

**April 22, 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, David Eging, and Trish Schreiber.**

**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 15, 2025. Commissioner Kulaski seconded the motion. No public comment was received, and the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **CORRESPONDENCE;**

**Electronic mail was received from Ed Simonich, along with the meeting minutes from the Flint Creek Dam Advisory Committee meeting held last week for the Commissioners to review.**

**Electronic Mail was received from Elena Gagliano regarding the Zoom camera feature and asking why those attending the meeting in person are not on video/camera. Commissioner McLure said if you're on Zoom, to use your camera and mic to participate. When they comment, the Owl will move towards them if they are in person.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT: Kristin Kuiken, Western Montana Field Representative for U.S. Senator Steve Daines, delivered public comments on the Senator's behalf. She highlighted that this week is National Park Week, during which Senator Daines introduced a bipartisan resolution encouraging public visits to national parks, including free admission on April 19. She noted that Senator Daines supports President Trump's executive action to protect the Colstrip power plant and delay the implementation of the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) rule, which targeted substances not found at the commercial level. Kristin Kuiken also discussed the Telehealth Expansion Act, which enables high-deductible health plans to offer telehealth services at a lower rate, as if deductibles had already been met. She mentioned the Judicial Relief Clarification Act, which seeks to limit federal court orders to only the parties involved in a case, rather than applying injunctions nationwide. Senator Daines continues to support rural housing initiatives by increasing access to loans and grants for rural communities. He also supports the reauthorization of PILT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) through 2026 and is working to ensure Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding reaches smaller communities despite lower populations. Commissioner McLure noted that SRS**

funding was not received last year. Kristin Kuiken offered continued support, stating her door is always open to the County.

Trish Schreiber from Helmsville is a former special educator who works in Helena based on education policy. She is exploring the government, particularly at the county level, a little more, and just here to learn.

Public comment was received from Elena Gagliano, asking if it's only 9:07 a.m., and what agenda item they are on, and asked if they had talked about Zoom earlier from her correspondence. She wants an answer in writing to her correspondence (email from previous Tuesday). Commissioner McLure reiterated the correspondence, and they addressed her comments on Zoom as she was saying we don't have the public on Zoom and want this in writing. She didn't hear that we have addressed her correspondence and that the camera and mics are on. Blaine Bradshaw said you can attend Zoom but have to have your mic and camera on during public comment, not 24/7, and Commissioner McLure asked if we have to address this every single week because she refuses to put the camera on. Blaine Bradshaw said what you're doing is legal in requiring Zoom participants (giving public comment) to have their video feed on. At this point, Elena Gagliano continued to send emojis (such as the angry emoji on Zoom). Commissioner McLure asked about the distraction of emojis and if she could be removed from Zoom if it continues. Blaine Bradshaw said could give her a warning to start.

**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: cold patching and blading roads in between the storms. Waiting for culverts to get here, two sections of culvert piping, and one at Bear Gulch, caught up on installing culvert pipes unless something happens. Paul Alt brought a list of roads that were bladed in the past week. Commissioner Kulaski asked about the hauling gravel timeline. Once the spring rain is all gone, end of May start is projected at this time.

**SOLID WASTE:** The backhoe at the Drummond Solid Waste site is old and worn out (getting wiring harness repairs currently), and while it will eventually need to be replaced, and it is hard to find a reasonably priced used one because they sell quickly. The hope is that it will be repaired this week, though the wiring harness repair work is meticulous and time-consuming. There was another meeting with Kenworth regarding the wrecked plow truck, which is still awaiting parts and paint; ideally, it will be completed this week. Welding work on the front end will follow on the plow truck, and the necessary work regarding the plow can be completed. The demo for the milling machine is tentatively scheduled for mid-May. If there's no response by then, Paul Alt will reach out. Some subdivisions have been calling about possible work, but they must contact this office directly first. There was also discussion about the Skalkaho Road possibly being turned to gravel farther down, near Moose Lake Road. The Blackfoot payment has not yet been received. Paul noted that a letter should be sent if it's still not in by next Tuesday. Blaine Bradshaw reported a call from local landowners out of Drummond regarding a damaged pipe caused by Blackfoot subcontractors who never

