

**County of Granite
Study Commission
August 27th, 2025, 6 p.m.
Granite County Courthouse Foyer**

Agenda Items:

1. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance
 - a. Acknowledgement of visitors
2. Public comment on matters not on the agenda
3. Approval of minutes

Continued business:

4. Workshop questions with Philipsburg study commission questionnaire - Luke Ulatowski
 - a. Discuss logistics, cost of mass mailing
 - b. Discuss, potentially decide on joint meeting with Philipsburg study commission
5. Review Daniels County Study Commission procedures - Elena Gagliano
 - a. Discuss training, Dan Clark
6. Decide regular meeting location
 - a. Update on courthouse use
7. Decide preferred Zoom/livestream option and allocation within courthouse
8. Decide on advertising methods and allocations

New business:

9. Set agenda items, location, date and time for next meeting
10. Public comment on matters not on the agenda

Adjourn

**County of Granite
Study Commission
Philipsburg Public Library Meeting Room
August 7th, 2025, 6 p.m. Meeting Minutes**

Study commissioners present: Vice Chair Elena Gagliano, Secretary Luke Ulatowski

Ex officio present: Blanche McLure

Members of the public present: None

Absent: Chair Bryan Senn

CALL TO ORDER: In absence of Senn, Gagliano called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. with a role call of those present. Gagliano noted the meeting room did not contain a flag and opted to eschew the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comment on matters not on the agenda was received.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Gagliano stated Ulatowski's minutes for the July 24th meeting were hard to follow and that parts related to her own statements from that meeting did not reflect the words she used or the manner in which she speaks. She also stated she received the minutes late, noting Ulatowski had initially submitted them in a file type that she cannot open.

Gagliano noted she wanted the minutes to include the July 24th meeting's mention and discussion of Granite County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw refusing to represent the study commission. Discussion between Gagliano and McLure turned to Bradshaw before Ulatowski offered a point of order to return discussion to "Approval of minutes." Gagliano stated she did not approve the minutes, and she moved on to the next agenda item. No motion was made.

CONTINUED BUSINESS

DISCUSS, DECIDE ON MEETING LOCATION: Ulatowski noted that while library director Gina Vale would allow the study commission to use the library's meeting room, she would not allow it to use the library proper without an employee present. Gagliano spoke in favor of returning to the Granite County Courthouse for in-person meetings, using the Granite County Commission office instead of the courtroom. She also recommended hosting meetings on Zoom using courthouse wifi.

McLure offered to bring the proposition of using the commission office to the commission itself. She also recommended the election office as another option since it is on the main floor and contains tables and wifi service while remaining unoccupied until the next election.

Ulatowski agreed the election office would make a good secondary option and motioned to have McLure present the commission office as the study commission's meeting location at the following Granite County Commission meeting. McLure again noted the election office option, and Ulatowski amended his motion to state that if use of the commission office is not approved, the study commission shall use the election office as its official meeting location. McLure added that the justice court backroom on the bottom floor could also potentially be used.

The motion passed 2-0. After this, Gagliano stated "Thursday is out" as a regular meeting date because the courthouse can get packed on Thursdays with important court hearings. She proposed Wednesdays at 6 p.m. A motion on the matter was saved for the end of the meeting.

DISCUSS, DECIDE ON ZOOM/LIVESTREAMING OPTIONS, BUDGET ALLOCATION:

Ulatowski stated he spoke with clerk & recorder Sarah Graham on implementing Zoom for meetings out of the study commission budget, which would cost \$159.90 a year. Gagliano noted Zoom is already in use at the courthouse and recommended looking into using the county's Zoom account. Ulatowski noted accounts are charged "per host" and that if the Granite County Commission agreed, it would have to share its login information.

Gagliano brought Zoom's free, limited option to attention. Ulatowski argued the 40-minute time limit does not meet the study commission's needs. Gagliano argued that while it is a pain, the host can simply start up another meeting after the time limit is reached.

Gagliano turned attention to the study commission's budget, with expenditures included in the meeting materials. She asked if the \$12,000 budget is for the duration of the study commission's tenure or if it is for a year; Ulatowski explained it is the former unless the county commission opts to allocate more funding later.

Gagliano then noted she had submitted additions to the August 7th agenda written by Ulatowski that were not included. The additions were intended as hyperlinks on the digital agenda, allowing pre-meeting access to meeting materials for everyone. She offered an agenda from the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority as an example.

