

**MALHEUR COUNTY COURT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Pursuant to Initiative Measure No. 23-64**  
**January 10, 2022**

A Special Meeting of the County Court was called to order by Judge Dan Joyce at 9:00 a.m. with Commissioner Ron Jacobs present. Commissioner Don Hodge was absent. The Special Meeting was held pursuant to Initiative Measure No. 23-64 to discuss how to promote the interests of Malheur County in any negotiations regarding the relocation of the Oregon-Idaho border. Present in the meeting room were public members Margaret (Margie) Williams, Blu Fortner, and John Messick. Present electronically were various members of the public and members of the media including but not limited to: Jim Mosier, Bob Wheatley, Brent Grasty, Jim Maret, Betty Holcomb, Stuart Reitz, Mike McCarter from Citizens for Greater Idaho, Steve Grasty, Leslie Thompson of the Argus Observer, and Pat Caldwell of the Malheur Enterprise. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the Argus Observer and Malheur Enterprise and posted on the Courthouse bulletin board and County website. The meeting was audio recorded. The agenda is recorded as instrument # 2022-0197

Judge Joyce opened the meeting and noted that written comments were submitted by Gary and Denise O'Daniels of Klamath Falls, and by Brent Grasty of Vale. See instrument # 2022-0198 and 2022-0199 for the complete written comments.

Judge Joyce called on Brent Grasty for oral comments.

Brent Grasty: I submitted another letter to the conversation, and just to raise some points about that, but I'll just direct this to the Court, and maybe it's more about questions of how the process works than it is about anything else. So, my main concern is that we're going to spend a lot of time on this subject, with recognizing the challenges that are associated with it, with your time and others, I think would be better spent on more pressing issues. And, what I asked for last time is that the Court keep track of the time that's involved on this, but I think it's fair that we share that with the County and keep them posted on that. This could be a long-term conversation, or it might run out of steam, so I'd just like to reiterate that. And then here's my question Dan, the ballot measure is completely open-ended; I'm sure you all deal with measures like this that kind of don't have an end point, or a conclusion, or a point where the voter's response to the question has been addressed. So, it was an off-cycle election, I did a quick little bit of checking, and about 34% of the registered voters in the County turned out, and just barely 54% of those voted in favor of this discussion. One thing that Mr. McCarter said repeatedly, well two things, one is, his real point is to have the conversation – I think that's completely fair. The second point was that we don't have all the details worked out. If at the end of one cycle, one year, has the Court met its obligation to discuss this idea and then return it back to the proponents to go that next step and put the details together, share that out with the County and multiple counties for that matter. And they've got to go through it again. How does it work for the Court to say, okay, we've done what the voter's asked us to do?

Judge Joyce: The way I understood it was this morning, this goes on forever or until we join Idaho. Unless there's a change between now and then.

Brent Grasty: So, there's no end to this? We don't have a benchmark, we've had the discussion, we just keep rolling on. Does the Court have any authority to say, okay, and I'm sure it has to be through an open forum, but two years out, five years out? This is an old issue, especially in the southwestern part of the state, you know the State of Jefferson whole issue, so is that what the Court's obligation is three times a year for infinity?

Judge Joyce: The voters are the only ones that could repeal it.

Brent Grasty: So, another initiative has to start and get on the ballot from any side and that's the only way for this to reach a conclusion?

Judge Joyce: That's the way I understand it.

Brent Grasty: Okay, alright. I'd like to suggest that, the conversation's fine, you guys are doing exactly what you ought to be doing, the voters, even though it was a minority of registered voters on a, you know, kind of when the voters aren't very focused on a lot of issues, especially more than just local issues. You can see where I'm going on this. I assume, that the proponents are trying to put together a list of those questions that need to be answered, but that list is exhaustive and I don't know how prepared, given that Mr. McCarter didn't know how the process works and couldn't speak to it last time. I'm sure he's cleaned that up a bit, but, as it stands right now, the way I see it is three states are involved, three state legislatures have to approve it, each of the, I guess, each of the counties say we're in or we're out and another election has to happen locally and then Congress has to approve it. But what we're talking about here, and the article in the paper yesterday, it kind of focused in on a couple of really local issues, but what happens with your water rights you guys? Maybe Ron you could address that but it seems to me like we're under the state of Oregon water rights. The water rights go back to no priority if we shift to Idaho? What happens with fish and wildlife? The two states have different perspectives on that. Is every statute or OAR, administrative rule, does that get reviewed and revised and refreshed? Land use planning? We just went through a phase eight years ago where the Boardman to Hemingway proposal was to go on, their only alternatives were to go across farmland on one side of the Butte or another. Land use planning stops us. We locals use our existing land use planning to keep that from going right by the County symbol. This list is extensive, I'll stop rambling, but I just feel like somehow there needs to be a, when has the Court addressed all the issues that were in the measure? I guess I'll just back off and if you have any questions I'm happy to speak to them, but thanks for the time you guys.

