

## State of the County Report 2018

Much has been accomplished in the County this past year. I have highlighted some of the events that I feel are important and am reporting these events in four categories: (1) Quality of Life for Curry County Citizens; (2) Economic Development; (3) Improving County Efficiency, Communication, and Transparency; and (4) Public Safety. I realize that there is some overlap in some of these categories and these events are not necessarily in chronological order.

### **Quality of Life for Curry County Citizens:**

1. The Board of Commissioners (BOC) was informed about some nuisance and health issues by a group of property owners on Hamilton Lane in Harbor. Previously these issues were not addressed by BOC because of lack of funding. The BOC budgeted for a code enforcement officer and those issues on Hamilton Lane have been addressed. There have been quite a number of other properties in Curry County with similar issues that have been reported to the Code Enforcement officer and these issues are being prioritized and addressed.
2. The Brookings Head Start Grant for remodeling the Head Start building (the old library) in Brookings was approved by the BOC. The grant for this project was over \$1 million and is scheduled to be completed in September 2019. This should be a boon to our local economy by adding construction jobs as well as giving our young children a better and safer place to learn.
3. The BOC sent a letter to Sutter Coast Hospital's Directors expressing concerns about the high cost to citizens who used their emergency room. Their emergency room services were contracted to EmCare which were charging approximately ten times the maximum allowable charge for local carriers. The Del Norte Supervisors and Del Norte Health District also sent letters about these high charges. As a result, Sutter Coast has discontinued the contract with EmCare effective January 2019 and patients going to the emergency room at Sutter Coast will now be paying far less for their care.
4. It has been verified by State officials that it is legal and possible to have a critical access satellite hospital in Brookings. A stand-alone emergency room has been advocated for Brookings but it is important that CMS (Medicare) frowns on stand-alone emergency rooms because they increase costs and risks for patients. Much work has to be done on this issue before it could come to fruition.
5. Curry County Public Transit Service District is eligible to get significant new grant funding through STIF (Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund) funds. The grant application has been submitted and the Transit District will use the new funding source to give the public more access to public transportation in Curry County by extending the hours and number of routes that are available.

## **Economic Development**

1. The BOC passed an ordinance that approved having Enterprise Zones in Curry County. Industries built in these zones could get lower property taxes for a limited time and would have to pay employees more than minimum wage. It is important to note that these industries would be subject to current County zoning regulations and would have to go through the proper process to obtain building permits. The goal is to bring investment and jobs to the County for sustained long-term growth.
2. The airport was sold to the City of Brookings. This is the culmination of years of discussions between the City and the County. Bottom line, the City has plans to develop the airport that are easier to accomplish with City ownership. The future development of the airport will benefit all Curry County citizens.
3. A citizen's revenue task force (CRFT) was formed and they have had a number of meetings to find possible increased revenue for the County. The first thing that came out of the CRFT was a possible ballot measure for a Transit and Lodging Tax (TLT). This would implement a tax for temporary lodging (under 30 days) to facilities in unincorporated areas. These taxes are currently being charged in our cities. The BOC approved the first reading of this ballot measure. After the second reading it should be on the May 2019 ballot. Other possible ideas for increasing County revenue will be discussed by CRFT and will be brought to the BOC for consideration. Appropriate measures will be referred to the citizens, who ultimately decide the future of the County.
4. The BOC passed an ordinance that will allow Pacific Gales Golf Course in Port Orford to use waste water from the Port Orford Waste Treatment Facility to water the course. This will be a "win-win" for City, the County, and the Golf Course.

## **Improving County Efficiency, Communication, and Transparency**

1. The new County website was launched on 2/8/2018. The website makes it much easier for the public to access all of the meetings, the GIS system, and other items of interest.
2. The County continues to televise all meetings and has approved Curry Voices using citizen volunteers that have been trained to use the equipment to produce programs that are of interest to Curry County citizens.
3. Clark Schroeder, the County Administrator, was hired in April of 2018 after extensive recruiting efforts of the Prothman Firm. This is the first time Curry County has hired an

administrator. Over 50% of all General Law Counties in Oregon currently have administrators.

4. An ordinance was passed to make sure that all public records requests are handled in an efficient, consistent, and legal manner.
5. Extensive effort was put forth by Commissioner Huxley, Julie Swift (HR director), and John Huttli (Legal Counsel) in conjunction with department heads and administrator to update and revise the employee hand book.
6. There were several large purchases that were approved by the BOC for equipment for the Road Department that will enable them to make quicker road repairs and have less down time because of old equipment failures. In the long run, these pieces of equipment will enable the Road Department to be more cost effective and efficient.

### **Public Safety**

1. The BOC increased the budget to fund four new road deputies for the sheriff's department.
2. The ambulance services of Port Orford and CAL OR were consolidated all under CAL OR.
3. The elevator in the jail was replaced. It is important to note that both the jail and the court house are extremely old and will need to be replaced. The communication towers (these are needed for 911) need to be replaced and it will take millions of dollars to do so. These towers are so old that parts are no longer available for repairs. In the past, there were no provisions made to bill the entities that use these towers for future replacement (this issue is currently being addressed).
4. The BOC approved funding for a study done by Portland State University that will look at the feasibility of consolidating all of the 911 services in the County. This study is being paid by both Brookings and the County equally.
5. Unfortunately, there were two fires in Curry County: the Lobster Creek Fire (extinguished within weeks); and the Klondike Fire (close to Agnes) that was very large and was not extinguished until early December. A number of families had to be evacuated for a short period and fortunately no citizens were injured and no homes were destroyed.

Submitted by Sue Gold, BOC Chair