

BENEWAH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 9, 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 - Absent
	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 Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
2. Approve Monthly Claims (ACTION): A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. There was discussion about the salary for employees in the Prosecutor’s office, a claim from Fast Eddies that needed to be updated to reflect D2 not D1, Golf Course capital claims, and ambulance building claims were discussed. Motion carried.
3. Expenditure Requests (ACTION):
 - a. Assessor – Travel Request – Required Training for Certification: Assessor Spier spoke about the trainings and the requirements for the training. She covered the savings in AirBnB vs hotel. Assessor Spier also noted she would attend a training in Grangeville in March at no cost to the county as she will cover travel and accommodation. Commissioner Reynolds noted he agreed with the training, does not like employees spending their own funds for their job. Assessor Spier noted she is ok to help the budget in this way for now. Commissioner Reynolds made a motion to approve this item, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
 - b. Assessor – Budget Request – Vehicle Repair: One of the vehicles in the Assessor fleet needs a new motor. The vehicle is worth \$6500, new engine ins \$8,700. Assessor Spier has reserve funds to help with the expenditure and believes replacing the engine is the best option at this time. Commissioner Reynolds noted he does not like to put good money after bad but agrees she could get 5 more years from the vehicle. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Commissioner Reynolds and Assessor Spier discussed the trust funds and how the revenue is accumulated and what expenditures it has been used for in the past. Motion carried.
 - c. District Court – Law Clerk Cost Share w/ Shoshone County: Clerk LeWan explained what this expenditure was, the reason for the increase, due to the judge’s schedule no longer including Kootenai County cases. Attorney Dunham noted this was an unfunded mandate from the state. Explaining this law clerk is a county employee for Benewah and Shoshone County because we fund them. Attorney Dunham also noted that there have been conversations started with legislatures requesting the state to change this and provide funding for this

position. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

4. Authorizing Capital Funds for Required Repairs and Modifications on Coroner Vehicle - Resolution 2026-04 (ACTION) – Discussion that this resolution solidifies the approval in a previous meeting to the coroner’s office for the donated vehicle. A motion to approve resolution 2026-04 for fixing the coroner vehicle was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion Carried.
5. IAHD – Transportation Legislative Highlights – Proposed Revenue Reduction from State General Fund to Road Districts – Commissioners discussed the reduction of \$741,031 from the General Road budget, when the reduction would take place which is estimated to be this year. Attorney Dunham noted that IAC is being proactive on this topic and encouraged the Commissioners to reach out and stay in touch with the legislative updates.
6. Road District Staff Schedules (ACTION): Commissioner Short opened the discussion by stating that overtime costs need to be brought under control. He expressed concern that the county is logging hours comparable to those seen during a severe winter, despite conditions not warranting that level of response. Commissioner Reynolds acknowledged that his district accounts for the majority of the overtime usage and agreed that it represents a significant expense. However, he emphasized that maintaining the level of service expected by residents requires that additional time. Commissioner Reynolds noted he has already spoken with his employees and mentioned that two staff members will be retiring soon, at which point options for restructuring will be evaluated.

Commissioner Short reiterated that other districts have managed to significantly reduce their overtime, questioning why similar reductions are not occurring in Commissioner Reynolds’ district. Commissioner Reynolds responded that crews are currently occupied with necessary maintenance work, including repairing equipment, sanding, and performing mechanical work to keep aging rigs operational. He stated that aside from explicitly forbidding overtime, he is not comfortable cutting back on services provided to taxpayers. Commissioner Short cautioned that if improvements are not made quickly, the county may need to revert to a 40-hour work week.

Commissioner Short also raised concerns about staffing, noting that pulling two workers to assist with the transfer station leaves only one employee covering the roads in his district. Commissioner Reynolds shared that some employees have expressed that overtime has effectively become part of their regular income, and that eliminating it could lead them to seek employment elsewhere. Commissioner Short responded that the county cannot continue to subsidize salaries through overtime but added that any reduction would help the overall budget. Commissioner Reynolds said he understands the financial pressure and, given his background in public works, recognizes what is required to deliver the current level of service.

Clerk LeWan noted that one of the crews inquired about comp time as an alternative. Commissioner Reynolds indicated that comp time could be beneficial and noted that it is still accrued at a rate of time-and-a-half. However, he added that managing comp time is difficult due to the inconsistent nature of the workload and the fact that the work is not steady enough to allow employees to take time off easily. Commissioner Short & Commissioner Reynolds expressed appreciation to be able to openly discuss the topic. No action was taken on this item.

