

January 29, 2024

The Board of Garfield County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, January 29, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Chambers at the Garfield County Courthouse.

Present were Chairman Justin Dixon, Member Larry Ledgerwood, Member Jim Nelson, Clerk of the Board McKenzie Lueck and the public.

The Board started the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board reviewed and approved the minutes for the previous meeting.

Chairman Dixon called for public comment. There was none.

Chairman Dixon informed Wendi Watson that the Garfield County Planning Commission typically meets on an issue-based need. They don't have a regular meeting schedule. Chairman Dixon stated that there are minutes from previous meetings available for people to review. The next meeting will be advertised in the local newspaper as well as on the County's website.

Road Supervisor, Steve Gormsen, gave the road report. The crew is working on calculating miles for painting lines for the coming year. Steve informed the Board that Columbia County sold their striper to Walla Walla County, so he is going to get his calculations figured out and reach out to a few surrounding counties and potentially private businesses to get quotes. The shop was busy last week; Grader 121 has a transmission issue, and they are working on pulling it. Commissioner Ledgerwood asked if they could use the construction grader while that grader is down. Steve stated that it is currently being used and stated that if the county gets a big snow event soon, we will have to rent another grader or look into doing something different for the time being while that one is down. Steve continued that the grader operator for district 2 was assessing roads within their district last week. There was maintenance done on the grader for district 3 last week but it's back to running. Steve stated that the crew plowed roads last Monday, and then cleaned out the trucks so they're ready for the next event. The crew is working on cleaning culvert heads and burning weeds while checking for running water on the roadway. Last week, in the shop they worked on E215, E247, E260, E127, E121. Ollie is working on getting a count for signs needed to have signs at every intersection in the county. This came up because Naslund Disposal called with concerns on finding addresses due to lack of signs in the county. Steve stated that there are potholes on the mountain road, and the crew will be fixing them, weather permitting. He wrapped up his weekly update, stating that the crew still needed to finish the guardrail project on Malone Hill Road, but they must wait until everything dries out.

Rachel Anderson joined the Board to discuss the vacancy on the Civil Service Board. She stated that she forwarded a list of individuals that are interested in the position to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Chairman Dixon stated that he checked with Prosecutor Newberg on the process of filling this vacancy as it's an appointment by the BOCC. Prosecutor Newberg is going to look into the process and inform the Board of the steps that need to be taken. Rachel also provided the Board with the 2024 Pomeroy Assist Budget. She informed the Board that the budget reflects a 5% increase. Chairman Dixon informed Rachel that met with Chuck Whitman,

Asotin County Commissioner, and Mark Janowski, Asotin County Veterans Service Officer, about a state grant which Asotin County has received which provides funding for services to Asotin and Garfield Counties to help veterans. Chairman Dixon stated that in the meeting, Mr. Wittman and Mr. Janowski spoke about coming over one to two times per month to provide services to Garfield County. The City Hall as well as the Commissioners' Chambers are available as a meeting place to provide these services to the community. Chairman Dixon stated that during the meeting they discussed how to get the word out; they plan to advertise it in the local paper so the community is aware of what services they can provide. Chairman Dixon continued that this is a two-year grant. There was discussion regarding Garfield County Emergency Housing and how it pertains to this. Rachel clarified that the emergency housing is for Garfield County and short term. Commissioner Ledgerwood mentioned a door-to-door mailer to get the word out. Rachel informed the Board that a member of Blue Mountain Action Counsel contacted her to let her know that they have resources available for anyone behind on rent. She stated that the only issue is they can't help with mortgages, only rent. Chairman Dixon stated that three members of the community have come forward with interest in the Civil Service vacancy.

The Board reviewed the annual dues for the Washington State Association of Counties which totaled \$7,280. Commissioner Nelson recommended that the Board pay the invoice because they are getting representation statewide due to being a part of this association. Commissioner Ledgerwood made a motion to pay the dues, Commissioner Nelson seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Dixon stated that he received an email from Sheriff Hyer regarding an initiative that Representative Joe Schmick is moving forward with which would provide funding for Columbia, Asotin, and Garfield Counties for a wildlife conflict liaison to help with livestock depredation. This is to make sure that the best interest of the constituents is being met when wildlife/livestock conflicts arise. Sheriff Hyer's email was a letter of support that has been signed by both Asotin and Columbia Counties with a request for Garfield to draft and sign a letter of support as well. The Board was in support of signing the letter. Chairman Dixon stated that he would sign a letter as the chairman and send it on.

