

## **Bear Lake County Commissioners' Meeting**

**February 9, 2026**

**Commissioners' Chambers – Paris, Idaho**

The Board of Bear Lake County Commissioners met in its regular meeting at 9 a.m. Monday, February 9, 2026, in the Commissioners' Chambers in Paris, Idaho. Video access to the meeting was available via Zoom. Members present were Commission Chairman Rex L. Payne, Commissioner Wynn S. Olsen, Commissioner Alan P. Eborn, and Clerk of the Board Amy Bishop. Also in attendance was Treasurer Tricia Poulsen, Assessor, Jannelle Jensen, Sheriff Bart Heslington, Prosecutor Ronnie Keller, and various staff and members of the public.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The board reviewed the agenda.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to approve the agenda for the January 12, 2026, meeting of the Board of County Commissioners. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.**

### **ELECTED OFFICIALS UPDATES**

#### **TREASURER TRICIA POULSEN**

Tricia Poulsen presented a tax cancellation for a parcel that was created in error. The cancellation is for parcel 4964.04 in the amount of \$149.46.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion for the cancellation of taxes for parcel 4964.04 in the amount of \$149.46. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

Tricia presented the Joint Quarterly Report.

#### **ASSESSOR JANNELLE JENSEN**

Jannelle Jensen presented a report with the amounts received by the DMV and Parks and Recreation for the month of January. She noted that the Circuit Breaker program had started. Her office had visited the Senior Center already to help get residents signed up for the program.

#### **SHERIFF BART HESLINGTON**

Bart Heslington reported that the upgrades to the dispatch system are complete and that everything is working as planned. He is having ongoing discussions with the CAD and RMS providers so the systems can be used at full capacity. He has had conversations with other agencies regarding their standard operating procedures and response protocols.

Heslington serves on the Idaho Sheriff Association Legislative Committee. The committee is concerned that tools that allow them to do their job are being taken away. An example cited

included changing the requirement for vehicles to have a front license plate or a registration sticker.

Heslington reported that the Idaho Supreme Court is focused on courthouse security, but the vision and application are still far apart. The Sheriff's Office will conduct a security analysis beginning with the courtroom and working their way out so all parties can have needs met.

Heslington has been working with the prosecutor's office to consolidate the workflow for discovery requests.

The Sheriff's Office still has an open position for a deputy. Heslington is working to fill that position by the end of the week. Deputies have been working on cleaning up the area by the back sheds.

Commissioner Eborn reported about a conversation with Franklin County Search and Rescue. He indicated that Bear Lake County Dispatch was instrumental in helping with the recovery of an injured snowmobiler. He expressed gratitude that the counties help each other.

Commissioner Olsen asked Heslington about redacted police reports. Heslington explained the requirement to redact personal information. His office is working within the protocols developed by ILETS. Citizens involved in accidents are given a form at the scene which includes the information needed by insurance companies.

#### **CLERK AMY BISHOP**

Amy Bishop reported that she attended the Idaho Association of Counties meetings in Boise. She met with the State Controller's Office regarding the annual transparency report. Her office has fielded questions about filing for candidacy. The Secretary of State's Office is working to implement online filing options. The Clerk's Office has been working on the elections system to make sure all houses are included in the street index.

Bishop reported that W-2s were sent out last week. She reported that clarification was needed on reporting time and a half pay, but changes have been implemented to make the reporting easier in the future.

Bishop reported that the Trial Court Administrator and Administrative District Judge visited the week prior. They were able to address some immediate concerns with courtroom security, but will continue to work on long-term solutions.

Bishop reported that the records clerk had been compiling information about all local boards to simplify administration in the future. She notified the Board of Commissioners that there is new legislation requiring all counties to have an ADA compliant website. She will work with a web developer to bring the county in to compliance.

#### **PROSECUTOR RONNIE KELLER**

Ronnie Keller reported that his office is caught up on magistrate cases and law enforcement referrals. He was unable to attend the Idaho Association of Counties Conference, but did attend

the Prosecutor Conference in January. He has been working on civil cases and streamlining the processes in the office.

Commissioner Payne expressed his gratitude for Keller's work.

#### **BUILDING INSPECTOR WAYNE DAVIDSON**

Wayne Davidson reported that he is working through the homes currently being built. He anticipates this summer being busy again. Davidson reported that his last day of employment will be April 30, 2026. Each member of the Board of Commissioners expressed their appreciation for Davidson's hard work and dedication. Clerk Bishop read a proposed job description for the vacancy.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to post a job opportunity for the Bear Lake County Building Inspector with duties as read. The Motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.**

Assessor Jensen expressed her appreciation for Davidson.

#### **EMERGENCY MANAGER NIC HIGGINS**

Nic Higgins reported that he has been working on an EMPG grant. He met with the state and indicated that the grants we have will continue until September 30, 2027. A meeting with FEMA will be held February 26, 2026. He is working on finishing the SHSP grant and will submit it to the state by the end of February.

Higgins reported that the LEPC meetings were held. He has equipment on order and has been deciding how to best use the grant money. He spoke with the Red Cross about emergency shelters in the county. He reported that the Red Cross has resources available for emergencies if the county needs them.

Higgins attended the ISSA Conference where he saw a CAT grooming demonstration. He reported that our area is due for a new Snow CAT next year. He has applied for a truck and trailer grant which will be awarded in June. He reported that grooming has been slow this winter, but his team is working on trail heads in the meantime.

Commissioner Eborn notified the Board that the EMPG grant pays part of Higgins' salary. The Board will need to monitor the status of that grant in order to find different funding for his salary, if necessary. Eborn reported that the Red Cross has a monthly meeting with multiple agencies to coordinate resources in an emergency.

Commissioner Eborn mentioned an item he would like to see on a future agenda: people using trails whether there is snow or not. He suggested closing roads on a specific date every year. Higgins reported that other counties are having the same problem.

Higgins reported on several MOUs that will need to be reviewed by the Board. The MOUs will allow Caribou County to assist with Bear Lake County's radios if needed.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to accept the agency-to-agency encryption MOU. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Eborn made a motion to accept the agency-to-agency MOU to allow access to agency provision in the system. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Eborn made a motion to accept the agency-to-agency MOU to allow appoint out agency designees as Nic Higgins and Scott Hymas. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Eborn made a motion to approve the Idaho Office of Emergency Management Grant adjustment in the amount of \$22,778.52. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Olsen made a motion to ratify the claims before the Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.

Minutes were presented to the Board for approval from the January 12, 2026 meeting.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Olsen made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 12, 2026 meeting. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.

Clerk Bishop reported that there were two hay leases up for bid. They are designated as parcels A and B. She read the Public Notice for bids.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Eborn made a motion to post the call for hay bids in parcels A and B. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.

## **COUNTY BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Clerk Bishop reported that the Airport Board is fully staffed; the Animal Damage Control Board is coming due soon, but she is waiting on a recommendation letter; the Fair Board is fully staffed; on the Planning and Zoning Board, Todd Transtrum's appointment expires this month. Eric Bomsta's appointment expires in July. Several other board members' appointments will expire in January 2029. After a brief discussion among the Board of Commissioners, it was decided that Commissioner Payne will contact Transtrum and Bomsta to inquire if they would like to continue serving on the Planning and Zoning Board.

Clerk Bishop continued her report on local boards. Commissioner Olsen indicated that Cheryl Beck would like to keep serving on the Hospital Board.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Olsen made a motion to reappoint Cheryl Beck to serve on the Hospital Board. Commissioner Eborn seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Clerk Bishop continued. The Snowmobile Committee Bylaws dictate that there should be 6 members per county, but it may be better to have 2 or 3 members per county. Commissioner Eborn clarified that the committee is made of county residents and a commissioner from each

county. He suggested that this matter should be on the agenda for the 4-County meeting. Clerk Bishop agreed to keep working on this matter.

Clerk Bishop continued her review of county boards. She reported that Virgil Johnson would like to be relieved of his duties on the Translator District Board. They have been unable to fill the vacancy on that board. Any individuals interested in serving can contact Jim Parker or DeeAnn Gunn.

Clerk Bishop reported that the Golf Course Board is fully staffed. The Veterans Officer position is held by Ed Lyon, who is appointed and receives a salary. The Fish Haven Mosquito Abatement Board had a member would like to step down.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to appoint Richard Seel to replace Jim Felt on the Fish Haven Mosquito Abatement Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to reappoint Tavis Buys to the Fish Haven Mosquito Abatement Board. Commissioner Eborn provided a second. The motion carried.**

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to reappoint Cindy Erickson to the Fish Haven Mosquito Abatement Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

Commissioner Payne indicated the expiration dates for these positions would stay the same for now.

