

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY MEETING MINUTES
March 17, 2020

1. At 9:00 a.m., Commissioner Ainsworth declared the Tuesday meeting of the Polk County Board of Commissioners in session. Commissioner Mordhorst and Commissioner Pope were present.
2. **MINUTES** : **COMMISSIONER MORDHORST MOVED, COMMISSIONER POPE SECONDED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 3, 2020**

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Greg Hansen, Administrative Officer, informed the Board that agenda item number three has been removed. Also that due to Todd Whitaker, Public Works Director, not being at the meeting yet they will need to start with the last item and go backwards.

3. **CITY OF INDEPENDENCE UPDATE** – Shawn Irvine, Independence Economic Development Director, informed the Board that in response to the current Covid 19 issue the city of Independence has modified operations. City Hall is still open and they have consolidated the front desk operations to the police side because they have an area with a glass front. They have closed the library and the museum as well. The museum is being moved to a downtown location and they believe it will add value to the downtown area. The Independence Landing opened back in October and has been doing very well until the Covid 19 issue started. They are confident that it will withstand this recession and continue to thrive. There are 14 new townhomes being built along the road and 110 apartment units being built along the river. The city is focused on providing diversity in housing.

Polk County Tourism Alliance currently shares a staff person with Travel Salem. They have been working on a project called “The Great Oaks Food Trail”. It is a Travel Oregon initiative that is pulling together the agro tourism and culinary experiences in our region. They visited local farms and local producers in Polk County. It is a way to market the bounty of Polk County as an agricultural region. They are hoping to put together a “Taste of Polk County” event where all of these people can gather and offer samples and talk about their product. The city received an offer on the property located behind the Elks Lodge and part of that proposal would include building a new smaller Elks Lodge on that property and that would leave the current Elks Lodge building free for commercial use. He is also talking to 3 different companies about possibly purchasing a large commercial property that is currently for sale which would create a lot of jobs in the City of Independence. Commissioner Ainsworth commended Mr. Irvine for bringing so much economic development to Independence.

4. **CENSUS ASSISTANCE CENTER** – Ramon Martinez, Community Engagement Coordinator for the City of Independence, came to give the Board an update on the 2020 census efforts they have been working on. Mr. Martinez explains that the Census is crucial when you consider the various programs that are supported by the money we get based on it. This is the first year the census will be digital, with a 1-800 number as well as an option to complete the survey online. The first notice that will be sent out is an invitation to complete the census online with an id number. The Census consists of 10 questions, and there will be no question about citizenship this year. If you have a PO Box you will not get this invitation in the mail but you will eventually either get a knock on the door by a Census staffer or they will mail you out a Census survey to complete and mail in. It is forecasted that with our numbers this year Oregon is expected to get an additional seat in the House of Representatives. They

have also estimated that each person that is counted is \$3,200 per year. The City of Independence was awarded a grant by United Way of the Columbia Willamette to fund a Census Assistance Center (CAC) in Polk County. The CAC was intended to be a source of information about the census they also got funds to have a computer lab for individuals with no access to a computer or internet. With the current Covid 19 restrictions that have been put in place they will instead be encouraging people to utilize the digital methods. He will send updated outreach material that gives the phone number and clear instructions how to complete the Census online. He reminds the Board that the Census staff will never ask for your social security number or offer you money or incentives to complete the census.

5. **2020 OVERLAY PROJECT** – Todd Whitaker, Public Works Director, informed the Board that Public works had bids open last week for the 2020 overlay project. They issued the notice of intent to award and assuming they don't have any protests he will be back on Tuesday to ask the Board with his recommendation to award those contracts to those respective bidders. The scope of this is for all of Zena Road, Oak Grove, and Bethel which connects Hwy 221 to Hwy 223. When they are done with that they will do an ARTS funded project that will put in center line rumble strips on that road to stop the crossovers. In addition to that schedule B will include Valley Creek, and the other part of schedule B is pending funding from the City of Falls City to pave Bridge Street and Chamberlain Road.
6. **NON-LISTED ITEMS** - (Pursuant to ORS 192.640, the Board of Commissioners considered the below identified non-listed items.)
 - a) **COVID 19 UPDATE** – Greg Hansen, Administrative Officer, asked the Board if the county is wanting to declare an emergency. This would give the county flexibility in procurement procedure, personnel changes and modifications, among other things. We do not know yet if it would give us a pathway to access some of the federal dollars that are going to the state of Oregon in response to the virus. There are some other counties that have already declared a state of emergency. There are currently a total of 47 cases in the state of Oregon. Mr. Hansen recommends we do proceed with the declaration. Morgan Smith, County Counsel, stated that they will probably be putting a plan in place in regards to staffing and the benefit of declaring now will give them the flexibility of changing protocols at this time and then also having the ability to go back to our normal personnel rules once this has passed. Especially in regards to telecommuting and leave policies. Mr. Smith also recommends going forward with the declaration. Commissioner Pope explains that he does not want to create unnecessary panic. Mr. Smith explains that if a new employee who does not have sick leave gets sick and we do not want them in the work place would we allow them to borrow against their future sick leave and then in the future once the state of emergency has passed we can go back to our normal leave policies. Commissioner Pope wants to be sure that in the declaration it is also stated that this is not a reason to panic. It is a tool for the county to make adjustments in personnel and leave policies in order to better accommodate the employees during this time.

BY CONSENSUS, THE BOARD DECLARED A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN POLK COUNTY.

Commissioner Ainsworth adjourned the meeting at 10:19 am.

Minutes: Ciera Atha
Approved: March 24, 2020