Commissioner Jacobs: Well Brent, I know that that list is really a long list and there would have to be a lot of things to be considered. I think all the things you mentioned plus a lot more that are going to have to be considered. I don't know how we're going to specifically address that as a Court, partly because we're just more or less facilitating this and allowing people to speak for now. We're just going to have to check into it more and see what our next step would be.

Bob Wheatley: My name is Bob Wheatley and I'm a lifelong resident of Malheur County. I would just like to make a couple of comments in regards to what's been said. I understand that there is a long way to go and a lot of questions to answer. One proposal that I would put forward, not only to help move things along but to simplify things for the County Court and commissioners and not spending unduly time on this one issue, and I would suggest some consideration of forming a committee of residents in Malheur County to come together and address and try to answer the questions that have been raised so that we can provide this information to the Court and not rely on them to do all of the legwork. This is a grassroots movement, it is the voters of Malheur County and the other counties who have voted on this issue, that they would like to see this move forward. I noticed that Mr. Grasty mentioned that in the election there was a 34% turnout, I don't follow those kinds of things myself, but I would be interested to know if anyone knows what is an average turnout in Malheur County for an election? Is that unduly low or is that pretty close to average? I was involved in gathering signatures to get this issue on the ballot, talked to many of the people throughout Malheur County, and that's the whole County (inaudible) and the vast majority of the people that we talked to were interested in pursuing this and basically said that they're unhappy with the representation that they are receiving. There are a number of other issues and concerns and one that greatly concerns me is the impact that the laws that are being passed by the governor and legislature in the state on the farmers and ranchers in Malheur County. If some of the issues continue to go forward, like the carbon tax, I've had a number of farmers and ranchers tell me that they will not be able to continue to be in business. Whether they move out of the state, that may be an option if they can find the land that they need, but I wonder why the people on the western side of the state should be able to dictate to me in the eastern part of the state (inaudible). Our representation, population wise, as you all know, is minimal compared to what is happening on the western side of the state. We have different views, different issues. We're not content with how those issues are being met at the present time. That's all I have right at this moment.

Commissioner Jacobs: I might just address the committee issue. Until we see a lot of support for this, I don't think the County is willing to organize a committee. You mentioned that this was a grassroots effort and I think that if there's a committee that wants to be formed, it's going to have to start there. That's kind of where we stand here as the Court.

Judge Joyce: And they would operate under different rules than the Court does too; that's really important too.

Bob Wheatley: Mr. Commissioner, I guess my question is that the voters have already spoken by voting to see this initiative move forward. They have asked you, the Court, to move the issue forward. And my question is, I don't see how you can do that without some help. Whatever guidelines you feel that would be responsible and workable, would certainly be worth looking at. Those of us who have been involved in the movement in Malheur County would be happy to form a committee. It seems to be that we should be answering your questions and helping you, that's what our intention, or at least in my point of view, the intention should be, not be a separate committee from the Court, it should be responding to you and helping you.

