



## Wahkiakum Board of County Commissioners

District No. 1 Commissioner: Lee Tischer  
District No. 2 Commissioner: Daniel L. Cothren  
District No. 3 Commissioner: Mark Letham

### MINUTES Board of Wahkiakum County Commissioners Regular Meeting January 13, 2026

Chair Dan Cothren called the regular meeting of the Board of Wahkiakum County Commissioners to order on January 13, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. in the third-floor public meeting room of the Wahkiakum County Courthouse located at 64 Main Street in Cathlamet, Washington.

Present: Chair Dan Cothren, Commissioner Mark Letham, Commissioner Lee Tischer, Clerk of the Board Beth Johnson. Sheriff John Mason, Undersheriff Gary Howell, DEM Coordinator Austin Smith, Emergency Technology Coordinator Beau Renfro, Healthy Communities Specialist Dianna Zimmerman, Public Works Director Chuck Beyer.

#### Flag Salute

Chair Dan Cothren led the flag salute.

#### Regular Meeting Agenda

It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham approving the regular meeting agenda for January 13, 2026. Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved.

#### Consent Agenda

It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham approving the consent agenda for January 13, 2026. Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved. The consent agenda contained the following items:

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2026
- B. Resolution No. 06-26 a resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds from the Emergency Medical Services Cumulative Reserve Fund for the payment of vouchers properly chargeable to said fund in the amount of \$1,747.72
- C. Resolution No. 07-26 a resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds from the County Properties Cumulative Reserve Fund for the payment of vouchers properly chargeable to said fund in the amount of \$1,943.98
- D. Resolution No. 08-26 a resolution authorizing the expenditure of \$3,853.04 from the Contingent Liabilities Cumulative Reserve Fund for the payment towards an insurance deductible

- E. Resolution No. 09-26 a resolution authorizing the expenditure of \$8,671.00 from the Contingent Liabilities Cumulative Reserve Fund for payment of claims related to legal fees regarding environmental litigation
- F. Resolution No. 10-26 a resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds from the Electronic Communications Cumulative Reserve Fund for the payment of vouchers properly chargeable to said fund in the amount of \$660.00
- G. Voucher Approval - \$868,123.01
- H. Voucher Approval / Transfer Batch - \$11,576.44
- I. Voucher Approval / Transfer Batch - \$11,576.44
- J. Voucher Approval / Transfer Batch - \$96,373.80
- K. Voucher Approval / Transfer Batch - \$96,373.80

### Public Comment

There were no public comments.

### Sheriff

#### Service Level Maintenance Agreement with Communications Northwest for Radio Site Maintenance

It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham to approve of the Service Level and Maintenance Agreement as presented by Communications Northwest, with the funds being paid out of Fund 127, the Radio Communications Fund. Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved.

### Public Works

#### Call for Quotes for Rock Products and for Asphalt Products

It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham to publish the notice to asphalt product suppliers and the notice to rock product suppliers. Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved.

#### Ductless Heat Pump Replacement for the Public Works Office

It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham to accept Felton Heating and Cooling quote of replacing the heat pump in the Public Works office in the amount of \$8,920.45, to be paid out of the Capital Improvement Plan Fund. Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved.

#### Resolution Adjusting Rates for the Disposal of Solid Waste at the KM Transfer Station

It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham to approve Resolution No. 11-26 a resolution adjusting the rates for the disposal of solid waste at the KM Transfer Station. Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved.

#### Resolution to Adopt the Capital Improvement Plan Project List for 2026-2027

It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham to approve Resolution No. 12-26 a resolution adopting the Wahkiakum County Capital Improvement Project List for the years 2026-2027. Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved.

## **Workforce Southwest Washington**

### **Presentation: Workforce as an Economic Infrastructure: What it Means for Wahkiakum County**

Ayssa Joyner, Senior Project Manager, and Nolan Yaws-Gonzalez, Associate Director of Programs, provided a presentation to the board on the Workforce programs.

### **Commissioner Report**

Commissioner Cothren commented on landslide issues near East Valley Road and Wilson Creek.

### **Public Hearing**

#### ***Ordinance to Create a Joint Public Development Authority (PDA) with Pacific County Known as the Upper Grays River Community Forest***

Chair Dan Cothren recessed the regular meeting at 10:03 a.m. to proceed into a public hearing; he then called for public comments.

Sandra Staples Borner spoke in favor of creating the Community Forest. Her comments included that it would provide county ownership of forestlands, more diverse watersheds and healthier streams. She further commented on the loss of public access to forestlands and that this project will hopefully improve public access over time.

Krist Novoselic commented that the Grays River Grange supports the Community Forest; he spoke in favor of a decentralized structure.

Commissioner Cothren commented that the goals of increased public access and revenue production will occur, but that it will not be immediate.

Cherie Kearney advised that she is retired from the Columbia Land Trust and is now contracting with the Columbia Land Trust to continue working on this community forest project. She noted that she has worked with Wahkiakum and Pacific County over the years to reconnect forests with communities and ensure continued revenues. Kearney spoke in support of community forests and commented on their increasing popularity. She further commented that grants are being sought to purchase property and that an initial property acquisition may happen within two years.

Shirely Rheault, commented in support of the project and that it would allow for a mechanism for the donation of private timberland. She also spoke in appreciation of Cherie Kearney and of the Columbia Land Trust and their efforts in this project.

Stephanie Sotka, online, requested clarification on the structure of the organization and who would have legal authority over the board and their documents. She also questioned when it would be final and questioned the operating budget.

Cherie Kearney noted that the attorneys from all three partnering entities worked together to develop the founding documents.

Cameron Kockritz, staff representative for Congresswoman Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, advised that congressional funding has not yet been passed this year.

Sandra Staples Bortner, commented that the group will pursue operational grants but there may also be a fundraising campaign by the board of the Public Development Authority.

Steve Manlow, Executive Director of the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board, commented that he strongly supports the project. His comments included that upstream forestlands are important for fish recovery and habitat and that he also supports the sustained revenue production of the project. In addition, he noted that the project will improve access to forestlands for recreational fishing.

A Pacific County resident commented in support of increased public access.

John Rua expressed concerns about public access and who will control it. Rua commented that his past experience with the Columbia Land Trust has been bad.

Commissioner Cothren reiterated that the goal is to get public access, but it may take some time to occur. The board of the PDA will control and manage the property. Cothren also commented on the county's history with the Columbia Land Trust, noting that mistakes were made in the past. However, Cothren noted that the county now has a good relationship with the Columbia Land Trust and that they have been valuable to the county through their lobbying efforts and their efforts in this community forest project.

Shirley Rheault commented on the board composition of the PDA, which would be comprised of six members, two from each county, one of which must be a county commissioner, and two representatives from the Columbia Land Trust.

Bill Fashing, Director of Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council of Governments, commented that he has seen community forests be successful elsewhere, including the Hood River Community Forest. He thinks this is a unique and great opportunity for the counties. He noted that public access is a long-term problem that will need to be worked on. He also spoke in support of the board structure for the entity.

### **Reconvene**

With no further public comments, Chair Dan Cothren reconvened the regular meeting at 10:42 a.m.

### **Commissioners**

Ordinance No. 173-26 to Create the Upper Grays River Community Forest, a Public Development Authority  
It was **M/S/A** by Commissioners Tischer and Letham to approve Ordinance No. 173-26, an ordinance authorizing the creation of the Upper Grays River Community Forest, a Public Development Authority; and to sign the Interlocal Agreement with Pacific County and the Charter of the Upper Grays River Community Forest.  
Vote: Aye – Tischer, Letham and Cothren. Unanimously approved.

Board / Committee / Liaison Assignments

The commissioners reviewed their board and liaison assignments. Following discussion, the Board was in consensus to approve the appointment of prior Commissioner Gene Strong to the two Great Rivers Behavioral Health Boards: Great Rivers, LLC and Great Rivers Behavioral Health -ASO boards, with Commissioner Letham being the alternate to both boards. In addition, Commissioner Letham will assume the remainder of the assignments that belonged to prior Commissioner Gene Strong, including the IT Committee, the Fair Board, Cap Board, and the Grays River Flood Control District. Commissioner Letham will be alternate to the Health and Human Services Advisory Board and Commissioner Cothren will be alternate liaison to the Grays River Flood Control District and dredging / flooding issues on the west end.

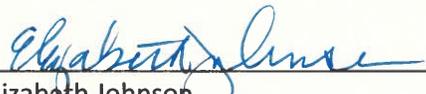
**Commissioner Reports**

The Board continued their reports for the week. Commissioner Tischer advised that the legislative session has begun and he discussed several issues that the Washington State Association of Counties has identified.

Commissioner Cothren continued to discuss landslide and road issues in East Valley.

**Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Attest:   
Elizabeth Johnson  
Clerk of the Board

Approved:   
Daniel L. Cothren  
Chair of the Board