Clerk Bishop continued her report on the county boards. The Waterways Committee is optional in statute and no one is currently appointed; the Bear Lake Mosquito Abatement Committee is fully staffed; the Bear Lake Historical Society had two members who would like to be reappointed.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to reappoint Pamela Wuthrich and Robyn Alleman to the Bear Lake Historical Society. Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

Clerk Bishop reported that the Off Highway Committee was still looking to fill three board positions. Deputy Kyler Dygert is looking for volunteers. He needs a ATV and a motorcycle representative.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING - Mill Canyon Parking Lot**

**MOTION: At 10:24 am, Commissioner Olsen made a motion to enter a public hearing to discuss the Mill Canyon Parking Lot Land Exchange. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

Commissioner Payne outlined the rules for a public hearing and gathering information. Commissioner Eborn provided a short history of the use of the Mill Canyon snowmobile parking lot. Bear Lake County owns 3.5 acres, but not all of the land is useful for parking. Eric Bomsta, a

landowner, is unable to get to his home when trucks and trailers are parked in the lot. Bomsta has developed land there and has proposed a land swap. Commissioner Eborn reported that Idaho Code §31-808(7) regulates land swaps.

Kathi Izatt asked about the values of the two properties. Commissioner Payne provided the numbers and gave comment about conditions that would need to be met before the land swap could be completed. Ms. Izatt urged the Board to review the agreement carefully before making a decision. Brad Wilks and Nic Higgins gave comments in favor of the land swap.

Commissioner Olsen stated there are two separate issues to be addressed: the land exchange and the issues with the road leading to the parking lot. Prosecutor Keller agreed.

Eric Bomsta is the managing member of the Canyon Vista Ranch, LLC. Canyon Vista Ranch, LLC owns part of the land around the proposed parking lot and would be doing the improvements on the lot. He gave a brief history of the land and the use of the road leading to the parking lot. Bomsta indicated Canyon Vista Ranch would take care of the fencing and would work with Liberty Rock to finish the parking lot, but the county would need to do the work on the road and the culverts.

Prosecutor Keller explained that an easement description for Barry Shelton can be included in the language of the deed. He explained that the county an exception would apply to the 5-year time standard for subdivisions in the ordinance if it is for county use.

Mr. Bomsta asked for an indemnity clause until after the survey is complete. Keller explained that liability can be assigned with a contract.

**MOTION: At 10:53 am, Commissioner Olsen made a motion to leave the public hearing and return to the regular meeting. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

Commissioner Olsen stated he was in favor of the land swap as it would be beneficial to the county. He restated his assertion that there are two separate issues: the parking lot and the road. Commissioner Eborn agreed that there are two issues at hand. He realizes the county may incur costs to improve the road, but this is the right thing to do. The road is already being used without any improvements. Commissioner Payne believed the land swap to be in the best interest of the county and agreed that there are two issues as previously stated. He stated that Mr. Bomsta will cover the cost of the survey. He stated the county would work with Mr. Bomsta and Mr. Shelton to ensure Shelton has easement to his property. The county will also complete liability transfers for both parcels.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to separate the road repairs and upgrade from the land exchange with Canyon Vista Ranch, LLC; and to handle the land exchange issue now and deal with the road repairs later. A second was given by Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.**

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to proceed with the land exchange including an easement for Barry Shelton; including a liability provision; and for parking lot improvements**

with an exception under the subdivision ordinance for the lot split. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.

#### **BEAR LAKE BRAWL TRIATHLON**

Joseph Coles appeared by Zoom to request approval to hold the Bear Lake Brawl Triathlon again. The event will take place September 19, 2026. He explained the history of the event and outlined the course for this year. He had been in touch with several agencies willing to provide support for the event. Sheriff Bart Heslington requested that Coles provide a detailed safety plan for his review. Heslington indicated he had funds earmarked for events like this.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to issue conditional approval for the Bear Lake Brawl Triathlon based on the condition that Mr. Coles works with Sheriff Heslington to provide an acceptable safety plan. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

#### **PUBLIC HEARING – City of Montpelier Area of Impact**

**MOTION: At 11:16 am, Commissioner Eborn made a motion to go into a public hearing. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.**

Commissioner Payne outlined the instructions for speaking in a public hearing. Mitch Poulsen Planning and Zoning Director, addressed the City of Montpelier Areas of Impact and the Area of Impact Ordinance. He reviewed applicable Idaho Code as well as the current impact area and the proposed impact area. Kathi Izatt notified the Board that she had reviewed the code and educated the Board about what she had read. She indicated that once the impact area is approved, the residents inside the area have to be included in the Planning and Zoning Commission. Doug Armstrong gave a statement opposed to making changes to the area of impact as he is unsure of the benefit to him, and he doesn't want to be annexed into Montpelier City.

Commissioner Payne noted that several attendees who signed the sign-in sheet were opposed to the change but had elected not to speak. Kale Wuthrich was present representing the Ranch Hand Trail Stop. He represents the Ranch Hand and twenty-eight acres north of the Ranch Hand. He is unsure how that property would be affected, but had questions about the exact boundary near his home in Montpelier Canyon. Poulsen showed Wuthrich the boundary.

Wyman Ray, Lillas Ipsen, Roseann Egan, Lyonna Burdick were opposed to the change to the area of impact. Montpelier City Mayor, Ted Slivinski, was present by Zoom. He explained that the city and the landowners in the impact area are partners in this decision. Mitch Poulsen addressed questions about development, rezoning, and water lines.

Commissioner Olsen notified those present that cities in the state of Idaho are required to have meetings regarding areas of impact. This ensures planning for future development. Counties are required by statute to anticipate growth. Commissioner Eborn stated that the County didn't relay enough information to the public. He recommended the Board listen to the public and give them more time to review the proposed maps. Lyonna Burdick stated that with the new information provided, she would be in favor of the new area of impact. Prosecutor Keller stated

that the Board had met the requirements and they were fine to proceed how they saw fit. Keller indicated he would like to make an amendment to Section 5 to include more specificity about when the city will be notified.

**MOTION: At 12:05 pm, Commissioner Olsen made a motion to close the public hearing. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

Commissioner Eborn stated he would like to table this matter to allow more information to be disseminated to the public and for Prosecutor Keller to have time to make the outlined amendment. Commissioner Olsen agreed. Commissioner Payne reminded the Board to not discuss this matter with the public, but to encourage the public to attend the next meeting.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to table the City of Montpelier Area of Impact Area Ordinance until the next meeting. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.**

#### **COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

County Superintendent Todd Boehme reported that the Road and Bridge Department had been continuing maintenance in the absence of snow this winter. The Road and Bridge Department will continue to do repairs on equipment and to work on shoulders of designated roads. He attended a meeting about earthquake preparedness; there will be another meeting in May. He notified the Board that the Idaho Transportation Department will be working on fences on Highway 30 by Rocky Point this summer. Boehme has been working with PacifiCorp to update the streetlights in the county. He will be attending LEPC on February 20, 2026. He explained the two additions to the surplus list.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to accept two Balderson wings, posts, and belly plates as surplus and to add them to the surplus website. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

#### **FIRE DISTRICT UPDATE**

Bear Lake County Fire Chief, Mark Parker, reported that Bear Lake Fire would be hosting the South County Fire Conference June 5-7, 2026. He will seek sponsors for this event, which will include a water rescue course. He explained that the county needs an insurance rating this spring. This is how home fire insurance policies are determined and priced. Parker indicated the fire commissioners would like to introduce a permanent levy override for the Fire District. He stressed that the department isn't trying to expand; they want to be able to maintain what they already have. He outlined other programs he has used to obtain equipment. He is facing problems with obsolete and inadequate equipment and buildings that aren't large enough to house trucks.

Chief Parker reported that he has fifty-eight volunteers, including two fire investigators in the department. The current levy rate is \$20 per \$100,000 assessed. Chief Parker is proposing an increase to \$60 per \$100,000 assessed.

Commissioner Payne questioned Chief Parker about his budget. Chief Parker reported the budget is \$489,000 per year. The new levy rate will increase the budget to \$1,000,000 per year. He already has posted this information on social media and plans on holding public meetings in April. He is planning on having this proposal in the May election.

### COMMISSIONER COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT REPORTS

Commissioner Olsen reported that he attended the State Fair Board meeting and an audit was approved for the state fair. The assessment for Bear Lake County would stay the same as previous years. He reported that the IDAWY audit was approved and that the landfill is working with the Department of Environmental Quality and the Idaho Department of Health.

Commissioner Olsen reported that House Bill 1083 would limit well water to household use only under certain qualifications. He reported that proposed legislation would introduce an additional 3% sale tax on lodging, 1.5% would go to property tax relief and 1.5% to the county. He reported that changes to Medicare and Medicaid have affected rural hospitals, with some being forced to close.

Commissioner Eborn reported that he had been working on snow machine issues, including the possibility of closing certain roads on a given date each year. He reported that the senior center is struggling financially, but the Idaho State Park has offered three nights of camping on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend as a raffle prize. He reported that the Oregon Trail Center Board met and reelected Heber Dunford as chairman.

Commissioner Payne reported that Bear Lake Watch is planning on having a wash tank at North Beach and the marina near Garden City this summer to help deter invasive species. Additionally, they plan on having prepackaged food for sale at North Beach during the summer. He reported that construction on the Idaho State Park that was scheduled to begin this summer may be on hold to determine if funding is available. He reported that Dingle will now be managed by Idaho State Parks instead of Idaho Transportation Department to. Commissioner Payne reported that Idaho State Parks are working with the city of St. Charles to obtain housing for park rangers and have discussed building housing.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 12: 57 pm.



Rex L. Payne, Chairman



Date Approved

ATTEST:

  
Amy Bishop, Clerk

