first thing is that we need to start where trust already exists, and I think that is right here, because I think everyone that's been at these meetings from the time I've been here, from either side of the issue, even though we don't agree maybe on whether the border should be moved or how it should be done, you know, there's never been any great animosity. We've trusted each other. We've listened to each other's ideas. So maybe since we're going to be having these meetings anyway, maybe we can find some ways to look at this in different ways other than just moving the border. The Greater Idaho Move the Border group, as Mike has stated, is not going to go away, is not going to stop addressing the issue and looking for ways that that might happen, unless all the voters tell us from the 13 counties that have passed that type of measure, unless they tell us they want it to totally go away. But that doesn't mean that we can't, as individuals, come closer together and talk about these things. I was really hoping that Brent Grasty would make it here today because I know Brent, even though he is totally against moving the border, does not think that's a good idea at all, he still realizes that there are a lot of things that we are feeling on this side of the state, as far as not being able to pass legislation that is more friendly, to the people who live in our part of the state. And Brent is a great guy to visit with and talk to. And I'd love to get together with him and other people that have been involved in this whole movement, both sides, and let's talk about things that, rather than going against each other, let's talk about things that we can do, that we can agree on and come together on.

And another idea that was formulated, if we have the trust, which I think we do, we can get better organized locally and be more consistent in our local views, especially regarding the legislature. We can recruit and elect local leaders who will act. Well, that's you guys. We're doing that. And I think if we come up with ideas that, that make sense to you, that would be positive for the whole county and the voters that you represent, there's no doubt in my mind that you would get behind us and help us in getting these ideas to the legislature. Now we need to show up where decisions are made. We need to think about ways that we can get more than four or five of us to this meeting if our objective is to try and have a broader viewpoint and to come to some broader conclusions on areas that we can work together on.

They said try and pass local measures that force attention. Well, we've kind of done that with this this Greater Idaho movement and move the border type thing, but again, I think there are a lot of other issues that we can look at and we can come together in a positive manner.

And the last thing they said is make the case public. And I think that's another area that if we had a stronger group movement here, and if we thought about this as more than just, okay, do we move the border to accomplish what we need to get done or can we work on some other issues like the tax referendum where we can get a majority of people behind or we can actually have issues that affect not only us but other parts of the state. I know there are people who have suggested in the past that there might be other ways to work with the legislature to where maybe there could be when legislation is passed, maybe there could be some ways to where the individual counties maybe could individually vote on whether they feel that they should participate or not. Maybe there's, I don't know what the way is to get there, but it's an idea to address and think about. Maybe

there are some ways that we can find ways to where issues that are more local, the various areas, are there ways that we can address those local issues on a local basis, get the support and find a way for them and then maybe go to the legislature and see if there are ways that the legislature can support us with those needs and wants without having it affect every county and every group in the state. I think that's one point that has been brought up before is that our biggest problem over here is all the legislation that gets passed that meets the needs of those counties on the western side of the state where the issues are totally different and the lifestyle is totally different than what we're facing in Central and Eastern Oregon. And so, if we can find better ways to address those things, we might be really surprised at how much support we would have on the west side of the state on various issues that could address, I think Paul's issue regarding the death tax, I think we'd be surprised on how much support there could be from the whole state addressing that issue. I don't think it's just an Eastern Oregon issue. So, gentlemen, that's really what I wanted to bring forth today. I wanted to see if we could open up the discussion, get your opinions about it, are there ways that we can do some things that would make it easier for you as a commission to address some of these issues. I'm going to stop there and let others comment on, make their comments.

Commissioner Mendiola: I've got a question. Mike, are you still there? Has there been any research on this movement about what it's going to cost Idaho to get this part of Oregon into Idaho?

