



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Management Update Minutes

Monday, September 15, 2020, 9:00 a.m.

Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Salem
5th Floor, Suite 5231, Commissioners Boardroom

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners Colm Willis, Sam Brentano and Kevin Cameron, Joe Kast, Tom Rohlring, Jan Fritz, Brian Nicholas, Jane Vetto, Tamra Goettsch, Brian May, Camber Schlag, Russ Dilley, Tom Kissinger, Mike Engberg, Rob Witters, Nate Combs, Rachael Estill, Michael White, Rex Weisner, John Carlson, Barb Young, Lisa Trauernicht, Chad Ball, and Kristy Witherell as recorder.

GUESTS:

Josh Weathers, U.S. Forest Service

Commissioner Willis called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

INFORMATIONAL:

Review the Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement with USDA – Forest Service for the Cooperative Management of the Little North Fork Recreation Corridor

- Russ Dilley, Tom Kissinger

Summary of presentation:

- The agreement is the end result of a five-year effort to formalize cooperative management of the North Fork corridor with the U.S. Forest Service;
- In 2015, the county had their first parks tour with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM);
- During the 2016 tour of the North Fork Corridor, the North Fork Recreation Area Group was formed;
- Regular meetings have been held since the formation of the group;
- With the increased usage of the parks, the three entities needed to come together for more collaborative management and strategic planning;
- The group has been successful in the following:
 - Town Hall meetings;
 - Fee collection booths;
 - Corridor garbage collection;
 - Worked on a FLAP Grant for an information booth;
 - Traffic counters placed by the U.S. Forest Service to give the county an idea of visitor impact to the area;
 - The county has provided radios to the U.S. Forest Service and BLM, so there is better communication; and
 - There has been great support from the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

- In 2018, the county began exploring the correct mechanism to formalize the existing arrangements:
 - The agreement that the group will be bringing before the board at tomorrow's Board Session is called a Challenge Cost Share Agreement;
 - It is a master agreement;
 - There is no money involved, and it sets up strategic goals of the plan for the future;
 - As supplemental projects arise, they will be brought back to the board as amendments to the agreement with dollars attached;
 - Exploring the idea of interagency park passes that would work for all parks; and
 - Adding fee collection stations and visitor information and messaging booths.
- Appreciates the collaboration with forest service partners putting the agreement together.

Board discussion:

- This agreement was developed before the fire:
 - It is a potential mechanism for recovery efforts in the corridor.
- Working on an agreement with BLM separately, and will be very similar to the U.S. Forest Service agreement; and
- The BLM and U.S. Forest Service already have an interagency agreement.

Discuss the "Fire or Act of God" Property Tax Program

- Tom Rohlfig

Summary of presentation:

- This year, every taxing district will be affected by the fires:
 - The tax dollars go into one big pot, into unsegregated tax collections;
 - The money gets distributed by the county treasurer based on a percentage and goes to every taxing district;
 - The districts will still get their distribution:
 - It will be less than a one percent difference than last year's distribution; and
 - All taxing districts will share in the loss.
- There is a proration application that is available in the Assessor's Office for those who have lost their homes in the Beachie Creek Fire:
 - The proration would be applied to this tax year.
- The property values in Marion County were estimated in January 2020:
 - The tax year begins July 1, 2020, and goes through June 30, 2021; and
 - The first tax payment is due November 15, 2020.
- Next year, the property values are expected to be very different:
 - The Assessor's Office applies values to properties;
 - The Assessor's Office will recalculate districts; and
 - The percentage of the pot will be smaller for redistribution.
- Due to state statute, the Assessor's Office is unable to extend the due dates for property taxes;

- If property owners pay the full amount due on their property taxes on time, they will get a refund;
- If they are unable to pay the full amount, they can pay one-third of it now, or pay nothing now and the Assessor's Office will send a corrected bill later:
 - The corrected bill is not eligible for discount; and
 - Will have interest on the past due tax portion:
 - The interest rate on the past due taxes is 16 percent.
- Under the statute, the property owner is eligible for a rebate due to an "Act of God":
 - There is an application process;
 - The Assessor's Office can verify if the property owner qualifies for the rebate; and
 - There should be a process where the property owner can pay what they actually owe, but the Assessor's Office will not know the exact amount until they can do a damage assessment on the properties.
- If the property owner doesn't pay the bill on time, they only lose out on the three percent discount:
 - The county is not foreclosing on properties.
- The property taxes are based on an assessed value, not a real market value;
- For a proration of an Act of God, there are three questions that need to be answered:
 - Is the property damaged or destroyed?
 - The Assessor makes that determination.
 - Has the application been filed in a timely manner?
 - For properties damaged in the Beachie Creek Fire, the due date will be June 30, 2021.
 - Is the after event real market value less than the original assessed value?
 - Yes – The taxes can be prorated.
 - No – The property owner has already been taxed on the lower value between the two.
- The assessed values in Oregon are much lower than the real market value; and
- In most cases, the assessed value is three percent higher than the previous year's assessed value.

Board discussion:

- The commissioners stated the need for messaging regarding property tax relief;
- The commissioners are unhappy that property owners have to fill out an application in order to get relief;
- Mr. Rohlring will send a separate letter to all of the properties affected on how to apply for property tax relief;
- The tax statements will be mailed on October 19, 2020;
- The commissioners are concerned with property owners walking away from their properties and not paying taxes on them;
- There are more than 2,800 parcels affected by the wildfires;

- There are differences in property tax relief options based on the damage of the property:
 - Damaged property would receive 10 months of relief; and
 - Destroyed property would receive nine months of relief.
- The commissioners recommended Mr. Rohlfing talk to Grant and Curry County and see what they did regarding property tax relief for homes that were destroyed by wildfires;
- Each year, mortgage companies pay one-third of the total tax roll;
- Public Works has a robust advertising contract that the Assessor's Office can use to get the message out for property tax relief; and
- Extra resources to answer phones may be needed once the fliers go out.

OTHER:

Camber Schlag:

- Requesting an emergency delegation of authority to Jan Fritz and Jeff White for signing contracts and purchase orders for the fire emergency that do not exceed \$200,000;
- There are only two examples of contracts, neither of them are over \$200,000;
- Since recovery is unknown at this time, this will give the ability to execute contracts quickly to get the work done;
- This emergency delegation matches the COVID emergency delegation, which is still in place; and
- This will be on the consent agenda at tomorrow's Board Session.

Board Discussion:

- The commissioners are in agreement to grant the approval to give the authority, but would like discussion of what is being purchased; and
- The purchase order for the radio communication mobile tower at Halls Ridge will be done today.

Meeting adjourned at 9:52 a.m.

COMPLETED BY: **Kristy Witherell**

Reviewed by: *Joanna Ritchie*