

COUNTY OF GRANITE
Study Commission
January 16, 2025 - 5:00 PM
Granite County Courthouse, 220 North Sansome Street, Philipsburg, MT 59858
Meeting 01/16/2025; not on Zoom.

Call to Order and Roll Call

Roll Call was taken, and the following all responded present: Gail Leeper, Robin Wight, and Gary Snyder. The following members were absent: None
Others present: Blanche McLure, Granite County Ex Officio.

Public in Attendance: Luke Ulatowski, representing the Philipsburg Mail; Dan Reddish, Philipsburg Mayor.

Public Comment: None

Amend Agenda

Chair Gail Leeper stated, she will be going out of order of the agenda placing the Bylaws later within the meeting agenda.

Minutes

- A. Tuesday, December 23, 2024 Study Commission Meeting Minutes. 1
Correction noted on Granite County Timeline; reflecting Adoption of Final Report to be End of June 2026, providing the County Clerk and Recorder a ballot certificate if a proposal is to be placed on the November 3, 2026, ballot.

Chair Leeper asked for a motion to approve the December 23, 2024 meeting minutes. Robin Wight made a motion to approve the December 23, 2024 Study Commission Meeting Minutes. Gary Snyder seconded the motion; all yeas, none opposed.

Items of Business

A. Regular Items

1) Study Commission Documents and Contact Information

Presentation: None

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Gail Leeper led the Study Commission discussion informing the commission, she had been in contact with Clerk and Recorder Sarah Graham. Granite County has added the Local Government Review Board to the Granite County website. Study Commission documents will be uploaded to this site for public access.

Gary Snyder mentioned, he is in the process of developing a website as well, which will be discussed under new business.

The main contact email address for the Study Commissioners is studycommission@co.granite.mt.us the public may utilize this email address to communicate with the study commissioners. Emails received to this email address will be forwarded to the study commissioners.

It has been requested, agenda items for the upcoming study commission agendas; be received by noon, the Thursday prior to each scheduled meeting. All agenda items should be sent, attention Miranda, Commissioners Assistant.

2) Town of Philipsburg Local Government Review Study Commission

Presentation: Chair Gail Leeper updated the commission for the record; Marty Ludemann and Chris Cooney, two of the Philipsburg Study Commissioners came by prior to the January 16, 2025 Granite County Study Commission meeting to introduce themselves.

Public Comment: None

3) Claim Sheets

Presentation: Claim Sheet documents provided to the Study Commissioners for reimbursement costs.

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Gail Leeper presented the claim sheets for the Study Commissioners, it is requested claim sheets be turned in to Granite County Clerk and Recorder; by the 10th of each month, for re-imbursement to be paid the month turned in.

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4) Bylaws

Presentation: Bylaw Templates distribute to Study Commission.

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Chair Gail Leeper presented the Bylaw Template to the Study Commissioners; after which, the commission worked together through the template customizing for usage with the Granite County Study Commissions Local Government Review.

Special attention to the following sections:

- Study Commission will meet on every 3rd Thursday of the month, with public posting not later than 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- Public Posting Locations: all Granite County designated posting locations, including Courthouse; website, Philipsburg Post Office and Huffman's Grocery. The Commission will verify with the current Resolution pertaining to remainder of the Granite County designated posting locations.
- Town of Drummond posting locations, including website and social media platforms; Drummond Town Hall, Drummond Post Office and Fic's Convenience Store.

- The Commission will reach out the Hall Post Office for physical posting and Town of Philipsburg regarding placement on website.
- Agenda Item to be received by noon the Thursday immediately preceding the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Chair Leeper asked for a motion to approve the Granite County Study Commission Bylaws. Gary Snyder made a motion to approve the Granite County Study Commission Bylaws. Robin Wight seconded the motion; all yeas, none opposed.

B. Old Business

1) Philipsburg Mail Agenda Notices

Presentation: None

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Gary Snyder informed the Study Commissioners; he reached out to Jesse Mullen with the Philipsburg Mail. However, there has been no response. Study Commissioner Snyder was hopeful in arranging a discounted fee, for posting Study Commissioner Agendas in the paper; as the funds appropriated for the Local Government Review are limited.

Chair Gail Leeper, asked Luke Ulatowski his thoughts as to proper contact person. Mr. Ulatowski suggested, reaching out to Julie List in the Sales Department of the paper.

2) Study Commissioner Snyder – Independent Website

Presentation: None

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Gary Snyder informed the Study Commission Board, he contacted MSU regarding establishing a website for the Granite County Local Government Review; verifying this would not be in conflict with procedures or laws.

This website will be created utilizing WordPress; maintained and overseen by Study Commissioner Snyder.

