

A special meeting of the Wheeler County Court was held on July 10, 2013, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Spray Grange Hall located in Spray, Oregon.

Judge Perry called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m. and welcomed those attending. Teresa Greenfield recorded the meeting.

Present: Patrick C. Perry, Wheeler County Judge; Robert L. Ordway, County Commissioner; Anne C. Mitchell, County Commissioner; Dan Ousley, County Counsel; Teresa Greenfield, court secretary.

Public signing in: Jeremiah Holmes, Spray; Scott Field, Spray; Joan Field, Wheeler County News-Spray; Tina Conlee, Spray; Gene Conlee, Spray; Randy Sharp, Fossil; Marj Sharp, Fossil; Juanita Newton, Spray; Cindy Peterson, Spray; Jody Graham, Spray; Sharon Helms, Richmond; Sharon Morgan, Spray; Janet Wilson, Spray; Diane Petersen, Spray; Emily Williams, Mitchell; Billy Williams, Mitchell; Julaine Wagner-Demeritt, Spray; Janice Bolton, Spray; Candy Humphreys, Spray; Dave Humphreys, Spray; Zee Tankersly, Spray; Cheryl Jenison, Spray; Wes Whelchel, Spray; Rahlie Goodell, Spray; Sandy Speer, Spray; Valerie Howell, Spray; Crystal Pechanec, Spray; Joy Andersen, Mitchell; Gary Andersen, Mitchell; Barb Sitton, Fossil; Melinda Jacobson, Spray; Marissa Jacobson, Spray; Robin Champagne, Spray; Larry Champagne, Spray; Joann Griffith, Spray; Don Griffith, Spray; Judy Alford, Spray; John Asher, Spray; Frank Cecil, Spray; Melba Cecil, Spray; Kristen Neuburger, Spray; Colin Neuburger, Spray; Penny Moon, Spray; Bruce Gray, Spray; Scott Richardson, Spray; Tammy Richardson, Spray; JD Bunch, Spray; Frank Asher, Spray; Robin Hunt-Palazo, Fossil; Rod Osgood, Irrigon; Jim and Linda Glawe, Spray; Judy Fischer, Spray.

**Purpose:** To discuss road funding issues and concerns. A meeting was held in Mitchell on July 9, 2013 and one will be held in Fossil on July 11, 2013. Public Meeting Notices were posted in the Wheeler County News and The Times-Journal as well as conspicuous places in each of the Wheeler County communities.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** Welcomed those attending the community meeting. It is the second in a series of three meetings that we are holding in all the communities in Wheeler County. She introduced herself and gave personal background.

The court has talked about the need to get out and hold court meetings in all communities; it is difficult for some people to participate and come to our regular court meetings, which are held on Wednesdays during the day. We have talked about coming out and holding court meetings when there are specific issues that are important to the different communities and now that we are facing some big challenges with our road department, and we have to make some drastic cuts in our staffing levels, this is the perfect time for us to come out and help to give you some information and have a community discussion and give people an opportunity to ask questions and share ideas. That is what we are here for this evening and invite you to, when we get to the part where we field questions and comments and that kind of thing, please feel free to share ideas with us. If you do not feel comfortable speaking or have questions or comments that come up after the meeting, please see the contact information on the informational sheets that were handed out. Comments can also be posted on the new county website. The court is facing a huge challenge because of the drastic reduction in the revenue and therefore, a reduced level of funding to support the road department, which is so important to public safety and for travel within the county. At the end of June, the court had to make the very difficult decision to lay off four of the six road crew. Discussion will consist of the finances of the situation and what the future might look like. Commissioner Mitchell gave background about how the road department is funded: Back in 1908, Congress passed a law that was called the Secure Rural Schools Fund Act. Counties that had federal timber lands that were tied up and would never be available to produce tax dollars, for the counties, there was a fund set aside....a certain percentage of the receipts from the timber harvested from those lands went to the counties to support our schools and our road department. While our timber economy was healthy in Wheeler County, that provided a good amount of funds for us to run our road department and contribute to the funds that the state provides for our schools. Commissioner Mitchell gave an overview of the documentation that was handed out in order to lay some foundation

for the discussion that will take place. In January of this year, the new court was faced with the reality that funding was going to be gone and they did not have another source coming in identified and there was no plan in place about how to maintain our staffing level and the service levels for the county road department. In March, the court made the very difficult decision that they needed to reduce staff and so the first thing they did was eliminate the position of the road master, which left six union crew members who have been working for the road department and are valued employees. In June, looking at the budget and looking at the future, the court knew they had obligations to the six remaining employees. If they had to be laid off, they were entitled to their benefits and paid time off and etc. the county needs to have a chunk of money to make sure those obligations can be met. With the remaining dollars and in order to maintain some level of service to the public and county roads, they made the very difficult decision to reduce the staff down and could only afford to employ two full-time road department employees. The court does not have all the answers for what the plan is for the future. This has been coming for a long time and in some respect, the can has been kicked down the road and the court has received it and is trying to come up with solutions and of course, the ultimate goal would be to maintain our level of staffing and the highest level of service possible on the roads in the county. They are faced with this difficult place in time and the situation. The meeting was opened up for questions and comments.

**Ms. Richardson:** Are we going to get answers to our questions tonight unlike last night or are we going to get the run around again? I would like some answers. My biggest question is why you chose the people that you chose to stay on with the county and how that is in the best interest in the county when one of your workers cannot work...walk upstairs....lift over 35 lbs. or any of that. How is that in the best interest of the county and why is Spray always the one that gets cut. You guys gave us no answers last night and I am not happy with that. We shouldn't go home after 31 years of work and hear on our answering machine that we have lost our job. We should be treated with more respect in a county like this. Especially for my husband....everybody knows that he is hard headed and an asshole but he worked hard and he is a hard worker and everyone in here would want him hired to do the job.

**Constituents:** Agreed.

**Ms. Richardson:** I do not understand where you are coming from there, other than your own personal friend and agendas.

**Judge Perry:** Thank you Ms. Richardson, do we have another question?

**Constituents:** Said they want answers.

**Judge Perry:** The answer to the question is we kept a level of sustainable service that the county could afford.

**Mr. Neuburger:** But that includes hiring someone who is not able to do the job when we have people who are willing to do the job?

**Constituent:** Boy, that's a way to make money.

**Judge Perry:** If we are going to run a meeting, we will run it with order so if you care to state your name sir (to Mr. Neuburger) I will call on you.

**Mr. Neuburger:** I am replying to her question that you jumped right over and went to the next questions... how is that intertwining with what is going on right now? You just went to the next question without answering her question and she just asked if questions are going to be answered tonight.

**Judge Perry:** Yes, we will answer questions tonight just as we did last night. The question was why did we keep the staffing that we did? We kept the staffing that had the most special qualifications that we were allowed to through the union contract to keep people with special qualifications....

**Mr. Neuburger:** When they can hire someone who is handicapped and not able to do the job compared to someone who has been on the department for over thirty years....

**Mr. Osgood:** I represent the union. If things had gone like they feel they should have gone.....Scott is the most senior man and should have stayed on the job. They utilized the opportunity to make Ronny a foreman, which in the contract keeps the union from letting them pick their own foreman. That kept Ronny, someone with much more lower seniority, on.

**Mr. Neuburger:** In other words-it was offering him a much lower pay?

**Mr. Osgood:** The mechanic was kept on because they claimed that he had special skills that they needed to perform that work. Does the union agree with their decision? No we do not but that is their decision. I have an attorney looking at it right now because I am not convinced that they did it correctly.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** We would really like to have this discussion not be a discussion between folks in the audience if we can so the answering of question....the reason we maintained JT Wimer was because he was our mechanic and for those mechanic skills. We are required by the union to have a manager.

**Constituents:** You are not required.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** We need a manager.....I do not know what the requirements are exactly but my understanding is that if we have a road department, we need to have someone in a supervisory role. It used to be the road master....we no longer have a road master and we have the opportunity in the union contract to have a foreman and so we have two people now. One will have additional responsibilities in some management and supervision responsibilities.

**Ms. Wilson:** You said that you did not want talk amongst the people? The union man is not...I believe the union man should be up here where he can be asked questions if people want to ask him questions.

**Judge Perry:** We are in the process of negotiations and bargaining for the contract so I do not feel we should be bargaining in open public.

**Ms. Wilson:** May I ask the union man a question?

**Judge Perry:** Is it alright if we ask you questions (to Mr. Osgood)?

**Mr. Osgood:** Absolutely. I am not going to get the opportunity to clear up everything that is said tonight but would be happy to sit up front if the council agrees.

