Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of June 3, 2026, Regular Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Regular Session on June 3, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the Crook County Annex Meeting Room, located at 320 NE Court Street, Prineville, OR 97754.

Regular 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; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Finance Director Christina Haron; Community Development Director John Eisler; Assessment Technician Elsie Ray; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Administrative Assistant Mona Glade; Senior Planner Katie McDonald; Systems Engineer Chelsea Watson; Administrative Services Manager Katrina Weitman; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; Budget Manager Jamie Berger; Assessor Jon Soliz; Library Manager Kim Bales; IT Manager Blaine Cheney; Natural Resources Coordinator Tim Deboodt; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Twandy Byrd; Julie Thompson; Laura; Ashley McCormick; Justin Alderman of the Prineville Review; Paul; Joel Komarek; Michael Miller; Crystal Irish; Jake Stephens; Daniel; Lorian Maxham; Max Yoklic; Jacob Ripper; and members of the public.

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

Agenda Modification: Commissioner Seth Crawford announced that the Core Services Final Report item is being removed from the agenda and postponed to a future meeting. He clarified that the process would continue as planned, but the final report would not be presented during today's meeting.

Public Comment

Justin Alderman, Managing Editor of the Prineville Review, inquired about the Ag Extension Service District Budget Committee meeting notice timeline and whether the district had complied with Oregon budget law. County Manager Will Van Vactor responded that meeting notices had been distributed on April 30th and May 4th to media and subscriber lists and confirmed that required notice procedures, including publication in the newspaper of record, had been followed. Mr. Alderman thanked staff for the clarification.

Consent Agenda

1. Approve Minutes

2. Order 2026-26 Appointment to Library Board of Trustees

3. Approval of Amendment 8 to the Oregon Health Authority 2025-2027 Intergovernmental Agreement

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to approve consent agenda as presented. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

Discussion

4. Public Budget Hearing — Order 2026-24 Adopting the Crook County Agricultural Extension Service District budget for fiscal year 2027

Requester:

Tim Deboodt, Budget Officer

Presenter(s):

Tim Deboodt, Budget Officer

Details: Budget Officer Tim Deboodt attended the Regular Session to present the Crook County Agricultural Extension Service District's proposed FY 2026 budget, noting that the Budget Committee held a public hearing and approved the budget on May 11th. The proposed budget totals $852,000 and is based on a permanent tax rate of $0.1207 per $1,000 of assessed value. Tim noted the budget is approximately $75,000 lower than the previous year. Commissioner Hermreck commended Tim for addressing a projected budget deficit and developing a balanced budget. A public hearing was opened and closed with no public testimony received. No further discussion followed.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to approve Order 2026-24, adopting the Crook County Ag Extension Service District budget for fiscal year 2027. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

5. Supplemental Budget Hearing – Resolution 2026-23 Adopting a Supplemental Budget for Crook County Fiscal Year 2025-26

Requester:

Jamie Berger, Budget Manager

Presenter(s):

Jamie Berger, Budget Manager

Details: Budget Manager Jamie Berger attended the Regular Session and presented Resolution 2026-23, a supplemental budget for FY 2025-26. The proposal included transfers from operating contingency to support additional activities within the General

Fund, Community Development, Health and Human Services, Surveyor, and Airport funds. Berger also outlined two supplemental budget adjustments: a $242,000 increase to the School Fund due to additional Secure Rural Schools (SRS) and federal payment-in-lieu-of-taxes revenues, which are passed directly to local school districts, and a $136,000 increase to the Fairgrounds Fund from higher-than-anticipated beginning fund balance, donations, and interest earnings to support ongoing projects and improvements. Commissioners discussed the additional SRS funding and noted ongoing restroom renovation projects at the fairgrounds. A public hearing was opened and closed with no testimony received and no further discussion.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to approve Resolution 2026-23, a resolution adopting a supplemental budget for fiscal year 2025-2026. Susan Hermreck seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

6. Public Budget Hearing — Resolution 2026-22 Adopting the Crook County Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

Requester:

Jamie Berger, Budget Manager

Presenter(s):

