

**MALHEUR COUNTY COURT MINUTES**  
**February 18, 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. Judge Joyce led the Pledge of Allegiance. 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 and Economic and Community Development Coordinator Taylor Rembowski. 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 # 2026-0597

**PUBLIC HEARING – BULLY CREEK PARK FEES**

Judge Joyce opened the public hearing to consider increasing camping and other fees at Bully Creek Park. Notice of the hearing was published in the Argus Observer on February 4, 2026. Commissioner Jacobs explained that numerous meetings with staff have been held regarding increasing the fees at Bully Creek Park to assist with the cost of operations and maintenance of the Park. Fees have not been increased since 2008. It is proposed to increase the overnight camping fee to \$25.00 per camp site (includes sanitary dumping and electricity), and each additional tent will be \$10.00; and the RV sanitary dumping fee to \$15.00 for non-overnight guests. An online reservation system will be implemented and fees associated with this service will be paid by overnight campers using the Park.

Judge Joyce asked for public comments. Ms. DuBois commented that the proposed rates put the Park more in line with similar facilities in the area; and the fee the County pays to pump the dumping station averages \$750-\$1,000 a month.

There were no additional comments received; and no written comments were received.

The hearing was closed. Commissioner Mendiola moved to approve Resolution No. R26-06: In the Matter of: Resolution Enacting Fees: Overnight Camping, RV Sanitary Dumping and other Fees at Bully Creek Park. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Effective date of the fee change is March 1, 2026. See instrument # 2026-0598; affidavit of publication of hearing notice is instrument # 2026-0619

Vote: JM/RJ/DJ in favor. Approved.

It is hoped to start the irrigation project at the Park the first part of March; the materials have been purchased.

**UPDATE – PROJECT HOPE**

Lifeways CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Steve Jensen met with the Court and reviewed architectural drawings and floorplans of the Project Hope project. The Project Hope campus will

be located on Lifeways owned property behind West Park Plaza/Tractor Supply in Ontario. The campus will include a medical office facility, a substance use disorder residential facility, and a secure residential treatment facility. It is hoped to complete the project's engineering phase in March and hold a groundbreaking ceremony in April/May 2026; Mr. Jensen invited the Court members to attend the groundbreaking ceremony and requested Judge Joyce speak at the ceremony. This social services campus was designed as a "one-stop shop" for behavioral health services. See instrument # 2026-0599 for the PowerPoint.

Lifeways has received grant funding (\$25,000) to be used towards a mobile crises van; additional funding is needed as the cost for the mobile crises van project is approximately \$90,000.

### **MALHEUR WATERSHED COUNCIL**

Malheur Watershed Council Executive Director Ellie Hanson and Office Manager Jesse Prentiss met with the Court and gave an annual update. Also present was Malheur Watershed Council Board member Bill Buhrig and County Weed Inspector Amanda Zander. In the past year, Malheur Watershed Council has partnered with landowners, local businesses, BLM (Bureau of Land Management), NRCS (National Resources Conservation Service), SWCD (Soil & Water Conservation District), BOR (Bureau of Reclamation), OWRD (Oregon Water Resources Department), DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality), USFS, ODFW (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Burns Paiute Tribe, area irrigation districts, local contractors, Pheasants Forever, and Malheur County. Work accomplished with these partners in 2025 included:

- 145 acres converted from flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation
- Piped approximately 3,580 feet of ditches to prevent erosion
- 15,800 feet of lateral ditches piped
- Installed 900 feet of buck-and-pole fencing to protect riparian areas and aspen groves
- Improved 6 livestock watering systems to help with management on range systems
- Enhanced 2,718 linear feet of stream banks
- 833 acres of weeds were sprayed
- Installed vertical post structures as well as some berm removal

Approximately 27 grants were managed during the 2025 year; and currently there is roughly \$5,767,000 allocated towards ongoing projects with landowners committing to contribute an additional \$795,643. These projects directly contribute to the local economy and bring about positive change.

Key highlights of 2025 included: working with Vale Oregon Irrigation District on the Vale Lateral Pipeline Project; receiving 3 new grant awards in 2025; and working with the County Weed Department in weed treatment grants and efforts.

Ms. Hanson answered questions from the Court members. Mr. Buhrig expressed support for the efforts of Ms. Hanson and Ms. Prentiss. Ms. Zander expressed appreciation for the partnership with Malheur Watershed Council. See instrument # 2026-0600 for the written report.

### **CROSSING PERMITS**

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Crossing Permit #04-26 to CenturyLink/Crown Utilities to replace a cut cable on Greenfield Road #1009. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The original permit will be kept on file at the Road Department.

Vote: RJ/JM/DJ in favor. Approved.

### **COURT MINUTES**

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Court Minutes of February 11, 2026 as written. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Vote: RJ/JM/DJ in favor. Approved.

### **LETTER OF SUPPORT – CITY OF VALE**

Commissioner Jacobs moved to sign a letter of support for the Fiscal Year 2027 Community Initiated Project (CIP) Appropriations Request from the City of Vale for its Water System Improvement Project. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. See instrument #2026-0601

Vote: RJ/JM/DJ in favor. Approved.

### **ADDENDUM – LEASE & OPERATING AGREEMENT**

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Second Addendum to Lease and Operating Agreement between Wyoming Colorado Railroad, Inc., Malheur County Development Corporation and Malheur County, Oregon Effective December 29, 2025. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The addendum finalizes the terms and forms of the Purchase and Sale Agreement in Exhibit D.

Vote: RJ/JM/DJ in favor. Approved.

### **HELICOPTER USE PLAN**

The Court received the proposed Helicopter Use Plan for Idaho Power's Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (note: Appendix A of the Plan was not included). To meet the requirement outlined in Condition GEN-PS-01 of the Energy Facility Siting Council Site Certificate, the certificate holder must submit to each affected county planning department the proposed plan; any comments need returned within 30 days. Planning Manager Kelsie Haueter inquired if the Court had any comments on the proposed plan. The Court requested that good advanced public notice of the helicopter activities be provided to include time periods and locations. Ms. Haueter will relay the Court's comments to the project manager. See instrument # 2026-0602

### **CONTRACT – LIFEWAYS**

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Personal Service Contract between Lifeways, Inc. and Malheur County Oregon for the Operation and Financing of Community Mental Health Programs Pursuant to Intergovernmental Agreement PO-44300-00054296 between Malheur County and State of Oregon. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. See instrument # 2026-0596

Vote: RJ/JM/DJ in favor. Approved.

### **IGA - TORT LIABILITY COVERAGE AS PROVIDER FOR PSRB**

Commissioner Mendiola moved to approve Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) # 44300-00057237 Tort Liability Coverage as a Provider for Psychiatric Security Review Board (PSRB); and Amendment No. 1 to County Contract No. 2026-0596 between Malheur County and Lifeways Inc. (2026-2027 PSRB Liability, 3rd Party Amendment). Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously. See instrument # 2026-0614

Vote: JM/RJ/DJ in favor. Approved.

### **FAIR BOARD**

Commissioner Jacobs moved to appoint Cody Franklin and Dave Tiffany to the Fair Board, as recommended by the Fair Board. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Cody Franklin and Dave Tiffany have been serving on the Fair Advisory Board. Cody Franklin will fill the position previously held by Leanna Elguezabal; and Dave Tiffany will fill the position previously held by Helen Thomas.

Vote: RJ/JM/DJ in favor. Approved.

### **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.

Vote: JM/RJ/DJ in favor. Approved.