

MALHEUR COUNTY COURT MINUTES
December 10, 2025

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Court was called to order by Judge Dan Joyce at 9:02 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 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 # 2025-3962

UPDATE - PROJECT HOPE

Lifeways CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Steve Jensen met with the Court and gave an update on Project Hope. Project Hope is a proposal to develop a social services and medical campus in Ontario (the initiative was started in January 2024). Funding for the project has been secured and architectural plans have been received (additional funding may be needed due to increased building costs). The campus is designed as a “one-stop shop” for behavioral health services with the ability to bring multiple programs and community partners together in one location. Lifeways will expand its certifications to become a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC); and also plans to expand into non-medication type treatments to include TMS (Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation) therapy. The plan is to build three (3) additional buildings on the Sunset Drive campus (medical office building; urgent care walk-in center, crisis stabilization center, and 16-bed secure residential treatment facility to include an outdoor courtyard within the building itself (will accept individuals from the state hospital); and a substance use disorder facility (will replace the Lifeways Recovery Center across from the Fairgrounds). Groundbreaking may be April/May 2026.

Mr. Jensen also briefly reviewed the Local Mental Health Authority and Community Mental Health Program system. The federal government moved mental health services to the community under the Community Mental Health Act of 1963 and Malheur County Mental Health was started in 1964. Local Mental Health Authorities were established under the Community Mental Health Program Act in 1973. Malheur County transitioned the County Mental Health program into a nonprofit, Lifeways, in 1997 with 24 employees. In 2012, Oregon legislation established Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs).

The County as the Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) can provide its own services or contract with a third party to provide the services; Malheur County has contracted with Lifeways for nearly 30 years. The LMHA is responsible for establishing a Community Mental Health Program (CMHP) to deliver mandated “safety net” services. These safety net services include 24/7 crises services, jail diversion, assertive community treatment, aid and assist, civil commitment, and many more. The County contracts with Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for funding to provide the services.

The CCO for our area is Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO); EOCCO contracts with Oregon Health Authority to deliver Oregon Health Plan (OHP) benefits to Medicaid recipients. The County does not contract with EOCCO; the CCO's are not responsible for the delivery of the CMHP safety net services. EOCCO contracts with Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. (GOBHI) to oversee and manage behavioral health services for OHP members across the 12 counties in the EOCCO region. GOBHI contracts with Lifeways to serve as the in-network provider for behavioral health services, including substance use treatment.

GOBHI was founded in 1994 and began contracting with the State as a direct provider. GOBHI and Moda Health are co-owners of Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization. GOBHI contracts with the regional Community Mental Health Programs in the EOCCO region to deliver outpatient behavioral health services to OHP members and these CMHPs are considered in-network providers. GOBHI functions similarly to a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). OHP members who wish to receive services from an out-of-network provider must go through a pre-approval process with GOBHI. GOBHI/EOCCO recently announced that beginning January 1, 2026 it will require new routine Medicaid (OHP) outpatient mental health and substance use disorder services be received from an in-network provider. GOBHI and other CCO's are experiencing financial challenges and working to continue to provide services for everyone with available funding. Lifeways also contracts with TFP to provide services; Valley Family Health Care can provide mental health services to OHP members; and telehealth services are available through the other in-network providers in the EOCCO region.

Mr. Jensen answered questions from the Court members. See instrument # 2025-3970 for the Project Hope executive summary handout; and miscellaneous CMHP handouts.