Ulatowski moved to have the study commission look into whether or not it could use the county's Zoom account or if the study commission could use a free option. Gagliano stated hyperlinking documents on agendas is important and asked what exactly Ulatowski's motion was for. Ulatowski requested the hyperlink topic have a separate motion and reiterated his own. Gagliano seconded Ulatowski's motion, and it passed 2-0, with no further motion offered.

PROPOSE STUDY COMMISSION SURVEY QUESTIONS: Gagliano stated the topic should be tabled along with its subtopic regarding the logistics and cost of a mass mailing. Ulatowski did not oppose. No motion was made.

DISCUSS COLUMN, ADVERTISING: Ulatowski stated Senn asked to write a monthly column, 500 words max, recapping study commission discussion and decisions for the Silver State

Post/Philipsburg Mail and was given permission by the newspaper's managing editor, Peggy Kerr, although Senn was unable or unwilling to write a column for the study commission's first month. Ulatowski also stated he would look into purchasing public notices for meetings while noting this is not usually done for regular meetings. Ulatowski suggested investing in physical media such as fliers and postings at the post office.

Gagliano approved the idea of a 500-word monthly column and stated each column could note the date of the next meeting. Ulatowski agreed this would make for an economical way of advertising and that it could have the study commission decide more meeting dates in advance. Gagliano further recommended having public notices announce three study commission meetings in advance. Gagliano and Ulatowski agreed to have Ulatowski report back on notices and advertising.

NEW BUSINESS

DANIELS COUNTY PROCEDURES DISCUSSION: Gagliano noted she had sent a number of links to Daniels County Study Commission materials to be hyperlinked on the agenda and that two printouts of agendas from that study commission, brought by Luke Ulatowski, were unnecessary. She pointed to topics discussed by that study commission as examples for Granite County's and recommended watching a video from MSU's Dan Clark included on the Daniels County Study Commission webpage.

Gagliano stated she had signed up for MSU's study commission training course and spoke to the Granite County Study Commission's general need for training. She noted the training session Clark provided for both study commissions in April did not have minutes or a recording posted. She recommended putting a link up for the discussion with Clark and that study commissioners should reach out to him with any questions, also offering to reach out to him herself with agreement on the message from other study commissioners.

EX OFFICIO DISCUSSION: McLure clarified she has no voting power and helps with logistics, offering county data and facilitating meeting spaces. Gagliano suggested an ex officio is typically a clerk & recorder or someone who knows how to work with Zoom and spread out agendas. McLure noted she spent 17 years as clerk & recorder. Gagliano stated that if the ex officio situation were "cleared," then the study commission would not have to go through Graham and then Granite commission assistant Maranda Williams.

NEXT MEETING: The meeting was set for 6 p.m., August 27th, at the courthouse.

**County of Granite
Study Commission
July 24th, 2025, 6 p.m. Meeting Minutes**

Study commissioners present: Luke Ulatowski, Elena Gagliano, Bryan Senn

Members of the public present: Jackie Butler

Absent: Ex officio Blanche McLure

CALL TO ORDER: Temporary board chair Ulatowski called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The three study commissioners, all newly-appointed, introduced themselves to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comment on matters not on the agenda was received.

BOARD OFFICER APPOINTMENTS: Ulatowski volunteered to take the position of secretary. Gagliano motioned to appoint Ulatowski secretary, and Senn seconded. The motion passed 2-0, with Ulatowski abstaining. Senn volunteered for the position of chair. Gagliano motioned to appoint Senn as chair, Ulatowski seconded, and the motion passed 3-0. Senn motioned to appoint Gagliano as vice chair, seconded by Ulatowski. Butler commented, asking if the new study commissioners have to undergo training or bring MSU Local Government Center Director Dan Clark to town for that purpose. Senn stated, "I sure hope so." The motion passed 2-0, with Gagliano abstaining.

BUDGET DISCUSSION: Ulatowski noted the study commission's starting budget was \$12,000, and the former study commissioners left behind a current budget of \$10,640. **Ulatowski noted Granite County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw had refused to represent the Granite County Study Commission and that Bradshaw had recommended the commission hire a minutes-writer.** The commission agreed not to hire a minutes-writer or legal counsel, with Ulatowski filling the former role and Clark and Powell County Attorney Ellen Donohue posited as providers of legal advice. Gagliano stated she would like to see McLure act as a liaison between the study commission and other boards and committees. Gagliano also recommended the study commission alternate between regular meetings and working meetings.

