

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of April 22, 2026, Work Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Work Session on April 22, 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: Seth Crawford, Susan Hermreck, Brian Barney

Board Members Absent:

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; County Counsel Eric Blaine; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Natural Resources Manager Tim Deboodt; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Extension Office Service Lead Carmin Shelton; Landfill Director Jacquie Davis; Community Development Director John Eisler; Assistant Building Official Terry Weitman; County Sanitarian Chris Haindel; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Administrative Services Manager Katrina Weitman; Assessor Jon Soliz; Emergency Manager AJ Crawford; Jessica Barnes; Mike Ervin; Julie Thompson; Laura; Donna Kriege; Matthew Esslinger; Andrew Adams; and members of the public.

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

Public Comment

None

Discussion

1. Installation of EMF (Electromagnetic Frequency) units near right-of-way on Crook County Property

Requester:

Andrew Adams, Senior Field Engineer

Matthew Esslinger, Field Engineer

Presenter(s):

Andrew Adams, Senior Field Engineer

Matthew Esslinger, Field Engineer

Details: Wood McKenzie representatives Andrew Adams and Matthew Esslinger presented information regarding a proposal to install approximately 9–10 energy monitoring sensors on county property. The representatives explained that Wood McKenzie is a third-party energy data company that monitors real-time energy generation and transmission data to improve transparency and efficiency within energy

markets and the electrical grid. The proposed sensors would be low-impact, solar-powered devices installed on small steel posts requiring minimal maintenance. Wood McKenzie indicated the sensors are not considered permanent installations and would occupy approximately two square feet each. The company proposed an annual easement payment of \$500 per sensor, totaling approximately \$5,000 annually to the County if all 10 locations were approved. The Commissioners and staff requested additional information prior to consideration, including proposed locations, maps, photos and drawings of the devices, company background information, references, intended data usage, and clarification regarding placement within existing utility easements or rights-of-way. Discussion also included how the collected data is used to support grid transparency, monitor congestion, assist utilities and renewable energy developers, and support regulatory oversight. No action was taken. Wood McKenzie representatives agreed to provide additional information and materials for further review and future consideration.

2. CAFFA Grant Filing Status/Request Update

Requester:

Jon Soliz, Crook County Assessor

Details: County Assessor Jon Soliz attended the Work Session to provide an update regarding the annual County Assessment Function Funding Assistance (CAFFA) Grant application submitted to the Oregon Department of Revenue. He explained that the initial application submission deadline is May 1 and requested an out-of-court signature from a Commissioner prior to submission. Jon reported that the estimated statewide distribution forecast for the upcoming year is approximately \$16.6 million, compared to \$16.1 million for the current year. He also noted that the County's assistance percentage has declined over time and is currently approximately 10.5%. Discussion included an overview of the funding source for the program, which is partially supported through property-related recording fees collected by the Clerk's Office. John explained that the application compiles budget and staffing information from several county departments involved in assessment and taxation functions. The Commissioners clarified that the request was for signature approval on the application only and did not require formal Board action or commit the County to additional obligations. No formal action was taken.

3. Onsite Fee Increase

Requester:

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Details: Sanitarian Chris Haindel and Community Development Director John Eisler attended the Work Session to present a proposed on-site septic fee increase for Environmental Health services. Staff explained that the department is fee-dependent and is proposing a 5% overall fee increase, with a 10% increase specific to on-site septic fees to address inflation, staffing costs, and long-term budget sustainability. Comparisons with neighboring counties and DEQ fee increases were reviewed, noting

Crook County would still remain below several regional jurisdictions. Discussion focused on balancing affordability for residents with maintaining essential environmental health services. Chris provided an overview of the on-site septic program, emphasizing its role in protecting water quality, supporting rural development, assisting with compliance issues, and providing responsive local customer service. Commissioners discussed the importance of local expertise, impacts on housing development, and the need for clear public communication regarding the value of the services provided. Staff noted that repair permit fees would not increase in order to avoid creating barriers for residents addressing failing septic systems. Commissioners requested additional comparison data, visual fee breakdowns, and supporting information to help communicate the necessity and value of the proposed increases to the public. Broader discussion included potential grant opportunities, state mandates without accompanying funding, and the importance of retaining knowledgeable staff to continue providing efficient local service.