7. Approve Catering Permit (ACTION):
 - The Bunker Bar @ Soaring Hawk Lodge – Commissioner Short asked for clarification on authority for this type of permit. Attorney Dunham explained the

permit, and the role of the commissioners in approval. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

8. LHTAC Quarterly Progress Report – Review: There were no questions on this topic. Public Work Director Roletto noted the only project on the list for Benewah County was a safety project, at no cost to the county. The county already met its obligation of 5% previously and the project is making its way through the system.
9. Fernwood Saddle Club Lease (ACTION): Mariah requested direction on the lease draft presented at the previous meeting, noting a decision was not required immediately. The draft proposes a 99-year lease at \$500 per year that would revert to the county if the property is no longer used for recreational purposes. She advised the term and rate could be adjusted and suggested considering periodic reviews to avoid locking in a long-term, below-market rate. Commissioner Short suggested reviewing the lease amount every 5 years, while Commissioner Reynolds asked about comparable agreements such as the fairgrounds. With approval of the Commissioners Summer Williams explained that the fair board sets rates at the fairgrounds, with rentals around \$100 for a half day. Discussion noted the site differs from fairgrounds rentals because the club maintains the property and there is no direct county expense, though part of the parcel would be used for dumpsters. Commissioner Reynolds suggested meeting with the gun club as well, since both groups may need to coordinate use of the site, and recommended a 3-year initial term to allow adjustments. Commissioner Short also noted the club hopes to build a clubhouse.
Attorney Dunham recommended issuing a lease with a three-year review of the rate and terms to allow adjustments for compatibility with county or other users. A motion to approve this recommendation was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
10. Temporary Chair Authorization – Resolution 2026-05 (ACTION): Attorney Dunham clarified that the resolution provides only temporary authorization and does not represent Commissioner Lampert’s position. She noted the board remains in regular communication with him, but at times he is unable to be physically present. The authorization allows Commissioner Short to act on behalf of the Chairman for convenience and to ensure county business can be handled in a timely manner when the Chairman is unavailable. A motion to approve Resolution 2026-05 was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

JIM ROLETTO, BENEWAH COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR:

Emergency Management: Jim reported that the last two plans submitted were approved and a reimbursement to the county for \$9,000 was also approved. The all hazardous plan is in progress now.

Road Projects: Jim & Commissioner Reynolds met with the four large companies, Buell Trucking, Sibert, Stimson, & Potlatch to discuss sharing responsibilities of road maintenance. Jim will follow up with a letter that reiterates what was decided at the meeting. Jim noted the companies were very receptive to the request. Commissioner Reynolds made it clear this discussion covered the county as a whole and not only the Milltown area. Commissioner Short noted that Potlatch has been very helpful in the past any time help has been requested.

Sewer: System is going well, lift stations are reviewed each week, electrical output is utilized to track how it is going. Jim noted we will need more pumps in the future.

Airport: Last meeting the resolution to remove restrictions has already been utilized as they have an application for a new hangar. The new skidsteer has arrived, not all of the attachments with it but they are due in. They include a snow blower & broom. This is all paid for by a no match grant and the request for reimbursement will be submitted.

Solid Waste: Delayed discussion until later in the agenda.

P&Z: Two final plat applications are coming in. There is also another preliminary plat working its way through the process.

9:00 A.M. Consider Exempt Property Applications – (ACTION)

Assessor Spier explained these were all renewals with no changes, requested two motions to approve as they call under two separate Idaho codes.

- **Exemption under Idaho Code 63-602B:**

- Cajetan Matheson Living Waters Ministry – RPB00100230120
- Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses – RPA0210020282A
- Omega Gospel Hall – RP46N01W164200
- Plummer Bible Church – RPB00100380120 & RPB00100380070
- Presbyterian Church – RPA01800100090 & RPA01800200120
- Roman Catholic Diocese – RPB00100650050, RPA0170070007A, RPA01700600100, RPA01701000061

A motion to approve all applications under Idaho Code 63-602B was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

- **Exemption under Idaho Code 63-602C:**

- Benewah Valley Association – RP45N04W245100
- FOE St Maries Lodge #63 – RPA01600700110
- Lloyd McCarter American Legion Post #25 – RPA00602300500 & RPA00603200501
- St. Maries American Legion Baseball – RPA00602200501 & RPA0060330001A

A motion to approve all applications under Idaho Code 63-602C charitable renewal was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

