

**BENEWAH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 26, 2026**

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

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| 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 8:01 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 Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Benewah Community Hospital Agenda & Minutes: Commissioners reviewed the information and there were no comments on this item.
3. Benewah Community Hospital Financial Report: Commissioner Reynolds reported on the hospital's last meeting; hospital revenue was reported to be up 22%, totaling \$6.2 million, with contractual write-offs of \$4.6 million resulting in a net revenue increase of \$1.6 million. Despite the overall improvement reflected in the year-end report compared to the past two years, contractual write-offs continue to significantly reduce profitability, and efforts are underway to renegotiate certain contractual percentages. Discussion also included plans to hire a certified wound care nurse to bill at a higher rate and retain more revenue. Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements remain delayed by approximately 50 days, with the return rate decreasing slightly from 40% last year to a projected 39% this year. Additionally, Idaho has grant funding available for rural hospitals and is forming a committee to oversee the distribution of these funds; while details remain unknown, there is optimism that the hospital may receive funding.
4. Benewah County Precincts & Polling Locations – Resolution 2026-02 (ACTION): Commissioners clarified these are the same locations as last year. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried unanimously.
5. Northwest Dental Premium Increase – (ACTION): Reasons for the coverage increase was discussed, including the decision to cover the cost for the employee due to the employee not being notified of the increase. Commissioner Short raised concerns about setting a precedent, and it was agreed that this approach cannot be continued going forward as this was a unique instance. A motion to approve the proposed expenditure was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
6. Discussion of Surplus sale for Golf Course Backhoe (ACTION): Commissioner Reynolds noted that concerns regarding the golf course backhoe continued to be expressed by members of the public. It was noted that selling the equipment during the spring surplus auction is the new plan, even though moving it will result in higher costs to transport it to the transfer station. The equipment has not been sold. Attorney Dunham clarified that the previously

anticipated sale was not finalized and confirmed Commissioner Reynolds is using this time to report the equipment as not sold. A motion was requested to approve selling the backhoe at the spring surplus sale by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Fernwood Saddle Club Lease: Attorney Dunham presented a draft lease related to the Upriver Saddle Club's use of county property and a potential land trade. The Saddle Club has been holding events on the property and is requesting a lease with Benewah County. Commissioner Short referred the matter to the attorney, who prepared the draft lease for review. Commissioners discussed the proposed terms, including the annual increase, lease length, and consistency with other county agreements, as well as legal limitations on long-term leases. Due to potential overlapping use with a proposed gun club, the board discussed the possibility of a shorter-term lease. Commissioners agreed to review the draft further and provide any recommended changes to Attorney Dunham before the lease is forwarded to the Upriver Saddle Club.
8. Idaho State Tax Commission Response Letter re Solid Waste System (ACTION): Attorney Dunham reviewed a letter to the Idaho State Tax Commission, which was written by a city council member who raised concerns with the Tax Commission regarding whether the county can levy for the solid waste disposal system. Discussion included questions about the levy. Following review, the letter was deemed appropriate, and a motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried unanimously.
9. Jack A. Buell Airport Hanger Lot Resolution 2026-03 (ACTION): Discussion was held regarding constructing hangars in areas where appropriate space is available. Approval was given to adopt the resolution as written. A motion to approve this resolution was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
10. Clerk LeWan noted that the proposed expenditure to purchase the property could not legally proceed because the funds were not properly allocated in the budget. Clerk LeWan further stated that the Snowmobile budget could not support the ongoing maintenance and operation of a structure, as the budget currently spends approximately twice the amount of revenue it receives. Donald West spoke about the importance of the shed, noting that the club raises approximately \$8,000 per year through fundraisers, that there will be no poker ride this year, and that the club held an emergency meeting over the weekend. He stated the club maintains the other structures and would support the shed to ensure it does not fall into disrepair. Mark noted that at the time an application is submitted and funding is received, the club must demonstrate how it will move forward. Bob suggested that staff work to find a solution and consider holding a special meeting if necessary. Attorney Dunham proposed a special meeting if an opportunity arises that would make the project possible, and Mark agreed that a special meeting could be held if new information or funding becomes available. A motion was made by Commissioner Reynolds to table the item, with the understanding that it may be brought back at a special or regular meeting if a viable path forward is identified, seconded by Commissioner Lampert. Motion carried unanimously.
Prior to the meeting concluding, Donald West returned and asked whether, if the club raises the funds to purchase the property and gifts it to the county but the county does not receive the grant, the property could revert back to the club. Attorney Dunham explained that a reversion clause could be included in the gift deed, stating the intent of the gift is to acquire property for the groomer shed and that the property would revert if the grant application is not awarded. It was clarified that the club would be the purchaser of the property, and the

commissioners would approve acceptance of the gifted property and authorizing one commissioner to sign on behalf of the county.

