

September 10, 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 Assistant, Billie Ann Kulaski, and Granite County Attorney, Blaine Bradshaw, who attended a portion of the agenda items in-person. 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; Public Health & Safety Coordinator, Jackie Bolster; Marsh McLennan Agency Agent, Rody Holman; Road & Bridge Superintendent, Paul Alt; Granite County Custodian, Janeen Bonney; Extension Office Secretary, Dee Dunkerson; Blackfoot Communications Contractor, Jason Robertson and Rody Anderson; Drummond Mayor, Gail Leeper; Granite County Planning Director, Linda Bouck; Deputy Clerk & Recorder, Becky Mickey; Granite County Clerk & Recorder, Sarah Graham; and members of the general public including Elena Gagliano

**QUARTERLY SAFETY MEETING;** The Safety Committee met with the Commissioners including Public Health & Safety Coordinator, Jackie Bolster; Marsh McLennan Agency Agent, Rody Holman; Road & Bridge Superintendent, Paul Alt; Granite County Custodian, Janeen Bonney; and Extension Office Secretary, Dee Dunkerson. Commissioner Adler moved to approve the meeting minutes from the June 2024 meeting. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed unanimously. Rody Holman reviewed the most recent claims and loss runs report with the group, looking at the open claims and most recent claims. Rody Holman discussed the importance of timely (early) reporting, which the by evidence of the reports the County has been successful in doing. The group discussed early return to work programs and how the employer can facilitate these programs. Jackie Bolster explained that Brodie Loushin and her did the annual safety inspection and there were few items to be addressed. She is working with those Departments to address those items. Dee Dunkerson with the Extension Office is the new Courthouse Safety Committee member. Janeen Bonney and Paul Alt noted that they had nothing to report. Valerie Cartwright spoke with Jackie Bolster this morning and stated that there is going to be a follow-up iPAWS alert this morning at 10:00 am. Jackie Bolster explained that the Montana Safety Culture Act training has gone out to all the County Departments and Offices, and new safety trainings will be sent out the first part of October. Commissioner Adler moved to adjourn the quarterly safety committee meeting. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There were no public comments and the motion passed unanimously.

**BOARD MINUTES;** Commissioner Adler moved to accept the board minutes for September 3, 2024. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano raising concern over comments she made and documents she provided during the previous sessions second reading of Resolution 2024-15 concerning the County's

withdrawal from the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority. She inquired to if the documents where going to be attached. She also asked that her comments over federal money being thrown into a hole be corrected; as she had likened it to being a yacht. Elena Gagliano noted that there was further discussion over the FERC license that wasn't captured in the minutes. Commissioner McLure noted that the minutes are meant to summarize the meeting. Attorney Bradshaw stated that his legal opinion on why the FERC license should not be rescinded has been mentioned in the minutes several times, and has to do with the contract being legally binding. The documents referenced by Elena Gagliano are available and saved to the network as part of the meeting documents for the September 3, 2024 session. The Commission reviewed the meeting minutes and decided to move forward without amendments. Additional public comment was received from Elena Gagliano raising concern over documents being lost. She added that as elected officials the Commissioners represent the people of the County and that she went out to get signatures from people of the County showing support for remaining part of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA). She is concerned that the County is withdrawing from BSPRA when she would think the Commission would want to make decisions based on what the people of the County want. There were no further public comments received. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE;**

Electronic mail was received Vera Pederson, a Communications Specialist with MACo Healthcare Trust; announcing the upcoming annual member meeting that will take place on Tuesday, September 17, 2024.

The Dam Safety Inspection Report from FERC was received with detailed comments containing the Critical Energy Infrastructure Information (CEII); therefore, the information is not available to the public.

A letter was received from FERC concerning the ODSP Revision for Georgetown Lake Dam, Flint Creek Hydroelectric Project with comments requesting a response within 60 days.

Electronic mail was received from David Schnittgen of the Montana Department of Transportation formally giving notice on how information on locally funded projects on state and federal highway systems can be obtained.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano inquiring if any of the correspondence is going to be on the agenda for further discussion. She highlighted the correspondence from FERC, noting there are items that need a response. She added that she had further comments about the Commissioners decision to opt out of BSPRA event though it will not cost the County any money and merely provides them a seat at the table. She outlined the interest of the people of the County in restoring the passenger rail through the southern route and to create a station in Drummond. She added that the reasoning and logic behind the Commissioners withdrawal is not clear, noting that the federal spending has nothing to do with what was discussed. She stated that the Commission has not raised concern over the

**federal spending when approving thing concerning senior citizens, highways, bridges, or airport, which all include federal grants, which is all questionable. Elena Gagliano explained that in a short amount of time she was able to secure 22 signatures for people in favor of BSPRA and that they think it is a great idea and it is a shame for the County pull out.**

**The Commission responded that in regard to the correspondence from FERC that Great West Engineering is working on a response and that once a response is prepared it will be on the Commission's agenda for review. Elena Gagliano responded that the letter was not sent to Great West Engineering, but to the Commissioners. She attends these meeting to ensure the Commissioners are doing what they are supposed to be doing (public's will).**

**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 on projects across the County, the Road Crew is hauling gravel on the lower part of Willow Creek and dura patching. Soon the Road Crew will be wanting to do four ten-hour shifts. Paul Alt stated he would like to split the Crew again, which worked well. The Commission gave Paul Alt authority to manage when the Crew moves into their four-ten hours shifts, as long as it works with the payroll calendar. The Commission discussed that salt and sand will need to be purchased soon and they will get 1K yards for each side of the County. They will do this once they are done spreading gravel.**

**BLACKFOOT TELECOMMUNICATIONS' FIBER OPTIC PROJECT UPDATE ON ROAD REPAIRS; The Commission was joined by Blackfoot Communications Contractor, Jason Robertson and Rody Anderson. Commissioner Adler began by raising concerns over the contractors completing necessary repairs to the roadways around Maxville following the implementation of fiber into the ground; and he wants to make sure everything gets cleaned up. Jason Robertson provided their inspection report for Maxville for the Commission to review, outlining what needs addressed and cleaned up. He spoke about issues along the asphalt that need to be addressed. As soon as the main line fiber is in they are planning to clean up these areas. The Contractors will also go in and sweep the roads. Paul Alt raised concerns where the road looks like it has narrowed and needs widened back out and a culvert that needs to be addressed in the Maxville area. The Contractors are going to address those areas prior to the winter months. Paul Alt noted that an area on a corner up at Moose Lake needs an excavator to fix it or they can provide gravel and the County will fix it. The group discussed the ditches on East Fork that are planned to be addressed as well. The group discussed some of the more technical aspects of the project. Jason Robertson stated that he has a meeting with Blackfoot this week and can come back and report some of the more technical aspects of the project following that meeting, or he could have Blackfoot come in with him to a future session.**

**Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano stating she lives up Black Pine Road and wants to know if the work has been completed because she sees an unmarked van on her road. Jason Robertson explained that that is splicing van and they are putting out a box; and**

that the orange things coming out of the ground are drops from house to the hand hole. Following this process Blackfoot Communications will come out and connect the new service. Jason Robertson will have JB Ray from Blackfoot come with him to a future meeting to provide more precise updates on when residents can plan on having fiber optic internet connections in their homes or businesses.

**WYMAN GULCH, LITTLE GOLD, ROYAL GOLD ROADS; PROCESS TO FORMALLY ACCEPT AS COUNTY ROADS;** The Commission was joined by Granite County Planning Director, Linda Bouck. She explained that she agrees with the USFS that Wyman Gulch definitely has a break in the County's ownership for about one mile around Section 28, T8N, R13W. She stated that it would be useful for the County to acquire the full right-of-way for the Wyman Gulch. She added that she thinks that the County has the Royal Basin Road shown on the old maps and that the County should take an updated easement from the Forest Service for the road. In regard to Little Gold Creek, she looked over the documentation where the previous County Commission were trying to establish it as a county road, but the evidence is unclear as to whether that last step was taken. It seems like they were working on it for a long time; and it does seem to provide easement up to some of the old mining claims. She explained that it provides loop access to Royal Basin which could be helpful for firefighting purposes; and provides access to federal lands further up than the Royal Basin goes. In an age when it's so hard to acquire public access, she would recommend accepting the easement from the Forest Service and accepting it as a County Road, since there has been some understanding by the public regarding the road having public access. Commissioner Adler noted that the County wants to roadway to protect public access. Attorney Bradshaw noted that by taking the road, it doesn't mean the Commission agrees that it is a maintained County Road as the Forest Services verbally represented that the previous week that the County would decide the level of maintenance provided going forward. The Commission determines the level of maintenance on County roads. Commissioner Hinkle noted that he thinks that by doing this the County is buying a lot of problems. Commissioner Adler moved to go forward with a written resolution on Wyman Gulch and Royal Gold, and Little Gold Roads to formally accept them as County Roads and work with the USFS on FERTA Easements on portions of the roadways as necessary. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed two to one with Commissioner Hinkle dissenting.

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano asking for clarification. Attorney Bradshaw explained that he will draft an application (Resolution form) in the matter of the roadways and if these are passed by the Commission they will be sent to the USFS as an application to move the process forward.

**GEORGETOWN LAKE OUTFLOW; DAM TENDER'S REPORT;** The lake level was reported at 6428.28 feet; 14.64 inches below full pool, according to the USGS lake level gage and the dam tender's report for the week. Commissioner Adler moved to continue releasing 30 CFS in alignment with the current FERC Order in place. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed unanimously.

The Commissioners discussed some maintenance that needs to be completed at the dam including power washing some vegetation and repainting the blue strip along the face of the dam. Current dam tender, Jarrod Kruger is willing to complete this work but would do so as a contractor since it is outside the scope of his role. Commissioner Adler moved to hire Jarrod Kruger at his contract rate of \$60.00 per hour to power wash the dam and re-paint the blue strip along the dam face. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed unanimously.

**MONTHLY CLAIMS;** The Commission reviewed the monthly claims. The Commission raised concern over the frequency of the lawn being mowed in August, 2024. It was mowed weekly and the Commission doesn't feel as though this service needs to be outsourced for the amount it is costing the County. The County owns lawnmowers and will no longer be outsourcing this service. Commissioner Hinkle moved to approve the monthly claims for the month of August 2024. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed unanimously.

The Commission will not be meeting next week with MACo's Annual Meeting.

**GRANITE COUNTY VICTIMS/ WITNESS ADVOCATE PENNIE PYLE REQUESTING A COUNTY CREDIT CARD FOR DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS;** The Commission discussed providing authority for the Victims / Witness Advocate, Pennie Pyle, to have a credit card for purchases that come up in the middle of the night when victims are in need. Attorney Bradshaw explained that he will look into doing a pre-paid credit card for \$250.00 to support operations or the Victims / Witness Advocate. Commissioner Hinkle moved to approve a pre-paid credit card for the Victims / Witness Advocate in the amount of \$250.00. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed unanimously.

Granite County Clerk & Recorder, Sarah Graham joined the Commission and explained that there is County Credit Card available with a \$500 limit that they could assign to Victims / Witness Advocate, which may be an easier process. Commissioner Hinkle amended his motion to assign the County Credit Card with a \$500 limit to the Victims / Witness Advocate. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and motion passed unanimously.

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano asking who just came into the Commissioner's Office. Commissioner McLure responded that it was Granite County Clerk & Recorder, Sarah Graham.

**POTENTIAL FIRE RESTRICTIONS IN GRANITE COUNTY;** The Commission reviewed the current fire restrictions in place (Stage I Restrictions with no campfires being allowed). Commissioner Hinkle stated he thinks it is fine for the Commission to remain at Stage I restrictions for the next two weeks and follow the USFS restrictions. Commissioner Hinkle moved to remain at Stage I Fire Restrictions with no campfires allowed. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. There were no public comments received and the motion passed unanimously.

**The public meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.**