

**BENEWAH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
October 14, 2025**

Be it remembered that at this time the Board of County Commissioners met in regular session. The meeting was opened by Commissioner 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):** During discussion on item #3 from the previous minutes, Commissioner Reynolds noted that District 1 needs a truck and Districts 2 and 3 will require other equipment, but purchases are on pause until fund availability. There was also a review of how unspent FY25 funds carry into FY26. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
2. **Approve Monthly Claims (ACTION):** Commissioner Short asked about the history of the Humane Society claims – Attorney Dunham stated the court will seek restitution and the county has paid these claims in the past amounts may have been lower. Review continued to the lease payments for Zions Bank and fund accuracy, discussion on payment for Rock ‘N’ Road LLC no invoice required due to contract, Wood’s Crushing invoice noted for FY25, Gold Creek Bridge repair purchase. A motion to approve the claims was made by Commissioner Reynolds and seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
3. **Benewah Community Hospital Agenda & Minutes:** Commissioners opted to review these items when the CEO of Benewah Community Hospital came to present.
4. Benewah Community Hospital Financial Performance Packet – Review: Pending presentation of the CEO.
5. **Chaisson Petition Denial of Road Validation:** A petition concerning Sheep Creek Road in Santa led to a denial of road validation after no agreement was reached with adjacent landowners. The matter has now resulted in a lawsuit, requiring a county response and further discussion in executive session.
6. **City of St. Maries Area of Impact:** Attorney Dunham introduced this item noting recent law changes require the county to work with cities on Areas of Impact. Letters were sent asking for presentations to the commissioners. Plummer and Tensed have not responded, while St. Maries submitted a map and letter showing a smaller Area of Impact than in the past due to revised state law. Area of Impact outlines where annexation can occur within five years, ensures new development meets city standards for infrastructure (water, sewer, roads), and allow cities a seat on the Planning & Zoning board. Commissioners have asked for the Planning & Zoning board to review and give an advisory opinion.
7. **Air Permit Issued to PotlatchDeltic Land & Lumber LLC:** Commissioners were in agreement that they were glad to see the permit come through.

8. **Republic Services Disposal Contract (ACTION):** A motion to renew the contract with Republic Services was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion Carried.
9. **Computer Arts, Inc / Harris Agreement Software & Support License – (ACTION):** At the request of the Clerk a motion to table this item was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
10. **Topics for Legislator & Senator meeting Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> – Phil Lampert:** Commissioners requested the Clerk to email each elected official to ask what topics they would like to discuss with the legislators and senator at the October 27th meeting. Dale Hawkins plans to attend, Heather Scott may attend via Zoom, and Phil Hart may not attend due to other meetings. An agenda will be prepared and sent to Hari Heath in advance.
11. **Idaho Dept. of Juvenile Corrections – Revised - Passthrough Funds Recipient Agreement (ACTION):** A motion to approve this agreement was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynoldys. Motion carried.
12. **Extension & Amendment to Contract 2025-2026 – City of St. Maries (ACTION):** A motion to extend the contract was made by Commissioner Reynolds and seconded by Commissioner Short.
13. **Extension & Amendment to Contract 2025-2026 – City of Plummer (ACTION):** A motion to extend the contract was made by Commissioner Reynolds and seconded by Commissioner Short.
14. **Benewah County Resolution No. 2025-10 to Amend Fee Schedules (ACTION)** A motion to approve the resolution was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
15. **DoT Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse Queries & Letter to Current Employees:** The Clerk shared this is a process at the federal level and will only affect employees who hold a CDL.
16. **Application for Lengthy Trial Reimbursement (ACTION):** The application is seeking a reimbursement for \$2,240.00. A motion to approve the application for reimbursement was made by Commissioner Reynolds and seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
17. **Holiday Scheduling Request for FTE for Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (ACTION):** Holiday time off was discussed. It was noted it has been customary to approve of this day as a holiday. Concerns were raised about budget impact and pay practices, including possible double-time accrual. A motion to table the item until further discussion with the Sheriff’s Department was made by Commissioner Reynolds and seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
18. **Personnel Policy Acknowledgement Forms:** The Clerk noted with the resolution to the personnel policy this year a renewal of acknowledgment forms will be requested of all county employees.
19. **Statement of Interest – BCH Hospital Board Appointment:** Jen Izzarelli expressed interest in serving on the board. Jen stated appointments can be made outside of BCH nomination recommendations, while Attorney Dunham advised it was appropriate to wait for the official recommendations from the BCH board and will confirm the appointment process.
20. **CSRBA Tribal Claims Water Adjudication – (ACTION):** A detailed settlement discussion was held on this matter. It was noted the parties are close to a resolution. The item will be presented in executive session with action to follow review.
21. **Benewah Creek Road Rock - Addendum to Storage Lease Agreement (ACTION) –** The addendum to extend the storage lease agreement with Rock ‘N’ Road LLC beyond December 31, 2025, due to stockpiled material was discussed. It was noted that only a portion of material will remain onsite, and measurements are still needed to confirm lease usage. A

motion to table the storage lease agreement was made by Commissioner Reynolds and seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