Gagliano derided missing minutes from the prior Granite study commissioners on the Granite County website and recommended the current study commissioners research Daniels County's procedures amidst its local government review. Butler commented, stating it is a possibility that the Granite study commission will join the Philipsburg study commission and noted Greg Overstreet, Philipsburg town attorney and Granite special deputy, could serve as a resource in law.

On the topic of training, Ulatowski asked Senn and Gagliano if they had been sent links to the free MSU online course for study commissioners that he had undertaken. Senn stated he had

never been sent a link or contacted by anyone from MSU on the matter. Gagliano stated clerk & recorder Sarah Graham tried to get Gagliano in touch with an individual from MSU to enter the course, but Gagliano never heard back from the individual after trying to contact her. Gagliano further criticized a perceived lack of a budget report for the study commission from the county.

Senn stated receiving training from Clark would be useful. Ulatowski asked if Senn could start with the online course before a decision on paying to bring Clark to town for a training session, and Senn stated the course would make a good start.

SURVEY DISCUSSION: The three survey questions designated by the prior study commissioners were analyzed alongside an email from former secretary Robin Wight outlining the former plan for collecting answers: visiting various organizations and giving their members handouts.

Ulatowski and Senn agreed there are too few questions and that the initial plan would not have reached enough residents. Senn recommended educational visits to organizations separate from collecting survey answers. Gagliano recommended an online survey, while Senn recommended a mailout for voters across the county. Ulatowski offered to speak with Graham on the logistics of a mass mailing.

LOCATION DISCUSSION: Ulatowski stated the Granite County Courtroom is not a good meeting space for the study commission over accessibility issues. Gagliano also noted the courtroom is occupied during some Thursday nights. The Philipsburg Public Library, Granite High School, the lobby of the Granite County Courthouse and Philipsburg Town Hall were posited as potential locations. Gagliano stated livestreaming capabilities were not a factor as she could stream from her tablet. The study commission opted to make a decision on the matter during the following meeting.

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY: Ulatowski requested streaming over Zoom to allow members of the public to comment online. Senn agreed to write a column recapping study commission meetings for the Philipsburg Mail.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting was set for August 7th at 6 p.m., location undetermined. Discussion on Daniels County procedures and the ex officio position were added under "New Business."

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Town of Philipsburg Government Review Commission Public Survey

The Town of Philipsburg Government Review Commission is seeking your input.

All Residents and those living around the Town of Philipsburg are welcome to respond.

Please only complete and return one survey.

1. Are you a full-time resident of the Town of Philipsburg? Y N
2. Is Philipsburg your "Primary" Residence Y N
3. Do you live here Year-Round? Y N
4. Are you a Registered voter? Y N
5. Do you own or Rent? Own Rent
6. Have you, or do you, attend Town Council Meetings? Y N
7. Have you ever served on the Town Council? Y N
8. Do you work in the Town of Philipsburg but do not live in City Limits? Y N
9. Is it appropriate to have Council members elected "At Large" (meaning they can live anywhere within the City Limits)? Y N
10. Should the Town of Philipsburg continue to have Non-partisan elections? Y N
11. Historically the Town Council has trouble filling all six Council Member seats: How many Town Council Members should there be? 2 3 4 5 6
12. Would reducing the size of the City government improve efficiency? Y N
13. Should the town of Philipsburg establish an independent citizen Compensation Review Committee to review Proposed Salaries and Pay Raises of Town employees? Y N
 - a. If Yes, how many members should be on the committee? 3 4 5
14. Should the Town of Philipsburg Un-Incorporate? Y N
15. Should the Town of Philipsburg consider merging Town and County Government? Y N

Town of Philipsburg Government Review Commission Public Survey

The Montana Constitution Allows a Municipality to have One of Six Forms of Government. The Following Questions pertain to each form of government. They are intended to help the Commission make a decision regarding what if any changes should be recommended. Please read through the questions before answering as each question pertains to one of the six forms of government.

16. **Commission-Executive:** Our current form of government. In this form, citizens directly elect a group of people to be the Commission (our Town Council) to make the laws. You also separately elect a Mayor to be the main person in charge of running the town's day-to-day business and making sure the laws are followed. You vote for both a separate group to make laws and a single person to be the executive leader.

Should the town of Philipsburg continue to have an elected mayor? Y N

17. **Commission-Manager:** Here, citizens elect a group of people to be the Commission (Town Council) to make the laws. Instead of directly electing a Mayor, the Commission hires a professional Manager/Administrator who has experience and skill in the day to day running of a town. This Manager is like a CEO who handles the daily operations and reports to the Commission. The Commission is still in charge of setting the overall policies. The citizens elect the lawmakers, and the lawmakers hire a professional to be the executive.

