

**BENEWAH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 9, 2026**

Be it remembered that at this time the Board of County Commissioners met in regular session. The meeting was opened by Chairman Lampert.

Present:	Philip R. Lampert	Chairman
	Robert Short	Commissioner
	Mark Reynolds	Commissioner
	Janeen LeWan	Clerk
	Mariah Dunham	Attorney
	Jim Roletto	Public Works Director

The Board met at 8:06 a.m., whereupon the following proceedings were had to-wit.

1. Approve the minutes of the previous meeting(s) (ACTION): A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
2. Approve Monthly Claims (ACTION): A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried. Deputy Clerk Ettinger requested clarification that the culverts ordered were for District 2 and the Ironman invoices were repair work at the transfer station.
3. Benewah Community Hospital Agenda & Minutes – Review: Commissioner Reynolds reported that while financial performance is improving, cash flow concerns remain partially due to delayed Medicare reimbursements, including a pending \$200K payment. Several questions related to bond terms, including extending payments or reducing reserve requirements, require legal review. There are also questions about the commissioners’ authority to pursue this. Discussion also covered \$118M in hospital grant funding, though distribution details are unclear at the state level. A request has been submitted to use funds for bond payments.
4. Benewah Community Hospital Financial Report – Review – Discussed with the Agenda & Mins Review.
5. Benewah County Probation Manual (ACTION): A motion to accept the Benewah County Probation manual was made by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
6. County Fee Schedules, New or Revised (ACTION): The group reviewed requests from two departments seeking fee adjustments, including updates to golf course fees and Cherry Bend Park rental rates. The requests were considered appropriate to move forward to a public hearing. It was agreed to schedule the hearing for the first meeting in April on April 13th. Other departments were invited to submit any additional fee change requests ahead of that meeting.
7. Healthcare Support Letter for Michael Done Request (ACTION): Attorney Dunham reviewed the request with the commissioners and provided information that it is not typical for a government entity in Idaho to provide a letter of support for a private entity in this manner. Request the commissioners to deny the letter of support, but welcome Dr. Done to the community. A motion to deny the letter of support but also knowing that we welcome him to the community and support him in this manner was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

8. Mineral Right Deeds – Return Mineral Rights to Surface Rights Owners (Action)
RP43N03W265500 & RP43N03W270500: These deeds were prepared by Attorney Dunham for Treasurer Sexton to return the mineral rights to the fee owner of the ground. These are BLM properties. Tax deed was taken on these rights, no value to the rights, deed execution just returns them to the property owner. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
9. Federal Parking Lot Weekend Use Request – Polly Grasham (ACTION): Clerk LeWan summarized the request, Commissioner Reynolds noted the city, and county can work together to provide signs for traffic flow if needed. A motion was made to approve the item by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
10. Collaboration Letter Review to City of St. Maries (ACTION): Mr. Roletto summarized this is a letter responding to the request from the city to meet. Mr. Roletto noted he has been working with Jaidyn to set up meeting dates. Commissioner Reynolds inquired about public meetings, Mr. Roletto noted the initial meetings would be small at first then they will come back and schedule a public meeting. A motion to approve the letter was made by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
11. Budget Cut Discussion – per Commissioner Reynolds: Clerk LeWan presented two budget documents. Commissioners reviewed the cuts coming down from the state level and the impact on the road budget. Commissioner Reynolds offered to recommend more cuts, and they could review those at the next meeting. Commissioner Reynolds also discussed overtime usage with D1 and noted that recent overtime was driven by staff completing equipment and vehicle repairs in-house. This approach allowed necessary work to be completed while avoiding higher external repair costs, resulting in overall cost savings.

8:45 AM JIM ROLETTO, BENEWAH COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR:

Emergency Management	Road Projects	Public Works	Solid Waste
	Sewer System	Airport	Planning & Zoning

Ardurra PSA S72 Airport Taxi Lane Phase 3: This item is an engineering contract related to Phase 3 of the project to prepare it for bidding. This is part of an ongoing effort, with similar agreements completed previously. The county’s contribution represents a small percentage of the overall cost and was approved some time ago. The phase will support additional development, including plans for nine more hangars. A motion was made to approve this item was made by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.

Emergency Management: Five northern counties met to get information. They may get more information from FEMA this week or next from them.

