

BOARD OF MADISON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
June 30, 2020, Meeting Minutes

On Tuesday, June 30, 2020, a meeting of the Board of Madison County Commissioners came to order at 9:30 a.m. in the Second Floor Court Room of the Administrative Office Building in Virginia City, Montana, with Commissioners Dan Allhands, Chairman, Ron Nye, and Jim Hart present. Laurie Buyan, Executive Assistant to the Board of Commissioners, was present to take minutes.

Those people in attendance at the meeting were Joe Brummell, Melissa Brummell, Bonnie O'Neill, Bob Bates, Shelly Burke, Brett Schriock, Jani Flinn, Tammy Mahlstedt, and several who participated via Webex. Ryan Wolter, IT Support Specialist, was present to administer the public connection to the meeting via Webex.

Approval of Minutes: Approval of minutes was continued was continued to July 2, 2020, at 2:30 p.m.

COVID-19 Update: Joe Brummell, DES, and Melissa Brummell, Public Health Director, met with the Board to give an update on the COVID-19 pandemic. Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, and Vicki Tilstra, Finance Officer, were present for this portion of the meeting. Joe reviewed the most current COVID-19 statistics for Madison County, the state, the nation, and worldwide. He stated that today is 117 days into the pandemic adding that fortunately the only change in Madison County is that 384 negative tests have been conducted, 40 of which have been in the last week. There have been no new cases in the county. The state is not doing so well, with 919 positive, up 185 from last week, and up 56 from yesterday. There are 13 active hospitalizations 23 fatalities, 609 recoveries, with a total of 88,743 tests conducted. Joe reviewed statistics for the United States which is at 2.64 million confirmed, 128,000 fatalities, and 811,000 recovered; worldwide there are 10.3 million confirmed cases, 506,000 fatalities, and 5.24 million recovered. He also reviewed a spreadsheet showing cases per 100,000 in several Montana counties. He discussed active clusters, seasonal construction workers, weddings, and other social gatherings. He stated that Governor Bullock announced availability of 1 million in coronavirus relief funds for the Montana Agriculture Adaptability Program and discussed the details of this program. He noted that Missoula hospitals will start a no visitor policy on July 1, 2020, and discussed other states that are implementing mandatory mask wearing, considering reverting back to Phase 1, and implementing testing for school employees and students this fall. He reviewed activities of the Incident Command Team, upcoming meetings, supply and PPE opportunities. Melissa discussed surveillance testing, stating that she will talk with the State DES and National Guard about testing locally and noted that Big Sky is testing tomorrow from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and that only people without symptoms will be tested. Joe also discussed weather and a fire at Lump Gulch that is almost completely contained.

Assistant to Department Head Wage Percentage: Vicki Tilstra, Finance Officer, requested that this topic be put back on the agenda with the salary resolution.

Claims: The Board approved claims.

Museum Water Intrusion: Bob Bates, Safety Coordinator, met with the Board to discuss the water issue at the museum. He stated that he talked to Jack Albrecht, Library Director, who asked if they were going to do any air sampling at the museum. The museum will be manned in the next couple weeks and Jack would like testing done before then. The Board agreed this would be a good idea. Bob will check with Buffalo Restorations to see if someone can come out this week or next for testing. He stated that he did get the final results for the courthouse and has emailed it to the Board. There was discussion about sealing the old coal room or putting a dehumidifier in it.

G200 Disinfectant Product: Bob Bates, Safety Coordinator, met with the Board to discuss a new product that is used to disinfect the inside of vehicles. He stated that this is the product that is being used to sanitize the Senior Citizen's bus, and that he would like to use it for road crew vehicles and solid waste

vehicles. He stated it is a sanitizer and disinfectant and that it is approved for COVID-19. He discussed how it is used and noted some minor health issues such as eye and skin irritation. It can be used in a spray bottle, dries clear, and doesn't hurt windows. It also comes as a wipe for high-use areas, such as doors, steering wheels, seats, etc. He noted that it is about \$100 per gallon but that only a minimal amount is needed. Bob will talk to Margie Edsall, Weed Coordinator, and the Sheriff's Department.

