

Harney County Court Meeting

May 19, 2010

The Harney County Court convened on Wednesday, May 19, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. in Judge Steven E. Grasty's office. Members attending were Judge Steve Grasty, Commissioner Dan Nichols and Commissioner Jack Drinkwater. Also attending were Road Supervisor Eric Drushella, County Planning Director Brandon McMullen for a portion of the meeting and County Court Secretary Sharon Johnson. Public attending were Burns Mayor Len Vohs for a portion of the meeting 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 May 5, 2010 minutes as mailed, Commissioner Nichols seconded, motion carried unanimously.

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

The Court briefly discussed the Lone Pine Road and an issue that came up recently regarding the legal description of the road. Judge Grasty noted that all the work that Howard Palmer has done on indexing county roads was very helpful in resolving the issue.

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Nichols, as the County Court representative on the CCP (Comprehensive Conservation Plan) for the Refuge, stated that the Plan is officially moving forward in the cooperative process and that discussion has been positive among the agencies involved in the collaborative effort. He concluded by saying that the Refuge has put a lot of work into the CCP and that is much appreciated.

Judge Grasty recommended moving to Agenda Item #5 as it is related to the discussion just held. He stated that the County has three major NEPA processes going on right now; the CCP that Commissioner Nichols is participating in, the EIS on the North Steens Transmission Line that all three members of the Court are involved in and the Blue Mountain Forest Plan which he has taken the lead on. On the EIS for North Steens, BLM & Refuge are considering Environmental Justice – there is a Presidential Order that they are operating under that talks about two groups of people that should be considered to see if there are impacts on them from NEPA processes – the two groups are minorities and low income. Judge Grasty stated that with the current economics the majority of people in this county fit as low income.

Judge Grasty told the Court that he had asked the US Forest Service Regional Forester, Mary Wagner, to come to John Day to discuss the Blue Mountain Forest Plan; he also noted that all 12 counties impacted by Plan were also invited. The meeting was held on May 13 and the outcome was positive in several respects. Discussion followed. It was the consensus of the Court to send a letter of thanks to Ms. Wagner for taking the time to attend the meeting and for her help in resolving some issues.

Resolution #2010-04 in the Matter of Elections for National Forest Related Safety-Net Payments was reviewed and Commissioner Drinkwater made a motion to approve the Resolution, Commissioner Nichols seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Nichols made a motion to adopt Resolution #2010-03 in the Matter of Extending Workers' Compensation Coverage to Volunteers of Harney County. Commissioner Drinkwater seconded, motion carried unanimously. This resolution is required annually by the County insurance carrier.

The next item of business was a discussion regarding the Order of Sale for a county owned parcel in the Catlow Valley, Account #20434. The County's policy for bringing county owned parcels to auction was also discussed. Commissioner Nichols then made a motion to sign the Order of Sale of County Property, Commissioner Drinkwater seconded, motion carried unanimously. Further discussion followed the motion.

County Planning Director Brandon McMullen was present to update the Court on the Wind Energy Task Force. He began by explaining the make up of the Task Force. He explained that the Task Force was charged with developing review guidelines that could ultimately become a part of each county's land use regulations and conditional use process. He went on to briefly describe his review of and recommendations on the report that was created by the Task Force. Commissioner Nichols noted that Mr. McMullen had not looked at Forest lands in his review; the Court asked him to go back and look at the report with Forest lands in mind and report back on June 2. A copy of Mr. McMullen's review in its entirety can be requested from the Planning Department.

A letter from the Vale District of the BLM in reference to litigation challenging the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and subsequent settlement negotiations was reviewed. Also reviewed was a letter from the Lakeview District of the BLM regarding litigation challenging the Lakeview Resource Management Plan.

Judge Grasty noted that he is working with the Eastern Oregon Rural Alliance towards getting Chris Dudley and John Kitzhaber, gubernatorial candidates, to hold a debate in Burns or John Day to discuss only rural issues.

Judge Grasty mentioned that Senator Merkley's office had responded to the County's Court's letter to him regarding Harney County's experience with the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). Senator Merkley has forwarded Harney County's concerns to the US Department of Commerce and has asked them to report back to him.

Water Use Requests were reviewed and no concerns were noted.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Johnson
County Court Secretary