

It was disheartening to read the latest report from Granite County's Representative John Fitzpatrick's "FROM THE CAPITOL CLOAKROOM" on Granite County's supposedly deteriorating infrastructure and fiscal incompetence. I have been with Granite County 32 plus years, first their Clerk and Recorder and now Commissioner District One. I have always been proud of the fact that we are fiscally responsible, and our infrastructure is not deteriorating. I would like to respond to these allegations from our representative.

These long-range planning grants (now part of HB6) have generally never required match (\$) funding. Great West Engineering applied for the grant on behalf of Granite County for the Flint Creek Dam improvements, and the application didn't include a match as we didn't know the requirement. Upon receiving the grant application without a match commitment, my understanding was Granite County's project was placed as the top priority in the State of Montana for the long-range planning grants. Granite County was never notified that it required a match, until we were dropped from the program. We then appealed to the Committee to please reconsider, and we could match \$30,000 to no avail.

The appropriated \$190,000 for the bridge (South Main Street) by Drummond was not needed and Granite County repaired it on engineering advice without State grant funding. The Town of Drummond applied for the bridge grant (not the County), but Granite County stepped in as a good neighbor and solved the problem in 2023. The State funds were appreciated but not needed.

Regarding the \$200,000 affordable housing grant, this was to be used for new home buyers to help supplement their down payment, not for commercial remodeling of buildings. Not only were there several public comments against this grant, 2 of the 3 Granite County Commissioners believed this to be a bureaucratic, socialist handout from the State with unreasonable strings attached to the borrower, so the County declined to participate in the program.

Regarding the federal funding of \$1.3 million (FLAP grant) for Lakeshore Drive. Please remember this is a Forest Service Road. The road in question was Lakeshore Drive, not Georgetown Lake Road as Mr. Fitzpatrick suggests. Initially the match was \$90,000 which Granite County met, then the federal funding entity increased the dollar match to \$400,000, we couldn't meet that, so we declined to participate. US Forest Ranger, Cameron Rasor, advised the County that funding will be possible again with a lesser dollar match, Granite County is waiting for a new round of grant funding; but please remember, Lakeshore Drive is a Forest Service Road, and we were negotiating our yearly contract with the Forest Service not attempting to get out of our obligations. Granite County has only been maintaining Lakeshore Drive in the past years to be a good neighbor as it is certainly not a County Road but is used significantly by Granite County Residents.

Blanche McLure
Granite County Commissioner
District 1