

**BENEWAH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 12, 2026**

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

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 8:00 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 Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Approve Monthly Claims (ACTION): Commissioner Short & Reynolds reviewed a few of the claims for clarity. Clerk LeWan noted the addition of the J&E invoice & ICRMP payment. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried unanimously.
3. Expenditure Requests (ACTION):
 - a. Sheriff – Credit Card Usage Exception: A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried unanimously.
 - b. University of Idaho Extension – Credit Card Usage Exception A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried unanimously.
 - c. Clerk – Credit Card Usage Exception A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
 - d. Prosecutor’s Office – Credit Card Usage Exception A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
 - e. Prosecutor’s Office - Idaho Prosecuting Attorney’s Association Training Request: Attorney Dunham discussed the budget considerations she has made to determine the importance of completing this training. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried unanimously.
 - f. Coroner – Coroner Vehicle w/ Modifications & Repairs – Coroner Nordin discussed the draft letter to the Commissioners and reviewed the information provided. It was determined that a budget amendment would be required, and the reasons for the amendment were discussed. For the current year, the funeral home cot and related resources will be used, with the understanding that these expenditures will need to be reviewed during future budget considerations. Commissioner Lampert mentioned a van at the airport, and Coroner Nordin stated she would look into that option. A

motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approve Alcohol Beverage Licenses (ACTION): A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
5. Groomer Shed in Clarkia Area - Purchase & Sale Addendum (ACTION): The club approached the county in May requesting assistance with the purchase of the property, indicating a purchase price of \$23,000. The club proposed contributing \$15,000 and asked the county to cover the remaining balance using the snow fund. The intent was to purchase the property and then apply for a grant related to it. The purchase and sale agreement was approved on August 25, 2026 and was expected to close, but the closing has not occurred. The club is now requesting an extension on the property, Attorney Dunham noted that the purchase price has changed. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
6. Stimson Lumber Company donation to Benewah County (ACTION): Clerk LeWan presented the requested breakdown of the donation was presented, showing how the funds would be split among the taxing districts where the parcels were sold, based on the prior tax cancellation amounts. Clerk LeWan answered why all districts were not included and noted because this was a donation to the county it was in the purview of the Commissioners to allocate as they see fit. A motion was made by Commissioner Reynolds to distribute the donation back to the taxing districts according to the breakdown, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
7. Road District Staff Schedules (ACTION): Commissioner Short raised concerns about excessive overtime and requested the issue be added to the agenda, stating it appears some employees may be taking advantage of it. Commissioner Reynolds explained that overtime is sometimes necessary due to travel time, staffing shortages, and safety concerns, particularly noting Commissioner Lampert's district being down to two employees. While acknowledging budget constraints, Commissioner Reynolds emphasized safety as the priority. Commissioner Short stated that District 3 is working eight-hour days and asked that overtime be monitored more closely. Deputy Clerk Ragan noted inconsistent work schedules across districts, with crews independently choosing between four 10-hour days and five 8-hour days and no clear guidance in place for holiday and sick accruals. Commissioner Short noted his crew follows a defined schedule period of April 1 through October 1, and suggested this is adopted across the board. Commissioner Reynolds stated that District 1 is on five 8-hour days, but they are working 10-hour shifts, noting that using 10 hours vs 8 hours of vacation is irrelevant as they have a set amount allocated per year. Commissioner Lampert said he would check with his district to confirm what schedule they are following. Commissioner Reynolds noted two trees on Golf Course Road were scheduled for removal January 13. No action taken on this item.
8. Sheriff's Office Administration Fee Increase – Resolution 2026-01 (ACTION): Attorney Dunham explained the concealed weapons permitting process is handled by the Sheriff's office, noting that part of the fees are determined by the state and part by the Sheriff's Office. An increase of \$0.25 to the Sheriff's administrative fee was proposed. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried unanimously.
9. Kootenai Electric Cooperative – Wildfire Mitigation Plan: Jim reported that the plan is being updated and noted that Kootenai Electric were included in the county's plan when fire mitigation was completed through LEPC.

10. Citizen's concern with Milwaukee Road Maintenance – Tracking Issue– Jim Roletto (ACTION): Ongoing concerns were discussed regarding the tracking of mud and debris onto county roads over the past several years. Letters have previously been sent requesting that companies maintain the roads, primarily involving Milwaukee operations, but these efforts have not been effective. It was noted that the county is required to clean the roads when companies do not as safety can become a concern. To elevate the issue, Jim proposed meeting individually with: Buell, Sibert, Potlatch, and Stimson, as well as Commissioner Reynolds. Jim indicated he has drafted a standard letter that could also be used for other contractors. Mark made a motion to create a countywide letter for Benewah County and to schedule meetings with the four companies, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.

JIM ROLETTO, BENEWAH COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR:

Emergency Management: A declaration of emergency was made by the five northern Idaho counties, with estimated costs being compiled at the state level and a request for federal assistance submitted. Actual or estimated project costs are being gathered, with Plummer Electric, Kootenai Electric, and Clearwater Electric noted as being significantly impacted. He stated he will continue to provide updates and develop cost estimates.

County staff were commended for their response, noting that roads were opened quickly; however, widespread power outages created challenges in caring for residents. With Emergency Management receiving calls late in the evening about residents without heat, a warming shelter was established, staffed, and operated until power was largely restored.

Road Projects: Road inventory study is in progress, they are mapping, comparing roads against ITD reports and what the county is maintaining. Jim is working with ICRMP on the Santa shop to repair the structure.

