

July 9, 2024

The Board of County Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. in a regular session in the Commission Office of the Granite County Courthouse with Commissioner McLure, Commissioner Adler and Commissioner Hinkle attending. Also attending were Commissioner's Assistant, Billie Ann Kulaski, and Granite County Attorney, Blaine Bradshaw, did not attend as he was at County Attorney training, but was available by phone or email. The session was livestreamed through the Zoom internet-based program available for the public to view the session and comment. The public was also allowed to attend in person and provide comment. The session convened with the pledge of allegiance.

Also, in attendance were *Philipsburg Mail* Editor, Amelia Wood; Granite County Treasurer, Ashley Todd; Granite County Road & Bridge Superintendent, Paul Alt; Ahnna Reid; and members of the general public including Elena Gagliano.

BOARD MINUTES; Commissioner Hinkle moved to accept the board minutes for July 2, 2024 with amendments. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There were no public comments received. The motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE;

Electronic mail was received from Deputy Clerk & Recorder, Becky Mickey forwarding a request from Time Clocks Plus for an update on implementation of time clocks. This will be on a future agenda.

Electronic mail was received from MACo providing a quick reference guide for obligation of ARPA Funds, which are required to be obligated by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026.

Electronic mail was received from Frontiers Racing Representative, Ben Grass updating the Commission on the upcoming cyclist race on July 13, 2024, which will travel across Upper Rock Creek Road between road 348 and Skalkaho Highway. He asked that the road not be graded since it could cause issues with the race. The Commissioners noted that they cannot hold off on grading the road, if the grader is in the area.

Electronic mail was received from Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, announcing an upcoming meeting on July 10, 2024, with an attached agenda.

Electronic mail was received from MACo concerning a draft letter to the Secretary of Agriculture concerning the National Old Growth Amendment; the letter addresses concerns about the constrains on the Forest Service that hinder meaningful cooperation with state and local governments. The Commission agreed with the drafted letter and will notify MACo that they support this letter.

A memo was received from State Attorney General, Austin Knudsen's Office referencing the Opioid settlement funds and a recent settlement with Kroger providing 3.85 million dollars

to the State and local governments. Attached was an updated MOU to include amendments from the Kroger settlement funds.

Electronic mail was received from the Missoula BLM Office, inviting the Commissioners to Road Palooza Workshops to be held in Missoula on August 19, 2024.

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano inquiring what items would be on a future agenda. Commissioner McLure explained that the correspondence referring to the Time Clocks will be on a future agenda.

Elena Gagliano inquired if the correspondence from MACo concerning the National Old Growth Amendment would be on a future agenda. Commissioner Hinkle explained that the letter was informational and that the Commission is in favor of the letter going out. They will contact MACo via e-mail to voice their support concerning this matter.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano inquiring about the correspondence from MACo concerning the “National Old Growth Amendment”; and suggested the Commissioners place this matter on a future agenda.

ROAD & BRIDGE WEEKLY REPORT; & SOLID WASTE UPDATE WITH ROAD & BRIDGE SUPERINTENDENT PAUL ALT; Granite County Road & Bridge Superintendent Paul Alt joined the session to provide an update of projects across the County including blading roads around the County. The Crew is hauling gravel up Henderson Creek this morning and are working to finish a piece and will begin working on roads in the Hall area. The Commission discussed the potential purchase of a new Grader. Paul Alt presented information and this matter will be on the agenda next week. Commissioner McLure noted that the tax base is not at a level where the County can continually upgrade equipment, demonstrated by the Road Budget being supplemented by PILT funds. The group discussed the training on the new Grader that would be provided by Western MT Caterpillar. Paul Alt referenced that new training should happen in the fall so it doesn't compromise maintenance projects that are going on. The training is put on by Caterpillar and is available to whoever needs training on new equipment, focusing on employees who have not received training. Paul Alt noted that he would like to send three employees to the training.

Solid Waste Update: The well that was drilled in the fall of 2024 is dry at the Philipsburg site. When the well was drilled in the fall it was producing 30 gallons a minute. They will come back to drill the well deeper. The group discussed that this could have something to do with the aquifer being dug up across the road as part of the lagoon project the Town of Philipsburg is conducting. This could also be affected by the irrigation season affecting the water table. Some members of the public have raised concern over the modified hours at the Philipsburg Solid Waste transfer site, but the Commission are going to continue with the time change to ensure consistency across both sites.

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano inquiring about the digging for the Sewer Lagoons by the Town of Philipsburg. She asked if there was an environmental impact study that was completed for the project. The Commission referred her to speak with the Town of Philipsburg concerning this matter.

Paul Alt responded to the concerns from Frontier Cycling over the grading of Rock Creek Road. He explained that the grading has already been completed and that he is not going to adjust the maintenance schedule for the project, as the tax payers needing access off of this roadway are the priority not the event.

TCS NORTHWEST PRIME CONTRACT CHANGE ORDER FOR GRANITE COUNTY COURTHOUSE WATER UPSIZING; The Commission reviewed the change order include larger water piping for the Courthouse's current ADA Bathroom projects for a total cost of \$3,378.70. Commissioner Hinkle moved to accept and sign the contract change order for water upsizing with TCS Northwest. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed unanimously.