Roads: Skylar is finishing up the road study, new maps have been developed, next up is right of ways. Echo Springs – Jim did run the road and will touch base with the individual.

Sewer: Meters are being read. Will write a memo to move the sewer shed to the airport. No pumps were replaced at this time. Jim noted that the Mag Chloride was bid by the Worley highway district at \$185 per ton.

Solid Waste: Plans to remove dumpsters on Wednesday. Plans for Washatucna have started. Should hear in the next few weeks if it is an option or not. RFP has been sent out, and he is responding to questions. Commissioner Lampert requested update on Plummer dumpsters. Skylar has been monitoring and having conversations with people utilizing the dumpsters. Plans for an increase in traffic at the transfer station have been discussed with staff. Commissioner

Reynolds noted an increase in calls stating the dumpsters have been overflowing. It was noted J&E had a truck go down and an accident which could be contributing to the delay.

Planning & Zoning: There will be a meeting on Thursday. Preliminary plat & a final plat have been working through the process. Area of Impact City of St. Maries: They would like to relook at it before presenting it again. Jim has been working through conversations with the City of St. Maries. Commissioner Reynolds inquired about considerations around subdivision development and the impact on county roads. Access and traffic flow were identified as key factors, particularly regarding where developments connect to existing roads. Concerns were raised to him about increased traffic on narrow roads, including recent inquiries in the Mutch Creek area. Mr. Roletto noted that while some areas may not have originally been planned as subdivisions, incremental development and property splits can lead to increased traffic over time. While no significantly large-scale issues have arisen yet, the P&Z board continues to monitor these situations when they come up. The option of borrowing a road counter and placing it in areas of question is available through ITD.

9:00 AM ROAD CONCERNS – BARRY GAINES

Mr. Gaines discussed ongoing concerns with the condition of Desmet Road, particularly related to deteriorating surface quality and maintenance practices. Mr. Gaines shared a history of contributing materials to improve the road and expressed frustration with recent grading work that displaced rock rather than maintaining it, leading to safety and usability issues. Concerns were also raised about the type of rock being used and the impact on vehicles.

Budget constraints were acknowledged, and it was clarified that some recent capital improvements were funded through separate sources. Commissioners committed to reviewing the road conditions, with plans to assess the area and potentially schedule additional work. The discussion also highlighted the need for possible refresher training in grading practices to ensure proper maintenance and preservation of materials.

9:15 AM PUBLIC COMMENT

Jennifer Izzarelli – raised concerns about statements that the hospital is “doing better,” with questions about what metrics are being used to support that assessment. While it was noted that bond payments are current, concerns were expressed about declining funds and negative cash positions, with uncertainty about how the hospital can sustain operations under current conditions. She emphasized the potential impact on the community if the hospital is unable to recover and expressed strong concern over the characterization of improvement. In response, Commissioner Reynolds acknowledged that while progress has been made in meeting payment obligations and maintaining transparency, the hospital is not yet out of financial difficulty and continues to work toward stability.

Michael Moore - Discussed follow-up to the most recent hospital board meeting, particularly around longstanding issues with low reimbursement rates. It was questioned whether this has been an ongoing issue that was unrecognized or insufficiently addressed over time. Commissioners noted frequent leadership turnover as a potential contributing factor. Additional concern was expressed regarding the hospital’s financial outlook, including statements suggesting potential difficulty meeting payroll, which heightened skepticism about portraying the situation as improving. Commissioner Reynolds noted that assurances had been made that payroll would not be missed. Comments also highlighted differing perspectives among board members, including one view that financial reports should be accepted as presented, while

others stressed the board's responsibility to actively question and provide oversight. Overall, the exchange reflected concern about transparency, accountability, and accurately representing the hospital's financial condition.

Cody Crandall – Expressed concerns about the hospital's financial performance, noting that despite a budgeted profit, the organization reported a significant net loss. Questions focused on the drivers of the loss. Commissioners responded with discussion pointing to write-offs, reimbursement timing, and higher-than-expected salary and benefit costs, particularly related to temporary staffing. It was explained that while staffing levels have improved and services such as surgeries have resumed, there is a lag before associated revenues are realized, contributing to current financial strain.

