

MALHEUR COUNTY COURT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Pursuant to Initiative Measure No. 23-64
May 8, 2023

The Special Meeting of the County Court was called to order by Judge Dan Joyce at 9:00 a.m. with Commissioner Jim Mendiola present. Commissioner Ron Jacobs was absent. The Special Meeting was held pursuant to Initiative Measure 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 Bob Doughty, Mike McCarter, Charles Pike, Sara Stabler, Bob Wheatley, Patrick Barfield, Brent Grasty, Merlyn Skeen and Mary Belnap. Present electronically were Gary Thompson (for a portion of the meeting), Shay Myers (for a portion of the meeting), Chase (last name not identified), Madison Richards, Sharla (last name not identified), and Julian (for a portion of the meeting/last name not identified). 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 # 2023-1359

Judge Joyce asked for proponent comments from those present.

Mike McCarter: I'm Mike McCarter, I'm the President of Move Oregon's Border and Citizens for Greater Idaho. I live in La Pine Oregon. I have a brief statement here and I'd be more than willing at some point to answer questions. Nobody alive in Oregon today had any say in which state their county was placed. That decision was made 164 years ago in a very different time and culture when there was less than 50,000 people in the entire state. Things have changed greatly since then. State lines can be changed. And in fact, often are changed when they no longer make sense for the communities they serve. This is what the Greater Idaho movement is all about. In May, Wallowa County voters will get a chance to let their elected leaders know that they want them to pursue changing the current state line between Oregon and Idaho so that the residents can get their state level governance from Idaho. Eleven other eastern counties have already done so. And elected leaders in both Idaho and Oregon have already begun the process of beginning the discussion. As a leader in the Greater Idaho movement, I believe that there are many reasons why eastern Oregon counties would be better off as part of Idaho, but the most important one is having a say in the future of our communities. The west side of Oregon and the east side of Oregon have grown far apart socially, culturally, politically, and the state government reflects Portland values not those of most eastern Oregonians. A quick look at the bills making their way through the Oregon legislature shows that the west side of the state has every intention of continuing to push on us values that most eastern Oregonians don't share; laws regarding drugs, guns, schools, abortions, and mandates go against what most eastern Oregonians want. Unfortunately, our state leaders are not listening to what we want for our communities and seem determined to force policy on eastern Oregon that eastern Oregonians don't want. Those of us on the east side of the state find ourselves in a position of having little political power and a voice that's not being heard. Voting to change the border and change state governance is our best way of ensuring that our values and way of life are respected and maintained moving forward. A core principal of America is the right to have government for

the people, by the people, and with consent of the people. Just a quick update – the Idaho state legislature, in the representative side, has passed a memorial to open discussions with Oregon; it stalled on the committee desk, or in committee on the senate side, but we did a poll and we had the votes to get it voted through on the senate side which we'll take up next year. The same memorial, introduced in the senate on the Oregon side looks like it may die on the senate president's desk without being talked about. So, we're continuing to move forward, we haven't given up. And we believe that Wallowa County will come through this time, even though in the very beginning we lost by 40 votes in that county. But it was a new message and we didn't have the money to take and propose anything there. It's an ongoing process. Crook County commissioners have agreed to put it on the ballot in a future election. We're starting to work in Gilliam County and then Umatilla County to get it going. So that's my statement there.

Bob Wheatley: My name is Bob Wheatley, from Ontario. What I have with me today – at our last meeting in January, if you will recall we discussed that the citizens, you would appreciate citizens forming a committee and trying to address some of the problems that would be entailed, address some of the questions that would come up regarding this movement. So, working with a number of people in the area, but specifically working with Chuck Pike - who is here today, Brent Grasty - who is here, Paul Skeen, Pat Barfield – Pat is here, and Kelly Dame, I asked those people to not only research the issue and try to address questions about this measure from both the pro and the con side, so that we could put together a report for you, as you had requested. I do have that report with me. (Report was passed out to the Court members.) At this point, I really don't have any other comments to make at this point. If you would like a few minutes to be able to kind of look at what was put together feel free to do that, and you can ask questions or we can move on and come back to that, whatever you would most desire. See instrument # 2023-1360 for the written report.

Judge Joyce: Let's keep moving forward, because this is going to take some time, I can see that, it might take another meeting. Thank you, sir.

Commissioner Mendiola: Thanks Bob.

Merlyn Skeen: Merlyn Skeen, and my husband Paul and I have a family farm in Nyssa. I think he's been at most of your meetings. We approach this from more of an agriculture point of view because that's how we make our living. So, here's for agriculture – why we would like to be part of Idaho. There's no overtime for ag workers in Idaho. We pay \$2 more per hour for our H-2A workers, which puts them up at about \$18 an hour, we're almost right at \$18, which is way higher than even minimum wage in Oregon. We have a mandate for ethanol in Oregon that we wouldn't have in Idaho so we wouldn't pay as much for our fuel. Idaho is an agriculture friendly state. I know last year in session there were bills introduced to try and tax our tractor fuel; to even require electric tractors; luckily, they didn't go any further – they were killed. But what's going to keep them from coming back? These are just the kind of things that keep coming from the other side of the state. Idaho is agriculture friendly; we have lots of friends over there that are in ag. They don't have to fight the same fights that we do to try and make a living. And the sad thing is that we are