**Ms. Wilson:** So the court is refusing to allow us to ask questions....

**Judge Perry:** Please ask the union man a question if you have a one. I don't want to interrupt.

**Mr. Frank Asher:** the fact that you stated JT was kept on for his mechanical abilities....how often is he going to be using those abilities and how often are we going to have to hire on or bring on extra people to pick up the slack that he is creating by not being able to do the job in the first place? Wouldn't it be more financially feasible to get somebody who can hit the road and do the work and maybe hire out some mechanic work to a local entity or....that doesn't make much sense to me.

**Judge Perry:** As part of the union contract, we are not allowed to contract out services.

**Mr. Frank Asher:** You have one person in Mitchell is that correct?

**Judge Perry:** That is correct.

**Mr. Frank Asher:** And you have one person in Fossil is that correct?

**Judge Perry:** That is also correct.

**Mr. Frank Asher:** But you have nobody working out of the Spray area?

**Judge Perry:** The goal is for the two people to overlap in Spray so Spray will get coverage as well, maybe even more coverage with both of them overlapping.

**Mr. Frank Asher:** With over 260 miles of county road, 77 miles plus or minus being paved-and over 40% and near 50% of it being in the Spray area, rather than in Mitchell or Fossil, would it not make more sense to have somebody stationed here where the greatest portion of the work is going to occur for any kind of storming or anything like that? You need to take into consideration that not only does the road department have responsibilities for the roads schools and mail but they are also part of our support for any hazards: fires, flooding etc. which is going to be a greater need here along the river than other areas. Has any of that been taken into consideration?

**Judge Perry:** We really consider public safety our priority in keeping our roads open and available for the sheriff's department, ambulances....all emergency services, school buses and the mail routes are also as important...maybe not as equally important as the ability for emergency services to reach our constituents.

**Mr. Frank Asher:** But by having one person who is disabled during the winter, during the snow storms, whether he has mechanical abilities or does not, he has to chain up or has a flat tire, you have to bring another crew member from the other city and now you have just cut your already depleted manpower in half. Those things are going to happen and you and I know it. So if we are going to take several hours to plow the roads to get the schools open here, how long is it going to take throughout the county and basically you are working on 1 ½ manpower?

**Judge Perry:** If they start in Spray, they will work their way to wherever the services are most needed. It is not that they are excluding Spray of services. If there is a plow truck here or grader here, their service will start here.

**Mr. Holmes:** I understand the financial aspect of the budget....it is up in front and we have limited resources but I am not sure we have necessarily taken the correct action. First of all, along with emergency services, we are neglecting the businesses that need these roads.....the agriculture and the timber that are harvested right now. If the county cannot get them plowed out, how are the logs going to get to the market to get the revenue we need? As far as the question from before about contract services...I know for a fact that the county road department has hired mechanics in the past to work on equipment and I don't believe that the answer of the specialty services of a mechanic is going to answer our questions as to why we have that particular person in there instead of someone who can operate. I don't think....I understand that right now you guys are sitting up here and basically in the frying pan but decisions have been made that I am not sure were in the best interest of all of the communities. This kind of meeting should have been taken care of earlier....before the decisions were made. I myself and several others sat on the board two years ago and made recommendations. It was not to this extreme. Nothing was done then.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** One thing we are facing now as opposed to what was happening when those meetings were taking place is we had more money and the recommendation that I read about was to....the only conclusion was to reduce the work force. And so we are at the point right now where we just don't have the money to continue to write paychecks. Back then, they had a little more money to work with and now, we have pretty much spent it down. That is where we are at and trying to figure out where to go from here.

**Mr. Holmes:** According to the sheet, we have one more year worth of money and should have been thought out a little more.

**Judge Perry:** At a sustainable level....we are wanting to provide sustainable services not for one just one or two years but to try to do it long term. It will take some adjustments. We are aware of the adjustments and it will take some mistakes but we will also have some wins.

**Ms. Champagne:** I am a bus driver. I see hands up in the audience and you are not acknowledging them and I wish you would. I want to know if you have two only for personnel. One is a mechanic that you are going to keep in Fossil specifically?

**Judge Perry:** He is an equipment operator as well.

**Ms. Champagne:** I also know that he cannot sit very long in a truck and you are going to.....who am I going to call? I used to be able to call Scott or DeWayne or Gene in our spray area when I had a tree down on my bus route, the snow is too deep....I am sliding sideways. Who do I call now?

**Judge Perry:** You will call the same people you have always called ma'am. You will call the road department.

**Ms. Champagne:** They are not employed right now.

**Constituents:** Many chuckled and said that they are all out of jobs.

**Judge Perry:** We have an office number and a commissioner of roads, Rob Ordway.

**Ms. Champagne:** Are you going to be there at 5:00 a.m. when I call?

**Judge Perry:** There will be somebody available at 2:00 a.m. if you wish ma'am.

**Ms. Champagne:** And they will come from Mitchell.....I am sorry I am very upset and concerned that we do not have somebody in Spray. We leave at 6:00 in the morning. Your weather might be great over in Fossil and Mitchell and Richmond and vice versa. So who do we call in the morning when we are sliding? There are other bus drivers and we cover a lot in Spray. How are we going to get two people to cover all of our roads?

**Judge Perry:** I drove school bus for 11 years in the south of the county and we had one person plowing down there plowing roads and it just gets done. You can contact Commissioner Ordway or myself anytime. I suggest you can contact us before your leave if the roads are going to be bad.

**Ms. Champagne:** I am not going to know what the roads are like until I get on them. What is here in Spray might be totally different on Alder Creek, Winlock and same thing on Richmond Road. I have had so thick of snow that nobody could take care of. These guys come and they are on the road at 6:00 a.m. They are going to have to live here. You don't have anybody here. I guess that is my biggest concern and

you are going to get someone from Fossil or Mitchell? How long is it going to take to get here?

**Judge Perry:** Actually, the plow truck has left Fossil and done the Mitchell roads in the past. It's not like the services won't leave from here.

**Ms. Champagne:** They don't take care of Richmond Road.

**Judge Perry:** ODOT takes care of Richmond Road on occasion.

**Ms. Champagne:** Richmond Road not the highway. Richmond Road is a county road in Wheeler County and does not get touched.

**Constituents:** Verified that it does not get plowed.

**Judge Perry:** That is something that they will address and will work on it and asked that it be written down on the board.

**Ms. Champagne:** It is a big concern and another thing....when we have trees down, who am I going to call? We don't have cell phone service on all the roads....drive around the corner and there is a tree. I used to be able to stop by someone's house and put a call in....we don't have that now and that is going to be a big concern. We are going to have hunters on our roads very soon too.

**Judge Perry:** Very big concerns thank you ma'am.

**Ms. Conlee:** For those of you who were not there last night-we participated in the meeting at Mitchell and I am kind of on Tammy's side as far as....I went home last night and there were certain questions that we asked you and I felt that you really skirted around the answers. Either that or I was just not satisfied with the answers I got and so I kind of feel like Tammy and will keep asking the same questions until I feel better about it and I kind of think that's what you did. Last night we talked about how in March you took over the managing duties of the road department to save money and you changed that position managing and overseeing the road department until June 28<sup>th</sup> when you terminated four positions. Out of the two that you kept, one of the gentlemen you promoted to foreman, which I am assuming with that promotion comes a pay raise to assume what he does now...I am not clear on that but am assuming that is what happened. My question first is...why if we are down pinching pennies and saving everything we can....in my mind it would seem reasonable that... why did you not stay in command of the supervising of it and keep him as a regular employee...why are we promoting him when our union rep is sitting right here and specifically saying that it was not in our contract and that we did not have to do that. I want an answer about that first.

**Judge Perry:** In the contract it does state that we will have a work plan and will operate under a work plan. In order to form a work plan, management has to form a weekly work plan.

**Ms. Conlee:** Wasn't that what Commissioner Ordway was doing in the months that you guys were taking over?

**Judge Perry:** Yes, that is.

**Ms. Conlee:** So why can we not continue that to save that money that we are promoting that gentleman to a foreman?

**Judge Perry:** We feel that we need a hands on foreman that can be there to do the day to day guiding of the department and Commissioner Ordway, of course, has a personal business to run as well, and felt that for what he is doing as a commissioner and what he will continue doing as far as assisting in the court and assisting in finding funding for the department we needed to bring on management at a lower level to allow commissioner Ordway to do more upper management which would be actively pursue funding to fund our road department for the future. I would like to allow Commissioner Ordway to answer some of his own questions.

