

BOARD OF MADISON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
September 1, 2020, Meeting Minutes

On Tuesday, September 1, 2020, a meeting of the Board of Madison County Commissioners came to order at 9:30 a.m. in the Second Floor Courtroom of the Administrative Office Building in Virginia City, Montana, with Commissioners Jim Hart and Ron Nye present. Commissioner Dan Allhands was absent for personal reasons. Jane Bacon, Commissioners' Clerk, was present to take minutes.

Those people in attendance at the meeting were Joe Brummell, Jani Flinn, Pam Birkeland, Tammy Mahlstedt, Brett Schriock, Bonnie O'Neill, Tony Forsythe, Marnie and Kirk Smith, Ellis (Eli) Thompson, Vicki Tilstra, Landon Dybdal, Allen Rohrback, Justin Ekwall, and several who participated via phone/Webex. Ryan Wolter, IT Support Specialist, was present to administer the public link to the meeting via Webex.

Approval of Minutes: No minutes were available for approval.

Claims: The Board approved claims.

Public Health Office/DES – COVID-19 Update and Fire Update: Joe Brummell, Director of Emergency Management, met with the Board to present updates on COVID-19 and local fire situations. He reviewed COVID cases: 93 confirmed cases in the County to date, with three active cases; 89 people recovered; one death; and one active hospitalization. The State has had 7,421 confirmed positives and 104 deaths; 134 people have been hospitalized; and 5,330 have recovered. A new set of statistics is being reported on for the 291 Long Term Care Facilities (LTCF) in Montana: 41 facilities have had COVID cases with 311 people testing positive, and there have been 33 COVID-19 related fatalities reported. Nationwide there have been over 6 million cases and 183,000 deaths, and Joe said recoveries are no longer being shown. Worldwide has seen 25.3 million cases, 848,000 fatalities, and 16.7 million people recovered. In Montana, Madison County is listed fifth in cases per 100,000, he reviewed how other counties are doing, and said active cases resulting from the Sturgis Rally are starting to be traced. Two counties are still without cases, and schools are opening throughout the State. Joe reviewed fire conditions which are critical right now, although there is presently nothing significant in the area, and said the Bradley Creek fire is still being monitored in spots but has been put out completely with no loss of animals.

Journal Vouchers: Jim Hart moved to approve Journal Vouchers for the 8/20 accounting period. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Petition to Close an Alley in Pony, Montana: The Board reviewed a petition from residents in Pony requesting the closure of an alley in Pony. The petition has been reviewed and approved by the Clerk and Recorder's office. A viewing committee, consisting of Ron Nye, Frosty Armstrong, and Tommy Luksha, was chosen, and the date for a public hearing was set for Tuesday, September 29, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. Following review, Jim Hart moved to accept the petition to close the alley between Hanley Street and Isdell Street in Pony, Montana. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Public Discussion and/or Comments on Items Not Listed on the Agenda but Within the Board's

Jurisdiction: Jim said an opportunity has to purchase some used desks from Ravalli County that might be useful in the Second Floor Courtroom of the Administrative Office Building, and an agreement was made to sell them to Madison County for \$500 unless we decide not to purchase. The Maintenance Manager is looking into the cost of renting a trailer to haul them.

Airports: Jani Flinn, Airport Board Secretary, met with the Board to discuss the following topic.

- **NorthWestern Energy Underground Electrical Easement (Ennis Airport):** Jani explained that this relocation agreement was discussed last week, Lance is available for questions, and the \$109,000 expense is fully reimbursable. Following review, Jim Hart moved to approve the underground electrical

easement between NorthWestern Energy and Madison County across the Ennis Big Sky Airport property. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Grants: Jani Flinn, Grant Administrator, met with the Board to discuss the following topic.

- **TSEP Planning Grant Contract Extension Request:** Jani reviewed the letter requesting an extension for completing the planning grant that includes a preliminary engineering review on three bridges: Jack Creek #4, Saylor Bridge, and Silver Springs. She verified that it is a 50% matching grant. Following review, Jim Hart moved to approve the letter requesting the extension of the Madison County TSEP Planning Grant Contract #MT-TSEP-PL-21-216 to December 31, 2020. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Superintendent of Schools: Pam Birkeland, Superintendent of Schools, presented the Board with the preliminary budget for Madison County Schools.

