

**06-01-16**

Judge Shaffer called the regular Gilliam County Court meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was held at the Gilliam County Courthouse in Condon, OR. Present were Judge Steve Shaffer, Commissioner Michael Weimar and Commissioner Dennis Gronquist. Absent: None.

## IN THE MATTER OF ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Executive Session ORS 192.662 (g) Trade and Commerce

## IN THE MATTER OF CONDON CHAMBER COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Elizabeth Farrar presented the results of the Condon Chamber of Commerce Alumni and Community Survey: Internet Attitudes. The surveys are still available on both the Condon Chamber and City of Condon websites. The survey was designed to collect alumni contact information, public opinion input for local leaders and to gauge the interest and barriers to alumni returning home. There were two slightly different versions of the survey, one for the local community and a second for out-of-town alumni. To date 120 local residents have completed the survey and 47 out-of-town alumni. Farrar said the local sample size is large enough to instill confidence that local results are representative of the whole community. The out-of-town sample is too small to have the same confidence in those results. The Condon Fiber Committee helped shape the questions of the local survey. With respect to local internet attitudes, over half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagree that internet speeds met their needs and they would be willing to pay more for faster internet. With respect to economic development, schools and quality of life, not only was there a super majority, but large percentages of respondents selected strongly agree which signals an intensity in their belief. Farrar said the survey results indicated that the community had made up its mind about the importance of having high-speed internet.

Farrar said the number of out-of-town responses was not enough to be statistically significant. The Condon Chamber will be redoubling efforts to obtain additional out-of-town surveys and she will share results with local leaders when those become available.

## IN THE MATTER OF THE CONDON FIBER COMMITTEE

The following members of the Condon Fiber Committee were present for a discussion of bringing high-speed internet to Condon and Gilliam County: City Councilors Donald Jamieson and Jan Stinchfield, City Administrator Kathryn Greiner and Fiber Committee members Condon Police Chief Dale Scobert, retired educator and business owner Rita Rattray and business owner Elizabeth Farrar. Jamieson informed that the City of Condon

formed the fiber committee in response to what they felt were slow internet speeds in Condon. They discovered that Gilliam County has some of the slowest internet speeds in the State of Oregon. Jamieson noted that it has been well documented that in today's world high-speed broadband is the number one tool for economic development. After attending a USDA Rural Broadband conference in Bend the committee learned that Condon is not rural or poor enough to qualify for existing USDA grants. The take away from the conference was that the City needed a strategic plan. The Broadband Adoption & Utilization Strategic Plan has been completed and widely distributed. In an effort to increase public awareness and education about high speed broadband, the committee worked with Home Telephone to bring a high-speed fiber line to the Condon Public Library. May 31<sup>st</sup> internet speeds were 180 mbps down and over 300 mbps up. The fiber committee's goal is to bring fast affordable broadband to the residents of Gilliam County not only for economic development, but for increased quality of life. It has been well documented that open systems work best; that competition brings the most affordable prices. The Fiber Committee is interested in working with the County and has \$400,000 to contribute to fund the fiber backbone to Condon. Stinchfield added that if City contributes funds, the City would like to have a voice at the table. During a meeting with Judge Shaffer Stinchfield said she learned that the County currently has \$400,000 earmarked for fiber. Jamieson informed the committee had met with Q-Life, another ORS.190, and Light Speed Network (LSN) and learned they are interested in bringing fiber to Condon because their goal is to run fiber south to Burns. Columbia Basin is willing to partner with the City also. Stinchfield stressed the importance of fostering public trust if public funds are used. She thought the process needed to follow the law with the assurance of accountability. Stinchfield asked how much money the County has set aside in fiscal 2016-17 for economic development and had any of those funds been earmarked for fiber. Commissioner Gronquist said that he felt that the remaining \$400,000 earmarked for fiber in the current fiscal year should be rolled forward for fiber in fiscal 2016-17, but the Court has not specifically earmarked additional funds for fiber for next year. Judge Shaffer said there hadn't been funds specifically set aside for fiber, but the County will have \$1 million in fiscal 2016-17 for economic development projects and fiber could be a good use for those funds. Jamieson stressed the importance of having open access to dark fiber. A number of different users, such as cellular companies would be interested in tapping into an open system and would want their own dedicated lines. LSN supplies internet to court hearings around the state so they would be interested in having their own fiber strands. Jamieson reiterated that Condon has money and wants to be part of the process. The City has the staff time and with some funding the City could put out an RFP for an open system that anybody can tap in to, whether it's Frontier Telenet, 911, or anyone else. Commissioner Gronquist asked if the Fiber Committee had a quote for getting fiber to Condon. Stinchfield said the City had a preliminary quote from LSN of \$1.1 million to go from Wasco to Condon. They estimated it would cost an additional \$400,000 to run fiber to the premises. Commissioner Gronquist asked if it was critical to have an open line. Jamieson said it was absolutely critical. He said he has a number of different articles that state it is critical to have an open system whenever government funds are