9:15 A.M. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jen Izzareli expressed concern about overtime, speaking to Commissioner Reynolds stating he was warned in the past meeting and based off today you are still wanting to think about it. She asked what you have done in the past two weeks. Commissioner Reynolds stated the crews in the past were working through their lunches, so they were getting 10.5 hours per day. They are no longer working through lunch. Equipment is being staged to reduce travel time to job sites. He said that aside from ongoing daily conversations, he has not told employees there will be no overtime, and he is not at the point of prohibiting it unless directed by a vote of the board. Jen commented that Commissioner Reynolds' district appears to be using the most overtime. Commissioner Reynolds replied that his district is larger with varying elevations and conditions, including rock gravel and plowing, compared to flatter miles in other areas. It was also noted that some districts have been short-staffed due to vacancies. Commissioner Short added that Districts 2 and 3 have cut their overtime significantly, though some remains, and said the ongoing consistent overtime bothers him.

Cody Crandall thanked the district for the cut back on their overtime.

9:30 A.M. Concerns Regarding Pokey Creek Road Maintenance-

Shannon Sanders shared that the letter presented was prepared before the meeting and described severe road conditions from a few days prior. He stated that if drivers met another vehicle, they risked damaging their own trying to avoid large, offset potholes. His wife wrote the letter regarding damage to her truck. He noted he has lived there for 13 years and that this year the road has been particularly bad, with conditions beginning to tear up vehicles. Although crews addressed some issues recently, he said there are still three to four large potholes and a muddy dip, and he would like to see additional rock applied.

Commissioner Short responded that due to budget restrictions, adding rock this year is not feasible, though he acknowledged being passed twice on that same road. Shannon added that drivers unfamiliar with the area often do not slow down or move over, creating dangerous situations. Commissioner Short said the county will continue to monitor the road.

9:45 A.M. Gun Range Proposal – View Tentative Drawings & Discuss Lease Agreement- Hank Thornton & Dave Ressor

Hank Thornton stated their funding would come from Fish and Game and Friends of the NRA, potentially totaling a few hundred thousand dollars, and that grant opportunities favor a long-term lease, making a 99-year term beneficial. He said \$500 per year is acceptable but higher rates would be difficult, especially since they would not charge the public or host events like the saddle club. The facility would be used for training by the Sheriff's Office and school programs. Hank said a three-year term is too short and that Fish and Game would need about 18 months to evaluate the site while fundraising occurs, adding the project would not be ready in less than three years.

Attorney Dunham explained the county could not issue a lease at this stage because the specific portion, size, access, and layout of the parcel had not been defined. Instead, the county could grant permission to evaluate the site, including access for Fish and Game. She advised that once details such as a map of facilities, utilities, restrooms, and intended uses are developed, the commissioners could consider a lease proposal. A written commitment indicating the county would entertain a future lease could help with grant applications.

Discussion also addressed compatibility with existing equestrian use. Hank said they have met with the saddle club and would avoid scheduling conflicts with its events. Commissioner Short noted the range would need to close during those events. Commissioner Reynolds clarified that the previously mentioned three-year period referred to a review window for coordination, not a short lease term. Residents raised questions about safety, fencing, and access; Dave Ressor said the range would be clearly marked, controlled, and not open for unsupervised use, with a rangemaster present when operating and appropriate backstops installed.

Commissioners encouraged the group to work with Attorney Dunham to develop documentation. Lauren King & Madison Sotin 4-H representatives expressed interest in participating and assisting with grants. It was noted other local shooting groups have also expressed interest. Commissioner Short emphasized the site must be kept clean, which would be addressed in any future lease.

10:00 A.M. Animal Contract Update for Benewah Humane Society – Hopes Haven – Nancy Fritzgerald, Jim Shubert, & Debbie Martinson

Commissioner Reynolds noted the county is operating under a strict budget and that Humane Society costs have increased compared to prior years, including several unusually high invoices. Presenters explained they incurred significant expenses after the Sheriff's Office placed a large number of dogs in their care for several months as evidence animals, preventing adoption or transfer and maxing out their capacity. They noted at any given time their waitlist of people wanting to surrender animals can be 15 or more. They also noted the loss of free spay/neuter services has added costs and emphasized the shelter provides a county service by housing dogs at large. Debbie said they believed their proposed payment approach had the prosecuting attorney's support but have not been able to secure a clear agreement on reimbursement rates.

Attorney Dunham clarified the county received a draft contract prepared on the shelter's behalf by Henry Madsen but has not reviewed or approved it and does not support it as presented. She cited inaccuracies, misrepresentations, and a substantial proposed cost increase, stating the proposal is not feasible under the current budget. She indicated the county could consider specific, clearly defined contract changes if the commissioners choose to do so.