Ambulance: Jim discussed completing the shed floor, with an estimated cost of \$10,000, and noted that the shop is currently heated.

Solid Waste: Discussion was held regarding the Washtucna Landfill, noting that they have reached out to the county in the past and is closer geographically. The county is currently negotiating a contract with Republic, which is expected to be finalized by the end of the month. It was explained that for an Idaho company to dispose of waste in Washington, apple maggot regulations apply; however, other Idaho counties are already delivering waste there, indicating the issue can be addressed. Commissioner Short requested research on truck weights and verification of mileage. It was also noted that discussions with other counties regarding a potential incinerator will continue.

Floodplain: Jim noted that Avista has been implementing a strong plan, and there has been an increase in floodplain permit activity, which was viewed as a positive development.

Sewer System: Jim reported that two pumps were installed. Building permit requirements call for septic approval in advance, to determine if connection to county sewer is available. Staff are actively pursuing funding, noting that some hookups were completed without notification. Staff are working to capture invoicing, and a new process is being developed to better track and send out invoices.

Planning & Zoning: A public hearing will take place January 22nd. Chapter 7 language to be modified, and the preliminary plat hearing for Silfvast subdivision.

Airport: Annual reports are being submitted. The equipment purchase agreement needs to be signed by the seller, which will be paid for by a no match grant. Commissioner Reynolds inquired about a previous contract. Jim noted the associated project is ongoing and currently in

Phase 1, with funds tied to that position. There are no plans to hire additional staff moving forward. Ground operations were reported to be going well.

9:15 A.M. PUBLIC COMMENT

Doug Pratt commented in reference to opening roads, on Hells Gulch everyone owns a chainsaw. There was a crew of about 20 men who were clearing debris. Doug Pratt also stated that Hells Gulch at the 2-mile and 2.5-mile markers has significant potholes that need attention.

Jen Izzareli asked whether the commissioners approve timecards and how often, and requested confirmation that vacation and sick time are handled on an accrual basis. Commissioner Short responded that timecards are approved monthly. Commissioner Reynolds confirmed that leave is managed on an accrual basis and noted that the employee handbook outlines the details. Jen asked for clarification of the discussion regarding a concern that some employees may be claiming 10 hours of vacation time when they are normally on an 8-hour shift. Commissioner Reynolds stated that this concern has been raised, explaining that although employees are on an 8-hour shift, they are working 10-hour days and therefore are taking 10 hours of vacation time.

Amy Boe commented on the emergency management response, stating that she has questions from the community regarding who is receiving training and whether the county has a backup source and a stronger emergency program in place. She noted there was no effective way to communicate that a warming shelter was available and suggested implementing a formal program, including mailing information to residents about emergency locations. She emphasized the need for a set plan where people know where they can go to warm up, shower, and take care of basic needs, and stated she would like to see something better organized that does not rely on electronic communication. Amy said she would be willing to participate in a committee to help with this effort. She also noted that the Red Cross was present and that cots were set up at the Cormana building, while Tina coordinated meals through the Senior Meal Site. Amy added that she believes the high school should have a backup generator and stressed the importance of conducting drills and exercises and completing an after-action report following emergencies.

Jim responded we meet quarterly, we discuss things like what you are talking about. You are welcome to come to this, Wednesday we are going to meet about how it went and what happened. We had a lot of people reaching out to volunteer but we had a great team here. Make it a topic at the meeting how we can make it better. What is the value of the plan? The meetings create everyone knowing everyone and then when there is something they show up. Avista was amazing and called us and responded. 10:00 am at the fire station. State has a lot of trainings they host and committee members are invited to take those trainings.

Cheryl Blake questioned why wages and bookkeeping practices are not standardized across the road crews and stated that they should be more consistent.

9:30 A.M. BENEWAH COUNTY TREASURER (ACTION)

Treasurer Sexton reported that 57% of taxes have been collected. This is the highest percentage she ever recalls for December taxes. The hospital is current on all bond payments. A memo to the Commissioners was discussed and summarized. Treasurer Sexton also discussed road

overtime and project impacts in light of an expected significant decrease in state funding that will have a substantial effect on operations.

9:45 A.M. BENEWAH COUNTY ASSESSOR (ACTION)

Two tax cancellations were addressed, one involving a house located on the wrong parcel and another involving a county parcel that had been assigned value but was later determined not to be a tax deed, as previously believed. A motion to approve the cancellations was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.

Idaho House Bill 329 (HB 329) was discussed, explaining changes to how utility taxes are assessed and collected. The per-kilowatt-hour tax, which is being communicated by Avista, is not a new tax but a replacement for the previous utility valuation method. The change follows litigation that led to a new, more standardized approach used in other states. The intent is for the first year to be revenue neutral. Under the new process, the state will collect the tax from utilities and then distribute the funds to counties, which will in turn remit them to the appropriate taxing districts, with no funds retained by the state.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: A motion was made by Commissioner Reynolds to enter executive session @ 9:47 am pursuant to Idaho Code Section 74-206(1)(a)(b); to consider items exempt from disclosure; seconded by Chairman Lampert. Motion carried unanimously. Present: Commissioners Lampert, Reynolds, and Short, Clerk Janeen LeWan, Attorney Mariah Dunham, Public Works Director Jim Roletto.

Exited executive session & meeting adjourned at 10:48 am.

Minutes read and approved this 26th day of January, 2025.

By the Board of Benewah County Commissioners:

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

Attest:

_____/s/_____
Janeen LeWan, Clerk