Madison Valley Rural Fire District Board Resignation: Following review and with appreciation for time served, Jim Hart moved to accept the resignation of Albert Hendricks from the Madison Valley Rural Fire District and to advertise for the vacancy. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Western Montana Mental Health Center Contract Renewal: Pam Birkland, Superintendent of Schools, met with the Board via telephone on behalf of the Madison County Mental Health Local Advisory Council, to discuss contracts for mental health services. Pam discussed the agreements stating the Western Montana Mental Health now has more locations than before which has expanded the opportunities for beds and services. She also noted that the contracts have not changed from last year, although they may have to raise the administrative fees in the year or two. She stated she is getting reports for each quarter and that Madison County numbers are up but that might be a result of new data tracking operations. Following review, Jim Hart moved to accept the Memorandum of Agreement between Western Montana Mental Health Center and Madison County to provide short-term secure emergency detention services for persons experiencing a mental health crisis at the rate of \$536.60 per day. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. Ron Nye moved to approve the Professional Services Agreement between Western Montana Mental Health Center and Madison County for the provision of specific mental health services to residents of Madison County for the amount of \$8,190 for Fiscal Year 2021. Jim Hart seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Madison Meadows Golf Course – Request for Refund: The Board discussed a request from Madison Meadows Golf Course for a refund of taxes paid in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. Jim Hart stated that after the Golf Course received a refund for 2019 taxes, they decided to ask for the additional years also. He added that he had told them that the remaining taxes were minimal and that the County can go back up to five years for refunds. Jim called Shelly Burke, Treasurer, and asked her to attend the meeting. When Shelly arrived Jim explained the request. Ron Nye asked if it is a lot of work on her part when a refund like this is given. Shelly explained the process stating that it comes out of each budget for each year and that everything you touch is tracked. She added that it would create journal vouchers. Following much discussion, Ron Nye moved to deny the request for reimbursement of taxes paid by the Madison Meadows Golf Association for the years 2018, 2017, 2016, and 2015. Jim Hart seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

County Phone System Update: Brett Schriock, IT Director, met with the Board about a new County phone system. Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, was present for this portion of the meeting. Brett stated that he was asked to check with DIS, which he did, and they are interested in bidding, but it is the same phone system that we currently have not an upgrade. He added that another issue is porting the numbers, if we leave 3 Rivers we would all get brand new numbers. There was much discussion about the difficulty that would be caused in getting new numbers and the possibility of getting 3 Rivers to give the County a discount. After much discussion, the Board agreed to stick with 3 Rivers for now and see if the County can get a discount from 3 Rivers. Brett will check on replacement phones for Madison Valley Manor and will check on issues with the conference phones.

Open Bids for Roof Repairs: Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, met with the Board to discuss bids for roof repairs at the Tobacco Root Mountains Care Center. She stated that they received no bids and will re-advertise for another three weeks. She will expand the advertisement to Butte, Bozeman, and Dillon papers.

Jani Flinn, Grant Administrator, met with the Board to discuss the following topics.

- **Ennis Big Sky Airport – Northwest Energy Agreement:** Jani stated that this agreement is not ready yet and requested that it be put back on the agenda.

- **Varney Bridge Contract Amendment:** Jani stated that this topic was not listed on the agenda but that TSEP has declined closing the grant because they are waiting on funds from the Montana Department of Transportation. A Docusign agreement will be sent later in the day. She asked permission to execute the agreement, noting that today is the deadline for the extension. Following discussion, Jim Hart moved to approve authorization for the extension of the Varney Bridge, Montana Department of Commerce, Treasure State Endowment Program Contract Amendment #MT-TSEp-CG-17-865B with the Montana Department of Transportation for execution by the County Attorney and the Commission Chair. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Tammy Mahlstedt, Human Resource Generalist, met with the Board to discuss the following topics. Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, was present for this portion of the meeting.