Shelter representatives emphasized the operational impact of long-term evidence holds, including costly veterinary care and reduced ability to serve other animals, and requested that any future agreement address similar situations with clearly defined terms and amendments.

Attorney Dunham recommended they target their request that if there is a similar situation we can investigate those. She recommended the representatives to make an amendment to indicate what they are changing, what it is and why they are requesting the changes.

10:15 A.M. Benewah County Solid Waste System – Review of Operational Expenditures and Evaluating Potential Cost Saving Measures

Jim outlined rising solid waste costs driven by dumpster collection, transfer operations, landfill charges, and tipping fees, and asked what actions could reduce expenditures. One immediate proposal was to remove dumpsters within a four-mile radius of the transfer station (Fairgrounds, Milltown, District 1 Shop, Lower St. Joe, and St. Maries River Road). Data from November 2025 showed 228 loads from these five sites, representing 12 dumpsters. Estimated savings were approximately \$10,000 per month, depending on fill levels.

Concerns were raised about public impact, including longer travel distances, limited transfer station hours, and the risk of illegal dumping if dumpsters are removed. Mark provided mileage comparisons from several sites to the transfer station and suggested exploring a mini transfer site on county property as an alternative to full removal. Jim acknowledged consolidation had been considered but emphasized the need for immediate cost savings. Donna noted convenience issues for residents who rely on 24-hour dumpster access.

Attorney Dunham reported that staff have reviewed multiple options, including restructuring funding through a fee-based system rather than relying on the current levy. She noted Treasurer Sexton has done a lot of the initial work on this system last year and recommends restarting analysis now so the Board can make an informed decision during the next budget cycle. Jim added that tonnage revenues have fallen short of projections, making proactive changes necessary.

Public communication was emphasized, with discussion of providing at least 30 days' notice through newspapers, signage at affected sites, and other outreach. The transfer station could absorb household waste, potentially reducing county costs through sorting efficiencies.

Actions Approved

- **Explore Fee Structure Options (ACTION):** Jim explained that revenue is currently generated through multiple sources: an annual fee charged countywide, a levy applied to all taxpayers, and additional fees collected at the transfer station from non-county users. He noted that under a revised structure discussed with Sara, the county could move to a single annual fee applied to both county and city residents, raising the question of whether the levy would still be necessary. Commissioner Reynolds made a motion for the team to find options to find a fair fee structure for the whole county. Seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
- **Rural Dump Station Consolidation (ACTION):** A motion to eliminate the five dumpster sites within the four-mile radius was made by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried. Commissioners added temporary dumpsters may be provided for events or peak periods.
- **Notice of Termination J&E Collection Agreement (ACTION):** Jim noted the contract includes a 120-day termination clause, which will be used to end the current agreement so services can be put out for competitive bid, allowing J&E and other providers to submit proposals. He emphasized that the 120 days will pass quickly, so the county must move promptly to identify a new waste transfer provider. A motion to send the notice of termination to the current operator was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.
- **RFQ for Solid Waste Collection Services (ACTION):** A motion to approve the RFQ for finalization and open availability for bidding was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

The Board also discussed the landfill agreement with Republic. Attorney Dunham will prepare a redlined version for review, noting concerns about a proposed five-year term requiring guaranteed delivery volumes while allowing the landfill operator to raise rates with 30 days' notice—terms viewed as one-sided. Commissioners requested exploration of shorter-term options and associated rates. Jim was asked to contact the operator regarding pricing for a one-year contract and to review any Department of Transportation restrictions affecting hauling into Washington.

10:45 A.M. BENEWAH COUNTY ASSESSOR (ACTION)

There were two tax cancellations presented to the board from the Treasurer's office by Assessor Spier. Attorney Dunham will be looking into these further and work towards a resolution with Treasurer Sexton. She noted they may be ones she already has looked at but would need clarification. A motion to table these cancellations until the next meeting was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: A motion was made by Commissioner Reynolds to enter executive session @ 11:09 am pursuant to Idaho Code Section 74-206(1)(d); to consider items exempt from disclosure; & Idaho Code Section 74-206(1)(a)(b); personnel, seconded by Chairman Short. Motion carried unanimously. Present: Commissioner Reynolds, Commissioner Short, Clerk Janeen LeWan, Attorney Mariah Dunham, & Public Works Director Jim Roletto.

Exited executive session & meeting adjourned at 11:43 am.

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

By the Board of Benewah County Commissioners:

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

Attest:

_____/s/_____
Janeen LeWan, Clerk