OWYHEE BASIN STEWARDSHIP COALITION (OBSC)

OBSC members Tom McElroy, Lynn Findley and Ken Davis met with the Court and explained that OBSC is in support of Congressman Bentz's Oregon Wilderness and Community Protection Act legislation. Mr. Findley explained that Congressman Bentz's legislation mirrors a lot of the legislation proposed by Senator Wyden. OBSC requested that the County Court also support Congressman Bentz's legislation. The bill contains close to one million acres of wilderness and contains a lot of existing roads, including cherry stems and historic use roads that will allow for all uses; and also releases approximately one million acres of current wilderness study area. OBSC feels the bill is a good compromise. Commissioner Jacobs expressed a need to protect the County roads and Mr. Findley assured him that the bill does. Commissioner Mendiola moved to submit a letter of support to Congressman Bentz. Judge Joyce requested OBSC draft a proposed letter of support, and seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

COURT MINUTES

Commissioner Mendiola moved to approve Court Minutes of December 3, 2025 as written. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET RESOLUTION

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Resolution R25-33: In the Matter of Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Supplemental Budget by Resolution Under Local Budget Law ORS (Oregon Revised Statutes) 294.471. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The purpose of the supplemental budget is to allocate public donation funds in the Sheriff's budget that were not anticipated when the budget was adopted – these funds will be passed to charitable organizations selected by the Sheriff's Office; and to allocate holdover funds in the Jail budget from the Criminal Justice Commission for Jail-based Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (JMOUD) grant – these funds will be returned to the State; and to allocate USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Rural Business Development Grant funds in the Economic Development fund that were not anticipated when the budget was adopted – these funds will be used to evaluate and determine the Bioeconomy Development Opportunity (BDO) zone rating for Malheur County. See instrument # 2025-3963

IGA - OSU AND EXTENSION TAX SERVICE DISTRICT

The Court met as the Governing Body of the Malheur County Agricultural Educational Extension Service District. Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Intergovernmental Agreement between Oregon State University (OSU) and the Malheur County Agricultural Educational Extension Service District. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The Agreement expires June 30, 2030; the parties may extend the term of the agreement provided that the total term does not extend beyond 10 years. See instrument # 2025-3964

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was called by Judge Joyce in accordance with ORS 192.660(2)(e) to conduct deliberations with designee on real property transaction negotiations with Commissioner Jacobs and Commissioner Mendiola present. Also present were Economic and Community Development Coordinator Taylor Rembowski, County Counsel Stephanie Williams and Administrative Officer Lorinda DuBois. No decisions were made during or following the session.

DRAFT TRANSITION AGREEMENT - MCDC

Ms. Williams reviewed a draft transition agreement with Malheur County Development Corporation (MCDC) with the Court. A few changes were made to the draft agreement since the last review with the Court. It is now proposed to enter into a lease and operating agreement with an option to purchase with Wyoming Colorado Railroad (Jaguar Transport Holdings (JTH)); proceeds will be in a special fund in the County budget; and an indemnification provision was added.

DRAFT IGA WITH CITY OF ONTARIO FOR FLOODPLAIN ADMINISTRATION

Ms. Williams reviewed a draft agreement with City of Ontario for floodplain administration. Current County staff has assumed the responsibilities of floodplain administration as the County has not had a Planning Director; and contracting with an outside firm is not working very well. The City's current planning director is the City's Floodplain Administrator (not a CFM) and is also familiar with Malheur County. City staff indicated it would be willing to contract with the

County for floodplain administration while the County's Planning Director position is vacant (to include the cities of Adrian and Jordan Valley as the County is also the Floodplain Administrator for those cities). The current County Planning Manager is taking floodplain courses; there is no Oregon requirement that the Administrator be a Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM); but it is recommended that the Administrator have a couple of years' experience. The City has proposed a rate of \$75 per hour; and associated costs plus ten percent (contingent upon approval by Ontario City Council). Jordan Valley school district has an upcoming project that is in the floodplain; the fee the County receives for a floodplain development permit will not cover the cost of Ontario processing the permit. The County can terminate its contracts with Jordan Valley and Adrian with 90-days' notice. Building Official Adele Schaffeld has been performing floodplain administrator duties for the County and expressed support for contracting with Ontario. Commissioner Jacobs expressed appreciation for Ms. Schaffeld acting as the floodplain administrator while the County has not had a Planning Director.

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.