**Commissioner Ordway:** What was the question? Why I wasn't able to stay on the job?

**Ms. Conlee:** Why, when we are down to the last penny and we are laying people off and letting people go and saying we need to start budgeting and forecasting and looking toward the future and we need to save, save, save...why have you guys been doing that job for so many months and why all-of-the-sudden are you going to lay people off and then promote someone and give them a pay raise. Why can't you stay in that position and not promote someone and keep him at the same wage her was making. There are only two of them, I am not sure why.....I am thinking that managing two people versus six might be a little easier but maybe not.

**Commissioner Ordway:** Well, somewhat easier yes. I felt that it was better to have someone that could actually put their full effort into that position.

**Ms. Conlee:** So is he going to be putting his full effort in making weekly plans and figuring out what projects need to be done and not being out working roads because you are saying it is too much for you...I get that you are not being paid for what you were doing.

**Commissioner Ordway:** That is right...I receive no compensation for that....

**Ms. Conlee:** I understand that but you are telling me that...he is taking on more responsibility so he will be busy doing that so then who is out plowing the roads...who is doing the work? I am confused about that.

**Mr. Neuburger:** Who will work on the roads that we were told would be worked on but have not been started yet?

**Commissioner Ordway:** Point taken.

**Ms. Conlee:** I am not done. The other question that I don't feel was answered.....you had six gentlemen to choose from off of the road department. You guys are in a tough position and making points that you already have made.... I feel that you need to specifically give us reasons why those two...you gave us the reason that one is specialized- he has specialized training and I get that. The other gentleman that you kept did not have the seniority or experience so I want to know specifically why he was chose....those two were chose from the six that were available to choose from. Did he have a better work ethic, specialized training, was he willing to do any and everything you told him? Does he show up more on time than the other ones? Because I just feel like I have the right to know that. What specifically.....specifically made you keep him?

**Commissioner Ordway:** Management skills.

**Constituents:** Laughed and noted wow...funny.

**Ms. Conlee:** Can you prove that he has management skills and that he worked somewhere else where he was a manager or did he take classes? Is there proof?

**Commissioner Ordway:** He has his own business and has worked in the Mitchell area on his own quite a bit.

**Ms. Conlee:** Okay, so he worked on his own in Mitchell....did he supervise over there....doing the things that he was supposed to do...do we know that for a fact or was he just kind of over there doing what he thought he should do and did he care what he really should be doing? I want to know if there is proof, actual proof, that he has more managing skills than the others. I know these are hard questions but as a public citizen I, along with all these other people, that you have made this decision on their behalf...out of those six people...you three picked the very best person out of those six people...that they have the bet training, the best skills, the best work ethic, the best to work with them as a boss and employee; you specifically chose him as the best one out of those six? That is what I want to know because at this point, I really don't feel....my husband worked for you and I am not saying you should have picked him because he is not good at public relations and he was the lowest man on the totem pole. I understand that you have hard decisions to make. I understand that he was probably the first one to go...we understood that but I don't feel that you made a good decision on behalf of the public as far as who you kept and why you kept them.

**Constituents:** Clapped and noted approval.

**Ms. Conlee:** Wait...is that the only thing you had to say about that or is there more to say about it? That he was good at managing because he had his own business?

**Commissioner Ordway:** I felt that his equipment skills were adequate.

**Ms. Conlee:** Oh...adequate? But were they the best.....the best out of the six?

**Commissioner Ordway:** The best out of the six?

**Ms. Conlee:** Yes, his blading, snow plowing, cleaning, the ditching, and all of that....was he the best? Because when it comes down to it that is how you guys should have picked... the best for the job. If we have anyone left...it should be the best.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** I don't want to....it was a very important decision; we felt that given the combination of skills and experience that we made the best decision we could have at the time.

**Ms. Conlee:** Do you feel that you made the best decision at the time...will you still back that up and still say you made the best decision at the time.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** I feel that way right now. None of us have the answer....we are new to this and we had to make a decision.

**Ms. Conlee:** I understand that...I understand that you got a bad deal. You came into office and you got a bad deal. It has been passed down and down and down.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** We are taking the responsibility for that and we know that some of the decisions we make right now in a crisis situation, down the road, we may learn something we did not know before but we are trying to make the best decisions we can and our decision was based on the combination of skills and experience and that is about all we can say at this time. It is not a decision we took lightly. We did not sleep at night and we know this is really hard and so I don't know that we can answer your questions to your satisfaction because we have just been trying to make the best decisions based on what we know and what we had to work with.

**Mr. Richardson:** My point is to lean toward Chris, he said that they did not allow the hiring out of another mechanic...yes we have hired out other mechanics. I feel that we went down Rowe Creek and we took on a pretty big project. I feel that this time and the money situation was a foolish time to be doing the project; it was a good project but at a foolish time and a waste of money. I feel that the position and that job was made to create work for one person-Earl Mortimore-did you contact the union before you brought Earl Mortimore on to the job? He worked his machine, his excavator, and his jack hammer for 6.5 days down there and a good share of that time we did not need it. The county was able to do the job with their equipment. He was not needed here. Robby made the decision to keep him there anyway and keep him going...he got the work out of it...he did not need to be there. Did you contact the union before you brought him on the project?

**Judge Perry:** Let me back up to the contracted services. In our union contract, we are negotiating for past practices and past practices included what you just described. We have contracted for mechanic services and we received a cease and desist order from the union as far as what we are allowed to do as far as renting equipment. We looked what we did with Earl Mortimore and we rented his excavator and hammer and we did a job that we couldn't do with our own equipment and it took us a lot less time and we saved money in the long run by having it done and done efficiently and getting the men on to another project.

**Mr. Richardson:** There was only a small part of the time that the machine was needed on the project. It was not needed probably 2/3 of the time.

**Judge Perry:** I really don't want to get into the nuts and bolts of it...

**Constituents:** Why? If we are running out of money?

**Judge Perry:** It was only rented out for 48 hours.

**Mr. Richardson:** You hired it with the operator...you hired him as the operator.

**Judge Perry:** And private practices...we have rented other equipment in other circumstances without contacting the union.

**Mr. Richardson:** But you said you could not do that with a mechanic.

**Judge Perry:** We actually got a cease and desist so we are still negotiating that in our union contract on past practices, ability contract and flexible work hours. I don't want to bring my union negotiations into this meeting; that is for us to do as a governing body.

**Mr. Richardson:** The county is down to its last pennies and we take on a big project that...I looked at my timesheets...you estimated the cost at about \$15,000 last night. I looked at it and my time, I am in it over \$4,000 in the first three weeks and have not added up the last two weeks and that is at the county going rate.....I have excavator rate....

**Judge Perry:** That is our rate for equipment rental when we rent it out.

**Mr. Richardson:** Yes it is so it is not worth it if we run it ourselves?

**Judge Perry:** That is our public's equipment and we are doing it for the benefit of the public and for public safety.

**Mr. Richardson:** That was a big focus about what remains...

**Judge Perry:** Was it not our right-of-way...our safety issue that we were fixing.

**Mr. Richardson:** It was a corner that needed widened out just like a countless number other corners. We prioritize.....Robby prioritized a corner in front of his grandma's house along with patching potholes in front of her house...along with fixing a culvert in front of his grandma's house that was really no safety issue there.....none at all- it unraveled with a piece of culvert sticking out.....

**Mr. Neuburger:** But it got done.

**Mr. Richardson:** But it got done, you bet it did.

**Mr. Neuburger:** We are still waiting two weeks for stuff to get done...

**Commissioner Ordway:** I will have to go back and look at the court minutes but it seems like in 05' or 06' that project was approved by the County Court and it was to be done when it was convenient and here we are in 2013.

**Mr. Richardson:** It took all kinds of extra money. By fixing the culvert, it was not a safety issue in any way, shape or form. It was ugly...somebody hooked it at the end of the culvert and it spiraled up a little bit. It had been that way for fifteen, twenty years or maybe longer, I don't know....but was it a safety concern? Was it something that needed prioritized at this time?

**Judge Perry:** There was an accident on that corner.

**Ms. Sharp:** What was the rent for the Mortimore equipment?

**Commissioner Ordway:** \$140 per hour for a total of \$5000 roughly.

**Constituents:** Wow.

**Ms. Sharp:** And you paid Scott \$4000 in three weeks and you rented this for 48 hours for \$5000?

**Judge Perry:** \$140 an hour. But it is specialized equipment the county doesn't have and we broke our 7 in the process of doing this.

**Constituent:** It broke on that job.....that job broke it?

**Judge Perry:** Whether it breaks on that job or on the crusher or wherever it breaks, if it is doing service for the county its alleviating public safety....or it is doing good for the good of the county.