Blu Fortner: I'd like to address that Mr. Wheatley. I definitely am a believer. This was going to be my last bullet point, but the grassroots effort was a disingenuous campaign made to drum up artificial consent and support for exactly what you're talking about. We're doing exactly, literally, the wording of the petition by sitting here and meeting and the fact that this group is implying that the County now wants to secede into Idaho as the result of that vote is proof that you guys worded it specifically to try to trick a bunch of people and be disingenuous with your intentions. The intentions are being met. And this is as much support as the County has. I'm an Idaho refugee, so I came just to state my reasons for being opposed to this idea and measure. In education, Idaho ranks 51% in the nation, they're lowest below even Washington DC. You think our kids don't deserve a good future and opportunities and education, that's crazy. Sales tax, we recently just voted down a 1% sales tax in Ontario about three years ago. And we used very clear wording on our ballot petition measure so that everyone knew exactly what our end result was going to be and voted on what they wanted and we said no sales tax there. I feel like the County is going to feel the same way because sales tax is regressive, meaning it affects poor people worse than the wealthy. Health care in Idaho is abysmal. I'm on the Oregon Health Plan, which I wouldn't receive if I was an Idaho resident. The labor laws and the minimum wage and the right to work is like the right to oppress people; the Federal minimum wage at \$7.25 won't allow anyone housing anywhere in the nation working less than 80 hours a week. I know we need to work on our land use laws a little bit but if we switched to Idaho's model we would lose a lot of very important farmland. We have assets that Idaho can't afford like the prison and the PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) debt; that's a cost to Idaho that'll never ever be met, so there's no reason to be talking about this whole measure at all. State employees guaranteed to lose jobs because Idaho spends less on its government. I'm going to close with a quote from Representative Judy Boyle, Republican from Midvale, she said, "if people don't like it they can just move". You guys should think about that.

Bob Wheatley: I think the whole issue is well pointed out that there are a lot of questions to be answered. There are obviously people on both sides of the issue, but I would say that, in our work to get the petition signatures to get this on the ballot, I and other people throughout Malheur County spoke to well over 1000 residents who were very much in favor of looking into this issue. My point is the voters have spoken, they have said that they would like to see this movement addressed, moved forward. I totally agree with you there are lots of questions to be answered; the best way to answer that, I have just put forth one proposal but that doesn't mean that's the answer. We who support the issue would be happy to work with the Court in a way that you would see would make sense and be workable. The only other thing that I would say at this time is that the argument that has been put forth that there are other ways to address the issue. This issue has been going on for at least 20 years that I know of and am aware of problems existing between Eastern Oregon and Western Oregon if you will, in the legislature and the citizens. I am open certainly to negotiate. I'm a lifelong Oregonian and would be more than happy to remain an Oregonian. At this particular time, I see more issues that I agree with, with the people who live in Idaho than I do with who live in Oregon, and that is why I am supporting this issue and why I want to be involved in the discussion.

Jim Mosier: I want to point out that this is not, by any means, the first time this issue has been dealt with, and that's the issue of the rural eastern Oregon counties having to compete with the more metro counties of the Willamette Valley. And we dealt with that, not in its entirety, but back in the early 80's the juvenile justice system, of which Malheur County was part of and I was part of, we created the Central and Eastern Oregon Juvenile Justice Consortium, which was a consortium of 17 rural counties east of the Cascades, that was able to actively compete with the metro counties in the state of Oregon for resources for juvenile justice services. That organization still exists and competes regularly now, in order to get a fair shake in eastern Oregon for the kids involved with the juvenile justice system. We did it by dealing with the politic within our own state. And that is really, in my opinion, an important process for us to work through the politics of our own state, and it can be done. I know it can be done because I was involved in the process that did it. I worry about encumbering the state of Idaho with the social issues that we have in the state of Oregon. I worry for the people of the state of Idaho; they are certainly not in the same place we are. And that boundary is long established. I also worry for the fact that in order to accomplish this border change, it involves the border of two states, Oregon and Idaho, and that's not just an interstate issue, that's a federal issue. So, the politics have just been intrigued at least by three times in order to get this accomplished. So, we really need to think carefully if we want to step into that pool, because the water's deep, the current is swift. I think that that can be accomplished within the politics of our own state, and we can deal within ourselves to reach agreements that need to be made in order to protect the interests of everybody in the state. Thanks for the opportunity.

Mike McCarter: This is Mike McCarter, President of Greater Idaho. The time change between Mountain and Pacific grabbed me just a little bit there so I apologize for coming in late. The bottom line in this whole issue – there is a tremendous amount of frustration in rural Oregon about the leadership and the direction that Oregon has taken. And it has gone downhill. I'm a born and raised Oregonian too. I've been around the politics end of things and watched what's happened. I'm not saying that we should give up necessarily on trying to get our voice heard in the Oregon leadership and legislature, but it hasn't worked over the last 20 years. And to think that we can just sit and just let it continue to ride; we've got to speak out and do something about it. Now eight counties have voted on this particular issue, and by far, the vote is getting more and more positive to start looking into this process. Malheur County voted for it; all the way up to Lake County, which voted 74% in favor of looking into this process. Now you can debate on how many people voted and stuff like that, but the fact is of the voters it is coming across positive all the way across the board. This coming May, Douglas County and Klamath County will both be voting on the issue and we believe that it's going to be a similar result. This is a result of what's going on in Oregon's leadership. Now Malheur County's already voted to look into it. So, what do we do now? Senator Findley has offered to take this up to the legislature and we have more and more Oregon representatives and senators and Idaho legislators coming on board with this to start looking into the issue. Now we can try to answer all the questions about education and sales tax and marijuana and everything else like that, but we're not the decision makers. And Jim, you are correct that a compact has to come together between the two states, a committee, an agreement, and then it goes to the US Congress for approval. But borders between states are not cast in stone; they're arbitrary. The fact is that rural Oregon, our values are closer to the values of the folks in Idaho than they are

closer to Oregon's. Three-quarters of Oregon's population is in the Willamette Valley; they're controlling everything that's going on in this state. And they don't care to listen to rural Oregon. The representatives that I've talked to are as frustrated as the people are because their voice is not being heard. It's just not being heard. So, what do we do from here on? Do we just sit or do we look outside the box? Yes, this topic has been discussed for almost a hundred years, about the relationship with Idaho. But maybe the timing is right that a move like this take place to bring people of like values together. Now, is it advantage, disadvantage, to Idaho, to rural Oregon, we believe there's advantages and disadvantages to all sides to this. Is there going to be some downsides, sure. There's no Utopian state out there in the United States right now, but we're blessed to have a state like Idaho adjacent to us that has values of freedom, family, religion, independence, self-sufficiency, compared to what we're facing right now in Oregon. And the agenda is set in the Oregon legislature, they've got the power, they've got the plan, and they're going to continue plowing forward, with the Super Majority it doesn't matter what we say. So, every law that's passed over there that answers a question in the Portland area, a social program, things like this that are going on there, it may cure something in the Willamette Valley but it affects us at the same time. So, we're not willing to sit and wait, we want to speak out and the people of rural Oregon are speaking out with their vote with it, and that's all we ask. Start looking into the process. Let's get a committee in the Oregon legislature dealing with the committee and the Idaho legislature and start looking at these details. They're the decision makers and that's where the process has got to go.

Commissioner Jacobs: I appreciate you answering that question. That was my question, exactly what process it is for us to get all these questions answered and find out where all this would end up. Thank you.

John Messick: Dan, could you ask him when we voted on this move to Idaho, when did we vote on it? I thought we voted on having meetings. When did the general public say we want to move?

Commissioner Jacobs: That's what we voted on; we voted on...

John Messick: And I don't hear that anywhere in my discussion with people, I don't hear that, I haven't heard it and I voted but I see no need to have these meetings and force us to have them, is what it looks to me like is what we said, is hey let's have these meetings and we'll get this done. That's the way I see it.

Commissioner Jacobs: That is what we voted on as a County and so that's what we're doing now.

Blu Fortner: Not to do the process, just to talk about the process. It's disingenuous artificial support that they're trying to drum up based on their dishonest wording of their petition.

John Messick: I agree.

Mike McCarter: May I answer that question? Do you honestly believe that the people would not vote to have these meetings if they weren't interested in looking into the process?

Blu Fortner: Yes, I believe it was very dishonestly worded. Everyone is going to want to have conversations about what our economic interests are.

Mike McCarter: Agreed

Blu Fortner: So you know that you tricked people

Mike McCarter: If people were not interested in looking into the process of the positive potential of this why would they not vote in favor of it

Blu Fortner: Here we are looking at it and you have brought nothing but the option to sit here and do nothing as one of your alternatives, we're here talking about it and your alternatives are terrible.

(Staff checked with the County Clerk – the average voter turnout in Malheur County without General Elections is 34%; the average of the last 6 elections was 44.57% which included 2 General Elections.)

Bob Wheatley: Thank you. I just wanted to restate a comment I made earlier, an answer, somewhat of an answer to the gentleman regarding the people. As I stated before, when we were gathering signatures, and we covered all areas of Malheur County, not just Ontario, and the vast majority of the people that we spoke to that signed the petition, which I agree, was to get the petition on the ballot to look at this issue. But the vast majority of people, we visited with them and they were in favor of making the move. As I stated, that was approximately a thousand people that I personally am aware of that not only signed the petition but were in favor of the move. Whether or not the whole County in a vote would carry it, I believe they would, I believe we've already shown that, but if you want further evaluation let's canvas the County, let's talk to people, let's get ourselves together and work together. If the answer comes up no, I'd be fine with that. If the answer is yes, that the people want to move forward, let's move, let's move this forward, let's find out what we need to do, let's have some action on this issue, because this is what the voters of Malheur County have stated they want to see. Thank you.

Margaret Williams: I'm pretty much with Blu. Actually, I couldn't see the point of the whole thing, if there is reason to discuss this then we discuss it and if not why in the world are we mandated to discuss something, the vote seemed like a ridiculous thing to me.

Steve Grasty: I really am just listening, but I want to be clear about one thing I just heard, this is your County and your discussion, I get it, but as I think about Harney County, we've got some overlap, one of them is Senator Findley. Did I just hear that Senator Findley is in support of this and that he would move some action to the legislature?

Judge Joyce: What his comments were at our meeting was if someone brought something to him he would be in a position to move it forward. But he also made a comment that there was a quicker, faster way at the Nyssa meeting, and that was to try to institute a senator per county, so, I didn't disagree with him.

Steve Grasty: He's got my support on that, it's what we should've done and what we tried to do 20 years ago.

Judge Joyce: Right, there you go.

Steve Grasty: Judge, let me give a quick overview, from my perspective, which is a pretty tiny one in a pretty tiny county, or, at least pretty large but population wise, pretty tiny. To be a part of this state you've got to participate. Jim Mosier set the standard. We put together processes to compete with the urban and generally fairly successfully. In 18 years as the Harney County Judge, I drove to Salem more than 250 times, and dozens of times to Washington DC. We need two strong parties in our state, we don't have them anymore; we've got one and one that whines. That needs to end. We need the Republicans to step up and work aggressively on the other side of the state, get back to the middle of the road, set the examples, and we can compete with urban. We proved it. Judge Joyce, you were there with me at the same time I was, lots of overlap there and we got things done. That can still happen today, but spending all our time, resources, and focus on trying to do something that I can't figure out what the outcome is. When I talk to people in Idaho, they don't want us. You may find some that do; no county in Idaho is giving up their resources to give to Malheur or Harney County, I guarantee you that, they'll fight to the end of the day. And most concerning in this whole discussion is water rights, because I guarantee you, your neighbor's going to be in trying to get in line to get senior on the water rights; tomorrow, when it's no longer, you have no seniority. So, I don't know, we've got a long ways to go. I love the committee idea. I think it should be equally balanced in pros and cons and put these together. You're talking about a process to move and yet nobody talks about the process. What is the process? Let's get those things together. We can't answer these questions in these kinds of conversations; we can have a nice discussion and back and forth, but there's way too many questions that need to get answered. Good luck, I am happy to be retired.

Judge Joyce: Really appreciate your comments and enjoyed working with you all those years and from a small county you represented the whole state because you were the president of our association at one time so I wouldn't want to override the population issue.

Mike McCarter: Commissioners, I have a little input and in reply to the last comment there. There was a poll last year in Idaho, 51% of the people were in favor of looking into the process; about 35% against looking into the process; so, there is interest there with it. I agree, I'm a born and raised Oregonian, I haven't given up the fight, but I'm not going to put my eggs all in one basket either, hopefully trying to get this just legislature balanced back out because it hasn't gone that way. And again, one side has the control and as long as you have one side that's not willing to negotiate, then we have a problem, there's no compromise on anything, they're just going to drive through their agenda the way that they want it. Harney County voted 63% in favor of looking into the issues with it, of having starting the discussions. The process is, you've got to get it started in both legislatures to get them to come together and sit down and start looking at all the details of it. And at that point, if a compromise, if a compact can come up, then it goes back to the US Congress. If both states agree, there's no issues, should be no issues with the US Congress in allowing the change, because it doesn't change the number of senators in the United States, it might shift one US representative from one state to another, but it's still the same number. It's a possibility, but if

you don't try, if you don't try some of these things and wake people up, just like you're saying, wake the Republicans up, well everybody needs to wake up and start talking about things to see whether or not we can improve and change and balance out Oregon. I agree. I've gone back to Washington DC several times in agriculture and talking to them back there about it. They looked at the big picture, they looked at the national perspective there. We can look at our newest senators right now and see what's going on with this whole thing. It's March together in one-line type thing. We've got to get the discussion started. If it turns out wrong, we've tried, and we've done it the right way by going to the people of each county first to find out, do they want to start looking into it? Not just a statewide vote, okay let's move. That's not it. We want to find out what the county folks think about this. Do you want to start looking at an option that is out there, and so far, most of them have?

Brent Grasty: Hi Mike, this is Brent Grasty, help me out with something. You just discussed an Idaho poll and the process you're using but your website's not about Oregon and Idaho, it's about Oregon, Idaho, and California. So, what really is the approach here? We're not talking about two states, here are we? We're talking about three states and up to what, 17 counties, 20 counties? At least in your concept on your website. So, what's the proposal?

Mike McCarter: The proposal in the very beginning looked at the northeastern 5 or 6 northeastern California counties within the proposal because they are very wealthy counties that are fighting the same battle that rural Oregon is fighting, but the processed changed part of the way through things. This is a grassroots operation, a movement of people in rural Oregon, it is not a political organization. It is not supported by any political side or corporate support, and all we can deal with is Oregon and Idaho. Looking at the state constitutions, that's a minefield that is tough to get through at times. We're just dealing right now, Oregon, rural Oregon and Idaho, so that is approximately 19 full counties and 3 partial counties; the partials being Wasco, Jefferson, and Deschutes Counties, because the proposed border that we proposed on the eastern side is the Deschutes River, so it does divide up those three counties.

Brent Grasty: Okay, that's good to know.

Blu Fortner: So, the word is pronounced compromise, it's a real important word to learn about, because we are all going to have to make compromises and work together. But it sounds like what we've learned in this meeting is that the proponents are going to have to go back with a more accurate petition of what they actually want to do in order to form a committee. And the opponents sound like they have to take a measure to the ballot, to the petition process through the ballot, if they want these meetings to end. Am I correct about that at all?

Judge Joyce: I would say that's pretty close, pretty accurate.

Blu Fortner: So that pretty much sums up what we came here to learn today from both sides.

Mike McCarter: Going back to what can we do? What is the County process there in these meetings? The Secretary of State in the initiative petition process declared that we needed to pass some type of legislation within the county to even get on the ballot. There is no poll allowed or anything like that of what people think about something. You've got to pass a law there. We did

write it that way for these committee meetings, or for the commissioner meetings to take place. But the simple step right now, if the commissioners of a county and their people have voted in favor of looking into it, Senator Findley asked for a letter from commissioners from the counties about how their people felt about this to get it moved into an action step in the legislature. Because we can sit in these meetings and we can talk and discuss and complain or agree or disagree, or whatever, and it really doesn't make any difference. What makes a difference is what takes place in the legislature. So, if we want our, want that talk to move up, and I'm not saying move up in a positive way, I'm saying move up and open up the discussions there, then we need to let our state senator, Senator Findley in your particular case, and Representative Owens know that the people have voted in favor of it and would the legislature start talking about it?

Blu Fortner: I disagree. What he wants is for you to get a hold of Senator Findley to state the feelings of the residents and the way that you're going to determine the feelings of the residents is through these meetings. What they put on the ballot and what we're doing is actually accomplishing what we needed to accomplish. For you to get an understanding of where people stand on this to be able to communicate to others such as Senator Findley.