involved. Whoever owns the backbone can enter in an IRU, Indefeasible Rights of Use agreement for a specified number of strands of dark fiber. IRUs are typically 20 to 30 year agreements. Jamieson thought it was important to not have monopoly control of the middle mile and that competition is what makes broadband affordable; whether it's LSN or Frontier Telenet. Jamieson said he would be happy to go with whatever company could get fiber to Condon the fastest and the most affordably. Stinchfield asked if the Court, or Frontier Telenet, had a time line for getting the fiber project done. Judge Shaffer said that three years ago the County prioritized paying down debt before investing in fiber, which had slowed Frontier Telenet's timeline for their fiber project. Judge Shaffer said that the Arlington TV Co-op needed help funding fiber the last mile to the home. He asked what funds would be available for an ISP to Condon if the backbone were built. Stinchfield said if the middle mile cost was already absorbed that would be a significant reduction in investment for an ISP looking to serve Condon. Jamieson said at that point the City was confident an ISP would be willing to invest their own money. Commissioner Gronquist said he had heard that the City project would hurt Frontier Telenet. Stinchfield said she didn't understand why Frontier Telenet didn't want the City at their table. Judge Shaffer said that Frontier Telenet's current operating revenue is needed to maintain their infrastructure. The E-rate dollars account for \$400,000 of the \$800,000 in their budget. If another company were to come in Frontier could lose the E-rate dollars. If they were to lose any of that operating revenue it would be the three counties that would need to make up the difference. Judge Shaffer urged the Committee to protect Frontier Telenet and Gilliam County. Commissioner Gronquist said that if Frontier Telenet is willing to work with the City they need to move quickly. The City has found a company willing to work with them it's time to find out if Frontier Telenet would be willing to work with them also. Judge Shaffer reiterated that the \$400,000 the County has would only be available until June 30, 2016. After June 30<sup>th</sup> it will roll into economic development for fiscal 2016-17. Commissioner Gronquist thought the \$400,000 should remain earmarked for fiber and should be a discussed at the next Court meeting. Stinchfield noted that pursuing new technologies, bringing broadband and improved phone service to rural Gilliam County were all priorities in the 2010 Strategic Action Plan. Judge Shaffer said he would work with Frontier Telenet and the City of Condon to get a meeting set up as soon as possible.

#### IN THE MATTER OF NEW GILLIAM COUNTY APPRAISER

Gilliam County Appraiser and Assessor elect, Chet Wilkins appeared to introduce incoming newly hired Appraiser Darlene Lufkin. Darlene will officially start June 1, 2016.

#### IN THE MATTER OF PLANNING DIRECTOR QUARTERLY STAFF REPORT

Gilliam County Planning Director Michelle Colby presented a brief overview of her quarterly staff report. Colby reported on land use actions, compliance matters, planning grants she has applied for, research inquiries she had received and gave a wind energy

projects update. Colby also informed the Court that she will be bringing the consultant contract with Tenneson Engineering Corporation for planning services in fiscal year 2016-17 before the Court at the June 15 County Court meeting.

#### IN THE MATTER OF PROPOSED ELECTRONIC CAR CHARGING STATION

Tom Wolfe, Columbia Basin Electric General Manager (CBEC) and CBEC Accountant Debbie Lankford were present to request financial assistance for a new Electric Car charging station in Condon. Wolfe informed the CBEC Board had approved installing four electric car charging stations in their service area. One each in Condon, Lone, Heppner and Fossil. Lankford will be the person in charge of implementation. The goal is to have the charging station up and available for tourists by July 1, 2016. After an approximately 30% Oregon Department of Energy tax credit, each unit will cost \$9,590 to purchase and install. The Bank of Eastern Oregon has agreed to purchase the associated tax credits. Each unit will qualify for travel and tourism funding sources. Wolfe asked the Court for \$1,000 to \$2,000 to assist with the purchase and installation. Each charging station will display the logos of those entities who helped make the project possible.

**Motion** by Commissioner Gronquist, seconded by Commissioner Weimar to approve \$2,000 for Columbia Basin Electric Co-op toward the purchase of a CT4000 Level 2 Commercial Charging Station; Shaffer – Yes; Gronquist – Yes; Weimar – Yes; **Motion carried.**

#### IN THE MATTER OF EXECUTIVE SESSION ORS 192.660 (2) (g)

Judge Shaffer declared the meeting to be in Executive Session pursuant to ORS 192.660 2 (g) Trade and Commerce. Separate minutes were taken and will be filed in the office of the County Clerk.