Mike McCarter: Well, there's been some cost figures, you know, because of well, predominantly because of the debt that Oregon has, you know, it's been figured out, I believe, that Oregon is so far in the hole, it's about \$3,000 per individual is the figure I've heard. And so, you know, there's been all kinds of bantering back and forth between well, how much is it going to cost? You know, Oregon, west side of Oregon sends approximately \$600 per wage earner to Eastern Oregon to subsidize Eastern Oregon. And people think, well, well, now, wait a minute, Oregon would not want to get rid of Eastern Oregon, because they would lose all that revenue that comes from them. It's just the opposite. The money flows west to east on into the counties with it. So, you know, there's a discussion that goes on, well, maybe Oregon will just like to cut their losses and remove Eastern Oregon from the process because they would save billions of dollars that come this way to subsidize. Idaho, of course, you know, you don't want to think about having to pay for Eastern Oregon to come that way. But you know, the figure has come up that the state of Oregon only owns about 3% of Eastern Oregon. A majority of it is federal and private property. So, it's not a state issue where you're acquiring a lot of state property or state equipment. There's been discussions and talks about, well, what about the prisons? What about the colleges and things like that? Well, if you want to get into the weeds and start talking about it, the first step is to start open up the discussion with it. If I were heading a say a task force on this particular issue, I would bring all the parties together and have a basically a huge grease board and just start writing these questions out and dividing them up and coming up with the answers to it in there. But if we're going to talk about buying from one state land from one state to another, then we need to first come to agreement that well, there might be some possibility of negotiations. If you're not going to even consider it, then there's no sense in trying to get into the weeds with it. And I know that citizens want to know certain things, how is, you know, the Oregon health care plan. A lot of people in

Eastern Oregon are on the Oregon health care plan. And they don't want to lose that, because that's their health insurance. I understand that, because Idaho does not have a compatible plan like that. They do have a plan for minors, but not for adults with it. You know, that's something that has to be worked out. They talk about, well, Oregon drug laws versus Idaho drug laws. You know it more than I do, when I've sat there at the truck stop and watch people from Idaho come across the border and buy their marijuana and stuff right there, and of course the revenue that comes out of it there, that's another issue that has to be dealt with. Abortion is a big complaint. However, when we talk to the abortion folks and whatnot, most all the abortions in Oregon are done in Portland. That would not change at all. If a person wanted that, that's where they would end up going on it. So I know I went off track on your question about buying property and stuff like that.

Commissioner Mendiola: Do you realize that Idaho's \$150 million in debt right now? That was on the news the other day.

Mike McCarter: I haven't heard that figure to be honest with you.

Commissioner Mendiola: I heard it on Channel 7.

Mike McCarter: Idaho traditionally year after year has a balanced budget.

Commissioner Mendiola: They do, but not this year. They've been cutting taxes too much. That's why they're \$157 million in debt on the budget. I'm more worried about property taxes in Oregon if this happens, going up, just to pay for what we've already got, like roads, bridges, highways.

Mike McCarter: I look at, what's the figure about PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) in Oregon? How far are they in debt?

Commissioner Mendiola: I don't know, I never see it.

Mike McCarter: I've heard figures as large as three billion dollars on it

Commissioner Mendiola: Wouldn't doubt it.

Mike McCarter: but then again, you know that's how rumors get going on and I don't like to talk about things like that, I'd love to have the facts. But if there is going to be a movement of the border and a movement of lands and property and stuff like that first thing you got to do is sit down and talk about it, see whether or not it's even feasible.

Commissioner Mendiola: Thank you.

Mike McCarter: By the way when we're talking about meetings, some of the commissioners' meetings have included or moved Greater Idaho into their regular commissioner meetings and we don't we don't object to that at all and I don't know the legality of. Maybe they've moved their

regular meetings on top of Greater Idaho to, you know, I know it's a time-consuming thing for you on it to come in and have a special meeting for something like this. And I, you know, like Bob is saying, we were interested in the topic, but we know that that topic can be brought up in any meeting there. So, I just thought I'd throw that in.

Paul Skeen: Paul Skeen, Nyssa, Oregon, lifetime member of this county, 72 years, even the Judge knows that. Okay Bob said a lot of good things, Mike said a lot of good things, I hope I don't miss any of this, who was that guy that was sitting there?

Commissioner Mendiola and Commissioner Jacobs: Taylor Rembowski, our Economic Development director.

Paul Skeen: Okay. I told you before, I feel like we're trying to eat the whole elephant at one time. I think we need to take some smaller bites. I hope Mike's listening to this. At one time, they even proposed to do it. So, there are four properties that are on the east side of the Snake River and Big Bend is the largest of it, the rest of them are less than 30 or 40 acres. But I think we need to see if we can even get that done. It should never have been designed like that. And he talked about this a little bit. So let me talk about that a little bit. In Illinois, if you take 150 to 175 mile radius around Chicago and were to take it out of Illinois, it would be a solid red state. Let's go to Nebraska. Omaha. Omaha is the reason that they even have one congressman that is a Democrat. I mean, it's throughout the United States everywhere we go. I got family that lives in Washoe County, Nevada. It's actually fairly conservative, but there's enough people between it and Clark County, Las Vegas, that it's got two senators from the Democratic Party. You guys are all old enough to remember, when I was a young boy, I can remember going with my father when they dedicated Bully Creek Dam. I don't know if you guys remember that, Hatfield came over with it. We had a governor, two senators, all Republican. Now the city of Portland can out-vote the rest of us. So, I guess when you stop and think about all of this, this is a survival for Malheur county. Maybe different than some of the other counties, but I have to compete against people on the Idaho side. I burn about 150,000 gallon of fuel a year. I can't get, and trust me, I think I get a good deal, I can buy 10,000 gallons at a time, for maybe a penny less than the Fruitland Maverick. Are you hearing me? 10,000 gallons. And the only break I get because of all our Oregon taxes is a penny. So, all my friends who farm on the Idaho side are buying for 25 to 30 cents less than what I am. 150,000 times that by 30 cents; it's a cost. It's a cost to me. It's a cost to every farmer. And where do I get my fuel? I get it from Fruitland. Where do I ship my onions? I ship onions to McCain Foods in Fruitland. I ship onions from JPI to Weiser. I ship Golden West on the other side of the river. I do do business with people in Oregon too, but I'm telling you, I've got to compete and make it with all those guys.

Taxes, you're saying that Idaho, I didn't see that, but Idaho is in debt to \$150 million, I think is what you said. I own ground on both sides of the river. I'm telling you, it's cheaper over there than it is here. I know that for a fact. Let's go about the straight line that runs right up from the Nevada border. It runs up and right where it makes the first curve, that's me. Clark Boulevard. And then it runs right on up, makes a wind around Hells Canyon, and then when it hits the Washington border, it's straight to the Canadian border.

It's throughout the United States with these problems. I think there's a chance that maybe Trump will look at this and say, we can't win. I will tell you, I had a son that was at Notre Dame getting his master's degree. Malheur County's right on top of it; they said, you can't vote in Oregon anymore. I said, he's still in school, but so, and now he lives in Idaho, so it doesn't matter anyhow. But they were on top of it that he hadn't lived here for a while. But not all counties are like Malheur County. We're the good guys in the white hats. Or as the Judge, I would say, big hat, not cattle.

Judge Joyce: Perfect.

Paul Skeen: I'm teasing you. I want you to know that I got this from the Speaker of the House in Idaho, Mike Moyle is his name, been a good friend for a long time, he farms in Starr, Idaho. I said, I need to be able to use your name, and this is what he told me: I'm absolutely for it, but I'd sure like to see just the Treasure Valley to begin with. That was his exact words. And I can tell you what they're worried about, Ada county has got people flying in there from

Commissioner Mendiola: everywhere

Paul Skeen: It's starting to become purple. And again, I go back to my taxes are higher, my fuel is higher, the overtime is killing, it's killing us. It is killing us. I'm, I guess I'll tell you this. I'm one of the top sugar beet producers in the Amalgamated Sugar Company. And I'm going to lose \$500 an acre on the best crop I've ever grown. Sugar prices have gone from \$76 in '23; \$52 in '24; \$32 now, and it's not over. Why? Why is this glut? We abide by the rules and didn't overplant. In the Midwest and throughout the United States, they all overplanted. And then our lovely last administration, guess I better leave it like that, they've let so many imports in that sugar prices are at historic lows. Wheat, 1984 prices for me, \$4.52. I looked at it just before I came. If I grow 152 bushel wheat, I lose three to \$400 an acre. I'm telling you, farmers are in trouble. They're not going to break me, I've been at it too long. I've put money away when you're supposed to.