**22. Benewah Creek Road Rock - Amendment to Supply Purchase Agreement (ACTION):**

The amendment proposes increasing the royalty payment from \$1.00 to \$1.25 per ton, reflecting a verbal agreement made prior to the current season. Commissioners agreed this amendment formalizes the updated payment rate. Commissioners agreed the past contract will not be renegotiated at this time and will be reviewed if a new project starts in the future. A motion to accept the supply purchase agreement of \$1.25 per ton was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.

**8:45 A.M. JIM ROLETTO, BENEWAH COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR**

<b>Emergency Management</b>	<b>Road Projects</b>	<b>Public Works</b>	<b>Solid Waste</b>
	<b>Sewer System</b>	<b>Airport</b>	<b>Planning &amp; Zoning</b>

**Planning & Zoning:** Review of a request to split a .65-acre parcel, but code now requires minimum 1 acre per lot. Property has two homes, each with its own water, sewer, and access. Previously would have qualified as a “free split,” but now needs a variance. P&Z will review and provide input.

Another individual has expressed interest in serving on the Planning & Zoning board. Jim will bring forward once reviewed.

**Emergency Management:** All-Hazards Plan review started; will take time. Annual Conference at end of month. Review of the Emida Ambulance shed, garage doors will be there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Road Projects:** Culvert installed on Whitetail (Tribe assisted; county supplied culvert and rock) Avista was there to jointly work on a project. Culvert on Brebner completed. Crushing work is complete; invoice received Friday. Stripping finished on St. Joe Road; centerline painted, no fog line due to funding/paint order. Sheriff notes centerline is enforceable; centerline also aids plowing. Road salt is arriving this week; will deliver to D1 & D2 when sheds are ready.

**Solid Waste:** Dumpsters moved to new location; City of Plummer establishing its own site. Dumpsters fill quickly and need monitoring for one week. Phil discussed location options with the mayor for city dumpsters to assist in overflow of the county site. Fencing contractor available to secure area. Concern raised about metal in dumpsters potentially damaging trucks. Spokane Waste-to-Energy Plant visit can be scheduled for December 3<sup>rd</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>. All commissioners and Jim will attend to see plant operations.

**Sewer System:** Ordering two other pumps for the sewer department.

**Airport:** Fuel tank project is funded through a reimbursement grant. A concrete slab was completed for the fuel syst. A fuel tank was donated and placed on the slab; it will be cleaned and connected with the existing tank so both can operate together.

**9:00 A.M. BERT KELTNER – BCH ANNUAL AUDIT PRESENTATION**

Keltner presented hospital operations improving by surgeon coverage restored, swing bed program renewed with positive results. Capacity nearly doubled since last spring. Increases noted for surgeries and outpatient services (ortho, general surgery, infusion, wound care, quick care) all growing. Imaging, lab, and PT services at record use. Surgery capacity has increased and will continue.

The audit focused on the final pages, noting five weaknesses in financial statements and adjustments. Corrective actions were taken on four items, including revenue reporting across fiscal years, accruals for retention credit interest and Medicaid/Medicare reimbursements, and tracking sick time as a liability.

In conversations with Jen Izzarelli additional concerns were raised, leading to two new review processes: weekly check approvals before mailing and daily ledger change reports sent to Bert for oversight. Mark requested these changes be reviewed with the auditor. A letter on corrective actions was sent to the governing board and auditors. Bert noted the importance of learning from mistakes. Burt noted in conversation with Jen she clarified she was not alleging fraud but pointing out areas where risks could occur.

**9:15 A.M. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Charles Craig:** Noted concern over solid waste billing and members of the community not paying an equal share. Commissioners and Jim noted how all loads are being charged across the scales, the tribe is being billed directly by Southlake Services. Also noted how pickup with J&E for county & commercial businesses is now separated, dumpsters moved to restrict use to county residents. Some problems noted is other counties using the dumpsters, and contractors utilizing them vs the landfill.

**Hari Heath:** Inquired about the Spokane Waste-to-Energy facility and whether it could provide an alternative to shipping garbage to Montana. It was noted the county does not generate enough waste to operate its own facility and would need to combine with other sources. Hari also asked about the impact of approximately 30,000 acres coming off the tax rolls due to the Tribe's purchase of Stimpson land.