Skepticism was expressed about whether this explanation reflects a recurring pattern, with concerns that similar assurances had been given previously while financial performance continued to decline. Additional concerns were raised about spending exceeding budgeted amounts and whether new departments are delivering expected returns. Commissioners noted that overall gross revenue has increased, and there was agreement that the financials, particularly the profit and loss statements, warrant closer review. It was acknowledged that reimbursement challenges play a significant role, but also that more detailed analysis and oversight are needed to fully understand the situation.

Cody commended two of the districts for their overtime reduction.

Cheryl Blake - questioned how the county plans to cover costs with negative numbers, asking where the money will come from when there is a gap in the budget. She raised concerns that layoffs may be necessary and that without funding, equipment and road work will suffer. She also questioned continuing overtime under these conditions.

Commissioner Short added that the county has worked hard to improve roads but may not be able to maintain them without sufficient funding and acknowledged they did not fully realize spending had exceeded revenue. Commissioner Reynolds responded that historically, the county has not waited for funds to be fully in hand before spending, expenditures were typically allowed to move forward based on expected funding. He acknowledged road improvements have come at a high cost and past budgeting approaches have stretched funds. Clerk LeWan noted that while funds may have been available to cover expenditures in the past, that is no longer the county's current financial situation. Cheryl reiterated concerns about potential personnel cuts and asked if overtime would continue if reductions were needed. Commissioner Reynolds stated that overtime would not continue if the county reached a point where it cannot afford it.

Attorney Dunham clarified the purpose of public comment, noting that it is intended for individuals to provide input for consideration by the commissioners. However, commissioners may respond if they deem it appropriate.

9:30 a.m. Right of Way on Railroad Grade – Dave Hunter – St. Joe City Railroad Grade

Mr. Hunter's request was made for consideration to reduce a 100-foot right-of-way on Lot 11 to 25 feet, with the belief that this should have been addressed when the property was originally deeded to the county. There was discussion regarding whether taxes had been paid on the right-of-way, with differing statements. It was noted that documentation has been provided, and the request will require further review by staff. The matter is similar to a previous request but has some differences, and additional research will be conducted before further discussion.

2nd ROUND OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Rachael Johnson - Rachael encouraged individuals bringing forward concerns to also propose potential solutions. She noted that additional budget cuts may still be coming from the state and asked whether there is any way to retain more local tax revenue for essential needs before funds are sent to Boise. She also suggested possible improvements to waste management, including using fenced areas to better separate materials such as cardboard, plastic, and cans. Rachael expressed appreciation for efforts to keep roads open during a recent extended outage and emphasized the importance of maintaining road conditions. There was also brief clarification from a prior meeting regarding a request related to prayer.

Wayne Glassman - asked for clarification on public comment direction and process to have more of a conversation with the commissioners. Attorney Dunham explained the process of being placed on the agenda for those seeking a more in-depth discussion with commissioners.

Cody Crandall - expressed appreciation for how public comment is currently being handled. He noted that the meeting is ultimately led by the commissioners.

Jennifer Izzarelli - reiterated prior concerns about financial oversight, emphasizing the importance of having board members with financial expertise. She questioned whether the current board has the necessary qualifications and asked that this be reconsidered.

9:45 A.M. CONSIDER EXEMPT PROPERTY APPLICATIONS – (ACTION)

A motion to accept these as written was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

10:00 A.M. IAC STATE & FEDERAL BUDGET & REVENUE UPDATES – SETH GRIGG

Seth offered updates on state and federal funding, including PILT, SRS, and sales tax. At a high level, it was noted that SRS is not a major revenue source for the county, funds are allocated between roads and schools. Congress had previously failed to fund the program, resulting in a two-year gap, but it was reauthorized in December. Payments for those years were expected recently. However, the program is currently only authorized for one year, and there is interest in securing a longer-term, 10-year authorization.

An update was provided on PILT funding, noting that it is a federal payment program for public lands. The county received approximately \$123K in 2025, and it appears funding will continue in 2026 with a slight increase tied to an index adjustment. After a question from commissioners, it was noted that PILT funding applies only to federally managed lands and does not provide replacement revenue for tribal lands.

Sales tax revenue sharing is up approximately 4.6%, showing growth though still below historical levels. The liquor fund has declined year over year, reflecting lower alcohol consumption and corresponding reduced revenue.

