Gilliam County Court
Town Hall Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2025

1.0 Call to Order/Establish Quorum/Flag Salute

Judge Patnode called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and a quorum of the County Court was established. Present were Judge Patnode, Commissioner Watkins, Commissioner Wilkins, and Executive Assistant Anja Mundy.

2.0 Opening Remarks of the County Court

Judge Patnode welcomed everyone and explained the goal of the meeting is community engagement. Judge Patnode thanked the public for attending.

Commissioner Wilkins thanked everyone for coming and shared that he looks forward to meeting folks and engaging with the public.

3.0 Strategic Plan and Goals Work Session

Cori Mikkalo, Fair Winds Consulting, was the meeting facilitator. She explained the process of the work session. Everyone will have a chance to provide input on five major issues – the Strategic Plan, Future Development Projects, how the County Court is doing, Livability, and Child Care. Each person will have the chance to provide input and ideas and vote on their top choices.

4.0 Question and Answer Session

A member of the audience asked if there is a timeline for the Amazon project and if the Court had any information to share. Judge Patnode explained that there is not much the Court can share. Denise Ball confirmed that there is very little that the City of Arlington can talk about right now.

Mike Keown – Asked about the Greater Oregon initiative and whether the County Court would put the issue to a vote of the people. Judge Patnode responded that the Court should find out what the people want at a public hearing. Mrs. Pemberton stated that she did some research about what Idaho and Oregon would gain by this movement. She believes Idaho wants our land.

Mike Keown would like to see the Greater Oregon issue on the County Court's agenda. Commissioner Watkins asked if he knew what other counties have done, and he

responded that they have all approved moving forward with it. A woman asked what is broken that they are trying to fix with the Greater Oregon initiative?

A woman stated that there are issues with the Columbia Hills Manor. There are units available, but nobody can move in there because the income requirements are so restrictive. Maybe Summit Springs could expand to Arlington? Brooklynn Griffith asked if the Manor was a non-profit because if they are, they could work with Kelley Non-Profit Consulting to find grant funding.

Judge Patnode shared that the grain lab building at Shutler Station will be released from the Economic Development Administration covenant in June. This topic will be discussed at the next County Court meeting. There is an opportunity to use the building for other purposes. Childcare is an idea.

Vanessa Williams agreed that childcare would be great because it is near Waste Management, which is the biggest employer in the area. There are night crew members with no childcare. The school district and the childcare could negotiate bus service for the kids to get to school.

Judge Patnode shared that the building has a huge kitchen as well as a conference room and a couple of offices. There are also bathrooms and showers.

Mike Keown stated he would like to see alternative education housed there.

Vanessa Williams stated that she was happy to see the County Court revisiting the process for small business grant applications. She appreciated that Brooklynn Griffith has sent out a survey to be completed by past grant recipients. Brooklynn asked that recipients of the survey be sure to complete and return them, so she has the information.

Judge Patnode explained that grants through the Chamber are for “for-profit” businesses and the grants through the County are for “non-profit” businesses. Marta Mikkalo asked that the County revisit the Chamber’s grant application and award process again. Vanessa Williams asks that the information on who received grants be made public. Cari Wade explained that in the past, folks that did not get a grant they applied for were harassing folks that did receive grants.

Cari Wade asked that a childcare endowment be created to put money aside for future costs. Judge Patnode shared that the County Court would be hearing from the Oregon Endowment Program at the next meeting to learn more about a possible endowment. She explained that the County has in place the Economic Enhancement Fund ordinance which provides that 20% of Waste Management tipping fees be kept specifically for early learning. Hailey Potter said that she is really worried about funding right now because

childcare is not a sustainable business model. Judge Patnode said that the Economic Enhancement Fund could include an endowment fund similar to the the Homestead Rebate endowment.

RESULTS OF THE WORKSESSION

Future Development –

The three top vote getters were a community center, beautification of the downtown area and a laundromat. Workforce housing, a better water system, and a skate park or bike trails were also at the top of the list.

Also on the list were Mesa Industrial Park redevelopment, County-wide parks and recreation district, car/truck wash, keeping the park beautiful, repurposing closed buildings and more summer events.

Livability –

The top three vote getters were downtown beautification, a skate/bike park, and a laundromat.

Also on the list were a recreation center, highway clean-up, benches around town, more restaurants, a swimming pool, a safe walking path, and a farmer's market.

County Court –

Things that are going well include good communication and listening.

The list for improvement includes healing the North/South divide, revisiting the small business grant process, more outreach and public information, regular meetings held in the evening a couple times a year, and work on attracting new businesses.

Childcare –

The list for improvement includes the need for more qualified staff, affordability of childcare, taxing districts support of childcare, care for kids from 0-18 years of age, and a childcare endowment fund.

Strategic Plan –

The top vote getters were more housing including apartments, help with high electric bills, additional funding for schools and education, develop the lower trailer park for improved livability, and more space to start small businesses.

Also on the list were community markets/entertainment, more access to County transportation, a new childcare facility in Arlington, space to start small businesses, fresh water in the lagoon, a mailed County newsletter, and help with run-down properties.

5.0 Adjournment

Judge Patnode adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

GILLIAM COUNTY COURT

By _____
Cris Patnode, Judge

By _____
Leah Watkins, Commissioner

By _____
Grant Wilkins, Commissioner

By _____
Anja Mundy, Recording Secretary