**Ms. Sharp:** I asked you last night if you had the figures. Do you have the figures of what that project cost?

**Commissioner Ordway:** We are working on that Marj and will probably have that for you tomorrow.

**Judge Perry:** It does not look like it will pass \$15,000 and that was our rough figure we gave you last night.

**Ms. Sharp:** Is the \$5000 part of that \$15,000?

**Judge Perry:** Yes it is.

**Ms. Bolton:** To address the corner...that corner was okayed by the County Court when John was still on there. DeWayne chose not to do it. So apparently everyone was ok with that...that he chose what projects he did and did not do so I am not sure why all of you are upset that they did do one or the other. That project did take a long time. As far as the school buses....when some of the Wheeler County roads started getting plowed.....our buses ran day after day on some of the roads and the drivers did not seem to have a problem....they ran without roads being plowed until Mr. Simmons moved up above them.

**Ms. Alford:** We are talking about what happened...is the county looking at finding some other funding or grants or something that maybe would make us stable again...or something like that?

**Judge Perry:** We are actively pursuing any kind of state funding and federal funding. We got turned down on federal forest access grants we applied for (Henry Creek and Williams Creek Lane and a couple in south end county). We did not make the cut because of priorities back in D.C. where they made the decision of who got the project money. With that and state funding, actually I am supposed to work up the numbers for Judge Thompson to take to the State Legislature to try to lobby for asphalt maintenance instead of the new bicycle projects that they are using in communities. They will try to take that money and reallocate it to asphalt maintenance for timber dependent counties. We are actively trying to get other funding for our roads. It kind of points up the necessity for Commissioner Ordway to help with that and not so much the day to day operation of the road department.

**Ms. Richardson:** I just find it kind of amusing that Mr. Ordway had Scott Richardson do those jobs across from Eleanor's ....because he does a good job but just not long after..... other jobs....he had him picking up garbage. Our county was paying their money to have him pick up garbage with Sean Davis while someone else was running the grader...someone with far less experience than him and we are paying him and the other person....last month and you had it out with him Mr. Perry, I did not even know who you were before then...and I don't understand that. Why would you take a very good worker and the wages he is paid and make him do crap jobs and putting someone else there because you had an agenda and you were not, in good faith, negotiating and you know it.



**Judge Perry:** Thank you for your comment Ms. Richardson.

**Ms. Moon:** I live up on top of Winlock and have a business up there. I have a father up there and also am an EMT on the ambulance. Can you guarantee me I am going to be able to respond anywhere? Last year we had 22 inches of snow up there. Is there someone who will plow it down? We don't have anyone here. Who will plow Winlock?

**Judge Perry:** We will have it covered and I have complete faith that we will be successful in serving our public.

**Mr. John Asher:** Chris, the position you guys are in now and past history shows that funding has decreased the past 13 years. I know that there is a certain amount of monies you have to keep in reserve for emergencies. I feel like you people are cutting in too many places; you need to put a little more pressure on your legislators. Past history, there have been years that we did not have any more than what you are getting. Perhaps you are not doing your jobs to the fullest extent. Another thing...it's not good to see all these people in this community going apart—There are 8 or 9 people who have worked for the county a good many years who have either quit or been laid off...that tells me you need to work a little harder to help.

**Judge Perry:** Point well taken.

**Ms. Howell:** I am also a school bus driver and want to first make a comment about unplowed roads...I know for a fact that when there was frost or snow...the road master was out there and making sure the roads were safe for our children. I am very concerned that upcoming years, there is no way you can get someone from Fossil or Mitchell on my route by the time I am leaving. I don't think you gave a very good answer about Richmond Road as how you are going to take care of that—you are guaranteeing that our roads will be safe in the winter? I am also a fire fighter. I know there are times when there have been water spouts etc. the road department was out there fixing those. We do not have enough people to do that work right now. What are we going to do if that happens? These people are going to have to find other jobs if they are permanently laid off. Who are you going to pull in? Do you think that it will happen as fast as our road department got out there? You hire private contractors....they will not be on the roads every day of the week. Holidays....how are you going to get them out there to work the roads?

**Judge Perry:** If we have weather events, there is nothing going to keep us from putting staff on that can do the job to carry over. If that means recalling employees we will do that.

**Ms. Howell:** You aren't going to have any employees to call.

**Judge Perry:** According to the union contract, we will recall the most senior man on the list.

**Ms. Howell:** They are going to sit around and wait for a call? Another question—I know there was some talk about hiring someone that you felt had a good amount of experience—business at home has nothing to do with roads. Maybe he can manage money but that is your job. Why would you.....this man has not been on the road department that many years.....Randy Sharp, Scott and others have been on the department a lot longer. I am not sure that Gene C. has not been on the department longer than Ronny Thomas. Re: Scott - How much value is experience? Experience to me is much more valuable than being able to supervise. Did you give him a raise when you gave him the supervisor position?

**Judge Perry:** I would like to clarify.....Ronny has been on longer than Randy and Gene. Scott, JT and Jim were senior over him. We did increase and put him on as not an hourly employee but as a salaried employee.

**Mr. Neuburger:** What was the pay raise?

**Judge Perry:** \$22.00 per hour. That is roughly what it would work out to.

**Ms. Howell:** Did you ever sit down with the guys and ask them if they were willing to break the union. When we were in school negotiations, we sat down with the administration and knew what the finances were like ....we said we will forgo our raises. If it had been drastic enough...we wanted to keep our jobs...I probably would have done other things to keep my job. I am not saying you guys should do that but maybe something to think about. Have you discussed doing other county jobs with the guys?

**Judge Perry:** We are in the middle of contract union negotiations now and would like to give others a chance to speak.

**Constituents:** They want an answer.

**Judge Perry:** We talked in negotiations about other services that the county has that can be performed by the road department—yes.

**Mr. Osgood:** No, you have not. This is a good forum for you to talk about this.

**Ms. Howell:** Has there not been a thought, or is it just rumor, since you are the only one on the commission negotiating Chris...that you would like to break the union-lay everyone off and contract all road department work out?

**Judge Perry:** That is not true.

**Ms. Howell:** That is not true? I have heard a lot of people say that part of your campaigning was that suggestion.

**Judge Perry:** I would like to have someone who heard me actually say that come up and speak about it.

**Ms. Richardson:** Of course they are not going to come here and speak.

**Mr. Richardson:** In the past, we have had heavy snow storms and had 5 rigs out plowing snow and we had not been able to keep up with the snow coming down. You are promising the people here tonight that you are going to with two people. I don't know how much pixie dust you have but it ain't going to happen I guarantee it.

**Judge Perry:** We are not necessarily saying two people. We will bring staff on in order to make the situation safe for the public.

Call in response to road conditions was added the board.

**Mr. Richardson:** You are going to call people when needed?

**Ms. Peterson:** Do you expect these gentlemen that you laid off to sit around until you call them...is that what you are saying?

**Judge Perry:** I can't tell them how to live their lives but if they are available they will be recalled.

**Ms. Peterson:** What is going to happen when you cannot find them...when they have found other jobs, who will you call?

**Judge Perry:** We will bring on temporary help when needed.

**Ms. Peterson:** How many years has it been since this county has worked with two road department people to maintain the roads- have they ever just worked with two road department people to maintain the roads?

**Judge Perry:** I don't have the answer to that question.

**Ms. Peterson:** You don't have a lot of answers but the fact remains that you do not know if you can cover the area with those two people. You don't know because you have always had a bigger crew.

**Judge Perry:** I am not saying that an event won't require more than two people but we will work our hardest to get the situation taken care of.

**Ms. Moon:** And when my elderly father needs an ambulance or me to get him out for help and I can't get out because I do not have a four-wheel drive...who will be responsible for that?

**Judge Perry:** I imagine we are responsible ma'am.

**Ms. Moon:** There are a lot of people in that situation that are going to be helpless. I would hate to have it on my conscious if someone were to die because I couldn't get an ambulance in.

