

MALHEUR COUNTY COURT MINUTES

March 25, 2026

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Court was called to order by Judge Dan Joyce at approximately 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. Also present were participants of the Ontario Area Chamber Networking & Leadership Program. 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 # 2026-1001

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Jon Legarza with Healthy Sustainable Communities (HSC) met with the Court and gave a presentation on Opportunity Zones (OZ) 2.0. Nominations for the OZ will open around July 1st (governors nominate). OZ 2.0 is looking to drive opportunity zones designations in rural areas. Malheur County has 3 eligible census tracts. The Opportunity Zones is a federal tax incentive to direct private investment into designated tax areas. Most rural counties in Oregon missed out on the OZ 1.0 opportunity as the majority of capital was concentrated in urban metro tracts. OZ 2.0 will be a permanent program with new designations every 10 years under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act; and investors in rural zones will receive a tax basis reduction of 30%. It will still be a competitive process. The Federal government designates the eligible tracts based on income and poverty levels. Counties and cities apply to nominate their tracts through Business Oregon. The Governor selects up to 25% of eligible tracts and submits them to the federal government. Treasury certifies the designations and new zones go live January 2027. Private investors then start looking for areas where they can invest that are qualified for opportunity zones; and there are additional tax benefits for rural investments. After which, the community gets a project – could be housing, commercial, industrial or infrastructure. Business Oregon is overseeing the nomination process and will submit recommendations to the Governor. The strongest eligible areas to consider might have development-ready land, existing infrastructure capacity, strong community support, and identifiable future projects and sites. Tracts that have other county or city incentives are more attractive to investors. Mr. Rembowski will work further with Mr. Legarza regarding the application process through Business Oregon. See instrument # 2026-1002 for the PowerPoint presentation.

AGREEMENT – CLARIFY CONSULTING LLC

Mr. Rembowski explained that the County received a planning grant from the Eastern Oregon Border Board for a feasibility study for converting drip tape into diesel (using current Oregon State University research); and for a drone feasibility study. Mr. Rembowski presented an agreement with Clarify Consulting for an UAS/UAV feasibility study for the Court's consideration. The County is evaluating whether participation in the expanding Pendleton UAS Range ecosystem can generate sustainable economic benefit. Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Consulting

Services Agreement with Clarify Consulting LLC (Limited Liability Company). Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. See instrument # 2026-1129

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

Mr. Rembowski left the meeting.

LEADERSHIP GROUP

The Leadership Group participants introduced themselves. The Court members briefly gave an overview of their positions and answered questions from the Ontario Area Chamber Networking & Leadership Program participants.

The Leadership Program participants left the meeting.

CROSSING PERMITS

Commissioner Mendiola moved to approve the following Crossing Permits: Permit #13-26 to Idaho Power to install a pole and overhead transformer on Holly Road #1022; Permit #14-26 to JA Miller Utility for Cable One for work on Vista Drive #977; Permit #15-26 to Farmers Mutual Telephone Company (FMTC) for work on Alameda Drive #863; Permit #16-26 to Farmers Mutual Telephone Company for work on Arcadia Blvd. #928; and Permit #17-26 to Farmers Mutual Telephone Company for work on SW 18th Avenue #887. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Original permits will be kept on file at the Road Department.

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

COURT MINUTES

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Court Minutes of March 18, 2026 as written. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

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

SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET RESOLUTION

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Supplemental Budget Resolution R26-11: In the Matter of Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Supplemental Budget by Resolution Under Local Budget Law ORS 294.471. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The purpose of the supplemental budget is to allocate CIS (City/County Insurance Services) Risk Incentive grant funds in the Information Services budget that were not anticipated when the budget was adopted – these funds will be used to install access controls to the Courthouse basement door to improve security. See instrument # 2026-1003

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Judge Joyce asked for comments from the public. No public comments were received.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was called in accordance with ORS 192.660(2)(a) to consider employment of public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent with Judge Joyce presiding and Commissioner Jacobs and Commissioner Mendiola present. Also present were Assessor Chris Russell, Administrative Officer Lorinda DuBois and Duran Villegas.

Duran Villegas left the Executive Session.

Aaron Fishman joined the Executive Session.

Aaron Fishman left the Executive Session. No decisions were made during the session.

PLANNING DIRECTOR VACANCY

Commissioner Mendiola moved to authorize Ms. DuBois to make a conditional offer of employment for the Planning Director position to the interview committee's number one candidate. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

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

COURT ADJOURNMENT

Judge Joyce adjourned the meeting.

** Oregon Department of Emergency Management Emergency Management Performance Grant Program Grant Agreement Number 25-22 recorded as instrument #2026-0992. Expires June 30, 2026