GEORGETOWN LAKE OUTFLOW; DAM TENDER'S REPORT; The lake level was reported at 6429.26 feet; 2.88 inches below full pool, according to the USGS lake level gage and the dam tender's report for the week. Commissioner Hinkle moved to continue releasing 30 CFS in alignment with the current FERC Order in place. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There were no comments and the motion passed unanimously.

TREASURER, ASHLEY TODD REQUESTING THE ADDITION OF A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES LINE ITEM TO HER BUDGET; The Commission was joined by Granite County Treasurer, Ashley Todd to review the requested addition of professional service line item to her budget. She also included a proposed contract to have former Treasurer, Vicki Harding to complete some title work, assisting the Office to get caught up. The workload for processing titles is steadily increasing. Commissioner McLure inquired about out-of-state titles being sent to Granite County for processing since there is not currently an excise tax. Ashley Todd explained that this would be discussed further in the next agenda item.

Commissioner Adler commented that he is not in favor of this contract, and suggested having some additional hours added to the Department as opposed to using a contractor. Commissioner Hinkle stated that he is not in favor of those who have retired coming back to contract with the County. Commissioner McLure recommended having a short-term status employee to support the Office to get caught up. She added that she doesn't think anyone should make more than the current Title Clerk to complete the same type of work. Commissioner McLure noted that there are people who would likely come in to work at the same rate as the current Title Clerk to help the Office get caught up. Ashley Todd explained the proposed contract details, outlining why she chose to present the agreement. Commissioner McLure explained the Commission would authorize a short-term employee to support office operations, but will not move forward with a contractual agreement. The group discussed the Department of Justice (DOJ) requirements for someone to be approved to process Titles, including background checks and fingerprinting. Commissioner Adler moved to deny the contractual agreement with the former Treasurer, Vicki Harding.

Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano stating that the Department of Motor Vehicle provides licensing services in the Courthouse, and inquired why the Motor Vehicle Office is not completing the title processing. She added that Scott Rettig helps in the Treasurer's Office when they are busy. Ashley Todd responded that most Treasurer's Offices across the State serve as an "all-in-one" Office; and the DMV operations are typically considered part of the Treasurer's Office. There were no further public comments received and the motion passed unanimously.

The commission discussed the Professional Services Line Item, Ashley Todd requested in her budget proposal, since she is also working with BDS to outsource the printing and mailing of real estate tax bills. It was recommended by the Commission that she use her supplies budget for business conducted with BDS since they would be vendor; but that if she wanted to track this more carefully she could add the line item. Ashley Todd explained that by using BDS it will save the County approximately \$4K and free up five full days of labor, adding that most Counties have transitioned to this type of service. Commissioner McLure suggested that additional hours be requested in the budget for the Treasurer's Office.

TREASURER, ASHLEY TODD WITH A TREASURER'S OFFICE UPDATE; The Commission was joined by Granite County Treasurer, Ashley Todd. The group discussed the potential of adding a local motor vehicle option tax (on luxury vehicles and also motor homes) to the licensing fees via a resolution requesting this matter be a ballot issue on the general election in November 2024. Ashley Todd explained that she has been looking into this process and gathering data. She has spoken to officials in Phillips County, and has a model resolution the County can use for a reference. Phillips County brought in an estimated \$60K after implementation of the excise tax; and Sweet Grass County has consistently been generating around \$300K annually. The County could present this to voter as a percentage or a flat fee. Ashley Todd noted that most Counties use the percentage method, and explained how the funds would support County operations as well as have a benefit to the Towns (these tax fund dispersed 50% to the County and the other 50% to the County and incorporated town, based upon population percentages). Ashley Todd is still sorting through data on MSRP's to provide a suggestion, as she doesn't want to see this negatively affect the ranching community. The Commission discussed that since Montana has no sales tax, LLC's establish themselves in the County and license out of state vehicles, creating a large amount of work for the Treasurer's Office, with not return from the State of Montana. This matter will be on the agenda next week.

Ashely Todd provided an update on the transition from Merlin to CARS program for motor vehicle operations. The transition will go live in March of 2025. There will be a mock computer station set up to enable the office to complete trainings on the new equipment in the meantime. The County will receive two new stations to replace the older two stations. Ashley Todd noted that the County could potentially add a third station, but that it would come at a cost to the County. With the new equipment the County will be responsible for all aspects of operation including IT Support. Ashley Todd has been working with the County's IT Support Company, DIS for assistance with the transition.

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano asking for clarification on what will be on a future agenda, highlighting the matter of a potential excise tax being added to the ballot in November. She stated that there would need to be notice given to the public via the newspaper and public hearing held before this could move forward. Ashley Todd explained that most of the information she is providing to the Commissioners is informational and about ongoing projects within the Treasurer's Office.

Ashley Todd provided a brief update of another software upgrade she is looking into call BMS Check Mapping which will cut one to two hours out of work out of each day. The implementation of this program with training is approximately \$1,000.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.