so close to the border that we have to compete with Idaho and their input costs are less. Of course, they don't have the laws that we have in Oregon. It seems like representatives Findley and Owens are constantly playing defense. We don't get to get anything done. It's hard to protect our side of the state because it's so heavy on the other side with what they come up with and their votes. The biggest thing is that Idaho doesn't have a death tax. We built our home 30 years ago on one of our farms, planned to live the rest of our lives there, raised our family there, but Oregon has the highest death tax in the nation, one of the highest, 16% percent. So, in order for us to keep our family farm intact to pass down to the next generation, we are being forced to move to Idaho. They'd have to sell off property just to pay the taxes. So, we feel that's very unjust. It would be real easy, there's a mass exodus moving to Idaho for that purpose only and it'd be so easy to fix if the state would eliminate the death tax – at least become equal to what the federal government does or raise the natural resource credit which helps the family farms pass it down to the next generation. Land values have doubled since that was put in place and it needs to be raised commensurately, that would help us a lot to be able to stomach some of the other things that we have to live with here in this state. But those two big issues are forcing us and it makes me sad; I cry when I think about it because I don't want to leave my home, I really don't. But it is something we're going to be forced to do if things don't change. And we would just ask that the Court consider our issues and send a letter to Representative Owens and Findley so that they can then take a letter to the state to give us a voice and let us proceed on this down this road and see if we can't get something done. Thanks.

Mr. Wheatley shared copies of his written report with members of the audience.

Charles Pike: My name is Charles Pike; I was born and raised here in Malheur County. I understand that you feel there isn't enough support for this in Malheur County. I collected over 500 names for this petition – this has been nearly a year ago now. I was all the way from Juntura to Jordan Valley in Malheur County. I had no problems receiving the names, I just set this down and tell them what it was; they filled it out. Only place that I heard any negative that would be against this would be right in Ontario and of course that is because Idaho has been coming to Ontario for the drugs. Idaho does support Ontario pretty strongly across the border because of the state tax. And other than that, I know nobody that's against this. I don't really have a lot more to say except for I'm pretty well known in Malheur County, even Commissioner Mendiola and Judge Joyce because I was raised with your families, the generation before. I know a lot of people and I still work for some of the farmers in the area and they all support this strongly; they do feel that maybe they're paying more than their share of the taxes for the whole state of Oregon including those that don't work in those large cities. They do need some support for themselves because they need to stay in business and believe me those people on the other side needs them as bad as the rest of us; they produce the beef, the spuds, the food, everything. A lot of these people just believe it comes out of the grocery store; that's not true. I even had a granddaughter - I'll tell this story because it affects that correctly - we were butchering a, or cutting up a deer, and she said ahh that was gross. These children are not taught the basics. If this ever happened again, where that had to be, they would starve to death. I told her, I said, well sweetheart where would you get it if that's gross? She says out of a grocery store. That brings up what I just said. Now it's obvious that this country is losing

the Constitution, in my opinion. I don't mean to offend anybody, but that Constitution is what kept us free and I was drafted when I was 18 years old to prevent this kind of thing to happen. So, I strongly support this personally. That's all I have for now.

Judge Joyce: Appreciate it. Thank you.

Commissioner Mendiola: Thanks Chuck.

Madison Richards: This is Madison Richards and Sharla Froerer. I'm a lifetime resident of Malheur County myself and I would echo what Merlyn Skeen shared. We have a family farm here that's been here for a lot of years and I'm like Merlyn, I'd like to be able to die in Malheur County. But we don't really have a state that's willing to fight for us. We need a place that's ag friendly, we need a place that's business friendly, that has advocates that are willing to represent us and that doesn't really happen in our state. And that would be my concern, right. Allow us to stay a family farm, allow us to die in Oregon, allow us to have the business-friendly environment that allows us to succeed in a world of regulations and higher wages and challenges that we face all the time. I believe our state just puts more and more challenges on us as a business and as an ag business, all the time. So, I would encourage you to think of your residents and to fight for our behalf. Thank you.

Judge Joyce asked for comments from opponents.

Pat Barfield: I appreciate the privilege of speaking here. I'm an opponent of this process, because I believe that if we're going to speak about Greater Idaho we need to view it through the lens of Lesser Oregon. And that's not okay with me. I have not been a lifelong resident of Oregon, but my wife has, I would never speak for her, we've been married 40 years, and I know better than that, but I just want to say I don't have any conflict of interest. Just for transparency perspective, I want you to know that I'm not a polished public speaker, but I'm not shaking because of that, I'm shaking because I have Parkinson's Disease. But I believe that silence is consent; if we don't speak out, we're not exercising our role as citizens. I have a bias, I love eastern Oregon. I love where I live, I'd like to keep the same address, the same zip code. I'm one of the 46% that actually voted against this idea because I thought it was wrong to start with. And I'll tell you why. When we first start this meeting we all turn around and face the flag and put our hand over our heart and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge of Allegiance is a pledge of unity. And then we sit down and talk about dividing. To me that's incongruent; I can't see how that is a moving forward in a positive way. I'd also like to say that I'm, as a disabled Vietnam Veteran, I think I know something about divisiveness. I served in the US Army from 1969 – 1972. I went to Vietnam in '70 and came back in '71 a year later, and there were protests throughout the country at that time against the Vietnam War and some of them very violent. So, there was no welcome home GI, it was spit in your face or tear a uniform or burn the flag. I couldn't get my mind around that. I want to acknowledge that the people, the folks who are the proponents of this idea to expand Idaho into Oregon, change the borders, have some very good merit. I think you have some good ideas. And toward that, once Cliff Bentz, I know he's obviously our representative for this district in Congress, not long after

he was elected, I was in line behind him at an establishment in Ontario, not one of the pot shops - I'll say that, but I said to him, Cliff, he's actually a neighbor of ours, now that you've been elected I just want to point out that I expect you to work for all of us, not just the people that voted for you. And I think that's how it's supposed to work; I still believe that. I spoke to my granddaughter, Olivia, I picked her up from school one day a few months ago, she's 14 now, and she said she was looking forward to changing schools because she could avoid some of the people that she doesn't like. And I said, well honey, it doesn't really matter where you go to school, you're going to find people you don't like, and they don't like you, you don't agree with them. But I think our only real path forward is to start working on some tolerance and working together toward common goals. And so that's my assessment of things. And finally, I just want to say that just because a group of concerned citizens has the right to do something, it does not mean, in my opinion, that it's the right thing to do. Thank you.

Judge Joyce and Commissioner Mendiola: Thank you.

Brent Grasty: Brent Grasty, I live here in Vale, and I'm born and raised here. I lived away for quite some time, went to school, traveled some, became a commercial fisherman in Alaska for a while, so I feel pretty comfortable with where the heart of the economy of this county comes from and most of eastern Oregon, and it's from the land, it's the bottom line. When I look at the drive from Vale to Boise, what I see is, and this is just statistics, 60,000 acres between us and Boise have been converted from farmland to homes. That didn't happen in Oregon because we're a land use plan. They're way more evolved, it was the first one that came into any of the states in '72 and there are loads of problems with it. It's hard to develop buildings and homes and businesses and industrial parks, but there's a process; that's why our court's there to assist with that and city government. There're ways around it and I think Oregonians are better than this approach. Splitting us up and finding ways to focus on the differences is not, it's not the strongest solution in my mind. And we've got good history; Jim Mosier, a local fellow with the Episcopal church mentioned two meetings ago that at one point there was an issue that 18 eastern Oregon counties got together and solved a problem and carried weight to Oregon's legislature to solve it; it was a voice that was heard. I think Mike you've said many times and so did Matt, that we want the dialog to happen. I think it's been successful. What I want to start figuring out is, Lynn Findley and Mark Owens, and Dan and Jim and Ron, they're our voices that we elected to carry the message up to the higher level to have those voices heard and come up with solutions. Those of us who grew up here all our lives, the Portland hunters coming over here, they weren't just hunting on our property, they were filling our motels and coming to hunters' breakfast and being part of our community, and we welcomed them and they're friend of ours. So, there's a lot of challenges here. And I think if this isn't getting the attention of the legislature from all sides, that disparity between the urban and rural areas, it exists no matter what happens. Boise, Ada County, it's transitioning, people are moving from other places for lots of different reasons, but they're coming with all perspectives. That mix is going to continue to change on whichever side of an issue that we have to address, it's going to keep changing. The other thing that I just wanted to say, what Bob led with, I've been a poor participant in this, but what Bob led in starting this list of issues that have come up and need to be considered and solutions found, to me is the list, last time at the last meeting I said, let's

figure out what the other counties are doing at this point in the process. Wallowa County is going to vote in a couple of weeks. Other counties are going to have to consider this. But they've got to be having the same kind of conversation that we're having. We need to put these questions together and identify what's the message we want to take, especially to our elected officials and how to raise these questions other than a simple, we've got a proposal, a proposal that only did one thing that we voted on, it said shall we continue the conversation? Not shall we move. Only should we continue the conversation. And I think that's important to carry on. I wanted to say thanks to Bob though and I'll do a better job (inaudible) in the next go around.

Mary Belnap: I'm Mary Belnap, I live here in Vale. I'm behind Skeens like crazy. We are farmers too. No matter what we say we are a small community. We put our stuff on the backs of our representatives for our area, to go up there and fight against all these democrats that are in opposition. I do understand your point of view. I was born and raised in Oregon, never moved out of state. I grew up in Grants Pass, moved to Vale here in '90. It's gotten so bad that we are being pushed with the ideology of Portland. Not just in everything that we do, but our schools and they passed it to where Brown was saying that to graduate from school you don't have to read, really what's wrong with that? You should be able to read, what happened to the basics? You don't get a job to learn all these things that they're trying to teach in school, that doesn't get you a job at all. And that is getting pushed upon us. This whole country, not just the state, is falling apart because of wrong ideologies. But how can we get our point across there? You're talking about everybody coming together; all these counties that are saying, hey, we want out of your state and this is our reason why. Why aren't all these representatives getting together to fight that? Why aren't they coming together? Not just Owens and Findley, that's doing most of this pushing on this, why don't all these representatives for all these counties, all these areas, come together and make a big stand up there. I don't know how to put out – to get that to happen. I know you guys should know how, I'm hoping you do. But this needs to get to be more of a bigger thing. We're trying to say, hey, we're having an issue. Fix the problem for everybody, not just for Portland, for Salem, Eugene, fix it for all of us. Do you guys have to up there, say, go along with what we believe in, not just us doing what you believe in. This needs to be hey, wait a minute, and we need to come together a little bit more than just our representatives. We need everybody to come together.

P. Barfield: This is Pat Barfield, and I appreciate what you had to say. What we're doing here today is not what our legislators are doing, they're not even speaking to each other. They are not crossing the aisle so to speak to speak to quote the other side. And unless we hold our legislators close to the fire about that, they're actually supposed, they're elected, they're supposed to work for us. Whether you're a D (Democrat) or a R (Republican), as Cliff Bentz likes to say. But to me that's, I know I'm naïve about this, about legislative process and that whole thing, but the only way forward is for us to begin to have this back and forth and to discuss this openly and without fear of retribution or whatever they call it if you cross the aisle that they sanction you in Congress now, put you out of a job or make sure you don't have any say at all. To me that seems really wrong headed.

C. Pike: The question is, how do you do that?

P. Barfield: Well I don't know Chuck...

Commissioner Mendiola: Keep talking to them.

C. Pike: (inaudible) is how to do it.

M. Belnap: It's not that we want to move out of Oregon; it's that we're tired of what we're being treated like. That's why I'm saying, the problem needs to be fixed up there. And I'm not kidding, it is up there. They control the whole state. I don't know if you've ever looked at the map of how people vote in this state, it's all red except you've got a little bit of blue which is where all that big population controls everything.

P. Barfield: That's true, and yet in all of those red counties, and all of eastern Oregon are red counties as far as I can see. But in all of those there's 30 or 40 or 45% perhaps of people that are not quote red, they may vote blue so how we proceed is just by I think listening to each other and having some respect for each side and develop some consensus.

M. McCarter: Maybe I can answer some of the questions here that we're talking about all the way around. I've spent considerable hours in the state capitol meeting with representatives and senators on both sides of the aisle. We talked about red and blue. Move Oregon's Border was not designed to be a political goal by any means. It's trying to preserve our traditional values of faith, family, freedom, self-sufficiency. But in December when I was up at the state capitol, I've got some pretty good relations with some of the people, which I guess will probably be called on the other side. Democrats. And there was a caucus called through the Representatives of all, on the democrat side, which are the majority, and they said, we will not talk about Greater Idaho. We will not talk about Move Oregon's Border. Period. No discussion allowed. They had their agenda set and they decided that they were going to move forward and we can see what's coming down the pike with some of the laws. Now I'm a born and raised Oregonian, 76 years; '65 to '72 in the service; 30 years of agriculture out of it, and I love where I live, I love this state, I love the land, I love the people of eastern Oregon, because when I returned even in '72, the people in western Oregon had changed completely, and I don't look at this movement, what we're trying to do as tearing down our nation. It's not creating a new state at all. What it's doing is just saying, somebody drew the lines at one point and said, this is your state, and this is who's going to govern you. That's an imaginary line, we don't have to show a passport to go over the border, back and forth or have permission to do that. So, moving that imaginary line to give a majority of the people who vote for a better governance or a governance is more like what we feel our values are at is the goal of that. And you're right Brent, the question in most every county, except for one, has been discussion; open the discussions up, let's start talking about this. And until you get both sides, Oregon and Idaho talking about it, or say, okay, we want to discuss it, that's when a lot of these questions are going to be answered, because I've tried to search into some things and I can't, I don't have access to government figures in some areas with it. One of the issues that came out of Wallowa County last time was LCDC (Land Conservation & Development Commission), land development. They did not want their ranches divided up. As far as I understand it, in Idaho that's a county issue that our

county commissioners in whatever county can dictate, okay, you can do this, you can divide it up, here's the rules. I'm a home state type of person in state laws that we should control more of what the federal government is trying to tell us. At the same time, I believe that county commissioners, the local government that we can reach out and sit and talk to, are the ones that should control what happens in the county; county rule. And of course, there are some counties in Oregon that are home rule counties, like Jackson County, so they make those decisions. I'm not going to put down Senator Findley and Representative Owens for not stepping out and talking harsher because in conversations with them, if they come out in total agreement with Greater Idaho, the movement on it, they don't get anything out of Oregon, out of the state legislature. They're working hard across aisles, they're having to give in on a lot of cases just to get some things passed for eastern Oregon; I understand, the same thing with Senator Hansell and Representative Levy up north, Senator Linthicum and Representative Rescke in the central part have spoken out about it. They're the ones that signed up that memorial to say, let's open the discussions up. Now we hear the lip service that comes out of our new governor (inaudible) well I'm going to travel around to every Oregon county and find out. What's happened? Where's it gone with it? The last 30 years of trying to bring people together, last weekend I was at the Dorchester Conference in Welches with 150 of the top republican leaders in the state and their metric, we can do, we can bring it back together. It hasn't happened for 30 years. And that same push is coming at us all the time, out of Portland, because if every eastern Oregon person voted, kids, everything else, all it takes is less than half of the Portland vote to negate it completely. So, it's not just the legislature, it is the people with different values in them, in the urban areas that are pushing their values on us. I hope that answered some of those questions there.

Commissioner Mendiola: That's not the only problem though. I've talked to your husband quite a few times, and quite a few times I've listened a lot, but it's just not what you guys are talking about, it's everything. I've been a contractor for almost 40 years, and there's nothing but more regulation every time I reup my contractor's license or everything. I mean, it's just overregulated. Idaho looks pretty shiny from here, but I think there's a happy medium between what they've got going on for regulations and what Oregon's got going on for regulations. We just need to keep it talking. We just need to keep to see if we can get some compromise in there, especially the death tax and the income tax and inheritance tax. They just claim they can't afford it because they think they can't live without. But we just need to keep at it.

M. McCarter: Idaho's the fifth freest state as far business regulations allowing it. One of the advantages of eastern Oregon becoming part of that is to free up that business, to not mandate a minimum wage, let businesses decide what they have to pay people to get qualified people in. Let that go. Yeah, their federal minimum wage is \$7.50 or so but only 2% of the people are working at that minimum wage.

Commissioner Mendiola: But the people's that got the vote are living the high-income places and the high rent places. I don't know if moving it is a good thing or a bad thing but we just definitely need to change what's going on up there.

M. McCarter: We need to start talking about it. Like you say, we need to discuss...

Commissioner Mendiola: We need to get more people talking to the right people.

Judge Joyce: So, when we met, was it last weekend, for the Ways and Means Committee, so the first day was a little stuffy and then they loosened up the second day, but the big issue was they agreed with a lot of what we said over here on this side, but they also said, we have to vote in a block; and you know about that Mike. So that's partially what we're up against.

M. McCarter: There's a difference between the two different parties. One party will walk across the aisle and talk. The other party says, no, we have the agenda, we all vote in a block.

Judge Joyce: Because they have the majority.

Commissioner Mendiola: We just need to bring that block, so it's a block instead of red and blue, we need a block that's all pulling the same direction.

M. McCarter: We need some of the blue people to stand up and agree with some of the problems and start speaking out on their own instead of just going along with the leadership.

B. Grasty: I want to throw in, they are; I'm one. And while I don't think this is the solution, I'm at the table, been here every time, been in communication with you, my brothers involved in this; there are voices out there. I think, to some extent, that message on those who don't think changing state borders is the solution also think it's not going to happen. And I probably want to end on that place. I'd like the commissioners to tell me this: Payette County said, no we're not going to table discussion about this. That at a minimum stopped it from moving forward in the senate. The county that depends on Malheur County the most, at least for sales, just over the counter sales, they said not a chance. There's no question there are problems here that Oregon has created for ourselves. But I think those conversations are going, and this is the thing that I think keeps that going. What I don't want it doing Mike is I don't want to be locked in this for 20 years, focusing on changing our border when we should be talking. And I don't think that's a blue needs to cross the aisle; I think that's both ways. We need to speak up about what we're doing here, and what we're running into, and how we're struggling over here with the rules that come down that don't apply, they don't fit with our economy, they don't fit with our communities, and I'm not saying that's true, there's a lot of them that I support that I think it's dead on right. And land use planning is one of them. We've got an opportunity to retain our farmlands. There're issues out there that this state has a history of, first to do the Bottle Bill, first to do a lot of things that we benefit. I remember as a little kid, there was trash everywhere on the roads; you drive into Idaho and it was wicked worse. Then the Bottle Bill passed and it changed; driving the freeway it was clean in Oregon, you cross the Snake and it was a mess. Those things are something that I think that I'm proud of being an Oregonian and I'm going to stick with this but I'm going to be at the table all the way through it. I talk to a lot of people, I've invited them to participate, I think it's going to happen. But what your comment was that Matt brought up that I really, I was pretty aggressive on the last meeting on this,

when he said, the purpose of being able in the Constitution to change the state borders was so like-minded people could live in the same place. That is not our Constitution. Our Constitution is about bringing people together and working out problems. I still support this conversation. This is important. We need to carry this message. But there are way better solutions than this and I don't want to be here for 10 years talking about changing the border when our sister neighbor across the river, artificial boundary or not, does not support this. I just don't want to be stuck here. I want to be moving toward a solution. And here's where we are is, and Mike I've always felt like your organization has misrepresented that one thing, when it's discussed or you're interviewed, it's always about the majority of people in those counties support moving to Idaho. That's not what this is. It's about what's...

Inaudible

B. Grasty: But that's how you say it. And the conversation is, let's have that conversation, and that's the message that really resounds with me. You say that in these meetings and I really support that.

M. McCarter: 62% of the people that voted on those issues across 10 counties, not the 11th county, Wheeler County the commissioners put it on, do you want to move to Idaho, and it came out at 59% in favor. So, it does, there is a correlation there with people who vote in favor of it. My reply to that, first of all, is that Malheur County is one of the few counties, this group is one of the few counties that has got some action going as far as trying to look into it. And so, when I went to Morrow County last week, zero, no discussion, no questions, no public input, no nothing. Senator Findley and Representative Owens that's what they see in most of the counties that they represent; nobody seems to be interested in it. Sure, part of it is the fact that the meetings are normally during the middle of the week during work hours, but the reply that I would have about finding the solution to it, moving the border may not be the best solution. But my comeback question to the politicians that come to me, I say, what is your answer for it? How do we get that changed then? What do we do with it? Not on civil disobedience, not like BLM (Black Lives Matter) or anything like that, how can we get the actions taking place there? Sit down like we can across different views; nothing wrong with that at all. You can agree, we can disagree. That's why we are Americans.

Commissioner Mendiola. This is awesome.

P. Barfield: This is democracy. Discussing sort of the vicissitudes of where we're at and kind of acknowledging it from different perspectives. Let me just tell you what Cliff Bentz told me when I said, I expect you to work for all of us he said, the first thing they teach you when you go to Congress is you never cross the aisle. So, that is just, I'm sure there's a lot of complicators, I'm sure, but if it's so complicated, why can't it be simplified and we can begin this work of consensus and trying to reach some, I thought they were there to represent us, to listen to us, I thought, well, why did I bother to speak to you. And I'm not talking out of school, this was right after he was elected.

C. Pike: I've got a question. Maybe there's a possible solution because population seems to be what's caused the biggest problems, it's all on the west side and not on the east side. But we've got landmass. Maybe you could put this in legislature and maybe have some more legislators in eastern Oregon for the landmass mile for the population. Because the basic amount of taxes that go in, a lot of it comes from eastern Oregon. They deserve more than what they're getting; that's what's caused the whole problem. Would that be a possible solution?

Commissioner Mendiola: Possibly.

P. Barfield: I'd like to respond to something that Brent mentioned about crossing the border there. When we go to Boise, Meridian, Idaho, Kuna, Caldwell, we can't wait to get back to eastern Oregon because of the quiet – we have more neighbors that are cows than we do people and we like that a lot.

C. Pike: (inaudible) capital city of Idaho, that's (inaudible)

P. Barfield: It's a nice resource for us but we can't wait to get out of there.

C. Pike: (inaudible) western Oregon.

M. Belnap: Yeah, same thing, yeah, western Oregon, a lot of people that live outside of Salem or Portland that do have to travel in town for doctors' appointments or whatever, yeah, they're glad to get the heck out of there. I used to live up there in Keizer area which was nothing compared to what it is now (inaudible) and now I don't hardly even recognize where places are any more. That's the thing. Malheur County is actually Idaho; we get Idaho news, we hear about Idaho politics, we are on Idaho time, pretty much everything, you go to your doctor stuff – it's all Idaho, that's the whole county and that's why Malheur County is talking about it because we live Idaho. I hate to say that but we are by Oregon rule so we don't hear about, we don't hear about half of these laws that are being, unless you read it in the paper, which you don't hardly hear anything, but Findley and Owens have actually started putting something in the Argus about what is going on. We don't hear about what's going on in Oregon; we just don't hear it.

P. Barfield: It's one way you say.

M. Belnap: No, it's because our news is Idaho.

P. Barfield: Okay.

Multiple talking

Commissioner Mendiola: All the TV stations come out of Boise.

M. Belnap: Radio, TV, everything is Idaho. That's why we discuss it, that's why, you know what, they don't hear us. We hear Idaho.

P. Barfield: Decades after I got out of the Army, I got out of the Army the day before my 21st birthday, I started bootcamp on my 18th birthday and it wasn't because I was in trouble, it was because you couldn't (inaudible) in 1969. So, decades later I met a man that was a Navy Seal for about 23 years and everyone, I'm sort of fascinated with the work that they did, and I told him, his name's Phil, I said, my work in the military was a lot simpler and a lot safer than what you did. His response was this, he said, Pat, we couldn't do our job if you didn't do yours. We all have to contribute, we all have to do our part, and I'm glad to have come here today and I'll look forward to coming back again because I think what we're doing is demonstrating the value of citizenship.

M. McCarter: I'm thankful for meeting this group, for seeing everybody in person, for being able to sit down; sort of like the old timers around the potbelly stove, no offense ladies. I can remember watching grandpas doing that, sit around and discussing politics and the issues and stuff like that. It needs to be discussed, it really does.

Bob Doughty: I'm Bob Doughty from Ontario. Listening to all this conversation is quite a thing for me, but I think it points to the reality. This problem we're talking about has been going on for 40, 50 years and they haven't given us one ounce of concession on the other side of the Cascades. Me, I think it's time to move the border, yesterday would be better than today. I think it's time to move it. They're not going to come our way; they've already showed us, they're not willing to discuss any of our situations over here. We don't count.

M. Belnap: No, we do, with our taxes that they keep raising on us as farmers, what she's been saying, it don't matter what, unless you sell across the border, you take your items across the border, you are taxed like crazy, just to sell in your own state. I mean, why? That is crazy, wrong.

B. Doughty: Crazy wrong.

M. Belnap: That's the problem, they're not understanding our point of view, they're not

Commissioner Mendiola: Comprehending the dialog.

M. Belnap: I mean, I have a sister who lives in Portland, and she comes over here and she calls it a vacation. And I'm like, it's just our way of life. But she is an opponent.

Commissioner Mendiola: I think we just need to keep the dialog going. We need to not gang up on them but make sure that they all know that we're needing something done, especially on the death tax and...

C. Pike: They need us just as bad as we need the legislation, we're paying the bill, these farmers have staggering taxes they're paying, I have difficulty believing they can even exist, they get bigger and bigger and bigger just to pay the taxes.

B. Wheatley: Mr. Chairman, Bob Wheatley, just a couple of comments I'd like to make, I'm not sure where we're at timewise, but one thing I want to do that Brent brought up about during the legislative session about the statement that the Payette county commissioners made. I find that really interesting and the timing of it, I wish I knew more about what's going on underneath there, my understanding was that they're main objection to moving the border was that it would have a negative economic impact on Payette County. And that amazes me. Because for 40 years that I can think of, ever since Idaho put in a sales tax the argument has always been the advantage that Ontario has, they steal all the shoppers because the people from Idaho, specifically Payette County, come to Ontario to shop so then they don't have to pay sales tax. So, I think there's something going on there that would be interesting to know more about, maybe we'll find out, I have no idea. I'm glad you brought that up because politically it's interesting. But I don't know enough politically to answer that for you. The main thing that I would like to state right now is regarding the report, just as a background, because I know we won't have time to go through the report and that really wasn't the purpose for this meeting, we were asked, and it's been stated in several previous meetings all the issues need to be put down on paper so we can address them line by line, so that, at least in my understanding, that was the objective, and how we approach this, it was a hard thing to do because it's hard to get people together, so basically I was relying on each of the members that I talked to and asked to participate to talk to their constituents, their friends, and get their opinions, and get some of that feedback. I also tried to do a lot of research as much as I could and I tried to stay as neutral as I could even though I do support the Move the Border, and I tried to present pros and cons. And as you go through the report, you will find that on some of the questions, some of the issues that are presented in the report, I have added comments that I picked up during the research on how other people have seen them, maybe to address that specific issue, that specific question. There are other questions in there that were beyond me being able to find anything and answer. It turns out to be a lot of it is going to have to be discussions that occur either within the Oregon legislature itself, or if they would be open to associating the Idaho, with a committee from Idaho, to discuss the issues. We've pretty much come to a conclusion, I think here, that open discussion is what we're really wanting here and we want to try and address the issues and try to come up with solutions. As Mike has stated this may not be the best answer, but at this particular point in time it is an answer that a lot of people in eastern Oregon have gotten behind. And Chuck and anybody who was involved in gathering signatures on petitions in any of the counties that have voted on this measure will tell you that the people who signed those petitions, the majority of them, they weren't looking at it as voting to set up these meetings, they were voting to move the border. Their comments were, heck yes, I'll sign it, let's move that border. So, there is a strong (inaudible) if there isn't a better solution going forward, believe me the majority of the people who have voted, yes, in the various counties on this issue are wanting to change, and they see moving the border as maybe the best solution. So not only is it time, Pat and Brent and Chuck, have all three committed that they'd be more than willing to continue our committee discussions trying to find more information for you as county commissioners to (inaudible) answers out there,

we would be more than happy to continue to add to the report. Our primary goal at this point, was to try and get something to you that you could hold in your hand, look at, and see what's there. We also would love to have your comments as you look through this. There are issues here that actually all of you could really talk to us about. You have access to information that we don't have. And it would be helpful as we gather and try to put together. I'm more than happy to kind of work as a secretary to try and put this all on paper and continue to put together a report we can all discuss and work on. But I don't have all the answers and I never will have. I love what we're talking about, in my, some of the things that I read, several people, Brent brought this up, several people suggested and maybe another answer would be a multi county block if you will in eastern Oregon, to come together on the issues that affect the majority of people, and be able to go the legislature as a block. There are other alternatives, there are answers that might come forward that will either support and verify that we will have to look further at moving the border. Maybe somebody will come up with a good alternate solution. I just wanted to get that out there, so you realize what our intent was putting together the report. And that we also are more than happy to continue to do, whatever you might ask us to do to help.

Judge Joyce: So, to Chuck's comment, one of the Senators said

C. Pike: No, he pretty much said what I

Judge Joyce: No, this is what you said earlier though

C. Pike: Oh, the business in Idaho

Judge Joyce: Well actually, one of our senators said wouldn't it be nice if we had a senator per county in Oregon. Now what's the reality of getting that done?

B. Wheatley: Actually, we can't. I addressed that

Judge Joyce: In this document?

B. Wheatley: Yes. It's been addressed nationally

Judge Joyce: No, I mean state.

B. Wheatley: Oregon at one time did have, there was one senator from each county

Judge Joyce: Just for the counties in Oregon, period.

B. Wheatley: But other states, counties in other states tried to do the same thing and basically, I guess it comes down to violating

Unknown: It's a federal

B. Wheatley: Yeah, the one vote, yeah, it's a federal thing.

M. McCarter: It came out of the supreme court in the '60's that ruled against that, they ruled that one person one vote. For the life of me I don't understand who was debating it because the federal government established that principal with two senators per state no matter how big or small the state is, so why don't you have one senator per county, why is that

Judge Joyce: But two separate issues though. One's federal and one's state.

M. McCarter: Yes. But that's why, and then Oregon changed its Constitution then.

C. Pike: That could be a solution to this I suppose (inaudible)

B. Grasty: Judge, do you have connections with the governor in terms of maybe we could have a little meeting when the governor comes out (inaudible) and you know, have a representative from each side or just with the Court and discuss this because I mean that's part of the tactic here is to make it real for them.

M. McCarter: We reached out to the governor.

B. Grasty: You know, we can't stop.

M. Belnap: We can talk to the governor but this is one person but were getting controlled by the legislature.

B. Grasty: Sure.

M. Belnap: Really big time and that's where like all of our taxes and stuff, of course Brown passed a lot of her executive stuff because that Corporate Tax was not passing but she threw it in, on purpose. So, we are controlled, talking to the governor, I don't know how far we're going to get. Before we never got far at all when she was here after the snowmagedon thing; that was the first time she was here. One of the guys that was with her said, he goes, so are you looking forward to the governor being here? And I go, I'll be surprised if she even shows up, she probably doesn't even know where Malheur County is, more less Ontario.

B. Grasty: Well we had a governor a bunch of years ago that said Bend was the middle of nowhere; I always wondered what do they think of us. Just a thought.

Judge Joyce: I'm missing a meeting right now with the governor.

M. Belnap: Oh, we're blocking you from a meeting

B. Grasty: Are we going late?

Judge Joyce: No, in person. In Salem. Our group's meeting there today.

Commissioner Mendiola: I talked to a lady from Salem one time, this has been 3 or 4 years ago about some licensing stuff and she asked me where I was from, I said, I'm in Vale Oregon, I'm in eastern Oregon, she says, well how far is that from Bend? And I said, lady, we're closer to Boise Idaho than you are in Bend Oregon. Well you're way over there, well yeah, look at a map sometime. A lot of those people don't even know we exist.

B. Grasty: But we've got to make them know.

Commissioner Mendiola: We've got to get the dialog going.

M. Skeen: That's the impetus of this whole thing. None of us want to leave. None of us do. But if we don't make a bunch of noise they just ignore us, they don't care, so it's just to get them, I think to get them at the table, find some resolutions that will keep us that we can stay. This is what we want. We would, if they would just work with us. But their forcing our hand so we have to make noise.

M. Belnap: That's why even this was even considered is because of what they are forcing on us that we're just saying, hey, we are tired of this.

Commissioner Mendiola: When Mike says the majority of them voted to move the border, I think the vast majority of them were just tired of what wasn't going on, or what was going on in Salem with our representation. And this is the only way we can get our voices heard and then they've got to take a look at us and say, wow, these guys are serious. It's like well, fix it then.

M. Belnap: (inaudible) how do we get through that block?

Commissioner Mendiola: There is some good people on the other side, besides these two guys, or three guys, or something. There's some people that don't think that block is right.

M. Belnap: (inaudible) it's like you grab these people and saying why aren't you caring enough to listen to us, you know, catch them outside of their little political office over there, even in their county that they're in.

Commissioner Mendiola: And it helps to be there in person to make sure that they see a face on that verbiage.

M. Belnap: Why the block? What is the purpose of a block? And why are you blocking us? Why are you not listening to what we're saying?

Commissioner Mendiola: One of those people we talked to the other day and Findley said well I'm, whatever jurisdiction he is, and these other people in Portland would have like three blocks

and that was all they had to take care of instead of ten million acres, twenty million acres. That's all they had to deal with was three or four blocks in the middle of Portland. Because they weren't here, they were here. I think we're on a good route here.

M. McCarter: I would ask you commissioners, the local government to carry the word up, and we're pushing through all the commissioners, to get it up into the eastern Oregon commissioners association into Oregon's commissioners. You guys are a voice for all of us in rural Oregon and I talk to my commissioners in Deschutes County, which some of it falls on deaf ears, but otherwise they hear it. But you're a voice too. You're a powerful voice out there because you are the local government for most of the people that they know. And so, I would, if you could, bring it up. There's talk going on, I know there is. In the very beginning, move Oregon's border, never happen, that won't take place, people laughing about it. Just like, I'm not going to vote because my vote doesn't count; that kind of apathy. All of sudden now, there's opposition starting to come at us. That is becoming an honest to goodness voice coming out of eastern Oregon; that there is something to it. And when you see all three gubernatorial candidates bring that up, even though one of them was Betsy Johnson, bringing it out that there's something going on between the west and the east and we need to look into it.

Commissioner Mendiola: We're on their radar any way.

M. McCarter: We are and we're going to keep pushing it.

Commissioner Mendiola: And that's the only way you can do it is to keep your voices heard.

M. McCarter: (inaudible)

P. Barfield: I'd like to suggest that we leave this meeting with a plan to invite someone and ask, each of us, if each of us invites one person and next time there's say 25 people here instead of 10 or 12, and double it again, just kind of keep working toward an idea to have some open discussion and maybe we can show the Oregon legislature how to speak to each other.

Commissioner Mendiola: Have to get a bigger room.

Judge Joyce: So, Bob, I have a question. Is there a way you could summarize this meeting in letter form, draft letter form, that we could present to eastern Oregon counties?

B. Wheatley: I can sure give it a try. How soon?

Judge Joyce: Well whenever you get it done. We meet once a month anyway so.

M. McCarter: Give (inaudible) other commissioners

Judge Joyce: And your Tony DeBone needs a copy of it, just FYI

M. McCarter: Tony's my neighbor and we talk.

P. Barfield: Our next meeting is in September here, is that correct?

Judge Joyce: Right, yeah, well that would be good (inaudible)

Multiple talking

M. McCarter: Pat, we had in Crook County a month ago had a meeting similar to this with the judge there,

Judge Joyce: Seth?

M. McCarter: Yeah, Seth was there and I hate to say it but he got burned pretty badly there because they had refused to allow the people to vote. They just would not approve the petition. Ten requests to just start the petition and they wouldn't let it go through, they wouldn't approve the language and everything on the petition. And other counties, like your county, approved the same one. Anyway, 70 people showed up for that one.

Written comments were submitted via GoTo Meeting from Shay Myers: My plane is about to take off and I won't be able to speak. This isn't about not tolerating or trying to get away from other people. It's about people, outside of the I-5 corridor, to care about us on this side of the state. This is not getting much attention from the legislature, unfortunately, they cannot come with a real understanding of eastern Oregon economics and they are ruthless. This is about a lack of compromise.

Written comments were submitted by Gary Thompson via email: I wasn't able to attend in person this morning but did sign in on the GoTo Meeting. I was not able to get my settings right to hear but I was shown as a participant. I just want the Court to know I am in favor of any action they can take to break the stranglehold that the political leaders in Salem have on our way of life in Malheur County. Making us part of Idaho would be great!!! Thanks

Written comments were submitted by Rosie Knapp via email: Just wanted to add our voice in agreement to support the Greater Idaho movement. Oregon does not support Malheur county views. Dave and Rosie Knapp

Written comments were submitted by Clyde Esplin: I am out of town, but want to voice support for moving the border to include Malheur county in Idaho. Clyde Esplin

There were no further comments and Judge Joyce adjourned the meeting.