

**WALLOWA COUNTY  
BOARD of COMMISSIONERS  
STATE of OREGON**

541-426-7730  
FAX: 541-426-0582  
CHRYSTAL ALLEN, E.A.

CHAIR TODD NASH  
COMMISSIONER SUSAN ROBERTS  
COMMISSIONER PAUL CASTILLEJA

[commissioners@co.wallowa.or.us](mailto:commissioners@co.wallowa.or.us)

September 5, 2018

**Wallowa County Board of Commissioners (BOC)  
Special Session Board of Commissioners Meeting  
Transient Lodging Tax Ballot  
9:00 a.m. Thornton Conference Room  
Wallowa County Courthouse**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** CHAIR TODD NASH  
COMMISSIONER SUSAN ROBERTS  
COMMISSIONER PAUL CASTILLEJA

**STAFF PRESENT:** STACEY FREGULIA, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, PAIGE  
SULLY, COUNTY COUNSEL

**OTHERS PRESENT:** LYNN WOLF, RON AND KAREN WOODIN, MARY  
WOLF, CHUCK ANDERSON, CARMEN GURULE,  
BECKY RUSHTON, JANET AND TOM GROAT, DON  
STEIN, DOUG BUSKA, MIKE LOCKHART, DAVID  
HURLEY, PATTI BUSKA, SCOTT HATHORN,  
KATHLEEN ELLYN, GREG JARMAN, CRISTIANO  
STREIBEL, BEN BOYD

**09:00 a.m. – Chair Nash opened meeting stating that this is a special session to review and or adopt a ballot measure for the proposed Transient Lodging Tax that will be on the November General Election Ballot. Chair Nash asked if the Board had any recommendations. Commissioner Roberts recommended that the Board start proceedings to withdraw the measure from the election.**

*Commissioner Roberts moved to start the proceedings for withdraw from the November General Elections Ballot.*

Commissioner Castilleja stated that before he would second the motion he believes that the Board will need to look into and make sure the county will not be financially burdened, and if the County could help out in some way.

*Commissioner Castilleja seconded the motion.*

Chair Nash opened the matter for discussion. He stated that this is an issue that will likely come up again. The 6.8% Transient Lodging Tax is lower than most places throughout the state. Wallowa County citizens pay at least 11% when they vacation other places. Chair Nash states that Wallowa County is partly a tourist based economy and feels that the county needs to capture some of the income coming in by raising this tax. Chair Nash explained a situation where he has fought for what he

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feels is right and mentions that he is willing to fight for the tax increase as well.

Chair Nash stated that the county has the lowest crime rate per thousand, the highest graduation rate, and one of the lowest tax rates in the state. Volunteers that keep youth active has been a grand part on why the ratio sits as is for our county. To provide for the health of the youth and to provide for a stronger Sheriff's Department is part of what Chair Nash states he was trying to do. He still believes that the burden of this should be passed on to tourism due to the 1 million bed nights that this county sees, it was not meant as a personal attack on anyone.

Chair Nash stated this is an opportunity to tie the fair into tourism. There are a number of people who like to invest heavily and try to capture as much funding through the state to improve the facility, which in turn would bolster a large indoor arena for many tourist related activities. He listed several activities such as car shows, horse events etc. He feels that there is a need for all to think about how to work together to accomplish this. He also stated that he will follow the process as accurately as possible the next go around.

**Public Comment:**

Doug Buska stated that he had wanted to spend the summer volunteering at the Fair, but the plans to raise the Transient Lodging Tax spoiled that relationship, but stated that it doesn't need to for the future. He recommends that the Fair Board reshape their organization. There is a mix conception in terms of the Fair Board and their vision. Is it about the fair or a convention center. If there is a focus on a vision then build a Fair Board that has the right mix of people to support these goals. He feels that is what's missing, once that is obtained then he feels people will get behind the Fair Board and try to raise funds to achieve those goals. Mr. Buska stated that this was the first time he has heard the need or the want to have the fairgrounds as a tourism venue. He would like to see more private money invest and build the fair.

Greg Jarman spoke about some of his concerns. One was that looking at the fairgrounds as it is, is it viable from a business stand point. He feels that the ones who pay into the tax need to see some sort of return investment. He stated that before you can ask for money you need to show what it will be used for.

Commissioner Roberts stated what Chair Nash was trying to state was that those things were not fleshed out and they need to be. She stated that the Fair Board is governed under ORS's and not by-laws, which many have asked about. It is not just the Wallowa County Fair but all fairs throughout the state of Oregon. The Fair Board function is to prepare and present the Fair. The facility itself, which has been a topic of discussions in the past, is County controlled. The question has always been; if the appointed Fair Board Members control the facilities, who is in charge of the Fair Board itself. She believes that what Chair Nash was trying to say is that we need to look at everything. Have another group of citizens' step forward and work on a larger picture for what could occur down at the fairgrounds, how to go about getting the funding for the fair, and what it means for the larger community.

Commissioner Roberts stated that what has been said today is that the Board will be

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withdrawing the measure, and possibly then propose, at some future time if the community can come up with an agreement on something, another measure for the Transient Lodging Tax.

Mike Lockhart stated that there has been some miscommunication that has transpired through the whole process. If you can't tell anyone how you are going to spend the money or what you will be doing with that money, how can you tell the citizens that it is legal under the ORS's. Mr. Lockhart stated that Lincoln did a feasibility study for years before doing a measure. He also stated that everyone at the lake is behind the fair and wants to see it flourish, but not this way. There are some misunderstandings about the businesses when you think that it is not painless to tax the tourist with no repercussions to them. If you tax the tourist you tax the business. Mr. Lockhart gave an example. He also believes that there is a need to be more equitable of spreading the taxes than what had been purposed. Mr. Lockhart also stated that it is not about fighting it is about working together on this.

Mary Wolf stated that if you tax visitors they end up spending less in the stores throughout the community, and you may even see less the next year.

Scott Hathorn stated that the role of the Fair Board is to present the fair, but who are they accountable to.

Commissioner Roberts noted that this has been a question that has been asked every year. The Fair Board is governed under ORS's once they have been appointed by the Board of Commissioners. If you read the ORS's, once they are appointed they are guided by ORS's to know what to do and how to do it. They do not really answer to the board that has appointed them. Scott Hathorn wanted to know who controls the actual funds. Commissioner Roberts noted that the County receives the money however again here is where the anomaly comes into play.

Chair Nash stated that the Fair Board meetings are open to the public and he recommends that people go to them and learn what takes place and learn from what they are doing and the Fair Board's struggles.

*Motion still on the floor.  
The vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Commissioner Roberts moved that if there should be an order required to be filed with the County Clerk for the withdrawal of the measure there will need to be one completed and it will be finalized upon the signature of the Commissioners.*

*Commissioner Castilleja seconded the motion.*

*Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.*

**No further business was brought before the Board of Commissioners at this time.**

**Adjournment:** The official meeting ended at approximately 09:28 a.m.

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Respectfully Submitted by:  
*Stacey Fregulia*, Executive Assistant

WALLOWA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

  
Chair Todd Nash

  
Commissioner Susan Roberts

  
Commissioner Paul Castilleja

  
ATTEST: Stacey Fregulia, Executive Assistant