**Judge Perry:** I agree with you ma'am.

**Ms. Wilson:** When you move out to Wheeler County, you move out here knowing that all help is volunteers. When you move into the middle of nowhere and the roads might be bad, even if we have a full crew the roads might be bad. I have a little problem with people who move out here and feel that way. Jan mentioned the snow plow—road being plowed. I used to be able to tell what time it was by the snow plow going by...clearing the road for the school bus. I can remember when Gene used to run the grader...there were not many more working for the county. I am here to tell you that always the snow plow or if there was ice and it needed gravel, was always taken care of guaranteed before the school bus made it through and before the school bus went home; the roads were safe. It was a good feeling to hear the snow plows going by maybe even 15 minutes before the school bus...making sure it was safe. You say that you are trying to do the best for the county; the road department is going broke and yet I would say that in response from the public...you say you are just learning and trying to figure it out...I would think that the response and knowledge of everyone in the room would make you stop and think that maybe what you did was not the best way to go. If we are going broke, if it is that bad...lay everybody off but you keep your people that know what they are doing and have seniority-that is the smart thing to do. How much is it going to cost the county to have a bad job redone? How much has the county earned when Sandy's driveway was bladed, by the way if Jim had gone over the road with Sandy

like she wanted, he would have known that a lot of the road would not have needed to be bladed at all. It has been done many times before with no problems or complaints. She said that certain portions did not need to be done. How much did it cost the county to go back in and take care of Sandy's driveway? How much did they lose by not having an efficient, effective person with seniority that knows what they are doing do the job? How many more jobs have we done that to before saying, " Opps, we might have done that the wrong way?" All the people would say to you...Yes, you did this the wrong way.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** In response to the first point....about what we are hearing from people about how we went about it and the decisions and the priorities and concerns...that is why we are coming out and writing these down and inviting people to get involved in comments. Maybe out of this process, we will have a task force or somebody that will work together so that we can address all these concerns to make the best plan possible with the resources we have. That is the point. We have done all the snow plowing, school buses and getting the ambulances through in the winter and the huge concern and priority; we have heard that loud and clear and it is important to everybody-that is one of the things we need to put at the top of the list. We are hearing you.

**Ms. Wilson:** When we have one person in Fossil and one in Mitchell trying to plow the roads for those school buses, they can't be here at the same time.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** Right...we hear that. We don't have a plan in place, this is still new and it is our job to make sure that we have a plan in place and we can't answer all the questions because we have not had time to figure that out. But we know we need to figure it out. It is going to be frustrating for people because we have to say we don't know for sure but we will do our best and our job is to guarantee that the kids get to school safely.

**Ms. Ordway:** Speaking with a school board member hat on...I would like to offer the suggestion to the County Court for our school district-that on days when we have school storms...to make sure the school districts are aware that school does not have to start at 8:00 a.m. We could do a two hour delay if needed. Just a suggestion to make sure that the County Court is in communication with the school districts.

**Ms. Vandehey:** I have a lot of concern-about how to make more money to turn things around. It is a point in history to ask where the money went. The road department spent \$25,000 on a road that the people did not want. The trick is how to get the money. We know there are resources and how can we help the situation in finding resources? No one before looked ahead and we cannot blame these people. We have to get people to work with them. Contract work is good and there are advantages to doing this because you don't have to pay the benefits like insurance. No one wants to lose their job; this is life. No one is to blame.

**Ms. Pechanec:** I am new at being a city recorder and my question is dealing with the city and the county is way bigger, in my opinion, like our fire department was in desperate need and needed help...the city helped them out a bit and I don't know if the county has ever helped. I know you can't be pulling money out of everyone else's fund but if there was a way to help the road department out to at least get one person in each community they will at least be one person in each place to help if there was a need. Is there that possibility or was it thought of?

**Judge Perry:** We have been researching things such as road districts and we are general fund stable but not general fund plush. I know other counties have used different types of assigning set fees such as Deschutes County tipping fees to augment road department funding. I have been trying to see what other counties are doing to see if there is something that fits into what we can do to augment our crew, some value that we have, to be used to spend on extra funding for our road department. It is all about seeing what works and make it work....a lot of that is seeing what other counties do to see what works. We are a little behind the curve as far as we are not sitting on reserves like Grant County (\$54 million). They operate off their interest. Even a county strapped in southern Oregon...Curry County...is sitting on \$33million and they want the state to take over general fund and road patrol obligations. We are sitting on \$1.3 million and have to make that last.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** Judge, can you talk about the constraints about funding road work with general funds?

**Judge Perry:** As being a timber county, there are only two counties that are exempt. If you take timber receipts to pay for roads and schools, you are obligated to only use timber receipts or in lieu of to fund

your roads, unless you form road districts and pay for them off the tax role such as the ESD and the health and school districts. When you are up against compression, each one of those districts has to move over to allow a new district to come in; you are only sharing one pot of money. The only way to increase money by taxation is to put it on a ballot and float a levy. You can raise taxes in order to pay extra for a district. Wheeler County is the second highest in the state for assessment on the property tax at \$8.23 per thousand; only Sherman County is higher than us on the per thousand valuation of assessed value. To put more tax on 800-900 registered voters, 1430 citizens total, makes it pretty painful and not a good option to try and raise hundreds and thousands of dollars off a small number of people. That is kind of why we have not pursued the road districts or levy because we are realists...we know people will not take that kind of a tax. It would run people out of here in droves. People could not afford to live here. It is not something we see will work but what will work and I agree with John....when he was on the commission, he allowed me to go back to D.C. and we were successful in getting another year of secure rural funding after a lot of lobbying....John was a big part of that and I agree, we need to go out and put the pressure on the feds to live up to their obligation. I did not go back to D.C. this year but do feel that the delegation going back there was not lobbying for timber receipts; they were lobbying for active forest management. The Umatilla Forest is being very active. They are producing timber receipts for our county and if we can have less litigation...less people filing on these timber sales, our numbers from what we see on the handouts will grow; they won't be the twenty some thousand dollar a year numbers in our forecasted revenues. Our revenues may come up to a better level of sustainability. I agree that there is tons of work for us to do for a very important part of our community and that is public safety and supplying them with roads that are safe and well maintained.

**Ms. Richardson:** I just wanted to address a question from last night and I did not get an answer to. You say it is about money and everything and yet we had people that were in your positions for years and yet we were told you were asked about a raise when you stepped into your positions and you said, "No". I understand Mr. Ordway took no insurance to save the county money....great....but yet he said yes because you stepped into the position and got the same wage as people who had been in there for years. People do not get to do that...is that in the best interest of the county that you got pay raises and slammed four people in the middle of negotiations and fired them with a phone call?

**Mr. Richardson:** They did not call us.

**Ms. Richardson:** No, and when we tried to call you to address it, you said that we need to quit talking about this stuff. There was no closure for people...it has been an injustice and it has to be talked through. You people did not handle it right and you are not admitting it.

**Judge Perry:** We terminated the employment under the union contract.

**Ms. Richardson:** The question is did you step in and take the same pay as the people who had been there for years?

**Judge Perry:** I would like to explain a little bit about what happened.

**Ms. Richardson:** Just say yes or no...did you get the same pay?

**Judge Perry:** I did not. I actually gave \$500 per month of what I would have made to my other commissioners and then we evened out their salaries so that they were both starting at the same level minus the step that John had above me. We leveled them and then I added \$500 of my salary, which brought them up to \$1400 a month.

**Ms. Richardson:** Because you had more experience than John...is that why you gave yourself that raise?

**Judge Perry:** I actually took less money.

**Ms. Richardson:** You had more experience? Mr. Ordway said you guys took a raise and you are saying that you didn't.

**Judge Perry:** Commissioner Ordway took less money because he does not receive health benefits; he turned down the health benefit package.

**Ms. Richardson:** My husband brings home \$2600 a month. You bring home \$3100 and Commissioner Ordway brings home \$1400. Who does more work than the road crew in the county? Who does more work for the county and yet you did not give us the courtesy to even sit down and discuss things. I come home and I have a phone call that he is fired after 31 years of work.

**Judge Perry:** We did not fire anyone. We laid them off ma'am.

**Ms. Richardson:** Could you not have been professional and more courteous?

**Judge Perry:** I admit we probably had some failures in communication.

**Ms. Bolton:** It seems that cuts don't always go the way planned; I have been cut twice. I was cut back the year before last and this year. Not once did I have someone come up and say, "We are really sorry, like wow we are going to go fight for you".

**Ms. Richardson:** You were called into the office and told.

**Ms. Bolton:** No I was not Tammy, don't tell me what I had done.

**Judge Perry:** We will remain in order and Ms. Bolton has the floor.

**Mr. Bolton:** Everyone knew about it before I did. When I asked my superintendent why I was not told before...and everyone wants to know this...he said because we have not had a school board meeting yet. When we have the school board meeting, I will officially notify you. That is how it was put to me. That is not my point...my point is there are cuts being made and if you don't make cuts, which you may find out like on the school boards and sometimes you make tough cuts that you don't want to make but if there is no money there you can't pay them, whether you hire people back or not. If you can't pay them there is really no reason. I was cut enough so that I would not get full benefits. That was the reason for the cut. It made me angry and disappointed; I don't know who would not be and I am not saying that you shouldn't be disappointed but I am saying that it is happening everywhere. Mitchell cut a teacher this year. We made cutbacks – who said we made the right ones or as many as we should; everybody is making cuts in Wheeler County.