The update on transportation funding highlighted ongoing concerns about reduced funding levels. Prior funding included one-time surplus dollars that supported significant road improvements and bridge replacements, but those funds are no longer expected to continue. The

county has benefited from multiple bridge projects through these programs, with a couple still in progress, after which that funding source will end.

It was also noted that prior support from the general fund and strategic initiative funding, which helped supplement road budgets, will not be available this year. As a result, the road budget is expected to decrease by 725K – 750K compared to the previous year. Statewide funding constraints were emphasized, with many counties and highway districts preparing for similar impacts. There was encouragement to engage with legislators in the near term to advocate for at least partial restoration of funding and to communicate the importance and impact of these projects locally.

It was noted that traditional highway user revenue is increasing gradually with population growth, but rising fuel prices may reduce travel, which could negatively impact future revenue. It was noted that material costs are increasing across the state, though there is hope that reduced activity during the winter months may have provided some cost savings for the county.

An update on the GEM Plan noted a projected increase of approximately 3–5%, which is significantly lower than the 20–25% increases being seen in the private sector.

Questions included the likelihood of additional transportation funding, with it noted that while there is hope for funding, it would be a significant request given current state budget pressures. Recent tax law changes have reduced anticipated state revenue, creating a substantial shortfall compared to prior projections. As a result, multiple state departments are being asked to reduce budgets, though some areas are exempt.

The state is required to maintain a balanced budget and, despite having reserve funds, is hesitant to use them outside of a recession. With only a few weeks remaining in the legislative session and budgets still not finalized, there is added pressure to reach decisions before adjournment.

Discussion included whether state endowment funds could be allocated back to counties. It was noted that no such proposals have been introduced this session, and there is currently no mechanism to use those funds without a constitutional amendment.

As the county approaches the upcoming budget year and prepares for potential funding reductions, an offer was made to provide additional support, including workshops, legislative updates, and budget training opportunities.

10:30 AM BENEWAH COUNTY TREASURER (ACTION)

- **Possible Tax Cancellation/Hardship Request(s)**

Treasurer Sexton presented multiple cancellations of mobile homes that are considered salvage or unlivable. It was noted that when these are treated as personal property, the required involvement of the sheriff can create additional costs for the county, which may exceed the value of simply cancelling them. Last cancellation is a trailer on Hells Gulch. Cancellations were signed by the commissioners at this time.

- **Financial Review/Cash Balance Review**

BCH has not made all payments for Feb 2026. As of Friday \$32,500, was not received for Feb. She will discuss with Attorney Dunham on if we need to specify that the payment was not made.

An update was provided on upcoming tax deed sales hoping to be scheduled for July 13th, with two parcels identified for sale, including one in St. Joe City and another previously acquired. It

was noted that a few parcels remain unresolved due to access issues. Questions were raised about property currently being leased and how it is handled, with staff indicating further review is needed. It was also noted that some parcels had been redeemed for medical reasons. Follow-up was requested on a specific property near the dike, with coordination planned between staff to review its status.

Funds have not changed much since the last meeting, and she encourages everyone to continue to be cautious about spending.

10:45 AM BENEWAH COUNTY ASSESSOR (ACTION)

Nothing to discuss.

11:00 A.M. PUBLIC COMMENT - DUMPSTER REMOVAL

Shelly Langendorfer - raised concerns about removing dumpster services, stating it shifts costs and creates safety issues with on-site garbage. She questioned whether local facilities could handle the added demand and noted the hardship for residents who cannot transport long distances. She urged reconsideration and suggested alternative cleanup options.

Donna Spier – Spoke as a resident and stated that St. Maries and Plummer residents are being restricted from using the dumpsters despite paying associated fees. She emphasized that 1040 residents would be impacted who contribute to these fees, which are covering costs and keeping the solid waste fund in a positive position. Donna noted that these funds are designated for that purpose and argued that residents deserve to continue receiving the service they are paying for. She also encouraged the commissioners to ensure that funds collected for solid waste remain within the solid waste fund.

Cheryl Blake - questioned how solid waste fees are being used and asked where the money is going. It was explained that a large portion of the cost is associated with transporting waste out of the area. Cheryl expressed frustration that she may now have to transport her own waste and requested a refund or prorated return of fees. Commissioners noted equipment needs, including trucks requiring replacement or major repairs, are a factor.