Would the town of Philipsburg benefit with a Manger or City Administrator? Y N

18. **Commission:** Granite County operates with this form. The Citizens elect a group of people to be the Commission (Town Council). The Council elects a Chairperson from amongst themselves to run meetings. The public does not get to vote on or select the Chairperson. There is no separately elected Mayor or hired Manager. The Commission works via majority vote to make and pass laws and run day-to-day affairs, including appointing department heads. The elected Commissioners share the responsibility of both making laws and running the town.

Should the Town of Philipsburg adopt a Commission form of government with the number of Commissioners to be determined? Y N

19. **Commission-Presiding Officer:** In this form, citizens elect a group of people (typically 5 to 7) to be the Commission (Town Council). After they are elected, the Commissioners choose one of themselves to be the "Presiding Officer" (who might also be called Mayor or President). This Presiding Officer acts as the main leader or chief executive of the town, like a Mayor, and can appoint department heads. However, they are still an elected Commissioner with the same voting power and are chosen by the other Commissioners not by citizens. In this system, citizens elect all the commissioners and then they pick one of themselves to be the main executive, typically for a period of one to two years.

Do you think this system would benefit the Town of Philipsburg? Y N

Town of Philipsburg Government Review Commission Public Survey

20. **Town Meeting:** This form is quite different. Instead of citizens electing a main group to make all the decisions, the power to make major decisions lies with the entire voting population. At least ten percent of the registered voters of the town gather at least once a year for a "Town Meeting" to make policies and decisions. At the meeting a "Town Presiding Officer" is selected who then manages day-to-day operations. There might also be a selected "Town Meeting Moderator" to run the meetings and the group elects someone to carry out those decisions.

A. Is it realistic to have a Public Meeting with greater than 10% of the registered voters present to make decisions regarding operation of the Town? Y N

b. Would the Town benefit from having only one person elected to be in charge of day-to-day operations? Y N

21. **General vs. Self Governing Powers:** The Town of Philipsburg Operates with General Governing Powers. An alternative is to operate with Self Governing Powers. By operating with General Governing Powers the Town can only do what State Law allows. Operating with Self Governing Powers allows the Town to make its own Policy, Laws and Rules as long as they do not go counter to what State or Federal Law prohibit. For example, with General Governing Powers a Town can not set up an electric utility company. With Self Governing powers it could, like Troy or Great Falls have. Or another example, the state does not have laws that regulate or deny strip joints in a town. With Self Governing powers, Philipsburg could do so.

General Governing means only doing what the state specifically allows. Self Governing means doing anything as long as no laws exist that expressly prohibit what is being considered (If no law forbids it, a Town can do it). 42 cities and towns have Self Governing power in Montana - for example: Anaconda-Deer Lodge, Butte-Silver Bow, Great Falls, Darby, Lewiston, Neihart, Polson, Shelby, Wolf Point to name but a few.

Should the Town of Philipsburg have Self Governing Powers? Yes No

22. Please Circle the Form of Government listed above that you think is best for the Town of Philipsburg.

Town of Philipsburg Government Review Commission Public Survey

On a scale of 1 to 5:

- Where 1 is poor or very disappointed,
- 3 is Average or Acceptable, and,
- 5 is very well or completely satisfied.
- N/A, Not Applicable to you or No Opinion.

Please answer the following questions:

22. How well does the Town of Philipsburg communicate with the citizens? _____

23. How well does the Town of Philipsburg meet your public service needs? _____

24. How well does the Town Council communicate with the citizens? _____

25. How satisfied are you with the Mayor? _____

26. How well does the Mayor communicate with the citizens? _____

27. Is the Town Council receptive to Public Comment and Discussion? _____

28. How Satisfied are you with the Public Works Department? _____

29. How satisfied are you with the quality of the roads in Philipsburg? _____

30. How satisfied are you with the sidewalks of Philipsburg? _____

31. How satisfied are you with how storm water runoff is handled? _____

32. How satisfied are you with your drinking water quality? _____

33. Do you feel your water bill is fair? _____

34. How well does your sewer system work? _____

35. How satisfied are you with the Public Parks? _____

36. How satisfied are you with the Library? _____

37. How satisfied are you with the Fire Department? _____

38. How satisfied are you with our Ambulance Service? _____

39. How satisfied are you with our Law Enforcement? _____