Three motions were then brought forth by the commissioners to approve the grant submission, authorizing signatures, and return of previous payments from the club.

1st motion to authorize Commissioner Reynolds to sign documents if presented to accept a gift deed with a reversion clause from the St. Joe Snow riders, for a county club groomer shed. So moved by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carried.

2nd motion to approve submission of St. Joe Snow riders grant application with the grant to be applied for by the county to be submitted by the Clerk on behalf of the County Commissioners when the documents are received by the St. Joe Snow Riders, and any modification pursuant the conversation today. So moved by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

3rd motion to return to the St. Joe Snow Riders any payments made to the county for any purchase designated to the county for the purchase of the groomer shed. So moved by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

11. Clarkia Property Purchase Signor Assignment (ACTION): A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Lampert, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried unanimously.
12. County Generator Discussion – per Commissioner Reynolds: The board discussed the status and potential use of a county-owned generator that was previously stored in a parking lot and is now located in Santa, with its relocation prompted in part by recent windstorm concerns. Ownership was clarified as belonging to the county, not the hospital, despite the unit originally coming from the hospital, and questions were raised about potential proceeds if it were sold. Possible future uses were discussed, including interest from Gateway Fire, while technical concerns were noted regarding voltage issues and the need for repairs estimated at approximately \$10,000. The board acknowledged increasing interest in the generator and agreed to gather additional information on repair costs and potential uses. It was also noted that the hospital’s new generator has the capacity to power the courthouse, which may provide an alternative solution for future emergency power needs.

JIM ROLETTO, BENEWAH COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR:

Emergency Management: Jim reported a meeting was held with FEMA. Materials have been submitted to the federal agencies, and while a response has not yet been received, all required documentation has been delivered. Additionally, an LEPC meeting was held, during which a subcommittee was formed to work on the All-Hazards Plan.

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. A meeting with the four big companies is set for Wednesday, Mark and Jim will meet with them.

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

Sewer: Sewer operations were reported to be functioning well, with all lift stations operating properly. It was also noted that individuals who are connected to the system without being billed are now being identified and issued invoices.

Airport: All leases have been paid in full. Discussion was held regarding moving a shed from its current location to the airport, where it would be placed under a covered but open area.

Solid Waste: It was reported that an environmental permit to perform work in Washington was received from Moscow and will be evaluated to determine what changes are needed to comply with applicable guidelines. Commissioner Lampert requested that someone be assigned to monitor the dumpsters in Plummer.

P&Z: There was a public hearing held on Thursday. These items are on the agenda today to be heard in front of the commissioners.

9:00 A.M. Clerk Quarterly Financial Report

Clerk LeWan reported as of December 31, 2025. Total first-quarter expenditures across all county funds were reported at \$2.726 million, while total first-quarter revenue totaled \$4.711 million.

Three funds were reported as operating with negative balances at the time of the report. The planning and public works fund reflected a balance of -\$43,876.70, the probation fund reflected -\$23,022.11, and the roads fund reflected the largest deficit at -\$82,145.36. It was noted that the roads fund began the year approximately \$438,000 in the negative but has since received revenue from LHTAC funds, property taxes, and other sources.

Road-related revenues were reviewed. The Clerk noted roads has received slightly more than \$300,000 in property tax revenue designated for roads, with an additional \$212,000 in anticipated property tax revenue yet to be received. A quarterly payment separate from tax revenue, estimated between \$400,000 and \$500,000, is expected by the end of January, subject to state allocation. An additional payment is anticipated in June, with the largest annual payment, typically near \$1 million, expected in July.

Commissioner Reynolds noted operational expenditures for the road department have been restricted, with no major purchases or large projects undertaken. Current maintenance levels are being maintained in order to manage cash flow and allow fund balances to improve.

Fund balances were also reported, with the sewer fund at approximately \$42,000 and the solid waste fund at approximately \$306,000.

9:15 A.M. PUBLIC COMMENT

Racheal Johnson asked what the four working parts for the committee are for the mitigation plan. She requested that the meeting be led by a prayer to enlist God's help in guiding the meeting.

Maureen Hodgson requested that tally sheets be kept in the loader and stated that she would like to know what materials are being taken out of the pit.

Chairman Lampert left the meeting at 9:21 a.m.