Jennifer Izzarelli - expressed dissatisfaction with the commissioners' performance and called for their resignation.

Tonya Duvall – noted she is involved in monitoring dumpster sites shared ongoing challenges with improper disposal, noting that recyclable items are frequently being discarded and that efforts to address the issue have led to negative interactions. She highlighted increased operational costs, contractual obligations, and limited staffing, which make sorting materials difficult. It was also noted that transporting waste out of the area adds complexity, with varying expectations between states. She emphasized that operations are being maintained at a minimal level to keep services running and stated that greater community cooperation would help address these challenges.

Cody Crandall - raised questions about illegal dumping on the west side by out-of-state residents. Commissioners noted that discussions have taken place with the Sheriff regarding the issue.

Jim Bennett - questioned how the decision to remove dumpsters was made and whether it had been fully analyzed. He expressed concern that the change could create additional challenges for both the county and residents and urged reconsideration or tabling of the decision. Jim also suggested reviewing employee wages and roles for potential cost savings, noting perceived inequities. Alternative solutions were proposed, including scaling back rather than removing dumpsters and exploring options such as an incinerator project in partnership with other entities. Concerns were also raised that increased illegal dumping could add strain to law enforcement and prosecution resources.

Cody Crandall - noted that while an incinerator has been discussed, it may not be the most cost-effective option. He compared current costs to potentially higher per-ton expenses and emphasized that overall costs and equipment expenses are rising. Cody stressed the importance of ensuring funds are used appropriately and not redistributed.

Tim Grubham - encouraged the county to take a closer and timelier look at a waste-to-energy plant as a potential way to turn expenses into revenue. He noted prior discussions on the topic and suggested possible partnership opportunities, including with Avista. Tim emphasized the need to act quickly and study the option in more depth, expressing concern that delaying could result in missed opportunities as other counties move forward.

11:30 A.M. DUMPSTER REMOVAL (ACTION)

Commissioner Reynolds noted that decisions are often made based on the information available at the time. Concerns were raised that to save money; some taxpayers may be impacted more than others. It was acknowledged that the decision was initially supported as a cost-saving measure, though some of the projected expenses remain uncertain. There was also concern that the anticipated savings may not be as significant as expected.

Lisa Wilson was invited to speak and expressed that they do not want the dumpsters removed but relocated due to their proximity to their home. Concerns included wildlife activity, property impacts, and late-night disturbances. It was acknowledged that the current location is problematic. Discussion noted the difficulty in finding alternative sites, as residents do not want dumpsters nearby and suitable property is limited. Relocation will be explored further, though removal remains a possible outcome if no viable location is identified.

Commissioner Reynolds stated that removal of the dumpsters should not be the first step, and that alternative solutions—such as separating dumpsters or implementing a fee-based system—should be explored. Commissioner Reynolds made a motion was made to postpone the removal of the dumpsters, and continue with the process of finding a fee-based solution, and continue working on the other issues such as out of state dumping, and not penalizing certain residents within radius. Commissioner Short seconded with the additive that it is consolidated to one area. Commissioner Reynolds agreed but cancel the removal of the dumpsters at this time. A motion to postpone removal of the dumpsters and work on solving other issues, and consolidate within a 6 month time period was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

Wayne Glassman - stated that removing the dumpsters could be considered a breach of obligation to taxpayers and may expose the county to legal risk. In response, it was noted that there is a distinction between removing and relocating the dumpsters.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: A motion was made by Commissioner Reynolds to enter executive session @ 11:13 am pursuant to Idaho Code Section 74-206(1)(d); to consider items exempt from disclosure; 74-206(1)(c) Real Property; & Idaho Code Section 74-206(1)(a)(b); personnel, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried. Present: Commissioner Reynolds, Commissioner Short, Clerk Janeen LeWan, Attorney Mariah Dunham, & Public Works Director Jim Roletto.

Exited executive session & meeting adjourned at 11:46 am.

Minutes read and approved this 23rd day of March, 2026.

By the Board of Benewah County Commissioners:

_____/s/_____
Philip R. Lampert, Chairman Robert Short, Commissioner Mark Reynolds, Commissioner

Attest:

_____/s/_____
Janeen LeWan, Clerk