Chairman Dixon stated that the Board was in possession of a draft agreement between Whitman County's and Garfield County's Sheriff's Office to house inmates. Prosecutor Newberg had made changes to the agreement. Commissioner Ledgerwood was in favor of signing the agreement, but Chairman Dixon requested that the Board wait until they speak with Prosecutor Newberg about what the changes were. Chairman Dixon stated that Walla Walla County is in possession of agreement that Prosecutor Newberg drafted to provide housing of inmates for Garfield County and are reviewing it. He expects to hear back from them this week. Commissioner Nelson stated that he doesn't see an issue with having multiple agreements in place, so the options are open. City Councilman John Hirsch asked who would be responsible for transporting inmates with these contracts and Chairman Dixon stated that all transports would be the responsibility of Garfield County Sheriff's Office. John then asked if Garfield County would have holding cells or not, and Chairman Dixon stated that the Board has not made a decision on holding cells at this time.

The Board went into executive session at 9:30 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. to discuss union negotiations with Prosecutor Newberg. No action was taken.

The Board went back into regular session at 10:02 a.m.

Engineer Wege joined the Board to give his weekly report. He stated that they are getting close to issuing a threshold determination on an energy project so there are a lot of conversations going on in the background to narrow down the details. He stated that he was on a webinar Tuesday and Wednesday for bridge standard updates/changes. He also met with Keller and Associates, as well as Grant Morgan (Columbia County Engineer) and Ron Weeks (Columbia County Assistant Engineer). Grant and Ron came to assist with conversations regarding the scope of work that Keller and Associates submitted for the Kirby Mayview project. Engineer Wege stated that a lot more has been done on the project than what could be conveyed by him, so Grant and Ron came to describe what they have already completed on the project. Engineer Wege is going to meet with Grant and Keller and Associates at the site this week to go over details of the project and then Keller and Associates will resubmit a scaled down scope and adjusted quote. The previous quote was around \$600,000. Commissioner Nelson asked when the revised estimate would be in, and Engineer Wege stated that it would hopefully be in by the end of next week. Engineer Wege also stated that the previous scope's schedule showed the ad being published in the spring of 2025. He continued that the issue with that is that the federal grant requires a 10% match by the county if the ad is not run by the end of this year. These details should be changed in the revised scope. He also informed the Board that he did performance evaluations on the administrative staff and that Tammy successfully completed her 6-month probation. He informed the Board that two employees were moved up to the next step in pay and that he had provided a letter to payroll.

Engineer Wege presented the Board with a resignation letter stating that his last working day will be March 18th, 2024. Chairman Dixon stated that they have discussed this, and he appreciates Engineer Wege coming forward with this letter. Commissioner Nelson moved to accept the letter and Commissioner Ledgerwood seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Engineer Wege stated that he has multiple meetings this week regarding the energy projects. He stated that Naslund Disposal brought up concerns regarding the lack of road signs throughout the county. Engineer Wege stated that the county only has signs on minor roads at intersections throughout the county, so you don't necessarily know what the main roads you're on are. His idea is to get a number together so they can apply for a grant as there is a lot of funding available for disadvantaged communities and Garfield County meets some of those requirements. The preliminary quote for purchasing the needed signs is about \$50,000. Commissioner Nelson stated that he likes the idea if we can find the funding. City Councilmember John Hirsch stated that there was probably additional funding available through emergency management for the sign project.

The Board reviewed the Affordable Housing fund budget and after comparing it to the proposed budget for Pomeroy Assist, Commissioner Nelson made a motion to approve the Pomeroy Assist budget for 2024. Commissioner Ledgerwood seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Ledgerwood stated that there was a fair board meeting last week and they are trying to decide on a theme for the 2024 fair. He asked if anyone has a good fair theme to reach out to Sara Riley.

Chairman Dixon stated that he has a meeting with Commissioner Hall, Commissioner Subert, Commissioner Swanick, and WSU Extension to see how WSU is going to move forward with extension agents for all four counties.

There was discussion regarding the drug and alcohol policy which is outdated. Commissioner Ledgerwood suggested that they give Adam Hodges a draft for the risk pool to review and provide insight on. Chairman Dixon stated that Prosecutor Newberg should review it as well. Commissioner Ledgerwood stated that he would deliver copies to both individuals.

Chairman Dixon informed the Board of building repairs needed at the Quality Behavioral Health building due to damage caused by a frozen waterline and frozen drain line. Chairman Dixon explained that they received a quote to repair the damages and it was above \$10,000, so they reached out to two other companies and are waiting on estimates. Chairman Dixon stated that he did inform Adam, and it was documented in case the county must submit a claim. City Councilmember John Hirsch asked if the County took care of the water problem that occurred in the Sheriff's office. Chairman Dixon stated that it was taken care of, but later that day another pipe froze, and it started leaking into the woman's cell. That situation is resolved now as well.

The following voucher payments were approved for payment:

Payroll Clearing Fund

Numbers: 23206 Through: 23206 Totaling: \$1,500.00

Electronic Payments

Dated: 1/25/24 Number of Payments: 22 Totaling: \$24,743.92

The Commissioners regular meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m. with the next regular meeting set for Monday, February 5th, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioner's Chambers at the Garfield County Courthouse.

/s/ McKenzie Lueck
Attest: Clerk of the Board

/s/ Justin Dixon
Chairman, Board of Garfield County Commissioners