Ex Officio McLure was concerned as to if Study Commissioner Snyder could create a website representing the County. Chair Leeper indicated he can create a website, as long as the name has not been taken.

There was concern presented, of the website creating conflict of a quorum; by Study Commissioners Leeper and Wight. Due to the possible conflict Study Commissioners Gail Leeper and Robin Wight will not be involved with this additional website.

It was also requested by both Gail Leeper and Robin Wight to specifically state on the website: Website presents Gary Snyder's independent opinion and does not reflect the opinion of the board.

Study Commissioner Snyder stated, once the website is up; he would extend an email invitation to the website, leaving it to the individual should they chose to be part or not.

The Study Commission Board will utilize the Granite County Website; in addition, Study Commissioner Snyder will be uploading information to his independent website.

3) Alternate Meeting Location

Presentation: None

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Chair Gail Leeper informed the Study Commission Board, there may be the need to find an alternate meeting location site; the third Thursday on the month is the set court date. If there is a trial, the Study Commission Board would need to utilize an alternate location.

Suggested alternate locations Philipsburg Library, Museum or Philipsburg Town Hall. Due to possible interference with the normal operating business; Philipsburg Town Hall would present the best alternative. Chair Leeper will reach out to Mayor Reddish establishing if this would be an option.

The Court docket is completed in advance; this would be utilized in knowing prior to the Study Commissioner Board Meetings if needed relocation is necessary.

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4) Communication Amongst Study Commissioners

Presentation: None

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Study Commissioner Snyder expressed concern regarding the ability to have basic communication with the board, between publicly scheduled meetings. That unless an item is being voted upon, that does not constitute a quorum.

Chair Leeper expressed she defaults to the book on this issue.

Study Commissioner Snyder placed request, to receive draft minutes timely enough to properly review them. Secretary Wight stated, she would provide them in two weeks of the meeting.

C. New Business

1) Property Taxes

Presentation: None

Public Comment: None

Discussion: Concern regarding property taxes was presented by Study Commissioner Snyder. In reviewing Montana Law, State Constitution, US Constitution, MSU Course Material and State Statutes; he feels it is within the Study Commissioners jurisdiction

to acknowledge the property tax process. Adding, the Charter Form of Government would allow for this.

Further discussion between Study Commissioner Snyder and Ex Officio McLure, reviewed how Montana State Mill Levy is calculated, with Certified Values received from the Department of Revenue to every County. Those provided numbers are placed within a calculation formula which indicates the values worth.

Continued discussion led to prior appeals and four areas Counties must address for an appeal.

Chair Leeper interjected reminding the board of the MSU Red Light/Green Light guide document regarding conducting the Local Government Review. The purpose of the Study Commission is to investigate the current form; and engage the people. The MSU classes specifically instructed taxes were not part of the Local Government Review process.

Study Commissioner Snyder referred to the US Constitution, which inclines him that this review process can indeed evaluate property taxes.

Study Commissioner Wight; interjected her concern that Study Commissioner Snyder has already determined a projected outcome of the Local Government Review process, prior to studying the existing form of Government and speaking with the Public.

To which Study Commissioner Synder informed the board, he has spoken with 25 people whose concerns were taxes, and he has already studied the current form of Government.

Discussions continued; resulting in Study Commissioner Wight requesting Study Commissioner Synder, expand topics with those he speaks to regarding the Local Government Review to go far beyond taxes.

The Board expanded, what entities will be interviewed as part of the research of the government entity and the importance of community involvement.

2) Historic Granite County Local Government Review Results

YEAR	COUNTY	EXISTING FORM	PROPOSED FORM	FINAL FORM
1976	Granite	ECOF, 634	COM (A), 615	ECOF
1986	Granite	ECOF	No Review	ECOF
1996	Granite	ECOF	No Proposal	ECOF
2006	Granite	ECOF	No Review	ECOF
2016	Granite	ECOF	No Proposal	ECOF

*ECOF – ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS FORM = DEFAULT FORM

Public Comment: None

Member Communications/Proposals for next Agenda


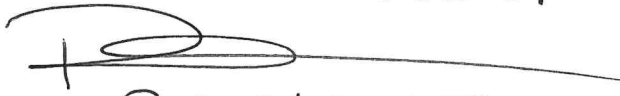
1. Public Communication
2. Government Entity Communication
3. Study Commission Communication

Agenda Items requested to be to Granite County Point of Contact, Miranda, by February 13th in preparation for the February Meeting Agenda.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 5:00 PM; Granite County Courthouse, 220 N. Sansome, Philipsburg, MT 59858.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the study commission, Gary Snyder moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:11p.m. Robin Wight seconded the motion; all yeas, none opposed.


Gail Leeper

Robin Wight