addressed the issue, and he will refer them to the right people. Commissioner Adler mentioned that most of the calls he has received lately have been related to Blackfoot work in the state right-of-way, not under County jurisdiction. The South Main Street Bridge in Drummond was brought up, with a suggestion to install signage such as “closed to through traffic except one lane bridge ahead” for local traffic when repairs are being made. Electronic signage was considered, but it would be more expensive. There have also been several concerns about the Gold Coin Bridge, especially as a house is being built nearby and loaded concrete trucks are using the bridge. There’s concern about increased housing and traffic in the area without an alternative route. Paul suggested that engineers should assess the situation and place a weight limit on the bridge as soon as possible. Finally, there was a discussion about ordering 100 equipment safety check booklets to be placed in all equipment.

**GEORGETOWN LAKE OUTFLOW; DAM TENDER’S REPORT;** According to the USGS lake level gauge and the dam tender’s report for the week, the lake level was reported at 6428.93 feet, 6.84 inches below full pool with 21 CFS currently being released. Commissioner Kulaski moved to proceed to keep outflows consistent with the inflows, subject to agency approval, which aligns with the estimated inflows and the current temporary modification consent agreement in place. Commissions agreed that Paul Tallon should be notified to let the Commissioner know before he adjusts the gauge. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. Brad Liermann joined the commissioners via Zoom and agreed with their motion. No public comment was received. The motion passed unanimously.

**COUNTY CLAIMS;** The Commissioners reviewed monthly County Claims. CPR class claim was discussed and what fund it should come out of. Also, the pre-trip check books and what fund those should come from. Safety or Road funds were discussed, Commissioner Kulaski said it seems county-wide when putting them in road, solid waste, and the county car. Sheriff rigs were brought up, but they take care of their trip checks. Commissioner McLure moved to accept the March 2025 Claims. Commissioner Kulaski seconded the motion. No public comment was received. The motion passed unanimously.

**RDG PLANNING GRANT DRAFT APPLICATION WITH GREATWEST;** Senior Funding Specialist of GreatWest, Craig Erickson, joined the Commissioners for this portion of the meeting via Zoom. Craig Erickson asked who the point of contact should be for the Grant, and they agreed it should be Commissioner's Assistant Maranda Williams. Commissioner Adler is the authorized representative, and Maranda Williams will be the point of contact to delegate. The application is due Friday. The initial draft will be done today, and he will have Jeremiah Theys review it today or tomorrow. Then the County can make any needed changes on our end, and once the County is satisfied, the application can then be submitted to see what happens. Commissioner Adler said it looks good. Commissioner McLure moved to have the RDG Planning Grant Application and financial authorization approved and signed. Commissioner Kulaski seconded. Public comment was received from Frank Prince asking what the funds are going to be used for from the Grant. The Commission said the funds are for the Flint Creek Dam’s upcoming Part12D Inspection (Comprehensive Assessment). Commissioner Adler asked about the Gold Coin Bridge

weight limit, and Craig Erickson said he would send an email to Jeremiah Theys to get that looked at by engineers and get back to the County.