Brent Grasty: I just want to clarify something, as I understood it, at least in the paper, one commissioner in Grant County wanted our Senator to move it forward, the other two, at least as reported, were not in favor of that, at least as they were quoted as saying, but the commission as a whole, the court as a whole, said we're going to draft this letter. So Lynn took that letter, or, I don't know if he's been given it yet, but he said, it's not going to be on his list of the two topics that he can raise this year because that agenda has already been set. So, he's going to have the letter. I don't know what that means after that, but as far as I can tell, and I'm not sure who's talking there in your office Dan, but that makes total sense to me what he said. What you are doing, what we're doing, is exactly what was on the ballot, even though it was a small minority of the registered voters, and that's right, but if the Court's going to submit a letter, I mean, I hope you're planning on being upfront on what the Court's opinion is, let alone what the last speaker said about how are you going to determine what the sentiment of the County is, but you're going to have to take a stand. And I don't see that as your role either under this ballot measure or under, I don't know, maybe, at least without an election, another election, how you would move any recommendation for a letter forward.

Judge Joyce: And I don't disagree with that, I think what Bob and Mike have said is that we need some kind of a committee. Well there's some rules that go with committees when they're appointed and so, if Bob and Mike have volunteered to form the committee for these counties then I think that's the appropriate role, to bring that committee report to, aside from the vote, to the county courts or the county commissions.

Blu Fortner: Are either of them Malheur County residents?

Judge Joyce: No.

Blu Fortner: So, they don't have as much say as us actual residents do.

Judge Joyce: That's true, unless you want to be the chair of the committee.

Blu Fortner: I will if I have to Dan, but I don't want us to go to a committee; as a Malheur County resident it sounds like we need another petition and vote to get a committee together.

Judge Joyce: Well that's possible. But there's also some rules that go with that that you need to know about before you get into that and so that's probably not a discussion for this meeting.

Blu Fortner: They've got me on planning and zoning so I fall under those qualifications.

Bob Wheatley: Just as a clarification, yes, I am a resident of Malheur County, lifelong, born and raised, in Ontario, Oregon. I've been a businessman in Ontario, I am retired at this time. My interests are not only for the City of Ontario, Malheur County, but for the State of Oregon. But my grassroots feelings are for the people of rural Oregon, and I see it's a poor future if things stay the way they are. If there can be a movement, I totally like the idea of each county having one senator in the state legislature; I see that happening less likely than any other movement so far. I just have concerns for the people, the residents, the business people, the farmers and ranchers. Recently we saw what happened, a local Oregon corporation, Bi-Mart, I am a retired pharmacist, so I know where they're coming from. Bi-Mart got out of the pharmacy business because what the legislature in the state of Oregon, the measures they have passed, have taxed them out of business if you will, as far as pharmacy work. I know where they're coming from; I've seen this coming for 15 years, and I've seen the same thing happening to our farmers and ranchers. And this is a big concern to me. Without our farmers and ranchers, in Malheur County, we will not have Malheur County. We will be a County of desert and sagebrush and jackrabbits. And yeah, the people who are unhappy, then that's what will happen, because there won't be any people to save these people. That's the last comment; thank you.

Brent Grasty: I'm not sure if you allocated more than an hour for the call, but I just wanted to say thanks, I've got to run to another one. And Bob, your ideas, your concerns, are I think exactly what Steve and Jim raised about. I think there are ways that if we could get the momentum going and focus on working together to solve these many, many problems. It's not just rural – urban. It's about rural in general; this is the repeated story in probably all the states. But I just want to say, I just think we have better ideas than taking the time that this could take to, and I would say, I really respect, I think it was you Ron that said that the obligation of the Court is not, under that ballot measure, to do anything except host these meetings, as far as I can tell. So, I mean, backup the proponents. Somebody said it'd be nice to have a committee for each county, well I think that's important to note what the individual differences of the impacts of something like this might be, pro and con, but we're talking about a statewide thing here. State water law – that's not county. Land use planning – that's not county specific; there's implementation that's county specific. But this has got to be a two-pronged thing, and I think it's the proponent's responsibility. Mike, this is the second meeting where you've said, there's a lot of details to be worked out. So, work them out. Tell us what the process is, tell us what the issues are, not the poll, what's the statutes say? What's going to happen if we're not a part of this, of Oregon anymore? As far as I can tell this organizations existed for 2 or 3 years. What have you been doing? Besides just reaching out and getting ballot measure on the ticket. Come back next time with some details. Let's hear what

happens with water rights. Anyway, I just want to say thank you for the time and Dan, is the next meeting scheduled?

Judge Joyce: It's in May

(Staff announced the next meeting is the second Monday of May.)

There were no additional public comments. Judge Joyce adjourned the meeting.