

WALLOWA COUNTY
BOARD of COMMISSIONERS
STATE of OREGON

541-426-7730
FAX: 541-426-0582
TERA ELLIOTT E.A.

CHAIR JOHN HILLOCK
COMMISSIONER TODD NASH
COMMISSIONER SUSAN ROBERTS

commissioners@co.wallowa.or.us

August 23, 2023

Wallowa County Board of Commissioners (BOC)
Special Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes

9:00 a.m. Thornton Conference Room
VIA Zoom Meeting
Wallowa County Courthouse

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner John Hillock
Commissioner Todd Nash
Commissioner Susan Roberts

STAFF PRESENT: Paige Sully, County Counsel
Caprice Locke, Grant Manager
Franz Goebel, Planning Director - ZOOM
Tera Elliott, Executive Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT: Bill Bradshaw, Wallowa County Chieftain
Roger Averbeck
Scott Hampton
Angie Rubin
Chris Bullat
Kathy Bingham
David Hayslip
Karen Wurdinger
Rob Despain
David Hurley

Matt Vasiogambros, Stateline
Terry DeSpain
Paul Doherty
Steve Rubin
Tom Bingham
Garry Reynolds
Mack Birkmaier
Heidi Muller
Kathleen Ackley
James Bane

ZOOM ATTENDIES: Meg Bowen
Steve Knudsen
Matt McCaw, Greater Idaho
Michael Dembrow, Oregon Senator
Thomas Haley
Jolene Cox
Erika Polmar
Autumn Wilburn
Dave Alba
Chris Smith
James Christy
Mark Lacey

Mike McNally
Christina Knecht
Mike McCarter
Carmen Cady
Jeffrey S. Petrillo
Doug Sundman
Jennifer Piper
Julian Smith
Randy Knob, Union, OR
Dave Drotzmann, Mayor Hermiston
Groat Groat

9:00 a.m. – Chair Hillock opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Hillock stated the purpose of the meeting: To discuss promoting the interest of Wallowa County

to relocate State borders, and to prepare Wallowa County to become part of Idaho.

Commissioner Hillock stated the guidelines of the meeting, allowing speakers 2 minutes of time to speak and comments are limited to the topic at hand. The meeting will be adjourned at 10:30 a.m. or earlier if discussion has been completed.

Commissioner Hillock opened the meeting and read the verbiage of the County ballot measure which was voted on May 16, 2023.

Commissioner Roberts stated she has done some research on the benefits of moving our County to Idaho, looking at land use, licensing, education, differences between what Idaho has and what we have in Oregon, and a myriad of other things. Land Use was a large difference with the possible ability of a neighbor dividing their 160 acres into 40-50 home sites. Although Commissioner Roberts stated her study is more of a cursory review, there are many things that would be different. The methodology of completing the process would be a long path, ending with Congress' final approval.

Commissioner Nash expressed his desire to possibly have a white board at the next meeting with favorable and negative impact items listed to allow for a clear vision of what it would look like if we should move. Another thing would possibly be to evaluate if people actually want to move, or if the vote was more of a frustration of not having their voice heard on the other side of the state, and wanting to send that message to Salem. Vetting those things out in preparation of the next meeting could be done.

Commissioner Hillock then opened the floor to public comment.

Comments and questions were given by the following attendees:

Heidi Muller	Meg Bowen	Angie Rubin	James Bane
Paul Doherty	Karen Wurdinger	Erika Polmar	Mike McCarter
Rob DeSpain	Kathleen Ackley	Roger Averbeck	Dave Alba
Mack Birkmaier	David Hayslip	Senator Michael Dembrow	Carrie Silveira
Garry Reynolds	Matt McCaw	Gary Reynolds	

Commissioner Roberts stated she would like to leave attendees with the task of making a list of how to promote Wallowa County becoming a part of Idaho. Focusing on what the ballot measure states, Commissioner Roberts requested information from the audience of what they would desire our commissioners tell the Oregon Legislation. Commissioner Roberts also stated her experience recently of guests in our courthouse commenting of their need to understand why people want to live in such a remote place. Upon reading one article found in a magazine on the 3rd floor, one of the guests stated, "I get it." That statement prompts the desire to know what you in attendance today would tell those from the west side about all of us to help them understand the differences of living here and the importance of maintaining our way of life. The next meeting is in February, several months away, giving time for constructive, helpful input on the best way to visit with our friends on the west side of the state.

Commissioner Roberts also commentated on questions regarding how we support [minority] peoples in our community and stated her answer has been the same for 40 years. "We don't have enough bodies in Wallowa County to eliminate anybody from any board or panel." If you have an opinion, we want to hear it. We don't care what color you are, what sex you are, or anything else you are. If you are willing to join up and be at the meetings and participate and give us your honest opinion, you're in there!

Chair Hillock stated in his travel around the state, the term "urban/rural divide" comes up every time. It is a huge issue each one of us need to work on solving. The publisher of the Pendleton newspaper publishes a quarterly magazine trying to solve the problem of urban/rural divide.

The Commissioners again encouraged attendees to meet, make lists, and provide the Commissioners with what they should take to Salem. The Commissioners encouraged forming informal committees to work on this in the interim, speaking with neighbors, gathering ideas.

Commissioner Hillock stated it was good to have this meeting with everybody expressing their opinions. He appreciated how polite everybody was and all the input. He also thanked those attending by ZOOM.

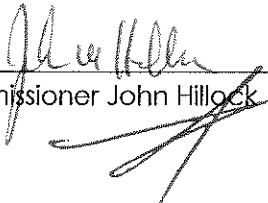
Adjournment:

The official meeting adjourned at approximately 10:10 a.m.

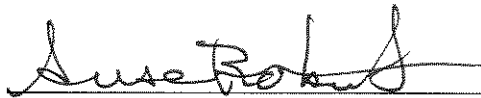
Respectfully submitted by:

Tera Elliott, Executive Assistant

WALLOWA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Commissioner John Hillock



Commissioner Susan Roberts

Commissioner Todd Nash



ATTEST: Tera Elliott, Executive Assistant