

November 27, 2023 Regular Session of the Beaverhead County Commissioners

The Board of Commissioners, in and for Beaverhead County, Montana, met in session on November 27, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Room of the Beaverhead County Courthouse. Present: Chairman Michael McGinley, Commissioner John H. Jackson, Commissioner C. Thomas Rice and their Assistant Taylor Longie.

Department Head Meeting/Commissioners Report

Road Supervisor Bob Ferris joined the meeting and began the discussion.

Weed Control Supervisor Amber Burch, Beaverhead Deputy County Attorney Coty Calvin, Reporter Casey Elliott, Lead Maintenance Shonna Graham, GIS Coordinator Tracy Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools Mike Miller, Land Use and Planning Director Rob Macioroski, Land Use Sanitarian Tom Wagenknecht, Sheriff David Wendt, Mayor John McGinley and Clerk and Recorder Stacey Reynolds were present.

Stacey stated she would like to introduce her new Deputy Clerk and Recorder Pamela Ford.

Bob stated that he heard Big Sheep got hit with some snow. Cody was going to go check. They are pretty well caught up. Bob asked when they should close the Scenic Byway. Chairman McGinley said early next week. Bob stated they will close Scenic Byway and Lemhi pass.

Tom Wagenknecht stated that Rochelle, Tom and Joyce attended a two-day Subdivision Training in Helena. Tom discussed the training.

Joyce discussed all the inspections she did this year. She is close to being finished with inspections for the year. Joyce said there was a lot of business turnover this year. Tom stated Wise River Club is a big one. Joyce stated that she received an FDA grant this year for mandatory trainings she did. Joyce discussed that there was one confirmed case of a food borne illness.

Nick stated they did get their scale. He thanked the road department for all their help. Nick stated that they put another repeater up on the ski hill.

Mike Miller stated they had a short week last week. He will be heading to grant on Wednesday to observe.

Rob stated they got a DEQ approval for a minor subdivision. It will be coming to the commissioners soon.

Shonna stated that they are still working on a few things at the public health building. She informed that the new custodian will start today. The panic button and cameras will be installed this week at the treasurer's office.

Tracy said that he is working on little things. He has been working on public health stuff.

Chairman McGinley stated that we will not have a meeting next week due to the MACo elected officials training.

The following Road Department Report was submitted and scanned into the minutes:

BEAVERHEAD COUNTY ROAD WORK
November 19th to November 25th, 2023
Dillon, Lima and Wisdom Areas

DILLON AREA

- Bladed on the following roads: Blacktail and Highway 324.
- Plowed snow on the Pioneer Mountain Scenic Byway.
- Repaired and cleaned cattle guard on Hogsback Road.
- Road checked Dillon area roads.
- Equipment service and repair.

LIMA AREA

- Bladed on the following roads: Big Sheep Creek, Dell Airport and Hansen.
- Road checked Lima and Dell area roads.
- Equipment service and repair.

WISDOM AREA

- Road checked Jackson and Wisdom area roads.
- Equipment service and repair.

Action on Previous Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the November 20, 2023 meeting were read and the following motion was made:

MOTION: Commissioner Rice moved and Commissioner Jackson seconded that the minutes of the November 20, 2023 meeting be approved. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion & Action~ Close Open Burning December 1st

Planning Admin Assistant Rochelle Hoerning, DES/Land Use Sanitarian Tom Wagenknecht, GIS Coordinator Tracy Sawyer, Reporter Casey Elliot

Chairman McGinley said that this will close open burning till the end of February. Tom said this is done every year due to air quality in the winter.

Discussion about the project took place.

MOTION: Commissioner Rice moved and Commissioner Jackson seconded open burning be closed December 1st, 2023 until February 29, 2024. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion & Action~ Resolution 2023-31 US Sheep Industry

GIS Coordinator Tracy Sawyer and Reporter Casey Elliot

Chairman McGinley informed this is a request to support the sheep industry. Sheep industry is the lowest it has ever been. We will send this to the Governor, Senators and US Representatives.

MOTION: Commissioner Rice moved and Commissioner Jackson seconded Resolution 2023-31 US Sheep Industry be approved. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion~ Supreme Court's Decision on State School Mills

Deputy County Attorney Sky Jones, Tom Wagenknecht, Representative Tom Welch, Road Department Admin Assistant Jamie Flynn and Reporter Casey Elliot were present.

Chairman McGinley stated that the supreme had a 7-0 decision that the DOR has the authority to bank mills. Chairman McGinley stated that he did a press release. Chairman McGinley said that he thinks the counties fought a good fight and lost. Sky Jones stated that as a resident and taxpayer he appreciates the commissioners for standing up for taxpayers. Chairman McGinley said

that he doesn't know how the process will go moving forward but those extra mills will have to be collected for the year.

Discussion on where the money goes and the process of the State general fund. Chairman McGinley discussed SRS. Chairman McGinley stated that the extra money from the extra mills goes in the general fund and doesn't affect the schools. Tom Welch stated that there is a bill that passed this last session to help people understand where that money is going.

Chairman McGinley discussed the House bill 538. Chairman McGinley stated that out of all this, Beaverhead County should be proud of the Search and Rescue, the library, the Animal Shelter, decided not to assess their full mills which saved the taxpayers of Beaverhead County taxpayers money.

Tom Wagenknecht asked if he has had time to calculate the effects of the solar farm. Chairman McGinley said he has not yet but intends to. The solar farm is taxed at 3%.

Tom Welch stated that Beaverhead County is not the problem. Tom Welch stated Beaverhead County is below the state average.

Tom Welch said that we have had a lot of residential growth.

Chairman McGinley discussed the newly taxable value.

Tom Welch stated that our tax system in Montana is really complicated.

Chairman McGinley stated that 25% of our budget it voted. Voters tell us to do it.

Tom Welch stated that he always talks about the voted mills to a lot of people in discussion about taxes.

Tom Welch reiterated that it is very complex and they want to simplify but it is hard to get everyone to agree.

Chairman McGinley said that there are a few ways to bill the difference in the mills. He discussed the cost to send out second tax bills.

Tom Welch stated that a lot of people got tax rebates, this was out there and people forgot about this.

Chairman McGinley asked Tom Welch, if Beaverhead County is not the problem, how many counties are the problem? Tom Welch said that he isn't sure, he couldn't give an exact number.

Tom Welch said that the commissioner's do a great job. And people lose sight of that.

Tom Welch asked if MACo did a good job on this topic. Chairman McGinley stated that he thinks MACo did a great job. Chairman McGinley described the process of getting MACo involved in the State School Mills. Chairman McGinley said that he was a big part of the process with MACo. Chairman McGinley said that the Mill calculation produces 77.9 mills. The supreme Court made the ruling that the DOR has the ability to bank mills. Chairman McGinley discussed that someone needs to make that decision to bank those mills.

Discussion about tax bills and escrow accounts took place.

Tom Welch discussed that this tax cycle, there is the ability to pay in 7 payments instead of the one or two payments that were available in the past.

Tom Welch stated that there was discussion about having a pass book savings account. He just didn't believe that was a good idea.

Discussion about the payment plan for the property taxes took place.

Tom Welch said regarding tax reform, it is not all going to get done in 2025, it will take time.

Chairman McGinley asked Tom Welch if him and his colleagues thought MACo did a good job on this? Tom Welch responded that he personally doesn't think that they handle some things as well as they could. Those things involve him.

Tom Welch said that this whole thing won't be solved in 2025, but hopefully they are moving the needle positively.

Chairman McGinley discussed sales tax. Mike discussed the tourism.

Tom Welch said what he has heard about property tax from people is that they are all for it but they don't want their stuff taxed. Tom asked if there is a sales tax, should there be property tax relief. He believes there should be, but a lot of people don't agree.

Discussion about sales tax took place.

Tom Welch stated that he talked to college kids that when they are looking for donations, they go to a local merchant but when they need a new pair of pants, they go to the internet.

Tom Welch said there are a number of low-income programs that lower your property taxes. He stated that not a lot of people know that. He believes there are a lot of people that should be utilizing that, that aren't.

John Jackson asked if the low-income housing units around get some kind of tax breaks. Tom Welch answered yes, most of them do.

Sky Jones stated that there needs to be transparency and he believes that all parties need to get along even when they disagree.

Recess

At 12:00 noon, Chairman McGinley recessed the meeting. At 1:30 p.m., Chairman McGinley reconvened the meeting with Commissioner Jackson, Commissioner Rice and their Assistant Taylor Longie present.

Public Comments on Subjects Under County Jurisdiction Not on Agenda

No public comment was heard.

Unfinished Business/Other Topics of Discussion

None

Payment of Invoices

The Commissioners reviewed and approved invoices for a total of 37,727.48, beginning with check #213811 and ending with check #213843. The Invoice Payment Schedule is located in the Financial Administrator's Office.

Public Comments on Subjects Under County Jurisdiction

There were no public comments.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Attest:

Clerk of the Board

Approved:

Chairman of the Board