- **School Budgets:** Pam provided an overview of mills per fund for all the schools and joint districts in the county, to get a feel for what the taxpayers will be paying in each district since the amount of money generated by a given mill in each district is different. She discussed how the schools get money and what they can do with permissive levies, reviewed mills and property values, noted the Federal and State money received this year for each school for COVID-related expenses, and talked about how the schools are doing with COVID preparations and policies. She also discussed school enrollments, virtual learning options, and home schooling, their effects on the budget, and said the budget total won't be accurate until October when they do the actual count of kids enrolled. Transportation and retirements are included in the mills calculated based on the needs of the schools, with some exceptions, and she explained the mill process. Based on the recommendation of the County Superintendent of Schools and the County Treasurer, Jim Hart moved to approve County levies for transportation at one mill, elementary retirements at 1.3 mills, and high school retirements at 7 mills. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Human Resources: Tammy Mahlstedt, Human Resource Generalist, met with the Board to discuss the following topic. Brett Schriock, IT Director, was present for this portion of the meeting.

- **Authorization to Fill Part-time IT Systems Computer Support Specialist Position:** Tammy reviewed the authorization to fill for the new part-time position in the IT Department. After review, Jim Hart moved to approve the authorization to fill the new IT Department position of Information Systems Computer Support Specialist. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Public Discussion and/or Comments on Items Not Listed on the Agenda but Within the Board's

Jurisdiction: A call was returned from Jim Jarvis, Virginia City HPAC, to discuss rain gutters on the Courthouse, and rain gutter repairs on the Administrative Building. Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, was present for this portion of the meeting. An invoice has not yet been received from Highland Mountain Gutters although the bid was accepted, so Jim will check into that, and see if they can also repair the gutters on the Administrative Building. Possible grants for Thompson-Hickman Museum were discussed, as well as progress and next steps on the Administrative Building canopies.

Craig Erickson, Great West Engineering, and Becky Lawson, SMA, met with the Board via Webex to discuss the following topics. Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, was present for this portion of the meeting.

- **Madison Valley Manor Project Update:** Becky said the boilers for Madison Valley Manor are on order and should arrive by the end of September, and Jim will look for a place to store them. The remaining documents have been forwarded to the State for approval, so advertising for bids can likely start next week in the Bozeman Chronicle and in the Madisonian. She discussed alternate items of work, including an enclosure around the walk-in cooler, as well as how they will coordinate a pre-bid conference without entering the building due to COVID concerns.
- **Request for Reimbursement of CDBG Funds – MVM Project:** Craig said the invoice for the boilers has not been received from Northwest Pipe, so he will reschedule the request for reimbursement of CDBG funds on the Commissioner's agenda when it arrives. He noted that CDBG grant funds can now be accessed because the environmental condition was lifted by the Department of Commerce, and briefly discussed the planning grant timeline for TRMCC.

Maintenance: Tony Forsythe, Maintenance Manager, met with the Board to discuss the following topic.

- **Fire Panel Replacement at Courthouse:** Tony discussed the necessity of replacing the old fire suppression system panel at the Courthouse, said he thinks the panel would be approximately \$2,500 but has no estimate on the installation. After review, Jim Hart moved to authorize Tony Forsythe to check into and purchase a new fire suppression system panel for the Courthouse. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Abby St. Lawrence, Attorney – Potential Litigation Related to County Road Issues: This portion of the meeting was closed to the public.

Petition to Alter a portion of Axolotl Lakes Road: Marnie and Kirk Smith, Madison County residents, presented and reviewed a petition to alter a portion of Axolotl Lakes Road. Ellis (Eli) Thompson, District 1 Commissioner Candidate, was present for this portion of the meeting. The petition has been reviewed and approved by the Clerk and Recorder's office. Marnie outlined the changes they wish to make to about 800 feet of the existing road location that goes through their property, reviewed the plan to relocate that section, and went over the reasons behind the change. Kirk described water running into their home from large ruts and potholes as the major reason, and Marnie added that liability and protecting their property are also major concerns, describing abuse to their property by four-wheelers. The petition process was discussed, Jim pointed out that since District 1 Commissioner Dan Allhands is absent a viewing committee would be chosen after checking with him, and the date for a public hearing was set for Tuesday, September 29, 2020, at 1:30 p.m. Following discussion, Jim Hart moved to accept the petition for County road alteration for a portion of Axolotl Lakes Road through the property owned by Kirk and Marnie Smith. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. At this point, the Smiths left the meeting. Further discussion included aspects of Axolotl Lakes Road, road history, old cabins, aerial photos from 1947, additional roads being researched by the Road Review Committee, and Forest Service district road responsibilities after the closure of the Whitehall office.

Later in the week, a viewing committee consisting of Commissioner Jim Hart and Ray Rowberry was accepted by District 1 Commissioner Dan Allhands.

Final Budget Hearing: The Board conducted a public hearing regarding the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 County Budget. Vice-Chairman Ron Nye opened the public hearing at 3:01 p.m. Vicki Tilstra, Finance Officer, and Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, were present for this portion of the meeting. Resolution 31-2020 was read aloud by Commissioner Jim Hart. Vice-Chairman Nye asked if there was any public comment. Tommy Luksha, GIS Coordinator, asked about staffing a part-time position in the GIS Department, and was assured that the position was included in the final budget even though discussion of the topic had been postponed. Hearing no further public comment, the public hearing was closed at 3:06 p.m.

- **Resolution Adopting Final Budget and Mill Levy Requirements:** Following review, Jim Hart moved to approve Resolution 31-2020, a resolution adopting Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget and mill levy requirements. Ron Nye seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. Vicki pointed out adjustments that were made to the final budget after preliminary budgets were presented, in the Weed Department, Library, Public Health, and the nursing homes. She said the budget total looks like a big increase but a lot of it is spread out, there is federal funding to be dealt with, she mentioned permissive mills and other special items, and various projects that are budgeted for, even though they may be funded or reimbursed through grants. The Cliff and Wade project was briefly discussed, and Jim said there would be more budget information from Western Federal Lands at the end of September.

Ambulance Meeting: Alan Rohrback, Madison Valley Medical Center CEO, Landon Dybdal, Ruby Valley Medical Center CEO, and Vicki Tilstra, Finance Officer, met with the Board to continue discussions about financing ambulance services in the County. Bonnie O'Neill, Chief Administrative Officer, and Justin Ekwall, Deputy County Attorney, were present for this portion of the meeting. Jim and Ron mentioned hearing rumors and negative talk about the ambulance situation, and said the County is not trying to mandate or take over – rather, they are trying to find ways to help by finding a funding mechanism to enhance the service we already have, and figuring out how to go about improving the way it works. Discussion ensued about maps, excluding Big Sky and the Cardwell/Whitehall area, response times in remote areas, Jefferson County's fees, ambulance fees versus assessed funds, oversight of funds, taking care to create a sustainable plan that will pass on a ballot, assessing household or dwelling fees similar to Solid Waste, fee amounts that would pass on a ballot, and the

value of mills given tax districts and taxable values. Next steps and schedules were discussed: the hospital administrators will work with the County GIS Coordinator and Director of Emergency Management to determine specific boundaries on a map, and the next Ambulance Meeting was scheduled during the regular Commission meeting on Tuesday, October 6, 2020, at 4:00 p.m.

Calendars: The meeting was relocated to the Commissioner's office where the Board reviewed calendars.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Next meeting: The next regular Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in the Second Floor Courtroom of the Administrative Office Building in Virginia City, Montana.

Dan W. Allhands, Chairman
Board of Madison County Commissioners

Date Approved: September 29, 2020

Minutes prepared by:

Jane Bacon, Commissioners' Clerk

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