4. Community Development Monthly Update for March 2026

Requester:

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Presenter(s):

John Eisler, Community Development Director

Randy Davis, Building Official

Details: John Eisler and Terry Weitman attended the Work Session to provide Building, Planning, Onsite, and Code Compliance activity updates for March and year-to-date operations. Assistant Building Official Terry Weitman reported that building permit and inspection activity remains consistent with prior years, with 182 permits issued in March and 809 total inspections completed. Updates were provided on several major projects, including CB International, Ochoco Apartments, Madras Highway Apartments, Brasada additions, and ongoing retrofit work at Apple and Facebook facilities. Staff also highlighted collaboration with Crook County High School's construction program on a student kiosk project. On the Planning side, John reported permit activity remains steady, though the complexity of projects has increased. Updates included the denial of the Verizon cell tower application, which was not appealed following multiple public hearings and extensive review. Staff also provided updates on the Transportation Safety Action Plan, Goal 5 DLCD grant work, Hidden Canyon Destination Resort Phase 1 application, and the Knife River CUP modification/revocation request. Onsite program updates included current permit activity, noting slower development trends compared to prior years but acknowledging seasonal fluctuations tied to spring construction activity. Staff discussed the role of onsite evaluations as an early indicator of development activity and economic conditions. Code Compliance updates included 13 new cases opened, and 13 cases closed during the reporting period. Staff also emphasized continued coordination between onsite and code compliance efforts to address septic-related public health and safety concerns throughout the county.

5. Amending a Gate Permit Agreement; Extending the Term; Closing a Portion of Buck Creek Road

Requester:

Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor attended the Work Session to introduce a discussion regarding the extension of the long-standing Buck Creek Road gate agreement with GI Ranch. Will reviewed the history and terms of the agreement, noting it was originally approved by the County Court in 2006 and is not a new arrangement, but rather an extension of the existing agreement through October 2030. Will explained the agreement allows GI Ranch to install, maintain, and operate gates restricting general public access to a portion of Southeast Buck Creek Road between Southeast Allen Road and Southeast Price 12 Mile Road. Under the agreement, GI Ranch is responsible for all gate construction, maintenance, liability, and associated costs, while also providing access and keys to the county and other governmental entities. The county retains the authority to terminate the agreement if deemed necessary and has no obligation to maintain the roadway. Commissioner Hermreck noted that Road Department staff historically indicated the county did not have the resources or desire to maintain that section of road. Board members expressed support for moving the agreement extension forward on the consent agenda at a future regular meeting.

Manager Report

County Manager Will Van Vactor recognized Administrative Professionals Day and expressed appreciation for administrative staff across the county. He acknowledged their essential role in supporting county operations and delivering services to the community, noting they are critical to the success of Crook County's work. Brian Barney offered a special thank you to Breyanna Cupp for her efforts in coordinating meetings and supporting the administrative functions of the office.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Barney had no update.

Commissioner Hermreck offered her appreciation to Breyanna for her support with agenda preparation and meeting coordination, acknowledging that her assistance has been essential in helping manage the workload.

Commissioner Crawford reported on a recent visit from the U.S. Secretary of Education to Crook County schools. He highlighted the event as a positive and historic opportunity to showcase local education programs, noting the schools did an excellent job hosting the visit. During the tour, the Secretary observed programs such as the

high school construction club, Advanced Placement courses, and opportunities for students to earn college credit while still in high school. Seth emphasized student achievement, including a valedictorian on track to enter college as a junior due to earned credits. He also noted broader discussions about both vocational and academic pathways for students, expressing support for expanding career and technical education opportunities within Crook County. The visit received positive feedback and helped highlight educational successes outside larger urban areas.

Public Comment

None

Executive Session

At 10:00AM the Board of Commissioners convened into Executive Session under the following statute(s): ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions; and ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection.

6. ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions; and

7. ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection.

During the executive session, County Counsel provided an update and noted there were no action items requiring Board approval. A potential expense was discussed; however, it was determined that County Counsel has existing contract authority to address it, so no motion from the Board of Commissioners was needed at that time.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to Adjourn. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 10:28 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant