

HARNEY COUNTY COURT MEETING

October 22, 2008

The Harney County Court convened on Wednesday, October 22, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. in Judge Steven E. Grasty's office. Members attending were Judge Steve Grasty and Commissioners Dan Nichols and Jack Drinkwater. Also attending were Road Supervisor Kerry Landers, and County Court Secretary Sharon Johnson. Public attending were Watershed Council Coordinator Karen Moon and Debbie Raney of the Burns Times Herald.

Judge Grasty led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Drinkwater made a motion to approve the October 8, 2008 minutes as mailed, Commissioner Nichols seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Statistical and Financial reports were reviewed and vouchers approved by Court's signature.

During Public Comment Karen Moon, Watershed Council Coordinator, was present to make a recommendation to the Court to appoint John Sword of Drewsey to the Watershed Council. Commissioner Nichols made a motion to appoint Mr. Sword, Commissioner Drinkwater seconded, motion carried unanimously. Ms. Moon mentioned that two more positions will expire in December 2008.

At 10:15 a.m. the Court met, by phone, with the Malheur County Court to ratify the Harney Malheur Community Action Agency (HMCAA) Director's contract. Those present from Malheur County were Judge Dan Joyce, Commissioner Nakano, Commissioner Wettstein and Stephanie Williams, Malheur County Counsel. Ms Williams began the conversation by saying that she had been working on drafting an employment contract with Barb Higenbotham since August and that one issue that has not yet been resolved is an appropriate retirement plan. Ms. Williams went on to explain the possibilities and problems. Discussion followed. Consensus was to table the issue, and gather more information; that being decided the HMCAA meeting with Malheur County was adjourned at 10:30 a.m. Further discussion followed amongst the Harney County Court members.

Cheryl Hancock, Harney County Library Director, was present to discuss an Internet Use Policy for the Library. Ms. Hancock explained the proposed policy to the Court. She said that it had been approved by the Library Board and reviewed by County Counsel, Tim Colahan. Discussion followed. Commissioner Nichols made a motion to approve the policy, Commissioner Drinkwater seconded, motion carried unanimously. Ms. Hancock also made a recommendation to appoint Janet Wheeler to the Library Board. Commissioner Drinkwater made a motion to approve the appointment of Janet Wheeler, Commissioner Nichols seconded, motion carried unanimously. Judge Grasty mentioned that the County Court would like to be at the January 13, 2009 joint meeting of the

Library Advisory Board and the Library Foundation. It was agreed that the Court would attend the meeting which would fulfill the requirements of the joint agreement.

Judge Grasty mentioned that the Strategic Investment Program, the contract being worked on with the Echanis Wind Project on property taxes, has not been completed yet; it should be available by the next County Court meeting. Discussion followed. Judge Grasty said that Harney Electric, BLM, the Refuge, and Columbia Energy Partners representatives have met and discussed process regarding the transmission lines needed for the Echanis Wind Power project.

Title II and Title III funding was discussed. It was the consensus of the Court to table the issue until the November 5th meeting.

Judge Grasty explained that interviews were held for the County Road Supervisor position, that was open due to the retirement of long time County employee Kerry Landers, and that Eric Drushella was offered and has accepted the job and should start on November 3, 2008. He further noted that at Mr. Lander's suggestion Mr. Drushella had already participated in a meeting regarding an upcoming bridge project. Mr. Landers then explained the project.

Judge Grasty informed the Court that Harney County's share of Senate Bill 994 is \$1,935,370.00.

Judge Grasty also noted that PILT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes), as part of Secure Rural Schools is fully funded until 2012. He said that this is the first time PILT has been funded at 100%, that it has historically been funded at around 60%. He said that there will be a PILT make-up payment to Harney County for last year in excess of \$300,000.00 and that the payment in June should be close to \$900,000.00.

The Court then discussed the Intergovernmental Agreement between Harney County and Lake County for Lake County Mental Health Services with Harney Behavioral Health Director, Chris Siegner and Finance Manager Vern Brown. Time commitments, wages and the ability to continue working in both places for Mr. Siegner and Mr. Brown were discussed at length. The issue was tabled until the November 5 meeting.

The next item of business was a discussion regarding the Request for Refund filed on behalf of the Holy Family Catholic Church in the amount of \$3,109.75. Ted Tiller, County Assessor and Tax Collector, explained that religious organizations are exempt from taxes but parsonages and rectories have not been but that a recent court case found that parsonages and rectories should be exempt. Mr. Tiller said that the law allows the tax office to go back five years and refund taxes paid. Commissioner Nichols made a motion to refund Holy Family Catholic Church in the amount of \$3,109.75, Judge Grasty seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Several pieces of correspondence were reviewed with no action being necessary.

Judge Grasty updated the Court on the progress of the Blue Mountain Forests Revision Plan team.

The meeting was recessed for lunch at 12:05 p.m. and reconvened at 1:20 p.m.

Water Use Requests were reviewed and there were no objections expressed by the Court on any of the requests.

It was noted that the Court would meet with the Taylor Grazing Board at 4 p.m. at BLM.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1: 25 p.m.

Respectfully,

Sharon Johnson
Secretary, Harney County Court