9:30 A.M. RAGAN ESTATES RURAL SUBDIVISION FINAL PLAT -

- Review Final Plat Application and Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendations
- Consider Draft Order Approving Final Plat (ACTION)

Jim Roletto presented, noting that it had previously been reviewed at the preliminary stage and was approved by the County Commissioners with no comments. The item was returned to Planning and Zoning for final approval, and no changes were made from the preliminary submission. A motion to approve the subdivision order for final plat was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

9:45 A.M. SILFVAST URBAN SUBDIVISION PRELIMINARY PLAT

- Applicant Presentation
- Review Preliminary Plat Application and Supporting Materials
- Review Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendations
- Consider Draft Order Approving Preliminary Plat with Conditions (ACTION)

Waylon Newton presented the subdivision request, stating that the subdivision qualifies as urban because it is under one acre. He noted that access is available and that septic and water have been approved. He stated that the applicant will bond for the septic system. No variances were requested. He added that Panhandle Health has conducted its review. Jim commented that during the public hearing there were questions regarding the use of septic systems in the area. He stated that Panhandle Health has approved the septic and that concerns regarding the isolated nature of the area have been addressed. Attorney Dunham stated that there are conditions included in the draft order, which are the standard conditions for a subdivision. She noted that the draft order does not include a condition requiring the sewer to be bonded, as that requirement is addressed in the ordinance and will be applied at the final plat stage. A motion to approve the order was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

10:00 A.M. TITLE 9 CHAPTER 7 SECTION 5, LOT SPLIT REQUIREMENTS

- Review Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendations
- Consider Draft Ordinance 2026-165 (ACTION)

Commissioner Reynolds noted regulatory requirements related to sewer connections and lot splits. Commissioner Reynolds noted that DEQ requires properties to connect to a municipal sewer system when a sewer line is available and fronting the property. Attorney Dunham clarified that the discussion pertained specifically to lot splits that do not require a subdivision. She explained that under the “free split” ordinance, parcels must be one acre or larger, or otherwise be processed through subdivision review. The proposed code change allows parcels under one acre to be split only if water and sewer service were established prior to a specified date. Attorney Dunham emphasized that this represents a very limited amendment to the code and does not affect the subdivision ordinance, applying only to the “free split” provision. She further noted that parcels under one acre may still be divided through the urban subdivision process. Setbacks for water and septic systems were also discussed, including the rationale for the one-acre threshold. It was noted that Panhandle Health reviews and approves septic permits based on required separation distances and measurements. A motion to approve the ordinance was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

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

Treasurer Sexton reported that Benewah Community Hospital has made all required payments for December and has already completed its January payments. Following the December tax collection which was the highest percentage of taxes collected in December she has ever experienced, total funds amounted to \$8,840,660.33, with outstanding checks totaling \$2,357,008.88, leaving a remaining balance of \$6,483,651.45. It was noted that this balance does not represent all county funds, and the Commissioners will need to work with the County Clerk to determine how the funds are allocated across individual accounts. Treasurer Sexton also noted that because December reflected the highest collection of the year, revenues in June will be lower than typical, and this should be kept in mind when reviewing and projecting expected revenues.

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

No cancellations were reported.

Assessor Spier explained that due to the county’s relatively low number of property sales, valuation data differs from what is reflected by local realtors. Only 16% of sales forms were returned, which limits the available data; as a result, second notices have been sent to obtain additional information. Current land values were discussed, with bare land averaging approximately \$18,400 per acre, and sales activity remaining strong. It was confirmed that county valuations are being derived from the reported sales data, with 52 land sales currently influencing land values countywide. As Idaho is a non-disclosure state, fewer sales result in a greater impact from each individual transaction. Commissioners noted that higher-priced purchases by incoming buyers are contributing to increased valuations, affecting local property owners. Assessor Spier reported the creation of 170 new parcels, 40 subdivision parcels, resulting in 130 new. Along with a steady increase in building permits. State law governs the valuation process and limits taxable value increases. Assessor noted that up to two years of sales data may be used to help moderate valuation increases. Education and outreach efforts continue through communication with realtors and title companies. There has been discussion on how this can be changed. A task force was formed a few years ago, and there have been a few minor fixes; however, the system is so complex that it would require a full overhaul to be fair. The use of MLS data was explored in the past, but it comes at a cost.

10:45 A.M. PUBLIC DEFENDER’S OFFICE SIGNAGE REQUEST IN THE FEDERAL BUILDING – CLAYTON ANDERSEN (ACTION)

Discussion on the request submitted including positioning and materials. A motion to approve this item was made by Commissioner Reynolds, seconded by Commissioner Short. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: A motion was made by Commissioner Reynolds to enter executive session @ 10:15 am pursuant to Idaho Code Section 74-206(1)(a)(b); to consider items exempt from disclosure; 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 10:56 am.

Minutes read and approved this 9th 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