Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of April 8, 2026, Work Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Work Session on April 8, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the Administration Conference Room, located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, OR 97754.

Work Session Agenda

Board Members Present: Susan Hermreck, Brian Barney
Board Members Absent: Seth Crawford
Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; County Counsel Eric Blaine; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Finance Director Christina Haron; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; HR Director Meghan McKee; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Extension Program Coordinator Carmin Shelton; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Assessor Jon Soliz; Landfill Director Jacquie Davis; Landfill Manager Aaron Reinhart; District Attorney Kari Hathorn; Budget Manager Jamie Berger; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Administrative Assistant Mona Glade; Airport Manager Kelly Coffelt; Library Manager Kim Bales; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Human Resources; Clinic Manager Jeffrey Berkebile; Erica Haitsma; Dan Strandy; Angela Cummings; Julie Thompson; Mike Ervin; Stephanie Alisson; Jessica Barnes; Bertha; Shelby Fisher; Laura Westmeyer; and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 09:00 AM.

Public Comment
None

Discussion

1. Republic Services Rate Increase Request
Requester:
Erica Haitsma, General Manager

Presenter(s):
Erica Haitsma, General Manager
Dan Strandy, Finance Manager
John Heylin, Municipal Sales Manager
Details: Erica Haitsma, General Manager for Republic Services of Central Oregon, attended the Work Session and opened the presentation by reviewing the actual financial results for the 2025 fiscal year. She reported total revenue of $2,970,000, marking a 12.75% year-over-year increase attributed to prior rate adjustments and a

2.4% growth in waste volume. While total operating costs rose by 8.67% to $2,674,000, Erica highlighted several shifting cost drivers: disposal fees surged by over 20% due to landfill gate rate hikes, and depreciation rose by nearly 20% following the acquisition of three new collection vehicles. Conversely, the company saw savings in insurance premiums due to improved safety records and a slight reduction in truck maintenance costs. Dan Strandy, Central Oregon Market Manager, followed with the 2026 projections and the formal request for a 6.5% overall rate increase. He explained that 1% of this request is a direct pass-through for rising landfill disposal costs, while the remaining 5.5% covers cumulative inflation from the past two years, as no CPI adjustment was sought in 2025. The projection includes a 3% cost-of-living increase for staff and a 7% rise in medical benefits. Notably, Dan clarified that the proposal conservatively projects a 2% decline in fuel costs despite recent global volatility, effectively acting as a credit to the customer. The presentation concluded with a discussion on the target pre-tax profit margin of 10.5%, which sits in the middle of the standard 9% to 12% range used by Oregon municipalities. The Commissioners expressed satisfaction with the transparency of the report, particularly regarding the fuel and inflation data. Because the proposal involves a rate adjustment, the Board noted it must be heard at a formal public meeting. The matter was scheduled for a presentation during the public session next week.

2. Update on Contract Negotiations with PSCS

Requester:

Melissa Thompson, Chief Behavioral Health Officer

Presenter(s):

Angela Cumming - Program Director BestCare Crook County CMHP

Details: Angela Cumming, Program Director for BestCare attended the Work Session and provided a critical update regarding the ongoing contract negotiations with Pacific Source Community Solutions (PSCS), the area’s CCO insurance provider. Angela reported that negotiations have reached a difficult impasse, characterized by Pacific Source’s demand for significant budget cuts—currently estimated at a 15% reduction—despite the insurer remaining financially profitable for the last four months. Beyond the rate disputes, BestCare highlighted severe administrative failures within Pacific Source’s system, including a 10-week period where no claims were paid and a recurring error that recently triggered 4,000 wrongful claim denials. These issues have forced BestCare to dedicate two full-time employees exclusively to managing Pacific Source’s billing errors. To address these challenges, BestCare is proposing a shortened six-month contract rather than a standard annual agreement. This strategic move is intended to monitor whether Pacific Source’s financial performance and administrative accuracy improve before committing to long-term reduced rates. BestCare is also seeking to include contract language that imposes surcharges or interest on claim denial errors caused by the insurer's system. Angela noted that Deschutes County is currently entering mediation with Pacific Source and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) over similar contract issues, and BestCare may eventually ask OHA to hold the insurer accountable or consider alternative CCO options. The Crook

County Commissioners expressed strong support for BestCare, noting that a loss of mental health services would place an unsustainable burden on the local jail and emergency rooms. To assist in advocacy, the Board requested that BestCare provide specific talking points to help them craft a formal letter of support. This letter is expected to be reviewed and approved at next week's public meeting. The Commissioners intend to use this communication to put pressure on both Pacific Source and the OHA to ensure the stability of vital community mental health programs.