I'm just telling you, we need to look at some of these things. What I'd like, Oregon, to come back to me, if I could speak to the governor, knock off the death tax. That's why all good tax paying people that farm in this valley that have much have moved to Idaho. And I'm in the process of, I'm probably going to end up moving to McCall. And do I want to leave the farm? No. But I can't afford not to. Let me explain to you what it is. In our state tax system, our death tax, I get a million, my wife gets a million. After that, they tax me at 16%. I own a lot of land, guys. Can you imagine how much that is? My kids won't be able to keep the farm. I have to move. It's just a crying shame. Now, Representative Bentz, quite a few years ago, did it, and then Lynn Findley helped with this and they have a, if you're still farming, I don't know the name of it or whatever, if you're still farming, you get to use, they give you a

Commissioner Jacobs: credit

Paul Skeen: a credit, thank you. They give you a credit that can go against the land. You remember when we were kids and you always heard the farmer say, I'm land-rich and cash-poor, well

welcome, because I'm having to eat out of my cash to keep this thing going. Onion prices right now, \$5 to \$6 FOB (Freight on Board), that's a bag of onions, 50-pound bag of onions. That sounds really good when you stop and think about it. The problem is is that the packers are taking \$5. There's nothing left. I asked one of my major packers, not going to say his name, Oregon packer, I said, am I going to be able to even pay the storage bill on what I got in your storage, because I have my own storages too, you guys know that. He thought I'd be able to pay my storage bill which means zero back to me. So, I bring all this up, so that I wished I could sit down with the governor and say, let us survive. I got to compete against Idaho. And it's kind of like having a real good-looking girl that you're dating on the Idaho side, and maybe not one that's quite, whatever, on the Oregon side, and you start looking and you start seeing, well, there's a lot of difference in each, and that's what's happening right now. The only good thing about it, Idaho has no land use planning laws so they can build wherever they want to build, and they're taking good farm ground, and it's forcing them to have to come more this way. Land prices are at least a third higher on the Idaho side than they are on the Oregon side.

So, I don't know if I covered all the things I wanted to cover. Bob did a great job of talking about it. I don't want to move. I built my wife that house when I was 39 years old, she doesn't want to leave it and we're being forced because I can't afford to give everything that I work for to the state of Oregon, not to the federal government, to the state of Oregon. I need you guys to help with this. I really would like to see us come back and say, let's try just the eastern part of land on the eastern side of the Snake River. Let's try that and see if we can get that done. And again, I'm telling you, Mike Moyle said, I am 100% behind you. But he too is worried about how are you going to handle the whole state? Let's take a few steps at a time. You got any questions for me?

Commissioner Jacobs: You did mention the overtime. Can you explain how that is different here in Oregon than it is in Idaho?

Paul Skeen: They have no overtime in Idaho on the farms.

Commissioner Jacobs: And there's also a fee for your labor that you pay, you have to pay that is higher than it is in Idaho. What do you call that? H-2A?

Paul Skeen: Yeah, my H-2A workers, last year we paid just shy of \$20. And Idaho was, without getting me in too much trouble, 15 to \$16, I believe. Now, Oregon did come down for the first time in the history of my 52 years. I'm starting my 53rd year. I've almost been farming as long he's been the judge.

Laughter

Commissioner Mendiola: I will comment a little bit, Paul. When I first heard about the moving the border, I was for the part of Oregon that's in the Idaho time zone. And when they started getting all these other guys involved, I could see it just going right down the toilet. Because there's just too many variables involved than just the Malheur county part that's in the time zone.

Paul Skeen: Although I will tell you, Jim, we have to play over in Coos Bay. They pick the furthest place that you can in the state of Oregon for Vale and Nyssa to go play. And as you drive through the back roads to get there, they're republicans

Commissioner Mendiola: oh yeah, I'm not saying they're not but northern California's got the same problem, northern Nevada's got the same problem, eastern Idaho's got the same problem. They're not happy with what's going on in Boise so

Paul Skeen: no you're right, no you're absolutely right

Commissioner Mendiola: it goes right back to Illinois and Indiana I mean it's just two different worlds between the rural and the urban

Paul Skeen: well when you watch after the election and you look at the counties,

Commissioner Mendiola: a lot of red out there

Paul Skeen: boy, there's a lot of red out there. I will tell you, because I think this is pertinent to that. They dropped us, I don't remember the percentage, but the H-2A for the first time in ever, they actually dropped it down. I think it's almost \$2. Now, as I discuss that with my sons, I say, how do we do that? I had to pay them more than what I should have been paying them to begin with. In Idaho, this is probably pertinent to you, my H-2A workers were making as much as tractor drivers on the Idaho side and mine only irrigate. So, there's a discrepancy. I mean, we pay more for everything. And the amount of crap that they make us do; my wife's a full-time secretary to a minimal size, we only farm 1,500 acres. And she's at it this morning doing W-2s. So, I need you guys to help us.

Can I pick on you a little bit?

Commissioner Mendiola: That's what we're here for.

Paul Skeen: I'm really thankful that we're getting something done with the, I guess what I call, I don't even know what I want to call it, so I'm going to back up, the transload facility. But I don't hear anything from you guys. It's always him in the paper, you guys need to speak up. I mean that. I don't hear from you guys it's always him and people wonder, well is there a split? You guys need to speak up. You need to help us. This thing's been a debacle from day one; I feel so bad for you guys. We got caught in rampant inflation that killed the whole thing. That's just me speaking from the, and I'm friends with every one of you so I got to be careful what I say, but we need your help.

There's going to be some people, and you know who I worry about losing out? Young farmers that have never seen prices like this. I mean, land prices have quadrupled in 20 years. And that's not a good thing for me. I have written in my will; it could probably bust; they can never sell my ground. My kids can never sell the ground. Whether we can make that stick or not. The attorneys say I

can't. But you know, we've been here, my family came in 1945. And I'm meeting with the president of Amalgamated Sugar Company at 12:30. My dad started growing sugar beets in 1933 and my grandfather on my mother's side was, we've been growing sugar beets for a long long time and it's a travesty what's happening to the producers nationwide, but especially here.

Judge Joyce: Can you get the fix on the imports?

Paul Skeen: The reason that I'm meeting with this guy is to get him to go back to Washington, D.C. He's the largest sugar factory in the nation, Amalgamated Sugar Company. We don't own it by acres, but we own it by tonnage. If you follow what I'm saying. And he needs to be able to get back to Secretary Rollins. We got to shut imports off to zero.

Commissioner Mendiola: Imports from Mexico? Where's the imports coming from?

Paul Skeen: Mexico, Cuba. Let me tell you how they do that. They ship it. We don't take stuff from Cuba, so they send it to Mexico. We don't take stuff from Venezuela

Judge Joyce: goes to Mexico

Paul Skeen: we got to stop it all. Man, you guys are hearing the, I'm dumping the whole load of gravel on top of it, can you survive with a whole load of gravel

Commissioner Mendiola: I've been there before

Paul Skeen: I'm telling you that it isn't, it's all cane sugar that's coming in, there's no sugar beet sugar that coming in, I don't believe. There's a little tiny processor in Calgary, or just outside of Calgary. And it's a banana belt. They grow sweet corn, they got three, Simplot, Lamb Weston, and McCain's are all up there on potatoes. The American farmer always seems to get the government to use us as a whipping stick. And when I was telling you about the onion deal, so the shipper, he's not losing any money, he's getting his packing and the growers get nothing. That doesn't work for very long. I'm telling you, I'm telling you that we're on the cusp of seeing some major changes. Again, it's not going to be a people that's our age, but these young people that haven't seen what it's like to not have prices go up or not make any money. Cattle, we're probably pretty good in Malheur county with cattle.

Judge Joyce: What goes up comes down.

Paul Skeen: What goes up comes down. And as Doug Maag told me a couple of days ago, oh, everything I'm buying right now is real high.

Judge Joyce: Oh boy. Super high.

Paul Skeen: Any other questions? I appreciate everything you do. I picked on you guys a little bit because you need to work as a unit, in my opinion.

Judge Joyce: And you don't know that we don't.

Paul Skeen: I don't know that you don't, but in the paper, you only see him. You guys need to be standing behind.

Judge Joyce: We each have one vote and it's unanimous.

Paul Skeen: Tell that to the paper.

Judge Joyce: They know the rules. And they take us to court on it too.

Paul Skeen: He doesn't like what I'm telling him.

Commissioner Mendiola: Ron's taking the lead off that whole thing. We're just making sure we're following him. We're 110% behind him. We're just not in the limelight like they're trying to make Ron.

Judge Joyce: Yes

Paul Skeen: All I'm saying is, you just see one, not the three.

Judge Joyce: This is the first time you've asked.

Paul Skeen: Oh, I've wanted to ask for a long time. Last year, I wasn't here for a while because I went through some health issues. But I think I'm doing better. I don't remember stuff for a while.

Judge Joyce: You're doing really well today.

Paul Skeen: Brother Pike, I didn't recognize him. My fault. Okay. Again, I appreciate everything you're doing. I hope Mike's heard all of this. I think we got to chase this cat a little different way. And I think they originally talked about doing that eastern, the eastern land on the east side of the Snake River. I mean, why that was never done right to begin with. They just drew the straight line, and then at me, they decided to make the curves.

Judge Joyce: That's before you got there.

Paul Skeen: It was before I got there. You are absolutely right, Judge. Any comments from you guys?

Unknown: No, but sure appreciate you.

Charles Pike: Yes, you being a farmer you feed us, we recognize that. I'm wondering, the only question I have is our government now is Donald Trump (inaudible) I'm wondering if that's helping you any?

Paul Skeen: The government handout?

Charles Pike: No. the government is changing some way, the Venezuelan thing and stuff like this, is he going to help you? The President?

Paul Skeen: I don't know. This government bailout, the \$11 billion bailout. I will get, I even looked it up, it's \$39 an acre and I grow six different crops and the only crop that it works on is wheat, so I'm going to get \$6,000. I don't think that's going to bridge much. I don't want any welfare from the government. I want to just be able to compete. And we can compete against anybody. Bananas, yeah, they've got to bring them in. Avocados, yeah, they've got to bring them in. What else is out there that they have to bring in?

Commissioner Mendiola: Coffee beans.

Paul Skeen: Coffee, you're right. Although there's a big one in Kauai, pretty good size, it's the largest one in the United States, but it's probably the only one. Thank you.

Mike McCarter: I appreciate the comments I'm listening to here. I just looked up the financial situation of Idaho. Not that I disagree with the figures that we're talking about, but, and if we can believe what you see on the internet. In June 30th of 2025, Idaho had a surplus of \$345 million. In looking forward into the current fiscal year, they project a deficit of \$58 million. And then into fiscal year 2027, \$600 million deficit. So, they're having their issues over on that side of the border to with it. They tend to blame tax cuts and federal tax conformity. However, that, whatever they figure that out, anyway, they're fighting some physical cash issues too so it's not just on our side of the hill. So, I wanted to make sure that was clear.

There were no further comments from the meeting participants. Judge Joyce thanked those present for attending.

Commissioner Mendiola moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously.