



***In the County Court of the State of Oregon for Harney County
Minutes of the County Court
February 17, 2016***

The Harney County Court convened in The Harney County Circuit Court Room at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, February 17, 2016. Members attending were Judge Steve Grasty, and Commissioner Pete Runnels and Commissioner Dan Nichols. Also attending were Eric Drushella, Roadmaster; Brandon McMullen, Planning Director; Shana Withee, OSU Extension; Lt. Brian Needham, Deputy Sheriff; Nellie Franklin, Treasurer; Deanna Atwell, Finance Assistant; and Derrin Robinson, County Clerk.

A list of public attendees is on file with these minutes.

Judge Grasty led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Runnels made a Motion to approve the minutes from the February 3, 2016, meeting, seconded by Commissioner Nichols, with no further discussion the Motion carried unanimously.

Voucher Approval

Opportunity for Public Comment

Herb Vloedman inquired as to how long the road will be closed near the refuge and what effect will this have on the county budget. Judge Grasty stated the court would discuss the road closure later in the meeting, and that this would have a substantial effect on the county budget, with details yet to be determined.

Mitzi Defenbaugh inquired as to the rural community meetings outcomes.

Commissioner Nichols provided a summary of the comments, a list of proposed solutions and explained the solutions they are going to go forward with. Judge Grasty and Commissioner Runnels will attend the NACO conference in Washington, DC, next week and will meet with Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior and address these concerns with them.

Barbara Cannady asked about the community meetings and how they were advertised. Commissioner Nichols explained they were not County meetings- they were meetings of the people of the various rural communities, not “public meetings”.

Jeff Maupin asked what the court doing to help the Hammonds keep their permit? Judge Grasty said the court has told BLM they oppose the idea of it becoming a grass bank. The court has said they will oppose any action to remove the permit from the Hammonds, specifically Hammond Ranches, Inc., and is willing to help with that matter in any way.

Mary Ausmus asked if Harney County still has an economic development officer, and stated “we can only use the events of the last 40 days for so long.”

Old Business

Order, Dated February 4, 2016, closing roads near the Refuge for public safety

The Court affirmed and explained two Road Closure Orders, one dated February 4th, and explained even though it mentions the “Center patrol Road” the court does not claim that to be a county road, nor do they claim any authority over that road, but explained Fish and Wildlife Services provided approval to include it on the Closure Order. The other Closure Order dated January 16th was also ratified by the court as it was approved by telephone. Both Orders are Temporary until the conclusion of the investigation and the refuge is re-opened to the public.

Courthouse Heating System

The Court reviewed Bids for Courthouse the heating system. Judge Grasty explained funding has been made available from the Oregon Judicial Dept. for the project. The project engineer recommended the bid be awarded to Bend Heating in the amount of \$530,000. Commissioner Runnels moved to award the bid to Bend Heating with the caveat that the project be reviewed with the contractor to see what can be done additionally to reduce the cost. Commissioner Nichols seconded, Motion carried unanimously.

Midge Smith asked what the \$530,000 pays for. Judge Grasty explained the two million dollar cost of the entire heating co-op project.

Watershed Council Update

Karen Moon, Watershed Council Coordinator, presented the annual update from the Watershed Council. She also requested sponsorship of two scholarships to the range camp, and made a request Mark Owens be appointed to the Council. Commissioner

Nichols moved to appoint Mark Owens to the Watershed Council, Commissioner Runnels seconded, and the Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Nichols explained the several million dollars in grants that are coming to Harney County from collaborative processes to complete the kinds of projects that Ms. Moon explained the Watershed council is working on, such as groundwater studies, Place Based Planning, weed control projects and studies to help maintain and continue flood irrigation. Mitzi Defenbaugh reminded the court what fits Harney basin isn't the same fit for the south end of the county. Herb Vloedman mentioned farming in Northern Lake County when the moratorium went into place. It was to be a two year moratorium (for North Lake), and suggested there be a local technical advisor to the groundwater study. Judge Grasty said he will discuss this issue and make that recommendation to Senator Ferrioli.

The Court discussed Senate bill 1532-(Minimum wage). The Court expressed their disappointment and opposition in this legislation that is moving through the legislature this session, and will likely pass.

County Sick Leave Policy

The Court discussed the County Sick-leave policy. The biggest impact to county departments is at the Library and the Weed Control Department, as these departments have the most part-time employees. The court expressed their disappointment in this legislation from last session as well. Commissioner Runnels moved to sign a Court Order in the matter of Accrual and Use of Sick Time of Employees of Harney County. Commissioner Nichols seconded, the motion carried unanimously.

Brandon McMullen, Planning Director provided an update regarding the grant application for goal 5 updates within the Comprehensive Plan. He explained The Advisory Committee for this project will be appointed. Judge Grasty said the process needs to be locally driven. People need to be included as a resource for this county, and that it does in fact, cover federal land as well. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Correspondence

Judge Grasty shared a response letter he received from Secretaries Vilsack and Jewel, and both are willing to sit down and talk to the court about concerns. Judge Grasty explained there are 3 audiences in Washington-The Western Counties, Congress, and the Secretaries in the Obama Administration. The court and the audience discussed priorities from the list Commissioner Nichols provided earlier they would like to share with those audiences in Washington next week, number one being Equal Access to Justice, and Joyce Green mentioned to the court to have them ask congress to address Wilderness Study Areas that have been locked up in congress for 25-plus years.

Supplemental Budget Hearing

Judge Opened the Public Hearing on a Proposed Supplemental Budget for 2015-2016 at 1:30 p.m. A supplemental Budget is required to address two funds:

- Fund 221 Senior and Community Transportation Fund. Additional funding of 45,000 has been made available to provide free transportation for medical rides to veterans in rural frontier Oregon. They are new and unexpected funds.

- Fund 228 Park Fund. There is an increase in the beginning fund Balance of 17,000, and upgrades will be made to Theimer Park with this funding.

Judge Grasty and Nellie Franklin, County Treasurer explained Nancy Oster-Courtney assists with technical matters with the budget. She has provided a list of miscellaneous matters to be addressed in the budget before the end of the fiscal year. (That list is attached to these minutes). Appropriate budget resolutions will be reviewed at the June 1 county court meeting.

There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 1:48 p.m.

Commissioner Nichols moved to approve the budget changes in Fund 221 of 45,000 and Fund 228 in the amount of 17,000. Commissioner Runnels seconded, motion carried unanimously. A budget resolution will be prepared for the next county court meeting.

The court reviewed again with the group what message Judge Grasty and Commissioner Runnels would send while in Washington, and what they hoped to accomplish, along with the proposed solutions from the community meetings as discussed earlier in the day.

There being no further business, the Court adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Derrin Robinson, C.C.C
Harney County Clerk