**PHILIPSBURG AMBULANCE UPDATE;** Sarah Morris and Jason Villa joined the Commission to discuss ongoing issues with the Philipsburg Volunteer Ambulance service. Robert Littlejohn, president of the Philipsburg Ambulance Association intended via Zoom as he is at a law enforcement academy to become a USFS law enforcement officer. Sarah Morris explained why revenues were not coming in is that the service hasn't submitted any Patient Care Reports (PCRs) since early 2024. When they did submit five, four were Medicare-related, but they were given the wrong insurance information for one patient while with other patients had exhausted the allotted funds under Medicare. There are serious concerns about compliance with Philipsburg Ambulance, as billing under the Drummond EIN for Philipsburg Ambulance is not only incorrect but potentially a felony. The county's structure doesn't support using a single EIN for multiple services. Philipsburg Ambulance has been losing significant amounts of money. Sarah Morris and Jason Villa expressed frustration, stating they want to step away from handling billing for Philipsburg Ambulance Association and no longer wish to volunteer with Philipsburg Ambulance Association. The situation has really deteriorated since Robert Littlejohn left, with leadership lacking (interim leaders not acting) and no meaningful operational improvements. Equipment shortages recently forced the Philipsburg Ambulance out of service for four days. Frank Prince from Drummond Ambulance Association noted that a separate Medicare number is required to be renewed every two years. PCRs must be submitted within 24 hours to maintain compliance—something Philipsburg has never consistently done. Sarah Morris and Jason Villa highlighted the financial and emotional toll, mentioning how they've lost money and faced hostility from Philipsburg, even during a search and rescue call. They're exhausted from trying to help while receiving no support or reimbursement, especially from Philipsburg, unlike Drummond. The volunteer system has also struggled with drug inventory compliance, and managing the DEA requirements has become burdensome. Jason Villa proposed hiring someone for \$75,000 to manage operations, emphasizing that Philipsburg's low call volume and primarily Medicare patients don't justify the current billing system. Frank Prince stressed that while it's a volunteer service, it is not free, and expenses must be accounted for. Commissioner McLure questioned the purpose of continuing if there's no compensation, while Blaine Bradshaw pointed to leadership as the root of the issue. Robert Littlejohn, expected back within the month, committed to taking responsibility and outlined his plans to restore order, including administrative changes and improved training. Three new EMTs have completed training but are not yet ready to run calls independently. Commissioner Adler expressed support for moving forward with restructuring, and Blaine Bradshaw recommended monthly meetings between the Commission and Philipsburg Ambulance to ensure coordination. Frank Prince praised Drummond's success since their collaboration began, showing it as a model for improvement. The meeting concluded with a plan to add termination of billing service and ambulance shed (bay) lease termination to next week's agenda as these agreements are in place between the County and Granite County Public Safety LLC (Sarah Morris and Jason Villa's company).

**MACO HEALTH INSURANCE AND INFORMATION ASSISTANCE FOR COUNTY EMPLOYEES;** Commissioner Adler initiated the discussion to better understand the insurance options available and how employees should sign up. He suggested bringing someone back to help in person, and MACo responded that if more assistance is needed, they could come back between mid to late May. Employees have until June 15th to complete their enrollment. Commissioner Adler mentioned that a letter from the Clerk and Recorder's office says it is due by May 15th. He also asked about option of staying on the same high deductible plan from previous year, but it was clarified that employees must choose a new plan, as only 2 employees were on that one, but got rid of that plan as an option as there was a better plan decided upon. Commissioner Adler brought up issues with Allegiance (service of claims' provider for MACo Healthcare Trust), noting that some employees don't understand the process and haven't received return calls. Blaine acknowledged there have been customer service issues but believes they are being resolved. Joanne said if there are unresolved issues, employees should call, and she has a report showing who has been followed up with and when. Commissioner McLure emphasized that the information has been well-advertised to employees, and it's their responsibility to reach out if they have questions. She asked how many people showed up in person and stressed that supervisors should tell their staff to attend. Pam and Joanne said they would follow up with departments like the sheriff's office and the road crew to ensure over 90% participation when signing up for those who can't always come in person. Joanne noted that 17 people attended the in-person session with MACo earlier this month. Commissioner Adler expressed frustration, feeling like he was being blamed, but Commissioner McLure reassured him that wasn't the case and said these decisions are personal and don't need to be on the agenda. Joanne and Pam reiterated that they are happy to help, either over the phone or in person, and they encouraged employees to complete their enrollment by the end of May. While people technically have until June 15th, they explained that earlier enrollment helps with payroll processing. Pam and Joanne offered to call Commissioner Adler directly. Commissioner Kulaski suggested sending out a reminder to enroll by May 15th, and Blaine asked Maranda to send another notice to all employees, encouraging them to call MACo for health insurance assistance.

**DONOVAN JONES AIRPORT HANGAR LEASE – MICHAEL FOLEY'S AIRPORT LEASE RESCISSION;** Commissioner Kulaski moved to accept the rescission of the lease with Michael Foley and enter into the lease with Donovan Jones which was previously approved by the Commission but the Commission was waiting for Michael Foley's letter. Blaine Bradshaw said this is the hangar and lot that the county owns and leases the hangar and lot. No public comment was received and the motion passed unanimously.

**Commissioner Adler adjourned the meeting at 10:51 a.m.**