- **Revised Building Maintenance Supervisor Job Description:** Tammy reviewed a revised job description for the Building Maintenance Supervisor, noting that Tony Forsythe, Maintenance Supervisor, has reviewed the comments in red. Following discussion, Ron Nye moved to approve the revised Building Maintenance Supervisor job description as provided. Jim Hart seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.
- **Recommendation to Hire Senior Shuttle Bus Driver:** Tammy read a recommendation to hire a part-time Senior Shuttle Driver. Based on the recommendation of the hiring committee, Jim Hart moved to approve hiring Allen Lingenfelter as the permanent, part-time hourly Shuttle Driver, working 30 hours per week at \$13.31 per hour. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. There was discussion about how many hours this position was needed and that the public is using restrooms at both the Courthouse and the Administrative Office Building.
- **Whitehall Transportation Transit Service Agreement:** Bonnie presented and reviewed an email from Whitehall Transportation regarding an agreement for transportation services in Madison County, noting that the Senior Citizen's Advisory Board did not recommend moving forward with the agreement. Based on the recommendation of the Countywide Senior Citizens' Advisory Board, Ron Nye moved not to move forward with the Whitehall Transit Service Agreement. Jim Hart seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Upcoming Fire Season: Don Copple and Tim Eagan, DNRC, and Joe Brummell, DES, met with the Board via Webex to discuss the upcoming fire season. Cindy Purdue-Dolan, Senator Daines Field Representative, participated in the meeting via Webex. Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, was present for this portion of the meeting. Don introduced himself as the Fire Management Officer at DNRC and introduced Tim Eagan, his supervisor. He mentioned the rain, adding it will be interesting to see what happens when it dries out. He discussed fire training and stated that they have tried training on line and have had a good attendance in Madison County, but will have to figure out how to do social distancing once fires start. He stated they have three engines and six fire fighters in their area and if one person gets it, it would shut them down. Twin Bridges would be their back-up in Madison County if anything happens. He added that they would also be a back-up for local fire departments in a worst case scenario. The current direction is to get fires out as quickly as possible and try to social distance while still doing their jobs. He discussed super scoopers from Helena that can be used for fire suppression and will contact managers for Ennis Lake and Ruby Reservoir in advance to get permission to use the water if necessary. He added they are working with Federal partners but trying to keep things close and local to prevent the spread of COVID. There was further discussion about funding, assistance/mutual aid for local fires, working with the local DES, long term predictions for draught, and receipt of PILT funds.

Calendars: The Board reviewed calendars.

This portion of the meeting concluded at 11:53 a.m.

The Board reconvened at 7:00 p.m. in the Public Meeting Room of the Administrative Office Building, with Commissioners Jim Hart and Ron Nye present. Commissioner Dan Allhands participated online. Jane Bacon, Commissioners' Clerk, was present to take minutes.

Ambulance Financial Meeting: Those people listed on the attached sign-in sheet were present for this portion of the meeting, and several others participated online and/or by phone. Joe Brummell, Director of Emergency Management, was present to administer the public /online link to the meeting via GoToMeeting.

Chairman Dan Allhands opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and tuning in, and said this is an informational meeting about what the County is going to try to do with its ambulances, as well as a financial discussion, and there will probably be several more meetings like this to come.

Alan Rohrback, Madison Valley Medical Center CEO, said tonight's discussion is about both the Ruby Valley and the Madison Valley. He said that Ruby Valley Medical Center (RVMC) started a hospital ambulance service within the last two years, which he described as a hybrid model with paid EMTs/paramedics and people on call. The Madison Valley has a volunteer, basic life support ambulance service with ALS capability and receives funding from the town of Ennis. Discussions have been ongoing about County ambulance services, whether there should be one service covering the entire county or separated by hospital districts or ambulance districts, and what the Madison Valley side might look like if it were to transition into a funded, fully advanced life support (ALS) service. MVMC and the Town of Ennis hired a consulting company who did an assessment, presented findings, and then convened stakeholders to determine common goals, one of which is a funded ALS service in the Madison Valley. On June 9, 2020, people from both Ruby Valley and Madison Valley hospitals met with the Commissioners regarding financial aspects of the RVMC ambulance service, it being apparent that RVMC will lose about \$250,000 per year on this service, and to show the Commissioners that it would be difficult for any single entity to start a hybrid ambulance service without funding, particularly based on a volume of approximately 200-250 runs per year. In rural areas similar to Madison County, Alan has observed 3-4 types of ambulance services: volunteer; hospital-based; fire/ambulance districts; or special ambulance districts. He said this follow-up meeting is to discuss funding in general, the benefits and disadvantages of each type of service, and in this and future meetings to arrive at a consensus about what the overall structure and direction should be.