3. Emergency Management Grant agreement 25-506

Requester:

AJ Crawford, Emergency Manager

Details: Emergency Manager AJ Crawford attended the Regular Session to present the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Agreement 25-506, a recurring award designed to bolster the county's disaster preparedness and response capabilities. This year's agreement faced initial delays due to specific federal warranty language that required legal refinement, but counsel Eric Blaine confirmed that the document is now legally sufficient for signature. The grant provides $67,978 in funding based on a 50-50 cost share model, primarily supporting operational expenses such as salaries and administrative time. Although the county had not originally factored these funds into the current budget, the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) has formally accepted the federal funds from FEMA, allowing the grant to be backdated to July 1, 2025. While there is no immediate hard deadline for execution, AJ noted that staff will be training on a new state grant reporting system next week to ensure compliance. The Board agreed to place the agreement on the consent agenda for formal approval during next Wednesday's public meeting.

4. Assessor Office Staff Promotion

Requester:

Jon Soliz, Crook County Assessor

Details: Assessor Jon Soliz attended the Work Session to present a request to promote a staff member from Assessment Technician 1 to Assessment Technician 2. The employee, hired in 2024, demonstrated exceptional proficiency by leveraging 12 years of prior experience in the title company industry. This background allowed her to quickly master entry-level tasks—such as processing deeds and data entry—and move into advanced responsibilities, including handling mobile homes, senior deferrals, and veterans' exemptions. Solis noted that the employee has been performing "out-of-class" work for some time and represents a high-potential, long-term asset to the county. The promotion is fiscally sustainable and carries a budget impact of approximately $2,000 to $4,000. Solis explained that the costs are more than offset by a vacant position in his office that has remained unfilled since July 2025; this vacancy has freed up approximately $88,000 and will not be filled in the 2026–2027 fiscal year. Furthermore, the overall department budget remains within the 3% increase limit directed by the County Manager. Jon confirmed that the promotion aligns with county goals regarding outstanding service, operational efficiency, and cross-training. The request received unanimous support from the Board, as well as prior clearance from HR, Finance, and the County Manager. While there was brief discussion regarding whether the item needed to move to a future consent agenda, HR clarified that a simple motion and approval during the current session were sufficient.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to approve the promotion of Tech II. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

5. Oregon Department of Forestry IGA
Requester:
Kelly Coffelt, Airport Manager
Details: Airport Manager Kelly Coffelt attended the Work Session to present an updated Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) for the lease of airport space during the upcoming fire season. While ODF typically bases two single-engine air tankers at Prineville airport, they have decided to double their presence this year to four aircraft. This expansion will significantly increase the airport's revenue, nearly doubling the lease receivables compared to previous years. The contract generally spans six months at a rate of approximately $2,500 per month, though the exact duration remains flexible based on the severity and length of the fire season. Beyond the standard tankers, Kelly highlighted that ODF will also base a new, advanced "Twin Otter" aircraft in Prineville for the full summer rather than its usual base in Salem. This increased activity provides a substantial secondary benefit to the airport through high-volume fuel sales and the local economic impact of the 16 to 24 personnel required to operate the fleet. Kelly also informed the Board that high-level discussions are underway regarding ODF leasing hangar space for a permanent year-round base, which would further solidify the partnership. The Board expressed strong support for the increased fire suppression resources and moved the IGA to the consent agenda for formal approval next week.

