



Board of Commissioners' Work Session Meeting June 7, 2023 ~ 3:00pm ~ Room 214

6/7/2023 - Minutes

1. To Watch A Live Stream Of This Meeting, Click The Link Below Or Go To www.klamathcounty.org

2. Call To Order & Those Present

Commissioner Henslee, Commissioner Minty, Commissioner DeGroot; Haley Huffman / Admin Staff; Randy Cox / KCEDA; Greg Williams, Eric Brown / Museum Advisory Board; Check Wells, Lois Taysom / Library Advisory Board.

3. Approve Minutes From Last Meeting

Approved.

4. Museum Advisory Board Members - Museum Levy Discussion

Greg Williams and Eric Brown address the Board regarding putting a \$0.10 per \$1000.00 tax levy for the Museum on the November 2023 ballot. Commissioner Minty motions to support the Museum's request to place this item on the Nov. 7, 2023 ballot as laid out in the paper work, a five year levy for \$0.10 per \$1000.00 assessed value. Commissioner Henslee seconds. Unanimous vote. Approved. Commissioner DeGroot said, County Counsel and the District Attorney will have to approve the ballot language.

5. KCEDA - Update

Randy Cox addresses the Board to present an update from the Klamath County Economic Development Association.

6. Library Discussion

Chuck Wells addresses the Board to read a letter the Library Advisory Board sent the Board of Commissioners. Lois Taysom addresses the Board regarding a State Statute and a letter from the Oregon State Library. Ms. Taysom also addresses the option of volunteers being used. Commissioner Henslee said, I heard that several years ago, there was a discussion at the library about guns and it was moderated by a local pastor and the conversation went really well. Mr. Wells confirmed the conversation did happen and it did go very well. Commissioner Henslee said, I also heard from a local doctor who participated in a series of discussions and as that group met, it was facilitated by

someone in that particular group every week and I was told that conversation went very good. I'm interested in how do we protect the constitutional rights of the patrons and I know we're saying all the same thing so I don't understand why it has to be an employee that moderates the conversation. This has blown up into us violating people's first amendment rights and that was never the intent so I apologize for that. Protecting people's rights are of utmost importance to me I also don't believe in government overreach or government stepping into what I perceive to be government influencing people's speech or expression. Book clubs are wonderful, the library is wonderful, I just can't get onboard with people complaining and their will be complaints that government is influencing those discussions.



If someone has a gathering in the park, a protest in the park a birthday party in the park, we provide a safe space for people to do that and tax payer funds mow the yard and pay for the water, but we don't go moderating conversations there. If a volunteer or someone from the book club moderates the book club, wonderful. Mr. Wells explains, there's a particular characteristic of the library systems that requires a certain discipline, the librarian is responsible for training their staff to stay within certain parameters and the staff understands there is a check and balance and this has to be funded for the total experience that libraries provide. Commissioner Henslee asks, could I have a book club at the library and moderate it myself? Ms. Taysom said, not the way we have it setup right now. Ms. Taysom further explains it was setup that way to avoid liability, the idea was library staff need to be more in control of the space. Commissioner DeGroot said, there's difference between controlling the space and controlling the conversation. Commissioner DeGroot said, we receive advice from the library advisory board, we receive those things and then we make decisions on policy and then it is the library staff's responsibility to carry out those programs within that policy framework. While we appreciate your advice, it's also our job to discern what advice we take and what we don't take, if we don't take your advice it doesn't mean that we're fighting with you, it just means we didn't take your advice and the proper way to give us your advice is to have the conversation we're having today and that has not occurred in this particular instance. The letter that came from the State Board was already in the hands of the media before it came to the Board and you felt, in your email, that it was your responsibility to get it out the media because of the people you represent. You don't represent anyone, we do, we appoint you to a position to advise us. I want to be clear about that, those are the particular roles. Commissioner DeGroot discusses who determines what is political. He said, that is something that can be brought to the Board. I have lost confidence in your ability to give me advice because of the way this has been handled. Ms. Taysom said, I was asked by the Library Director if I would be on the advisory board to represent the interest of the people of Merrill and that is how it was presented to me, that may have been a mistake of Andy years ago when it was presented to me. I received the letter very late and wanted to get feedback from the people who use the library. The only way I could get it out in that time is to get it to the newspaper. My presumption was that it was not my position to send it to you, I apologize.

Commissioner Henslee asks Ms. Taysom to schedule a time to talk with him. Mr. Wells said, it dawned on me just now that I have not made enough of an effort to get in touch with you folks to keep the dialogue going, I apologize for that. Commissioner DeGroot thanks Mr. Wells for the apology and said, my apologies to you for not calling you. Mr. Wells said, there's a complaint process and we can also do the administration of keeping the system going. Commissioner Minty said, as I've observed the different perspectives, there is a lot of what I would call non-listening on each side, I hope we could put everything that was said up until now aside and say now we are all going to listen and roll model how we can have civil discourse. What I heard the librarian say in the past, is in that particular book club there was one person sometimes five that would show up. What I would like to offer, is the library do programming that gets the enthusiasm and passion to get people to come together in a constructive way, putting all this energy, organizing and staffing and that only

has one person shows up, is not a good use of resources. How can we get more topics that more people are passionate about. Library staff are amazing, volunteers are amazing. I don't want to minimize that volunteers can't hold a discussion. I trust them to hold an appropriate discussion. I don't know where we come to on a decision. I want us to make a decision today so everyone can move one. There are a lot of great things going on in our community. Commissioner DeGroot said, well said and thank you for really trying to be positive in a not very positive discussion. Commissioner Henslee said, thank you for all your hardwork at the library. I love all the programming, have it all, but I can't get behind a government employee, while on duty, getting paid moderating a discussion. I think there is a clear path forward for the library to continue all the services in a slightly different way. Mr. Wells said, we will have to work those out. Commissioner DeGroot said, I can get on board with that. The last thing I want to do is micromanage the library. What I want is to be able to say it's running fine and I can have faith, trust and confidence in the people I've appointed and/or hired to run those programs. What bothers me is when something comes up and I have to make a corrective action and the reaction I get makes me lose the faith, trust and confidence that I should have in those people. I'd like to be able to regain the faith and confidence. I believe the structure we have is correct as long as we're treating each other a little bit better. The Board was in agreement to work with library staff and the advisory committee to take what was discussed today and put it into practice.

7. Adjournment

4:43pm

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Klamath County Commissioners' Weekly Calendar is subject to change without notice.

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