**9:30 A.M. CHRIS HALVORSEN – SPLIT REQUEST INQUIRY**

Mr. Halvorsen notified the Clerk that morning he was unable to make it.

**9:45 A.M. JAMES COMSTOCK – OWNERSHIP OF & ON THE BENEWAH ROAD**

Mr. Comstock did not respond to the Commissioner's call.

**10:00 A.M. JEN IZZARELLI – FRAUD RISK FOR BCH**

Concerns were raised regarding existing financial risks at BCH. While the goal remains to make the hospital successful, weaknesses in financial statement preparation and adjusting journal entries have persisted year over year. These are defined as material weaknesses, the most severe type in an audit, and create risks whether from fraud or honest mistakes. It was noted that financial statements for 2024 are being used to make 2025 decisions, and breakdowns in internal controls mean the statements cannot be fully relied upon. Discussion included the need for stronger board oversight, clearer management controls, direct reporting from the CFO, and advertising of whistleblower options. Jen recommended consideration of a state audit to review concerns, noting other small entities have experienced fraud. Commissioners acknowledged that limited staff size creates challenges but agreed risks can still be mitigated. Hospital management is working on corrective actions, but board response was viewed as insufficient.

**10:15 A.M. KENNY MOORE – FAIR BOARD**

Construction project changes and upgrades were discussed for the bathrooms near the horse arena, which currently lack handicap access. A company has offered to remove the building for free if it is rebuilt. Plans are for a larger restroom with plumbing, potentially completed by spring. Questions were raised about whether Parks & Rec funds or grants could support the project, and permitting through the city and lease compliance will need to be reviewed. Handicap grants may also be available. Concerns about the existing septic and dump station were noted, with revenue from the \$5 fee going to the fair board. It was also noted the fair board has no bylaws, which will need further review.

**10:30 A.M. ICRMP REP. DEBBIE FERGUSON PRESENT NEW MEMBER**

**REFERENCE MANUAL**

No changes were made to the reference manual; training access can be provided through the county Clerk. A harassment training was highlighted; governance training options were also reviewed.

### **BENEWAH COUNTY TREASURER (ACTION)**

- **Possible Tax Cancellation/Hardship Request(s):** Second-half taxes on a trailer not lived in were reviewed. The new landowner plans to destroy the trailer and will not receive any value from it. Motion to approve the cancellation was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
- **Financial Update:** The hospital is current on payments through September 30 and has made two payments in October. County available funds are a little over \$6 million, but expenditures have been higher than usual, and October claims of approximately \$1.4–\$1.5 million will reduce this balance further.
- Revenue concerns were noted, as the homeowner’s tax relief credit, sales tax, and liquor tax distributions have decreased. Fuel tax funding has not yet been received but is expected later in October. Approximately \$820,000 in property tax revenue for 2024 remains outstanding, with additional delinquencies from prior years.
- Discussion emphasized that while the budget provides legal spending authority, actual expenditures depend on cash flow. Revenues do not always arrive in the same fiscal year, as property taxes are collected mainly in December and June, and state distributions vary. Unexpected costs, such as the recent Vista court case loss of roughly \$100,000, also impact available funds.
- Unspent budget amounts do not carry forward to departments but instead roll into the general fund. It was noted that reserves are lower than in prior years, making cash flow management tighter. The Clerk and Treasurer will work more closely to continue providing clear reporting on available funds and budget balances.
- The tribal purchase of Stimson land was also reviewed. Of the roughly 40,000 acres purchased, 18,000 are within Benewah County. Stimson paid three-quarters of the 2024 taxes before transfer; the Tribe is exempt for the remaining quarter, resulting in about a \$10,000 cancellation this year. Beginning in 2026, the \$40,000 in annual taxes will shift to other taxpayers.

### **BENEWAH COUNTY ASSESSOR (ACTION)**

- **Possible Tax Cancellation Request(s):** A request to cancel taxes on a parcel where the Homeowner’s Exemption was removed in error due to a program issue. A motion to approve the cancellation was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.
- A vehicle purchase was made for the Assessor’s office to replace another.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** A motion was made by Commissioner Reynolds to enter into executive session at 11:42 a.m. pursuant to Idaho Code Section 74-206(1)(d)(a)(b); To consider records that are exempt from disclosure and Personnel; seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried. Present: Commissioners Lampert, Reynolds and Short, Clerk Janeen LeWan, Attorney Dunham, Public Works Director Jim Roletto. Exited executive session at 11:57 a.m.

Minutes read and approved this 27<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2025.

By the Board of Benewah County Commissioners:

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

Attest:

        /s/    
Janeen LeWan, Clerk