Will Van Vactor, County Manager/Budget Officer

Jamie Berger, Budget Manager

Details: County Manager/Budget Officer Will Van Vactor attended the Regular Session and presented the proposed Crook County FY 2026-27 budget, which was approved by the Budget Committee on May 11, 2026, and forwarded to the Board without changes. The total budget is $139.3 million, including $92.9 million in appropriations, approximately $65.5 million in spending authority, $27.5 million in contingency, and $46.4 million in reserves. Van Vactor highlighted key budget components, including a 5% increase in the General Fund, a 1% reduction in Sheriff's Office operating expenditures, improved fiscal stability in the Health and Human Services Fund, capital equipment and vehicle purchases funded through the Capital Asset Reserve Fund, and continued evaluation of the Airport Fund's long-term financial position. The budget maintains the County's permanent tax rate of $3.8702 per $1,000 of assessed value and reflects a reduction of approximately 15 full-time equivalent positions through staffing adjustments, program realignments, and elimination of vacant positions, with no layoffs of current employees. A public hearing was opened and closed with no public testimony received. No additional discussion followed.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to adopt Resolution 2026-22, adopting the Crook County Fiscal Year 2027 total budget will be $139,305,000 as presented. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to approve the permanent rate levy of 3.8702 per thousand assessed value for the budget for 2027 and the museum levy, and the museum operating levy, which is 0.0600 per thousand dollars of assessed value for

2027, and a debt service for 2027 of $672,000 which is approximately estimated at 0.1839 per thousand of assessed value. Combined, these levies result in a total estimated tax rate of 4.1141 per thousand of assessed value, which is slightly lower than the prior year. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

Commissioners expressed appreciation to Budget Officer Will Van Vactor, Finance Director Christina Haron, and Budget Manager Jamie Berger for their work throughout the FY 2026-27 budget process. Commissioners noted that the budget development process was well planned, thorough, and professionally executed, and thanked staff for their efforts.

7. Process and Standards for Potential Temporary Commercial Photovoltaic Moratorium
Requester:
John Eisler, Community Development Director
Presenter(s):
John Eisler, Community Development Director
Details: Community Development Director John Eisler attended the Regular Session and presented a memo outlining the legal and procedural requirements for adopting a moratorium on commercial photovoltaic solar facilities. He explained that while enacting a moratorium is not overly resource-intensive, it must meet a high legal standard, including demonstrating a compelling need to prevent irrevocable public harm and showing that existing regulations are inadequate.

He reviewed the procedural steps required, including a 45-day notice to DLCD, two ordinance readings, and public hearings. John emphasized that findings would need to justify the moratorium, including why alternatives (such as doing nothing or accelerating the Goal 5 update process) would be insufficient. He noted that both alternatives present risks: doing nothing leaves a long window for development under current rules, while rushing the update could reduce public involvement and weaken outcomes.

He also advised that any moratorium should be narrowly tailored in both scope and duration, likely limited to specific geographic areas and tied to the completion of the county's Goal 5 inventory and related planning updates. John highlighted risks and uncertainties, including potential legal challenges, the "goalpost rule" (applications being judged under rules in place at time of filing), and the possibility that applications submitted before adoption could proceed regardless of a moratorium.

As an alternative or supplement, he described a Goal 5–based interim protection approach using updated wildlife habitat mapping (including ODFW data) that could allow temporary protections for identified significant resources while the full Goal 5 process is completed. He noted this approach also has procedural requirements, including notice and a limited 120-day effectiveness unless extended through completed planning actions.

Commissioners discussed concerns about losing local control if projects proceed to state-level review, the risk of a surge in applications ahead of any moratorium, and whether public engagement alone might be a preferable initial step. John emphasized that both the moratorium and Goal 5 pathways would ultimately involve extensive public hearings and input.

Joel Komarek requested clarification on the reasons for considering a moratorium, how long it would last, and what would end it. Staff responded that it is tied to the ongoing Goal 5 inventory update and anticipated new solar siting rules, and that protections would be lifted once those frameworks are in place. Komarek also urged the Commission to ensure a robust public process before any action is taken.

Ashley McCormick stated that, as a realtor, she has conversations with residents who are leaving the community. She expressed concern that some families feel their voices are not being heard and that local values are being diminished by large-scale developments. McCormick noted that, in her experience, these concerns are contributing to some residents' decisions to leave the area.

Max Yoklic provided comments in response to concerns raised regarding energy development and electricity use. He explained that energy produced at local facilities may be purchased by entities such as Seattle City Light through accounting and market systems rather than direct physical transmission. Max noted that local generation can enhance regional grid resiliency by contributing to system stability during potential transmission disruptions and addressing growing electricity demand. He also referenced anticipated fiscal benefits to the County, including tax revenues and payment-in-lieu-of-taxation agreements that support local services such as schools and fire protection. Yoklic stated that he and his organization remain willing to participate in future public hearings and continued dialogue with the County regarding energy development.

Julie Thompson emphasized concerns about transparency and public awareness regarding proposed solar energy developments. She stated that many residents feel uninformed about projects and encouraged more robust public outreach, clearer communication methods, and broader notice beyond traditional postings. Thompson also raised concerns about zoning changes, the scope of public involvement, and the potential costs and long-term implications of land use decisions, including litigation risks and decommissioning of facilities.