Discussion included various opinions and ideas for consideration:

- The hospital-based, RVMC service works well, in spite of funding and manpower issues, which seem to be common problems.
- The Ennis ambulance service has good volunteers, some get trained and move on but more volunteers get added every year, and they maintain a good bank account – why does it need to change?
- Ennis Commissioner perspective: the ambulance service has fallen under the umbrella of the Town of Ennis, who obtained a legal opinion that the ambulance is owned by the town, but the Town doesn't have the administrative expertise to run it. Ennis taxpayers have subsidized the service for three years at \$20-30,000 per year, which is why there is a need to change. The ambulance serves more than just the town of Ennis, so it shouldn't be up to Ennis taxpayers and the volunteers to keep it going – all the people who benefit should be helping to pay for the service.
- The Ennis ambulance service doesn't necessarily need to change unless it's the right thing to do – this discussion is about what's best for the entire County.
- Coordination between Ruby Valley and Madison Valley ambulance services is important and close collaboration will continue to be very important in the future.
- The Ruby Valley has several small fire districts instead of one large one, so a combined fire/ambulance district wouldn't work.
- Madison County, with its rural nature, variables, and large size, needs ALS crews and paramedics with training and experience – this is not an appropriate place for a new, inexperienced paramedic.
- Ambulances will not accept patient transfer runs unless Madison County is appropriately covered by 911 response and backup crews. Although there have been minimal times in the past three years that a backup crew was called out, a minimum of three crews, plus backup, would be needed to adequately cover a rural county of this size. Manpower and expense are the challenges. Even with paid crews, having three crews and two backup crews would still require volunteers.
- If difficult ALS transfers can't be covered by the ambulance service, the patient will need to use helicopter service, which is very expensive.

- Ambulances from both the Ruby Valley and Madison Valley must be able to take 911 calls.
- There is a need for ALS service, and quick response times. Residents that need advanced health services tend to move out of the county. Feedback from several taxpayers is that they are willing to pay extra to make sure added services are available when needed. Users should expect the same level of service no matter where they are located in the County.
- Call volumes are increasing on the Madison side. They haven't done as many transfers as in the past, but could have done more with more staff available, and can do ALS depending on who is available and when, and whether a backup crew is available.
- Taxable values differ between the Madison and Ruby Valleys. If one county-wide ambulance district is set up and funds requested from taxpayers, funds could be evenly distributed.
- The County continues to grow in population, and services should move forward to keep up with the desire for improved services.
- An ambulance service could operate as a funding avenue for a hospital district.
- The Big Sky area has its own, separate, ambulance services, appropriately, since it is a completely different situation there than in the Madison and Ruby Valleys.
- The Ennis Fire District has no plans at present to add emergency medical services, although it has been discussed, because it's hard enough to get firefighters. They are adding fire stations to meet population increases.
- Speculation about whether funding opportunities would be increased by adopting any one ambulance structure over another.
- Additional forms of ambulance services were mentioned such as private or county-based. Any model would likely require additional funding due to factors such as total number of runs and the County's size.
- If hospitals already have some knowledge of services performed by ambulances, it might make sense to be aligned with hospitals, especially if there would be a higher cost to taxpayers of setting up a totally separate system, but they should not be run by the County.
- Whatever structure is eventually determined, there should be a mechanism to make sure it's working well and can be modified, rather than being locked in.
- If a mill levy is added to the ballot for November, preparation time is limited. The Commissioners need to gather legal information, and the actual costs of running an ambulance service need to be determined to decide how much to ask of the taxpayers.

The meeting reconvened again at 2:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Office in the Administrative Office Building in Virginia City, Montana, with Commissioners Ron Nye and Jim Hart present. Chairman Dan Allhands was absent for personal reasons. Laurie Buyan, Executive Assistant to the Board of Commissioners, was present to take minutes.

Approval of Minutes: Jim Hart moved to approve the May 26, 2020, Commission meeting minutes with corrections. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. Jim Hart moved to approve the June 2, 2020, Commission meeting minutes with corrections. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Next meeting: The next regular Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 7, 2020, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in the Second Floor Court Room of the Administrative Office Building in Virginia City, Montana.

Dan W. Allhands, Chairman
Board of Madison County Commissioners

Date Approved: July 14, 2020

Minutes prepared by:

Laurie Buyan, Executive Assistant to the
Board of Commissioners, and

Jane Bacon, Commissioners' Clerk

Attest: _____
Kathleen Mumme, Clerk and Recorder, Madison County