**Mr. Neuburger:** You still have a job right?

**Ms. Bolton:** Whether I have a part time job with no benefits.....

**Mr. Neuburger:** You still have a job.

**Ms. Bolton:** That is not the point...the point is everyone is having to make cuts. It is not just Wheeler County, it is all over. It should not be a great shock to anyone. I had gone to the County Court years ago and sat a listened to them discuss this very same thing...as to what was coming and what could happen. I asked if we could look at a levy, like they'd run for the school district....is that possible? And if it is, how many people are going to vote for a tax levy to keep our roads going? My other point is the Donnelly Grade is probably one of the worse pieces of state highway or roads period, that our buses travel on. Maybe it's too bad that Linda is not here to tell us how many times she has come down that Donnelly Grade when it was not plowed because it is not a priority. I know that she has and I know that it is not great but sometimes you make priorities. I don't think that the crew in Mitchell was picking on them. That is where their priorities were for that piece of road. My big thing is about the tax levy.

**Judge Perry:** The levy idea will be added to the board.

**Ms. Conlee:** I agree Jan-don't think that I don't but I told everyone of you commissioners that I understand that they have a horrible job ahead of them and when there is no money, you cannot keep paying people and Gene and I fully expected that this job would be cut; the last one hired should be the first one to go. He has less experience-we prepared for that. What we did not prepare for was that these commissioners treated us with such little respect that they could not give us a phone call to tell us that he had lost his job and that somebody was not chosen to stay who was in the best interest of the county. That is what we had a problem with. I know that they are in a hard position and I know that they are probably doing the best they can do, the three of them...putting their heads together. I just wanted it to be a little bit more considerate.

**Constituents:** Applauded Ms. Conlee's comments.

**Ms. Bolton:** I would have liked that to happen to me.

**Ms. Conlee:** I would hope so and I apologize about what happened. I understand that and I know that being on the school.....I will have to make those hard decisions. I just asked for a little more respect.

**Mr. Greninger:** I am just thinking back...if you got a guy in Mitchell and one in Fossil and they are going to cover Spray-you let the best man in Spray go-why didn't you keep Spray and have Spray and Fossil covered or Spray and Mitchell covered. A man gives 30 years of his life on the do job and you guys didn't even call him and tell him he was fired. So, is there a chance you are going to get another guy in Spray or.....Not? That is my question. In experience-you got a couple of real bad, real bad places. I see that bus standing and sliding with 5 guys out there. So if we get the snow and I call you...you going to guarantee me that someone will be in Spray at my house? If my kid misses school, are you going to write

him an excuse why he missed school because you guys couldn't clear my road?

**Judge Perry:** The proof will be in the pudding Ed because we are going to do the best we can to do road services so that kids can get to school safely and emergency service can get to our citizens.

**Mr. Greninger:** With nobody here? With nobody in town that can get up and clean our roads by school time? You have to come 50 miles to get here and I have not seen any one of those guys you kept ever over here. They're going to come over and take care of our roads? Is that what you are trying to tell me?

**Judge Perry:** We are going to cover to the best of our ability. It may mean bringing back on help and it may mean them starting their shift here out of Spray to cover. There are lots of things to look at to see what best works to provide all of our citizens...not just Spray....Mitchell and Fossil included.

**Mr. Greninger:** Fossil and Mitchell already have guys. Why can't we have a guy in Spray so all places can be covered?

**Mr. Greninger:** We got a brand new shop in Spray.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** We don't have enough money for three people right now. We're going to do.....we know that this is a huge challenge and we don't know all the answers right now and hear that this is a huge priority and we are going to work with people and we hope people will work with us so we can come up with a plan to meet those challenges. That is the best answer we can give. We don't have a plan put in place and the reality is that we can only afford two people and if we get more or find more funding and make that happen, we will be hiring people back and adding to our road department as quick as we can. People in Mitchell would be concerned if there was no one there. We are all in the same boat so we are going to do what we can and bring in more people if we can.....we will have a plan for plowing and keeping the roads open to the best of our ability.

**Ms. Field:** You touched on that there is only enough money for two.....Can you give us the figures....as to why two and not three because that is such a big area to cover with only two people. Please give us some actual solid figures.

**Judge Perry:** We have provided some numbers and with them numbers it shows....

**Commissioner Mitchell:** (looking at the handouts and presented them to constituents) In order to maintain a basic level of service and have some funds to meet emergencies and those sorts of things...we have \$167,065 in which to move forward for the road department. We have no projected revenues. Also, what we have in our fund will cover our obligations to cover unemployment benefits and pay out the PTO to the employees we have to lay off; we have to have that amount of money so we can cover that and employ two people. That is where we are at, at this time, with the revenues we see projected for the next year. If we just spend it all down, we have nothing. Unless we can come up with something really fast....and we are working with our congressional delegation to get another year of reauthorization, we are working with other counties as much as we can to find other sources but at this point, if we kept trying to write paychecks for more people, we would not have enough to fulfill our obligations if we had to lay everyone off. The other thing we do have is an emergency reserve fund and that fund is for a catastrophic road fund (\$570,941) so if we have a catastrophic event-flood or something major happens-we have some funds to take care of that, which would include being able to pay those who work on it. We also have an equipment reserve, these are basically untouchable because these are funds put aside for emergencies.....we can touch those but they have been put aside for those purposes.

**Ms. Field:** I realize there is only a certain amount of wiggle room within a budget. Decrease in wages for the crew- has that been discussed?

**Judge Perry:** This might be a negotiated item and with luck, me and Rod can come together and with flexible work schedule and ....

**Ms. Field:** You are saying that this has been discussed before layoffs?

**Judge Perry:** Yes.

**Ms. Field:** May I ask the union rep if that has been discussed in the contract?

**Judge Perry:** Yes you can.

**Mr. Osgood:** They have never discussed reduction in wages. We discussed having a twenty hour work week of which three guys would be working 4 hour days, 5 days per week. Anyone who has worked in this field knows that travel time, checking fuel and oil etc. takes time and there would not be any time to do the work. We did not discuss wage reductions.

**Judge Perry:** We did not discuss wage reduction, which was then written on the board and if they would care to discuss.

**Mr. Holmes:** The 1.366 million-does that include the emergency catastrophic fund or is that separate.

**Judge Perry:** That is separate.

**Mr. Holmes:** It would be my opinion that you strongly go back to the drawing board on this and maybe do some changes. I don't know what the union costs are going to be....you are having an attorney look at it...where is that money coming from? I understand that you are wanting sustainable money coming in to be able to afford the road department but I believe in this situation right here, you just put the safety of the citizens of Wheeler County, especially Spray, at risk.....seriously.....over this decision to go down to two. I mean at least you could have done with three at the very least and tried to grow into it but you are making a drastic cut. There is no way, I don't care what you say, that 1 ½ or two people are going to cover this county; there is no way. Ultimately....bottom line.....I realize that you guys are the authority...you are the commissioners and judge but ultimately you work for us, we voted you in.

**Judge Perry:** That's right.

**Mr. Holmes:** And if you are not doing what Wheeler County citizens need, we will have to find somebody who can-bottom line.

**Constituents:** Applauded Mr. Holmes's statements.

**Mr. Sharp:** Ex-Wheeler County employee.....do you have any plans for any excess equipment that you have on hand and do not need? Four dump trucks.....you do not need three road graders....are you considering getting rid of some of the surplus?

**Judge Perry:** Yes we are considering it but in goes the conversation of replacement. If funding comes through and we need three graders, can we afford to go out and replace a grader we sold for pennies on the dollar? We talked about the need for a crusher and what it costs to produce rock. I got the numbers down to where it looks like we've been going backward for quite some time from what we are selling rock for and what it is costing us to produce... not a great deal...not as much as we thought but it was still at a rate less than what we were crushing it for.

**Mr. Sharp:** I would be interested in finding out how you came up with.....those numbers and the costs.

**Judge Perry:** I can supply that for you Mr. Sharp. I don't have them available but they are back in Fossil. We cannot continue to operate at a loss and go backwards. We tried things like private work for others and had some loses there. We've done some paving jobs we got state funding for and overspent what our funding was and we went over to a little degree. Each time we have a fiscal loss we go backward a little more if we take from our total take. To not have a little bit of money to handle something in a catastrophic event is mismanagement of funds...to spend down to the last dime and not have the ability to go out and have a road cleared so an ambulance can get to someone's house or to have kids that are a danger on their way to school...we just gotta make it work so that we can provide the most service with the least cost and we are going to have humps and dips but we wanna even it out so we have services for our public and putting somebody back on in Spray is an option with the ability to fund them or to....maybe through union negotiations, we can negotiate flexible work schedules where it can work out to reduced hours. There's things that need to be worked through and I think with working through things, we can provide the services that the communities will need. I am not saying that we will have a six person road department but I'm not saying we're gonna have a two person road department. Two is where we need to drop down to, to see where we're at to make it work.....to make our increases and this is the time of year to do it. This is the time to do it....we are not doing it in the middle of a snow storm...the worse thing that can happen to us right now would be a major flood event...water spouts. Now is the time to see where we are at and to make adjustments to be fiscally responsible.

**Mr. Richardson:** Chris made the statement that he and Rod have been lobbying back and forth...it is not just the two of them. It is also an attorney and they have a lawyer to represent them and that lawyer is being paid out of road department dollars- that is cutting into our reserve or any money that is left. Question for Janet regarding Sandy Taggart- does she have much gravel on her driveway?

**Ms. Wilson:** I believe they were going to take up two loads of gravel and were going to take three and she said she did not need it. She did not need gravel in the first place. That is why I asked earlier-why do they send someone in there who doesn't listen to the land owner and going ahead and doing something that has created a loss to the county.

**Mr. Richardson:** Robby, did she get gravel.

**Commissioner Ordway:** She got two loads of gravel...yes.

**Mr. Richardson:** Can't do anything right now and things like this have happened in the past....you have been more generous than some....the first week you were here you had me haul three loads out to Cal Hopper-we had use of his threader. Cal Hopper told DeWayne it was free...as long as he wanted it, it was free-Cal Hopper himself told me that. We used it for a long time -Robby then gave him gravel. Three loads of gravel took me three hours and 20 minutes to deliver it at \$9.00 an hour = \$300 and you gave away \$240 worth of that and additional costs...that equals \$520. This is not responsible.

Ms. Taggart's driveway issue and she got her road graded- 2 hour policy for \$50.

**Ms. Wilson:** Sandy did pay \$120.

**Mr. Richardson:** My last recollection-she was not satisfied with the job she got so the county had to go in and redo it. Understandable, but then the county threw in two loads of gravel at their new rate, which came to \$420. The county gave away two loads of gravel on top of having to re-grade the driveway.

**Ms. Wilson:** She never needed the gravel in the first place.

**Mr. Richardson:** Why are we doing this....we are down to our last dollars, why? Why are we giving this away?

**Commissioner Ordway:** Getting back to the first issue with Cal Hopper-he approached me about where his threader was and I told him I thought it was in the shop. He said we had it for quite a long time. Then I believe it was his wife who said they would appreciate a couple loads of gravel in payment for the use of it. Where I was at...it was a deal that I did not make. The county had use of it so I felt the obligation to step out and make good on it. As far as Sandy Taggart goes, Sharon Morgan approached me about the condition of her road and it was something that needed done. Maybe in haste...but it was in good faith....and given the circumstances, I sent an employee out to take care of it. It wasn't up to Sandy's expectations. I went out and looked at it and it wasn't mine either. There was some damage to the willows as well as some other things and we are going off into a personnel issue that I am not going to go in to. Judge Perry thought the two loads of gravel would help with mitigating the job.

**Ms. Wilson:** If the job wasn't done right in the first place, the county would not have lost all that money.

**Commissioner Ordway:** I agree.

**Ms. Howell:** Because of the situation we are in right now, how would the City of Spray go about getting a speed limit sign (safety issue) on county roads if we don't have anyone working? I talked to law enforcement today and they said there are no speed zone signs....there is a caution sign.....there is no speed zone sign and we cannot do anything about it.

**Judge Perry:** That is something I delved into years ago and the county cannot set speeds on county roads. This is a weird story but ODOT is the one who sets speeds on our county roads. A stretch of road on Winlock- I thought was a safety issue that we should reduce the speed there and was told we had to have ODOT approve speed limit. If you contact us, we'll contact ODOT and we'll get ODOT to send somebody out to make the determination to put up what speed at their standard...

**Ms. Howell:** I did ask that question...is that state highway department jurisdiction or county. They said...whoever I asked....said it is probably county because it is a county road, but it is also within the city limits.

**Judge Perry:** If it's in your city jurisdiction I would check with your lawyer and see if it's your jurisdiction. The county has a road that we have claimed that goes through your city so we have done maintenance on the Parrish Creek Road. If it's a county road that goes through your city, I still believe that you might have jurisdiction over signage if it's in your city limits.

**Ms. Howell:** So then to see if Spray has the jurisdiction wouldn't that be county because it is a county road or is it our responsibility?

**Judge Perry:** We can't set the speed limit on that county road but if you can set the speed limit within your city limits, I would approach it in that fashion.



**Ms. Howell:** And the county will provide and install the sign?

**Judge Perry:** Is it on county road?

**Ms. Howell:** That is what I am asking.

**Judge Perry:** If we have a sign already the set speed you have and it is available and just sitting in our inventory, I would say yes we will provide the sign. Maybe I can find a contact over in Bend with ODOT and if they have a sign that is available, I might be able to wrangle the sign for it. If you can tell me that we are not violating anything by putting up the signage-as long as it's in your jurisdiction-and if it's our county jurisdiction, I can try to get someone out from ODOT to make that determination.

**Ms. Howell:** I would assume, that it's close enough to the school, that it would also have some bearing.

**Judge Perry:** If it's in your city limits I believe between you and the school, you would have that authority but I am going out on a limb because it's a little unknown as far as city jurisdiction. On our open out-of-city limits county roads, we do not set the speed on them. We contact ODOT and they set the speed but we signage it.

**Ms. Howell:** So that can be done?

**Judge Perry:** It's possible if we go through the right hoops.

**Ms. Vandehey:** When you contact ODOT, will they talk to you about other things?

**Judge Perry:** If we have them out for one, we should have them look at several of our safety issues...yes.

**Ms. Vandehey:** Mentioning accessing national forests....levying and raising money. Look at ways to earn money instead of begging for it. We should look at broadening our recreational base. Wheeler County commissioners should talk to Umatilla Nation Forest reps to help out with broadening recreational base. There is a lot of property. Look at the bicyclists too who use the lands too...as people get wealthier, they may be able to help support the road department with honor and pride not by begging. Regarding lost gravel, there was a pile of it sitting in DeWayne's driveway that was apparently left there while working on a project and it is gone now; it was quite a large pile by his shed. I am curious about where that gravel went.

**Judge Perry:** Write down Winlock gravel on the board please.

**Ms. Vandehey:** Other ideas to save money for the road department.....you should consider decommissioning some of the county roads.

**Ms. Speer:** Is the Sandy Taggart Road a county road?

**Judge Perry:** No ma'am that is a private driveway.

**Ms. Speer:** Three Point Road?

**Judge Perry:** No, it's not on our inventory.

**Ms. Speer:** So are you now fixing driveways? I know a few driveways that need to be fixed but you don't have any money. I think that Sandy had to pay.

**Judge Perry:** Yes, she had to pay. There is a driveway policy that the county has. If we are in the area and available, we will do the first.....I don't have it in front of me but I believe it is we will do the first two hours for \$50 and then it goes up to \$80 or \$85 an hour after that. It has been kind of a courtesy that county did to the public to...when we were in the area and had the availability. We are really not going to have the availability to do that. It is one of those programs that is going to get neglected.

**Ms. Speer:** Three Point Road is not county?

**Judge Perry:** No ma'am.

**Ms. Wilson:** We are trying to come up with solutions and I realize that. How much does it cost the county to spray the county road sides every spring...two or three times...saturating the roads.

**Judge Perry:** Good question.....I have been using Title III money, which is fuel reduction money from the federal government out of our Title III monies, which have very limited spending ability. I can only use it.....I had to go and have our CWPP Community Wildfire Protection Plan amended in order to be able to use it for fuel reduction. Spraying the roadside weeds is considered fuel reduction and I've been able to fund that with the federal money that we received as Title III money, which by-the-way is part of this secure rural money that went away.

**Ms. Wilson:** Really, we have abandoned horses that we have at the moment and you are only spraying about ten feet out on the roadway and over three years or more of this is being done, I can't see where it is benefiting. I am very curious, if you are trying to find ways to save money and not be at the hands of a chemical company, it is just really something that should be considered.

It's not good business to lay off the person with the most seniority and knowledge with all the equipment and the roads and everything else....even if we are legally okay, it isn't morally okay to take somebody with that much seniority and knowledge of equipment and lay them off. How else can we make money for the road department if they don't take on more jobs? Just because there is a slight failure at Sandy's is not a reason to not take on private jobs. It's a good way for the county to make money but you are saying the crew you have wouldn't be capable of taking on private road jobs yet we have somebody over here with seniority who really can do that private road job and get paid. It might earn money for the county. We could get some wind mills....Gilliam County is so rich they don't know what to do...maybe we could borrow some money from Gilliam County...get some wineries up and running or something.

**Judge Perry:** We have tried to be a contracting agent and do road work for private and the numbers show we have went backwards doing it.

**Ms. Wilson:** Because you aren't charging enough.

**Judge Perry:** Or having failure because we are not bonded and licensed contractors so when we have a failure, you as the public are the ones who suffer the failure.

**Ms. Wilson:** Ya, everybody suffers when someone doesn't do a good job. I've never heard any problems to date up until now. I have never heard of any private jobs failing. This is the first one I heard of.

**Judge Perry:** We have had some paving failures when we have tried to work privately with paving.

**Ms. Wilson:** Paving...I am not talking about paving...it is a different story. We shouldn't be in the paving business.

**Ms. Peterson:** I did not come here from the city. I have always lived in the forest counties in Oregon and Washington. I have always been dependent on myself to get myself where I need to go regardless of the road situation. There are a lot of people who do not have the means to get people in and out. I am not one of them; I will get myself in and out regardless, whether we have six feet of snow or whatever.

Question- For two nights, we have had all these questions being asked and they are being posted. When can we expect some answers to all those questions and where would we find those answers?

**Judge Perry:** We will address them at County Court, that's how we have to do it by political process as we needed the forum and we can set up special work sessions to work on this to get the answers and can take leads on each of these 29 questions and get some answers to the public. We got a good website we can actually utilize so that the public is aware of what we have done with these 29 and hopefully more questions.

**Ms. Peterson:** I was hoping that some of the questions from last night would be answered tonight. The website....it's another issue. I went on there trying to find out who the commissioners were and who was doing what in the county-just the night before last. When you google your county Oregon, you get an old website that has lots of old information. On facebook last night there was a link posted that did take me to the new website. If you google it, you can't find that new website.

**Judge Perry:** I did today and got the old website because I did not put "county" after Wheeler.

**Ms. Peterson:** Can we take the old website down?

**Ms. Greenfield:** We are in the process of having it taken down.

**Ms. Field:** If you can't take it down, can point it to the new one so it doesn't matter.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** They are working on that and it is sort of hit and miss. We worked on that today to get them to work on it.

**Mr. Conlee:** We got a lot excess equipment. Are you paying monthly insurance on that equipment with two people? That would be enough to pay my wages for one year.

**Judge Perry:** I was in the insurance office with Mr. Hankins today...we are looking into that.

**Mr. Conlee:** Insurance on everything....with two people. 4 Trucks, Lowboy, three blades, seven pickups, couple of backhoes and two people.

**Judge Perry:** We are looking at not....we are looking at what we are needing to keep and what we need to put into moth balls for future use.

**Mr. Conlee:** Moth balls huh?

**Ms. Vandehey:** Want to expand on Ms. Wilson's idea of hiring out the county road department for private jobs. That competes with private enterprise and we need to not do that. The county road department is already being paid by county tax dollars working on the county roads and then they do

the private work and that is double dipping. They should not be using county equipment on jobs that I don't even know if they got paid for. The road department should be working on county roads with county equipment and not competing with private enterprise.

**Ms. Jenison:** What I have been listening to is that we are all unhappy because we don't have the money to take care of the roads. I want to know under your emergency reserve fund, where you have the catastrophic fund, why you can't use some money out of that for employment?

**Judge Perry:** That is an option, I feel, if we need to bring someone back on for an event. But to dip into our catastrophic reserve and then not have it for the day that the John Day River does the 1964 flood again, that is what the true meaning of what people put it aside for was a catastrophe. A catastrophe can also mean taking care of an event that requires extra services.

**Ms. Jenison:** I think that is what we have here. When we have a winter....we may get a winter that we haven't had for a while. If we have a bus wreck, you will problems.

**Judge Perry:** You are exactly right Cheryl.

**Ms. Jenison:** That is why we need a third person here.

**Ms. Morgan:** You had some job openings listed recently. Were any of those jobs offered to any of the road people?

**Judge Perry:** If they fill out an application they are more than welcome to apply for it. They would be looked at with astute eyes. I am not on the hiring committees so I can't speak to it because we put it out to...so there is no bias in hiring. It is an option for employment if somebody wants to apply for them positions.

**Constituents:** What positions are they?

**Judge Perry:** We have a half-time deputy clerk, fiscal clerk position and a janitor/maintenance position.

**Ms. Wilson:** Not well suited for a person trained in and working on roads.

**Mr. Bunch:** I am a private contractor. I have been in the same position the county has been in. I have been in the hole and had to dig myself back out. It is not an easy position. These guys have screwed up. There is no question about that. The biggest place I've seen is in the way they let people go. Not why, not when, but the way they did it. The only thing I ask is that the three of you put out an apology. The only question I have.....will you apologize?

**Judge Perry:** I will apologize right here now. What we did was done without as much heartfelt anguish as we should have expressed. We did lose good employees. We have laid them off. We are not firing people. Our hope is to be able to offer employment in the future but I can't ask them to hang around without searching for something in the meantime so.....It is a heartbreaker for me. These guys hate me but it's truly painful for what I did and I apologize for that but I am also put here to be fiscally responsible and give us a chance and we will formally make a letter of apology for the way we handled it.

**Mr. Bunch:** That is why I brought it up Chris, I have been in that same position. I have had to lay guys off and with no notice due to thing beyond my control. It's tough and I know where you guys are sitting but I know where everyone else in the county is coming from too and that's why I asked for an apology. I believe they deserve it.

**Judge Perry:** I believe you are right too and we definitely will do that because I cannot express it right now myself so we will put that in a formal letter.

**Ms. Richardson:** I don't hate you. I don't hate them. I am hurt. I don't hate people. I still would like my question answered as to why you kept the two people you kept. I don't feel that we had a legitimate answer to that.

**Ms. Wilson:** Are you going to try and answer her again?

**Commissioner Ordway:** First off, I will offer an apology to the crew for the way that layoff notices were handled. I talked to Gene Friday morning and expressed my sorrow over what we had to do. Jim Humphreys is probably the one I knew best on the crew from a long time ago and I told him I felt awful about it and if there was any other way that we could have done anything differently, we would have and I would have done it. I felt an obligation, though, to the county and the numbers we had to deal with. As far as the crew that we kept, I felt that it was essential we kept someone, if we were going to be with two, we kept someone in the south county and someone in the north county.

**Ms. Richardson:** Robby, you represent Spray, why didn't you fight for Spray?

**Commissioner Ordway:** I will back up a little bit further. It was an idea that I had that we would have two half time positions in Fossil and Spray until we could transition into something full time.

**Ms. Richardson:** Instead you just laid them all off and didn't negotiate anymore.

**Commissioner Ordway:** I wasn't in negotiations.

**Constituent:** Who was?

**Commissioner Ordway:** Judge Perry.

**Ms. Richardson:** If you didn't have answers, why did you jump to the decision before you got together and heard their response? And you guys still don't know why you kept someone who can't do the job.

**Commissioner Ordway:** Tammy, you are asking me to go into a personnel situation where I can subject myself to personal litigation...talking about someone's disabilities and I am not prepared to do that.

**Ms. Wilson:** Wow. Chose disabled over seniority...Wow.

**Mr. Neuburger:** Seniority and quality.

**Commissioner Mitchell:** For legal reasons, we can't really talk about it but that particular individual who has worked with the insurance company to make sure that the individual is able to continue to perform the job and also modifications and accommodations have been made to ensure that he can perform the job. Those modifications and accommodations are going to be paid for through the insurance company so we have done what we need to do to ensure....that is all we can say at this point and we don't really want to get into talking about personal disabilities...we can't really do that I am sorry.

**Ms. Wilson:** Is one of the reasons that you chose to keep him not because of his quality or seniority but because somebody else is helping to pay his way?

**Commissioner Mitchell:** No, he is a good worker and he can do the job. That is why we kept him.

**Judge Perry:** I have to adjourn the meeting and it is adjourned. Meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.