

MALHEUR COUNTY COURT MINUTES
January 14, 2026

The regularly scheduled 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. Members of the media, public and staff had the opportunity to join the meeting electronically or in person. Present in the meeting room were Administrative Officer Lorinda DuBois, Economic and Community Development Coordinator Taylor Rembowski, Malheur Education Service District Superintendent Mark Redmond, and Vale School District Superintendent Alicia McBride. Notice of the meeting was posted on the County website, Courthouse bulletin board, and emailed to the Argus Observer and those persons who have requested notice. The agenda is recorded as instrument # 2026-0259

AUDIT

John Russell of Zwygart John & Associates, Certified Public Accountants, met with the Court and reviewed the County's Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Audit. Zwygart John & Associates audited the modified cash basis financial statements of the government activities, the business-type activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of Malheur County for the year ended June 30, 2025, and the related notes to the financial statements. The CVSO (County Veterans Service Officer) Expansion Fund had a deficit fund balance as of June 30, 2025 (due to the timing of when the State funds are received by the County); and the County had one budget increase over 10% with no public hearing. PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) is no longer included on the schedule of expenditures of federal awards as those funds are not subject to a Single Audit. The audit will be placed on the County website and is recorded as instrument # 2026-0260

UPDATE ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Malheur Education Service District (ESD) Superintendent Mark Redmond and Vale School District Superintendent Alisha McBride met with the Court and provided an update on school attendance. Mr. Redmond shared a report created by the State regarding attendance data for students in the Malheur ESD region. Out of 19 ESD regions in the state, the Malheur ESD region had the best attendance. The data shows there has been an increase in attendance rates in multiple school districts in the county; there are a number of factors that can be contributed to the increased attendance including school teachers, principals, and superintendents; community partners; students and parents; and the countywide truancy ordinance.

Ms. McBride shared a report created by an outside party who is analyzing school attendance data throughout the state of Oregon. The report provides an analysis of current year data and trends over time. From the 2022-23 school year to the 2024-25 school year, as a district, Vale School District has increased from 72% regular attendance to 86% regular attendance. The state average is 67%. Based on this independent analysis, Vale School District is the 7th highest attending school district in the state of Oregon. Across the districts in Malheur county there is a culture of attending school regularly.

See instrument # 2026-0268 for the written reports shared by Mr. Redmond and Ms. McBride.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

Planning Manager Kelsie Haueter met with the Court and presented names of persons interested in serving on the County Planning Commission. Commissioner Jacobs moved to appoint Jodi Westerberg, Dinah Lord, and Jeremiah Strohmeyer to the Malheur County Planning Commission. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. (These three individuals fill the positions previously held by Kathy Clarich, Teresa Ballard and John Faw.)

COURT MINUTES

Commissioner Mendiola moved to approve Court Minutes of January 7, 2026 as written. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AUDIT

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve the County's audit for the year ended June 30, 2025. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Jacobs expressed appreciation to Ms. DuBois for her efforts with the audit and County budget.

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS IGA

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve 2026-2027 Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the Financing of Community Mental Health Programs with Oregon Health Authority, Agreement #44300-00054296. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. A contract will be drafted with Lifeways Inc. for operation of the Community Mental Health Program (CMHP). The term of the IGA is January 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027. See instrument # 2026-0261 for IGA #44300-00054296

The County's 2026-2027 Local Plan and Budget approved by OHA (Oregon Health Authority) and referenced in IGA #44300-00054296 is recorded as instrument # 2026-0262

BULLY CREEK PARK CAMPING FEES

Commissioner Jacobs discussed potentially increasing fees at Bully Creek Park campground; fees have not been increased in many years. Staff did a comparison of rates for other campgrounds in the area. There is also the potential to offer internet in the campground. Consensus was for Commissioner Jacobs to work with staff to develop a proposed fee schedule for the 2026 park season. An opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed fees will be scheduled after the fee schedule is developed.

ROAD ACCEPTANCE

Commissioner Mendiola moved to accept road dedication of a portion of Fawn Road and a portion of Ridgeview Road on Chase and Madison Hansen's Partition Plat. (Michael Pendergrass Border Region Housing (BRH) action) See instrument # 2026-0330 for the Partition Plat and instrument # 2026-0269 for the written statement prepared by County Surveyor Derrick McKrola.

ADDENDUM – LEASE & OPERATING AGREEMENT

County Counsel Stephanie Williams requested authorization for Judge Joyce to sign an addendum to the Lease and Operating Agreement between Wyoming Colorado Railroad, Malheur County Development Corporation (MCDC) and Malheur County. The addendum is needed to provide clarification on disbursement of funds at closing (\$100,000 deposit currently held in escrow). Commissioner Jacobs moved to authorize Judge Joyce to sign an addendum to the Lease and Operating Agreement between Wyoming Colorado Railroad, Malheur County Development Corporation and Malheur County. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Judge Joyce asked for comments from the public; no public comments were received.

COURT ADJOURNMENT

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