#### IN THE MATTER OF EXTENDING VOLUNTEER WORKERS COMPENSATION

Judge Shaffer informed there were no changes in the non-public safety volunteer workers compensation insurance for the NORCOR Inmate Work Crew.

**Motion** by Commissioner Weimar, seconded by Commissioner Gronquist to approve Resolution No. 2016-09 pursuant to ORS 656-031, extending workers compensation for non-public Gilliam County public safety volunteers; Shaffer – Yes; Gronquist – Yes; Weimar – Yes; **Motion carried.**

#### IN THE MATTER OF COUNTY VEHICLE AS SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

The Gilliam County Assessor's Office requested the Court make a resolution declaring the 1997 Jeep Cherokee as surplus equipment.

**Motion** by Commissioner Gronquist, seconded by Commissioner Weimar to approve Resolution No. 2016-10 declaring the Assessor' Office 1997 Jeep Cherokee as surplus equipment; Shaffer – Yes; Gronquist – Yes; Weimar – Yes; **Motion carried.**

#### IN THE MATTER OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

**Motion** by Commissioner Weimar, seconded by Commissioner Gronquist to approve the May 18 Regular Court Minutes and the May Claims pending review; Discussion: Judge Shaffer asked to have overtime for Community Development Rachel Weinstein removed from the May 18 Minutes; Vote: Shaffer – Yes; Gronquist – Yes; Weimar – Yes; **Motion carried.**

#### IN THE MATTER OF ORS 475B.345 LOCAL TAX OR FEE

There was a discussion of ORS 475B.345, local tax or fee; referral to electors for approval in the November General Election. ORS 475B.345 allows for a local option tax of 3% on the sale of cannabis. After a brief Court discussion, the consensus was to put the option of a local option tax on the general election ballot.

#### IN THE MATTER OF MCCOG MEMBERSHIP FEE INCREASE

The Mid-Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG) is proposing a membership fee increase of \$.50 from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per person. That would raise the membership fee Gilliam County pays from \$1,950 to \$2,975. Commissioner Weimar noted that a number of Gilliam County seniors use MCCOG services. After discussion, the consensus of the Court was to accept the MCCOG membership fee increase.

#### IN THE MATTER OF COURT MEMBER REPORTS

Commissioner Gronquist said that he wasn't aware if any of the three mixer trucks still for sale at Oregon Heavy Equipment had sold. He said he would give them a call to find out.

Judge Shaffer informed he attended the opening of the new Career Technical Education (CTE) building at the Arlington High School. He said he was impressed with the building and the 3-D printer. He thought CTE teacher Alan Cunningham had done a great job with the program.

Judge Shaffer met with Wind Wave, North Sky Communications and Light Speed Network.

Commissioner Weimar attended a Mid-Columbia Council of Governments. He also attended the Gilliam County Courthouse All Staff meeting. Commissioner Weimar said he thought there should be a new County vehicle discussion at the next County Court meeting. Commissioner Weimar said after reading the May 18<sup>th</sup> minutes he thought that the employment plan should be placed on the agenda to clarify how all of the new part time employees would be tracked and supervised. Commissioner Gronquist agreed that it should be put on the next meeting agenda since Rachel Weinstein's revised job description is still up in the air. Judge Shaffer said that he had not had a chance to work on new job descriptions, but would ahead of the next meeting. Judge Shaffer informed he has been working with MCCOG Executive Director Bob Francis on putting together a Request for Proposal (RFP) for hiring a Human Resources (HR) contracting firm and hoped that he will have an RFP ready for the next Court meeting. Judge Shaffer asked if the Commissioners were ready to approve the .5 FTE increase for Assistant Custodian Sabrina Wagenaar to begin work for Family Services. After a brief discussion Members of the Court agreed to wait on all new hires until after the June 15 County Court meeting in Arlington.

IN THE MATTER OF THE NEXT COURT MEETING

The next meeting of the Gilliam County Court will be at City Hall in Arlington on June 1, 2016.

It appearing to the Court there was no further business to be conducted at this time and no additional matters to be considered, Judge Shaffer adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

GILLIAM COUNTY COURT

By \_\_\_\_\_

Steve Shaffer, Judge

By \_\_\_\_\_

Dennis Gronquist, Commissioner

By \_\_\_\_\_

Michael Weimar, Commissioner

*R. Weinstein/Recorder*