6. Position Restructure- OSU Extension Office
Requester:
Meghan McKee, HR Director
Details: HR Director Meghan McKee attended the Work Session to present a proposal to restructure the OSU Extension Office following a recent staff departure. The vacancy provided an opportunity to reorganize job descriptions to better reflect the current duties and collaborative nature of the remaining team. A key component of this change involves transferring the budget management responsibilities to a dedicated Budget Officer, Tim, which allows the office leadership to focus more on program delivery and staff support. Under the new structure, the previous supervisor role has been

reclassified as a "Lead" role. This change enables Carmin to continue her specialized work with 4-H while providing leadership to the office. HR and the County Manager's office will partner more closely with the Extension Office and Oregon State University to ensure administrative support and cohesive operations. Commissioners expressed their support for the plan, noting the high levels of camaraderie and positive morale currently visible in the office.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to approve the position restructure of the OSU extension office. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

7. Public Health Week
Requester:
Katie Plumb, Health & Human Services Director
Presenter(s):
Katie Plumb, Health & Human Services Director
Stephanie O'Neal, Public Health Modernization Manager
Details: Stephanie O'Neal, Public Health Modernization Manager, and Katie Plumb, Health and Human Services Director, attended the Work Session to provide an overview of National Public Health Week, led by the American Public Health Association, with this year's theme "Ready, Set, Action." The presentation highlighted the importance of public health's proactive and often behind-the-scenes work, including prevention, education, and community support. Stephanie emphasized how public health supports youth and families, strengthens mental health resources, and prepares the community to respond to unexpected health events, and she invited attendees to a community event scheduled for Friday at 8:00 a.m. Katie Plumb highlighted several key program areas and service impacts within the department. Family Health Services currently supports over 30 families through home visiting programs and care coordination for complex needs. The WIC program serves approximately 722 individuals with a small but effective team. Health Protection and Response staff manage an average of 49 communicable disease investigations per month while also conducting environmental health activities such as inspections and clean air and water efforts. Clinical services average 32 appointments and 20 immunization visits per month, with plans to expand capacity. Prevention and Health Promotion efforts focus on substance use prevention, mental health, and youth engagement, including programs in local schools. Katie emphasized the relational nature of public health work and recognized staff for their dedication and impact within the community. Commissioners and staff expressed appreciation for the presentation and the ongoing efforts of the Public Health team.

8. Grass Butte Cinder Crush 2026-03
Requester:
Brad Haynes, Road Superintendent
Details: Road Department Superintendent Brad Haynes attended the Work Session to present a request for approval to enter into a contract for the 2026 Barnes Butte (Grass Butte) Cinder Crush project. He explained that the Grass Butte Pit is co-owned with the State of Oregon and that the project includes crushing approximately 5,000 tons of material for county stockpiles, with ODOT also planning to purchase materials through the contract. Mr. Haynes reported that 12 contractors attended the pre-bid meeting, with three sealed bids submitted. The lowest bid was received from 4R Equipment LLC in the amount of $73,450 (approximately $9.99 per ton), followed by significantly higher bids from other contractors. He confirmed that the low bidder is experienced and capable of completing the work. Brad requested authorization to proceed with the contract, noting the project would provide several years of material for road maintenance. Following discussion, it was determined that the item would be brought back as a discussion item to allow for the notice of intent to award and the required protest period prior to final contract execution.

9. Library Meeting Room Policy Update
Requester:
Kim Bales, Librarian Team Lead
Details: Library Manager Kim Bales attended the Work Session to present a proposed update to the library's meeting room policy, recommending that, effective May 1st, meeting rooms be available only during regular library business hours. She explained that the change is intended to address ongoing safety and liability concerns, including vandalism, alcohol use, and unauthorized after-hours use. Kim noted that the Library Board has reviewed and approved the policy and that staff proactively contacted regular user groups to discuss the change and provide alternative meeting space options, with concerns largely resolved. During discussion, Will Van Vactor relayed that Commissioner Crawford had suggested holding a joint meeting with the Library Board at the next regular session; however, Commissioners Barney and Hermreck did not feel this was necessary, noting that all concerns had been addressed and outreach had been completed. Commissioners expressed support for the proposed policy, citing the need to improve safety and protect county property. It was also noted that Crook County is currently the only library in Oregon allowing after-hours use, contributing to the issues experienced. Will Van Vactor further acknowledged that there had initially been strong public feedback regarding the proposed change and commended library staff for their proactive communication and efforts in addressing concerns. The Board agreed to place the item on the consent agenda, with the option for further discussion if requested.

10. Appointment of Kim Bales to Library Manager
Requester:
Will Van Vactor, County Manager
Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor attended the Work Session to request the appointment of Kim Bales to the position of Library Manager. He noted that Kim has been serving as Interim Library Manager since the departure of the previous Library Director and has demonstrated strong leadership, professionalism, and the ability to maintain stable operations and uninterrupted library services during that time. Will explained that following an unsuccessful recruitment for a Library Director, promoting Kim provides an opportunity to invest in internal leadership, utilize her institutional knowledge, and support continued progress under the library's recently adopted strategic plan and strong financial position. He further noted that, although the position is not titled as a director role, it functions at a department head level and is therefore being brought forward for Board approval. Commissioners expressed support for the appointment, commending Kim's leadership and the positive team environment within the library. The Board approved the recommendation and authorized Will to move forward with the appointment.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to appoint Kim Bales as the Library Manager. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

11. Review of Draft Public Records Policy
Requester:
Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor and Laura Westmeyer of Cable Huston LLP presented an update to the County's Public Records Request Policy, originally adopted in 2017. Will explained that earlier this year the Board directed updates to the policy, including a prior interim adjustment that shifted certain responsibilities to County administration. The proposed updated policy formalizes a centralized records custodian within the County Manager's Office, aligns response timelines with state statute, and establishes clear procedures for fees, completion standards, and communication expectations. Will highlighted that the most significant change is the shift to an administrative model, including authority for the County Manager to appoint a public records custodian and handle certain decisions, including fee waiver determinations. Laura Westmeyer further explained that the fee waiver process has been structured to improve consistency and transparency by using a standardized evaluation form and defined criteria to document decisions. Discussion also addressed records redactions and exemptions, with clarification that requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and escalated to legal counsel when necessary. It was noted that the Sheriff's Office and District Attorney maintain their own public records policies. Will also outlined expectations for training and oversight of the records custodian role to ensure compliance and continuity. The Commissioners expressed support for the proposed updates, particularly the fee waiver framework, and noted the importance of improving consistency and efficiency in handling requests. The item will be brought back for further discussion at a future meeting following incorporation of additional comments and refinements.

Manager Report

None

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Barney had no updates to report.

Commissioner Hermreck reported attending Senator Merkley's town hall meeting, where she served as master of ceremonies and participated in a leaders' meeting with Steve Uffelman, Greg Svelund of DEQ, and Caroline Ervin. Susan noted that she raised concerns regarding healthcare, particularly the reduction in mental health services and funding, which Senator Merkley acknowledged as a significant concern. Commissioner Hermreck also discussed wildlife management issues, specifically wolf delisting, and reported that Senator Merkley expressed conditional support for delisting in Oregon, while emphasizing a focus on Oregon-specific impacts. Additional topics included water contamination concerns with DEQ and discussion regarding the use of approximately $1 million in funding, with Commissioner Hermreck expressing interest in ensuring a portion of those funds are directed toward remediation efforts in addition to research and testing. She concluded by noting upcoming meetings with the Health Council and COACT, including advocacy for ODOT transportation funding priorities related to Highway 126 and the proposed roundabout project.

Executive Session

At 10:21AM the Board of Commissioners convened into Executive Session under the following statute(s): ORS 192.660(2)(e) For the purpose of conducting deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions; and ORS 192.660(2)(h) To consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

12. ORS 192.660(2)(e) For the purpose of conducting deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to direct staff to correspond with their counterparties as discussed in the executive session. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

13. ORS 192.660(2)(h) To consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to direct staff to correspond with counterparties as discussed in the Executive Session. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to adjourn the meeting. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 2-0.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 11:43 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant