

**MALHEUR COUNTY COURT MINUTES**  
**April 2, 2025**

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 Director Taylor Rembowski, and Lifeways CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Steve Jensen. Notice of the meeting was posted on the County website, Courthouse bulletin board and emailed to the Argus Observer, Malheur Enterprise and those persons who have requested notice. The meeting was audio recorded. The agenda is recorded as instrument # 2025-0922

**ALTRUISTIC RECOVERY AND INSIGHT COUNSELING & THERAPY**

Altruistic Recovery (Altruistic) Executive Director Annette Volk and Insight Counseling & Therapy (Insight Counseling) Executive Director Becky Wolery met with the Court. Ms. Volk and Ms. Wolery explained they were bringing a proposal to the Court regarding extending behavioral health contracts to more than just one provider (currently Lifeways). Support letters from the cities of Vale, Nyssa and Ontario were provided to the Court members. Ms. Volk and Ms. Wolery requested the County execute contracts with their entities for behavioral health services.

Commissioner Jacobs inquired what types of facilities Altruistic and Insight Counseling provide; both facilities are outpatient facilities providing a range of behavioral health services. Altruistic Recovery and Insight Counseling currently are able to provide services; however, they must obtain prior authorization through GOBHI (Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc) as they are out-of-network providers for Oregon Medicaid clients. This pre-authorization process is an administrative burden for Altruistic and Insight Counseling.

Commissioner Jacobs requested clarification on the contract referred to. Ms. Volk referred to a contract with GOBHI that provides funding in Malheur County that goes to Lifeways and the capitation funding.

Mr. Jensen was asked to provide further clarification. Mr. Jensen explained the two structures under the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) in which funding is distributed. OHA distributes funding to Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs); the CCO for our area is the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO) (12 counties); EOCCO contracts with Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc. (GOBHI) to oversee and manage the mental health benefit for OHP (Oregon Health Plan) members (Medicaid) enrolled in EOCCO. Outpatient behavioral health services are mostly funded through the CCO (managed by GOBHI in our county). GOBHI has chosen to contract with the CMHPs (considered in-network providers) to provide outpatient behavioral health services to Medicaid members in its 12-county region. GOBHI contracts with Lifeways to provide services as an in-network provider; and Lifeways contracts with TFP to be an in-network provider as well. Additionally, GOBHI uses a capitation system; GOBHI gives the in-

network provider a capitated payment and the provider is required to provide services to everyone within their region that walks through their door. The County does not contract with GOBHI. The out-of-network providers submit claims for payment to GOBHI and must go through the pre-authorization process. Ms. Wolery explained she has been seeking a contract with GOBHI for the last two years and has not been successful. GOBHI suggested Altruistic and Insight Counseling contract with Lifeways to be in-network providers. Altruistic and Insight Counseling want to contract with the County under the County's IGA (Intergovernmental Agreement) with OHA (Oregon Health Authority).

OHA also distributes funding to the Local Mental Health Authority (County) to provide the Community Mental Health Program (CMHP) (pursuant to ORS); the County can provide the services or contract with a third party to provide the services. The County has contracted with Lifeways to provide the CMHP requirements for nearly 30 years (these services are commonly referred to as Safety Net Services).

Mr. Jensen explained that Lifeways does need additional providers in the community and it is good for the community to have choice. The issue is how to work with GOBHI and EOCCO and network capacity. Ms. Wolery told the Court that they can influence GOBHI/EOCCO to make changes.

The Court thanked Ms. Wolery and Ms. Volk for the discussion and took the matter under advisement. See instrument # 2025-0923 for the support letters submitted.

### **RECYCLING MODERNIZATION ACT**

Waste Connections/Ontario Sanitary Service District Manager Travis Williams, Environmental Health Clerk Kelly Friend, and Environmental Health Specialist Evan Manger met with the Court. Under the Recycling Modernization Act, local governments can receive funding for eligible costs in five recycling program categories; the local government can elect to receive the funding directly or authorize its service providers to receive the funding directly. Ontario Sanitary Service is the service provider for recycling and will provide the programs under the Recycling Modernization Act. The funding is primarily for the area in the Ontario urban growth boundary due to population requirements. Commissioner Mendiola moved to authorize Ontario Sanitary Service to receive eligible compensation directly from the Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) for all program categories. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The local government funding authorization form will be completed and returned to Department of Environmental Quality by the April 15, 2025 deadline.

### **UPDATE - PROJECT HOPE**

Lifeways CEO Steve Jensen met with the Court regarding Project Hope. Part of Project Hope is construction of an inpatient substance use facility on property currently owned by the County (with Lifeways purchasing the property from the County). Mr. Jensen intended to bring a draft purchase and sale agreement for the Court's consideration today. However, it might now be possible to build the substance use facility on the same property that will house the secure residential facility and crisis stabilization center. Department of Justice (DOJ) has reviewed the requirements and came

to the conclusion that because the facilities are licensed differently, it may be possible to have both facilities on the same campus. It is hoped to have a final determination on the issue in the next few weeks; Mr. Jensen will keep the Court updated.

Mr. Jensen left the meeting.

### **COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS**

Lieutenant Jim St. Michell explained that a letter of support was needed from the County Court to be submitted with Community Corrections 2025-2027 Justice Reinvestment Program grant application. Community Corrections Justice Reinvestment Program seeks to reduce prison usage, hold offenders accountable, reduce recidivism and increase community safety. Commissioner Jacobs moved to sign a letter of support for the Justice Reinvestment Program grant. Commissioner Mendiola seconded and the motion passed unanimously. See instrument # 2025-0924

### **COURT MINUTES**

Commissioner Mendiola moved to approve Court Minutes of March 26, 2025 as written. Judge Joyce seconded and the motion passed. (Commissioner Jacobs abstained as he was not present on March 26, 2025.)

### **BUDGET TRANSFER RESOLUTION - AMBULANCE SERVICE DISTRICT**

The Court met as the governing body of the Ambulance Service District. Commissioner Mendiola moved to approve Resolution R25-11: In the Matter of Fund Transfers Under Local Budget Law ORS 294.463. Commissioner Jacobs seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Funds in the amount of \$8,500 are transferred from Payroll Costs to Disposable Medical Supplies. See instrument # 2025-0925

### **BULLY CREEK PARK**

Commissioner Jacobs explained that he met with Road Supervisor Dave Tiffany concerning Bully Creek Park and also has met with the Caretaker. A workplan for the park will be submitted by the Caretaker by April 10, 2025; after review of the plan a meeting will be held. The park opens April 15, 2025. Commissioner Mendiola expressed concern that the park does not appear to be near ready to open. Commissioner Mendiola noted he was aware of concerns in the community regarding Bully Creek Park and offered the following comments for the public: the park is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the reservoir is operated by Vale Oregon Irrigation; all improvements are approved by BOR through the Boise office; Malheur County has a maintenance agreement with BOR for the park; your comments have been received and the Court is looking for some options to fix the situation - some possible options may be to create a nonprofit or a volunteer supervising committee; positive comments would be greatly appreciated and Commissioner Mendiola would like to see more people get involved and be part of the solution. Commissioner Jacobs noted that the County maintains the park and has put substantial funding into the park for years without financial assistance from BOR. The park's irrigation system is nearly 60 years old and failing; discussions have taken place with BOR regarding the need for funding assistance as replacement of the irrigation system is costly.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET**

Commissioner Jacobs moved to approve Resolution R25-12: In the Matter of Fiscal Year 2024/2025 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 Oregon Department of Energy grant funds that were not anticipated when the budget was adopted; these funds are to be used for the County Energy Resilience Plan. See instrument #2025-0926

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Judge Joyce asked for comments from the public; there were none.

### **COURT ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned.