

**April 29, 2025**

**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 Adler, Commissioner McLure, and Commissioner Kulaski. Also attending were Commissioners Assistant Maranda Williams and Granite County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw, who attended a portion of the agenda items in person. The session was live-streamed through the Zoom internet-based program available for the public to view the session and provide public 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 members of the general public, Elena Gagliano, and Eric Anderson.**

**Commissioner Adler requested that microphones and videos be enabled for Zoom attendees who wish to speak during the meeting.**

**BOARD MINUTES: Commissioner McLure moved to accept the board minutes for April 22, 2025. Commissioner Kulaski seconded the motion. No public comment was received, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

**Electronic mail was received from Jackie Bolster with the April and May 2025 Safety Trainings on Lighting Safety and Poison Prevention.**

**Electronic Mail was received from the Montana Department of Administration with the FFY 2024 Federal Forest Reserve Payment.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT: Commissioner Adler went to the Student Health Fair in Drummond and said it was a great turnout. There was a Student Health Fair in Philipsburg too. He thanked Jackie Bolster and Deb Robinson for putting this on and all the people who participated; it was a well-put-together event. Elena Gagliano made a public comment that she wouldn't be on video and will have to mute her. Commissioner Adler asked for her to be turned off as she won't put on her camera.**

**ROAD & BRIDGE WEEKLY REPORT & SOLID WASTE UPDATE WITH ROAD & BRIDGE SUPERINTENDENT PAUL ALT; Granite County Road & Bridge Superintendent Paul Alt joined the commission for this portion of the meeting to update on Roads and Solid Waste. Paul said most of the guys are at Lower Willow Creek putting pipe in ½ mile above where the pavement ends. Blading on Middle Fork Road. Hitting all the roads, and will have to go back and do them again as they are waiting on water and magnesium chloride, and will be the next project. Cold patching at Rock Creek and Georgetown. Constant at Georgetown until they run out of cold patch but trying to divvy it up and get the worst as they go on.**

**SOLID WASTE; Solid Waste sites are pretty quiet. The backhoe is still broken down at the Drummond site, but they are trying to get by right now. Commissioner Kulaski asked about the Kenworth snow plow truck and should be done this week. Blackfoot still hadn't sent a**

check but Paul talked to him this morning and said it's been over a year and the guy assured it should be here by next week even though he wasn't sure about the accounting policy. If they don't have a plan in 30 days they pay the county weed people to spray. Commissioner Kulaski ordered the equipment pre-trip check booklets.

**GRANITE COUNTY'S SAFETY AND TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES;** Paul Alt suggested they train on everything they are going to operate and make progress, rather than every piece of equipment. The reason the Commission came up with this is to get everyone trained on equipment. Commissioner Adler said they all need the opportunity to be trained, rather than not being capable. Commissioner McLure said you haven't trained anybody that just can't understand it. Paul Alt said he's trained a lot of people, and some just don't understand how to operate the equipment properly. Commissioner Kulaski said on the 90-day short term, if they get hired now, they aren't going to be trained on a snow plow. Commissioner Adler looked for a motion to accept this. Commissioner McLure said this specific training policy is for employees, and it's more for the Road Department and Solid Waste, but Solid Waste would just have the backhoe training. Compactors were brought up at Solid Waste as well. Commissioner Kulaski moved to accept and sign the safety and training policy. Commissioner McLure seconded. No public comment was received. The motion passed unanimously.

**GEORGETOWN LAKE OUTFLOW; DAM TENDER'S REPORT;** Brad Liermann, Alex Scolavino, and Peter Brown joined the commissioner via Zoom for this portion of the meeting. According to the USGS lake level gauge and the dam tender's report for the week, the lake level was reported at 6428.90 feet, 7.2 inches below full pool. Discussion was had about backing up to a lower CFS, as it's at 23 CFS. Commissioner Adler said it's dry and windy right now. Commissioner Kulaski moved to proceed to keep outflows consistent with the inflows, 20 CFS to match inflows which can be adjusted mid-week looking at lake levels, subject to agency approval, which aligns with the estimated inflows and the current FERC Order in place. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. No public comment was received. The motion passed unanimously.

**POSSIBLY ADJUSTING FLINT CREEK PROJECT'S DAM TENDER STEP ON COUNTY PAY MATRIX;** The Commissioners went into a closed session for this portion of the meeting.

**BIG SKY RAIL AUTHORITY;** This item was tabled for a future agenda as they are waiting on a model, proposed Resolution from the Big Sky Rail Authority.

**DELINQUENT PROPERTY TAXES WITHIN THE TOWN OF DRUMMOND;** Granite County Treasurer Ashley Todd, Drummond Mayor Gail Leeper, and Town of Drummond Clerk Robin Wight joined the County Commission to address concerns surrounding significant delinquent property taxes and the impact on local projects, particularly an \$8 million wastewater initiative. Mayor Leeper reported that property owners in Drummond alone owe \$75,000 in taxes and highlighted that overall county delinquencies have reached approximately \$600,000, with some properties being three or more years behind. There was a shared concern that this shortfall threatens the county's ability to fund necessary

infrastructure, and that the absence of enforcement might be encouraging property owners to delay payments in hopes of eventual forgiveness. Options discussed to address the issue included placing liens on delinquent properties or pursuing sheriff's sales. Commissioners, along with Drummond Town Mayor, Gail Leeper, Town Clerk, Robin Wight, and Granite County Treasurer, Ashley Todd, acknowledged the need for stronger enforcement measures and better public communication. One idea was to post lists of delinquent taxpayers on the county website and social media, for example, to increase visibility and pressure. It was also noted that the Montana Code Annotated requires public notices of tax delinquencies, but this has not been consistently followed in the past. A significant portion of the discussion focused on systemic issues contributing to delinquencies, such as problems with title transfers—especially for mobile homes—and unclear ownership records. These often result in new property owners being unaware of existing tax obligations. Ashley Todd, representing the Treasurer's Office, explained efforts underway to improve billing processes, ensure accurate records, and coordinate more closely with appraisers and mobile home trailer park owners. She is also working to collect taxes from delinquent years dating back as far as 2018. The Commission expressed a desire to work on this issue and keep the issue on future agendas, suggesting at least quarterly updates to track progress. They also explored whether municipalities could contribute more directly to enforcement, but noted that converting unpaid fees into taxes is a legally complicated process. Concerns were raised about repeat offenders and the perception that failing to pay taxes carries no real consequences. The group acknowledged that past practices have been inconsistent and that improved coordination between departments and adherence to legal requirements are essential. They agreed on the importance of sustained effort, transparency, and adapting to current challenges in order to recover the outstanding taxes and prevent future delinquencies.

**POSSIBLE CANCELLATION OF CERTAIN DELINQUENT (OLDER) PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES;** The Commission discussed how to handle a growing list of delinquent taxes on personal property taxes, including mobile homes. Commissioner McLure emphasized the need to clean up the tax ledger to reflect only what is realistically collectable. Auditor Don Davies recommends writing off uncollectible taxes, particularly for trailers that are no longer present, while still taxing occupied ones unless official documentation shows they've been removed. The process for canceling taxes requires a formal resolution by the Commission after receiving a formal letter and list from the Granite County Treasurer, which must be completed by June 1. There was concern about setting a precedent, how to verify property status, and ensuring accounting records reflect reality. Blaine Bradshaw reiterated that the Commission has the final say and must follow MCA guidelines, with Ashley Todd to follow up with Don Davies for further clarification. The Commission and County Attorney were not for a blanket cancellation of such older tax debt, but will look into this further.

**COURTHOUSE CUSTODIAN APPLICATIONS;** Interviews for the Custodian position will be on their next week's public meeting agenda.

**SURPLUS BID OPENING 2017 FORD EXPLORER SHERIFF'S VEHICLE;** A bid for \$787.87 was received from Joseph White, a local resident. Commissioner Kulaski moved to

accept the bid for the 2017 Ford Explorer from the Sheriff's Office. Commissioner McLure seconded. No public comment was received. The motion passed unanimously. A letter will be sent to Mr. White outlining the details of the purchase.

**NORTH FORK OF LOWER WILLOW CREEK ROAD ABANDONMENT;** Previously in this matter, a petition to abandon a portion of the North Fork of Lower Willow Creek Road having been submitted to the County, and a public hearing be held. The County Commission previously voted a public decision meeting to abandon a portion of the North Fork of Lower Willow Creek Road conditional upon a consensus of the irrigation district members of the Lower Willow Creek Irrigation District. The said portion of the said road to be abandoned are located in the SW ¼ of Section 1 and the NW ¼ of Section 12 of Township 9 North, Range 14 West, P.M.M. David Peitz and Tom Rue joined the Commissioners. Commissioner McLure moved to abandon the North Fork of the Lower Willow Creek, but said the new easement from David Peitz to the Lower Willow Creek Irrigation District needs to be put on record. Dave Peitz said he has it with him and is doing it today. Blaine Bradshaw suggested that it be conditional upon a current easement (or similar) from David Peitz (BD and LLC) to the Lower Willow Creek Irrigation District remaining permanently in place. Commissioner Kulaski said it's a slippery slope to abandon county roads, but if there is an easement to the irrigators in place now that resolves any concerns. No public comment was received. Motion passed with Commissioner Kulaski and Commissioner McLure agreeing 2 to 1, with Commissioner Adler dissenting.

**GRANITE PUBLIC SAFETY LLC TERMINATION OF BILLING SERVICES AND AMBULANCE SHED LEASER TERMINATION AS REQUESTED;** Commissioner McLure moved to accept Granite Public Safety LLC's request (Sarah Morris, owner) request to terminate the lease (ambulance shed bay lease in Philipsburg Ambulance shed) and billing services for the Philipsburg Ambulance. Commissioner Kulaski seconded. No public comment was received and the motion passed unanimously. Blaine Bradshaw, County Attorney, will send a letter to Granite Public Safety LLC informing them of this decision which they had previously requested.

Commissioner Adler adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.