Lorian Maxham expressed concerns about the visibility and public understanding of solar development projects in the area, noting she was unaware of recent developments until construction was already underway. She urged the County to improve communication methods, including broader use of local media and varied outreach strategies to better inform residents. Lorian also emphasized the importance of public meetings and greater community awareness, stating that residents should have clearer opportunities to understand and participate in land use decisions affecting the area.

The board discussed whether to pursue a temporary pause (moratorium) on solar development or instead proceed through Oregon's Goal 5 land-use planning process as an alternative mechanism for evaluating impacts on wildlife and other resources.

Commissioner Barney expressed opposition to a formal moratorium, favoring continued work through established planning processes and improved public engagement and transparency. Commissioner Crawford supported initiating both a moratorium process and the Goal 5 update concurrently, emphasizing the importance of hearing from landowners, stakeholders, and the broader community before making a final policy decision.

John Eisler provided an overview of two procedural pathways: a traditional moratorium based on preventing "irreversible public harm," and a Goal 5-based approach focused on identifying and protecting specific natural resources such as wildlife habitat using agency data (e.g., ODFW mapping). It was noted that both approaches would involve similar timelines, public hearings, and state notice requirements, though the legal standards and scope differ—one being broader and community-focused, the other more resource-specific and map-driven.

Discussion also addressed process implications for pending and future solar applications, clarifying that applications submitted during either process would continue under existing county code unless additional restrictions are formally adopted. John emphasized that public involvement would be extensive under either approach, including advisory committees, Planning Commission hearings, and board-level review.

Commissioner Hermreck brought up cost considerations, with staff indicating that direct financial impacts of running both processes simultaneously would be minimal beyond staff time and administrative effort, though longer-term outcomes and potential legal appeals could introduce uncertainty.

Toward the end of the discussion, there was general agreement to move forward with preparing both options for further public review and consideration, rather than adopting an immediate moratorium. Staff recommended structuring the next steps as separate motions or parallel tracks to clearly distinguish the Goal 5 update from the potential moratorium pathway, allowing the public to evaluate both options.

The board concluded with intent to proceed to the next step of the process, emphasizing transparency, local control, fiscal responsibility, and continued public engagement before any final decision is made.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to direct staff to prepare the required notices and documents to hold a hearing on a potential solar photovoltaic moratorium pursuant to the staff memo as presented today. Seth Crawford seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye. Brian Barney votes Nay. Motion Passed 2-1.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to direct staff to send notice to DLCD and prepare the necessary documents for consideration of potential interim protection measures for the county's wildlife habitat, pursuant to the OARs as presented by staff. Seth Crawford seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye. Brian Barney votes Nay. Motion Passed 2-1.

8. Review and Consider Transfer Agreement for Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FFE) at the Crook County Justice Center
Requester:
Eric Blaine, County Counsel
Presenter(s):
Eric Blaine, County Counsel
Details: County Counsel Eric Blaine attended the Regular Session and presented a transfer agreement between the State of Oregon and the county formalizing the transfer of ownership of certain personal property items associated with the Justice Center. The agreement fulfills obligations contained in previously executed documents and was requested by the state to formally memorialize the transfer. The agreement is the result of several months of negotiation involving county staff and facilities personnel. Once fully executed, the agreement will result in the county receiving over $800,000 in value from the state.

MOTION: Brian Barney moved to approve the Crook County Courthouse Transfer Agreement OJD contract number 250090. Susan Hermreck seconded. VNo discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

9. Consider Adoption of Crook County Core Services Final Report
Requester:
Will Van Vactor, County Manager
Presenter(s):
Will Van Vactor, County Manager
Details: Commissioner Seth Crawford announced at the beginning of the meeting that the Core Services Final Report item was being removed from the agenda and postponed to a future meeting. He clarified that the process would continue as planned, but the final report would not be presented during today's meeting.

Manager Report
None

Commissioner Updates
None

Public Comment

Lorian Maxham expressed concern about the potential for additional data center development in the area and asked whether further projects are being considered or scoped locally. Lorian emphasized the importance of transparency and public awareness regarding any such developments, and raised concerns about potential visual and community impacts, describing them as an “eyesore.”

Justin Alderman requested follow-up from the Commissioners regarding issues discussed at a prior joint meeting with the Crook County Vector Control District. Concerns were raised about governance practices, including alleged appointment of friends/family to a budget committee, compliance with public meetings laws, and whether appropriate ethics guidance had been sought. The speaker also asked about a potential third-party financial review of the district’s operations. Will Van Vactor noted receiving a recent response from a contracted party and indicated further review was underway. Justin reiterated concerns about transparency and requested continued follow-up and possible future joint meetings.

Executive Session

10. None scheduled.

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 10:56 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant