

Bear Lake County Commissioners' Meeting

December 22, 2025

Commissioners' Chambers – Paris, Idaho

The Board of Bear Lake County Commissioners met in its regular meeting at 9 a.m. Monday, December 22, 2025, 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 Snowmobile Program Manager and Emergency Manager Nic Higgins, as well as various members of the public.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The board reviewed the agenda.

MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to approve the agenda for the December 22, 2025, meeting of the Board of County Commissioners. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.

2026 Meeting Schedule and Discussion about 2026 Priorities

Clerk Amy Bishop presented the proposed meeting schedule for 2026. She noted that the commissioners would be attending the Idaho Association of Counties on the 4th Monday in January, and recommended cancelling that meeting. She also noted that commissioner Payne would be out of town on the 4th Monday in August, and recommended scheduling another day for the budget hearing.

MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to approve the 2026 meeting schedule as presented with September 1st as the budget hearing. Commissioner Eborn seconded. The motion carried.

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR GRANT APPLICATION FOR TRUCK AND TRAILER

Nic Higgins reported on the snowmobile program. He is applying for a grant to acquire a truck and trailer to assist in hauling the program's equipment. He drafted a letter of support. The grant from the trails program would require a 20% match.

MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to approve the request for the tri-county grooming program to apply for a truck and trailer. Commissioner Olsen seconded. The motion carried.

Higgins mentioned that Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation is looking at purchasing a new snow cat for the area. He had drafted a letter of support, which will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. He also reported that parking lot work was completed above the shop in Paris. He appreciated the help from Road and Bridge. Snowmobile trailers keep getting bigger, and the additional space is helpful. The lot still needs some top material. Commissioner Eborn had asked him to look into a ski groomer for a cross country ski track at the lake. Higgins has been working with Parks and Rec on a grant to possibly build that.

MILL CANYON PARKING LOT EXCHANGE

Higgins also reviewed the Mill canyon parking lot area. Eric Bomsta wants to do a land swap with 1.15 acres for our current lot. The project would help keep road open for their gravel pit. Higgins thinks it is a good proposal. He cautioned that grant money cannot be spent before the money is in hand. Drainage on south side will come across the road, so a culvert will probably be needed. Bomsta noted that the culvert is included in their proposal. Higgins felt that the project would benefit the County. The groomed trail currently covers the gravel pit road. Lack of parking inhibits Bomsta's driveway. The proposal would have an area for year-round resident parking also. A MOU with Tri County Grooming and Liberty Rock would be needed.

Commissioner Olsen would like enough snow left on the road for nearby residents to not have to use a trailer. Commissioner Payne noted that the proposal would give everyone more space. Prosecuting Attorney Ronnie Keller noted that Idaho Code 31-808 (7) gives the commissioners discretion to exchange land for land. An exchange does not require public hearing, but he recommends that the commissioners hold one to gather public input. Commissioner Eborn stated that both parties had done an appraisal. The county has a survey on their parcel. However, Bomsta's survey is of the entire ranch. Bomsta stated he will do a survey for the 1.15 acres when the proposal is approved. Higgins stated that he had heard some concerns from the cattlemen. The cattle guard is on edge of the county's current property, and the cattlemen would like to know where will cows come off the forests. Commissioner Olsen said a new cattle guard should help. Bomsta noted that he had spoken with Road and Bridge Supervisor Todd Boehme and Boehme said they would move cattleguard if needed after the project is completed. Bomsta's property appraised for \$75,000 and the County's property appraised for \$42,000. Another concern is that a land owner below has two gates into Bomsta's lot. Bomsta says they will provide an easement.

MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to schedule a public hearing to move forward. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Olson. The motion carried.

Bomsta noted there is a requirement to not make a lot split for 5 years, following their family lot split application. The commissioners will need to address this. They also need a plan for this winter until the exchange is finalized.

Higgins also noted that on the emergency management side, weather is expected to remain the same. With state homeland security, they are working on handheld radio grants. The 2023 funds are ready to be distributed. The LEPC is meeting and working on the radios.

Communications grants are behind due to the government shutdown. Caribou county emergency manager has offered to help with programming radios.

Higgins also reported that he is working on escape area maps and emergency contacts. He is developing a flyer to go out to residents and Air BandB's. An ISU student will help build flyers as a senior project. He will bring the flyer to the commissioners when it is complete.

Commissioner Eborn also noted that future discussions will included a regional EOC. Tye Graham is helping with a mock disaster this summer.

GREEN CANYON PARKING

Spencer Bailey from St. Charles spoke to follow up on a proposal he submitted last year for a new parking lot at the upper part of Green Canyon. Commissioner Olsen met with him last week. They noted he may need to widen the road. He had applied for a plow permit. His property is past where the county plows, but he would like to plow into their home.

Commissioner Olsen expressed that it would be a good advantage. He feels the proposal would help the city by getting snowmobile trailers off road. The road could be expanded and culvert replaced. Commissioner Olsen stated he would review where the city limits were in relation to the project. There is a corner off the hill that would need to be sanded. Commissioner Eborn noted that the St. Charles City Council reviewed the proposal last year, and did not want the additional parking lot. The city will not extend road to the North because the homes are too close to the right of way. The city limit is just above the homes.

MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to take time to reinvestigate the situation. The motion did not receive a second.

Bailey responded that would like to get something done as soon as possible. He has been trying to address the issue for about three years. He has been denied a snowplow permit, and came up with the parking lot proposal to try to provide a win-win situation where the county could then plow the road. He is asking if the parking lot is not approved, to have his plow permit approved. Commissioner Payne said they can address as two separate issues. He wants to work together. Bailey said they have the equipment needed to not plow down to the dirt.

MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to give a permit to plow .07 miles to access Bailey's personal property with the condition that they leave a few inches of snow on road. Commissioner Eborn seconded. The motion carried.

RADIO DISCUSSION – SCOTT HYMAS AND NIC HIGGINS

Higgins noted that most of the first responder agencies have acquired additional 700 MHz radios. The state sends a bill for every 700 MHz radio. They need to be notified of radios purchased to be able to track the subscription cost. Hymas helps to track. They would like to require the agencies notify them. SHSP grant funds could help pay the subscription cost. Commissioner Payne asked Higgins and Hymas to work with Alan to draw up an agreement. Higgins and Hymas have reviewed the list to take off those no longer used for next year.

MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to appoint Alan to work with Hyams and Higgins on the radio situation. Commissioner Payne seconded the motion. The Motion Carried. (Commissioner Eborn abstained).

JULIE SCHEI – REQUEST TO WAIVE PENALTY AND INTEREST

Treasurer Tricia Poulsen spoke in behalf of Julie Schei, who was in the hospital. Poulsen stated that Schei had never missed a payment. She is requesting the commissioners to waive another year of penalty and interest. She has already paid \$418 of 2022's taxes. Schei needs to do a probate to get the property in her name.

MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to waive interest and penalty on 2022 for Julie Schei (parcel 01056.00) Commissioner Ebron Seconded. The motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING – OPENING BUDGET

MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to go into public hearing on opening the budget. Commissioner Olsen seconded. Roll call. Commissioner Payne, aye. Commissioner Eborn, aye. Commissioner Olsen, aye.

Clerk Amy Bishop reviewed the end of year budget adjustments and FY26 corrections as presented in resolution 2025-09. Most of the adjustments were for receipt of additional funds. She also noted the funds being transferred to the Golf Course Donation funds and the Opioid Fund.

No public signed up to speak.

MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Eborn seconded. The motion carried.

Commissioner Olsen asked if the 2026 adjustment to the Road and Bridge lease line item would impact the fund. Bishop responded that the funds were available and planned for, the adjustment was due to a data entry error in the final version of the budget. He also asked if the fair fund was solvent, Bishop responded that it should be sufficient if no major unforeseen expenses occur this year.

MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to approve resolution 2025-09. Commissioner Eborn seconded. The motion carried.

LETTER OF SUPPORT – SR. CENTER GRANT

Department of Commerce requested a letter of support to release the additional funds available for the senior center for the walk-in freezer. Bishop presented the drafted letter.

MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to approve the letter. Commissioner Eborn seconded. The motion carried.

ALTERNATE ENERGY ORDINANCE

Commissioner Eborn reviewed comments he had received on the ordinance since the last meeting. The first was from a Rich County resident who had asked that we please do not allow windmills. The second was a person who previously lived in Owyhee County who noted that windmills killed birds. The third was about section 8 in the exemptions. They wondered why we defined commercial as 10% and also asked if we needed to ordinance at all. The concern is if you could enforce the ordinance. Eborn shared his thoughts that an ordinance was needed. Eborn felt his district was the most recreational and windmills could be a detriment to their quality of life. With those considerations in mind, he presented his suggested alterations to the ordinance language. First, he recommended that on Section 6E the remove 1/2 mile limitation and note that municipalities have their own ordinances. Next, on section 6G he recommended to enhance penalties. Ronnie stated that criminal penalties could be imposed. Commissioner Payne noted that the ordinance required a bond (120%) so that companies could not walk away without proper disposal. He also stated that windmill farms are probably not feasible in the county. Payne also reviewed requirement for by FAA that would minimize impact on the airport. Bishop asked to clarify Eborn's proposal on the 1/2 mile limitation. Commissioner Payne asked if a new hearing would be needed if major changes were made. Commissioner Olsen asked if the 10% is enforceable. Payne stated that it was to prevent a commercial operation from claiming an ag exemption. Commissioner Olsen wondered if we should not allow windmills. Payne felt they needed to balance with personal property rights. Eborn felt they needed to protect the bird refuge better. Eborn suggested that alternative energy proposals be reviewed on a case by case basis. Review of the proposed language of the ordinance showed that the ordinance already defined the process as by conditional use permit. Olsen suggested extending the distance from the bird refuge and cities to be extended to 2 miles as well. Federal regulations on the bird refuge would apply as well.

MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to change the distance around bird refuge to 2 miles to match the lake at 2 miles in section 6E and also for municipalities. Commissioner Eborn seconded. The motion carried.

MOTION: A motion to adopt with changes ordinance 2025-02, Alternative Energy Ordinance, was made by Commissioner Eborn. Commissioner Olsen seconded. The motion carried.

The commissioners expressed thanks for the thorough review and hoped they had represented their constituents.

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:57 am.

Ry Hansen

Attest: *Amy Beck*

