

August 11, 2025 Regular Session of the Beaverhead County Commissioners

The Board of Commissioners, in and for Beaverhead County, Montana, met in session on August 11, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners Room of the Beaverhead County Courthouse. Present Commissioner John Jackson, Commissioner Tom Rice, Commissioner Michael McGinley and Multi-Department Secretary Rochelle Hoerning on behalf of Commissioner Support Specialist Dana Basile.

Pledge of Allegiance

At this time, those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance aloud to begin the day.

Updates on County Projects

Present: School Superintendent Mike Miller, Clerk and Recorder Stacey Reynolds, County Attorney Sky Jones, Fairgrounds Manager Justin Kellabrew, GIS Coordinator Tracy Sawyer, Food Sanitarian Joyce Pollastro, Justice of the Peace Randi Braddock, County Planner Tina Caron, Extension Agent Jack Bazemore, Finance Administrator Becky Hankinson, Sheriff David Wendt, and Undersheriff Seth Haggard joined the meeting.

Road Supervisor Bob Ferris was present and reported that they are just blading. They got a new mechanic last week. The following Road Department Report was submitted and scanned into the minutes:

BEAVERHEAD COUNTY ROAD WORK

August 3rd to August 9th, 2025

Dillon, Lima and Wisdom Areas

DILLON AREA

- Blade Lemhi, Blacktail, Ten Mile, Birch Cr
 - Safety Meeting
 - Repairs and Maintenance
 - Road Check

WISDOM AREA

- Load, Haul and Spread Gravel Skinner Meadows and Upper North Fork
 - Load, Haul and Spread Gravel on Steel Creek
 - Safety meeting
 - Parts Run, Equipment Set up
 - Check Local Roads

LIMA AREA

- Bladed South Valley Road, North Valley Road, and Brundage Lane
- Chloride on Wolfe Lane, Big Sheep Creek, Steel bridge Lane, Town of Lima, and South Valley Road
 - Equipment Repair and Service
 - Yard Maintenance
 - Safety Meeting
 - Checked Local Roads

Extension Agent Jack Bazemore reported that fair is taking a lot of his time.

Fairgrounds Manager Justin Kellabrew reported that he installed new base boards in the round pin. New toilets are going in.

Clerk and Recorder Stacey Reynolds reported that she went to a convention in Lewistown. She introduced the new Clerk and Recorder Deputy, Rebecca Fifield.

Finance Administrator Becky Hankinson has nothing to report.

Food Sanitarian Joyce Pollastro reported that she is working with food vendors for the fair. She will be attending the Jackson water and sewer meeting.

Superintendent of Schools Mike Miller reported that he went to an OPI training on grants. Tomorrow, he has an online zoom meeting to talk about scheduled testing for the school year. Thursday, they have a meeting at the college for rural schools.

Justice of the Peace Judge Randi Braddock reported that they are getting ready for a jury scheduled for next week. It's currently scheduled for 2 days, but may be done in 1. She has started working on a project called "food for fines". Fines paid (for things like traffic tickets, etc.) would go towards the food bank. She is hoping the City court will join in on that project. .

Planning Director Tina Caron reported that Jackson Hot springs has taken up some of her time this week. The Diamond O Ranch has started phase one for their floodplain project.

GIS Coordinator Tracy Sawyer reported that they are "bug" free at the scale. They will go live in the next couple of weeks. Lots of IT stuff going on.

Sheriff David Wendt and Undersheriff Ceth Haggard reported that they have some new computers for the dispatch center. They currently have about 18-19 people in jail downstairs.

County Attorney Sky Jones reported that he has a meeting today about the legislative audit. He will also attend the Water and Sewer meeting in Jackson. He has a meeting with the hospital about inmates going there. They are hosting a fair entry competition for a random draw event (like floral arrangements, etc.) All the proceeds for that goes to the food bank. He attended the Omak Stampede race in Washington, some discussion about that.

****Commissioner Jackson left the meeting at approximately 9:25am to attend to some personal matters ****

Discussion and Action- Interim Coroner Duties

County Coroner Charles Coble submitted a letter of resignation to the Commissioners on August 1, 2025.

Sheriff David Wendt stated that he has been a Coroner for over 20 years, Undersheriff Ceth Haggard has been one for 6 years. Detention Officer Hagan is shadowing others to learn. There are only 9 counties in the State that do not share Sheriff/Coroner duties.

Haggard and Wendt stated that there is a lot of paperwork that goes into the reports. There have been 56 deaths since the first of the year and none of the reports are done. There is going to be some added strain to the department. It would be nice to have some extra help since there is a lot of hours that go into the reporting.

Commissioner Rice asked where they would get the extra help? Haggard stated that he would like to have a designated person to help with those reports.

Commissioner McGinley stated that it makes sense for the Sheriffs dept. to take over as the coroner's office. However, the duties that would be added to the Sheriffs dept. is a strain. He looked at what other counties are doing and they have a pay system set up that would move the coroners' budget into the sheriffs. He thinks its imperative that another deputy is hired. He has been looking at the numbers and it's going to be tough to do, but it is possible later in the year (around November).

Attorney Sky Jones asked if there are any deputy coroners that have been officially appointed? Wendt stated that himself, Haggard, Dan and Hagan are currently designated as the deputy coroner. Jones stated that since they are already designated as the deputy coroners than they can most certainly take over in the interim.

Commissioner McGinley stated that before elections come, the Commissioners will need to get things ironed out. Jones volunteered to get everything put together before then.

***Others Present: Tabitha Saxton Union representative dispatch. Cade Dairy as representative for Sheriff Deputy, Jim and Nancy M.

MOTION: Commissioner McGinley moved and Commissioner Rice seconded to appoint the Sheriff and Sheriff deputies in their capacity as deputy coroners in the interim. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion and Action- Agent Appointment and Agreement PCT

The Commissioners reviewed the Agent Appointment and Agreement.

Commissioner Rice noted that the Commissioner percentage was left blank. Josh Boka stated that they were at 10%.

Boka stated that hopefully the communication paths continue to be good. There was some discussion about work comps. Commissioner McGinley stated that the premiums have increased.


With no further discussion, the following motion was made:


MOTION: Commissioner McGinley moved and Commissioner Rice seconded that they leave the percentage at 10%. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Drought Task Force

The meeting convened at 11:00 a.m. This portion of the meeting is recorded on Teams.

A copy of the sign in sheet can be viewed below: It is noted that individuals who signed in are not federally employed nor paid to be here.

JURISDICTION USING SOFT MATCH: Beaverhead County DES		<div>Training/Event/Meeting Roster</div> <div></div>					
POINT OF CONTACT OR LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Tom Wagenknecht							
EVENT/OR MEETING NAME: Drought Task Force							
LOCATION: Beaverhead County Courthouse, Commissioners' Room							
DATE AND TIME: 8/11/2025 @ 11am CONTACT HOURS:							
Name / Title: Rochelle Heering Bvhd Co. DES	Email or Phone #: Address:	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Match
Name / Title: TRAVIS WILSON LEWFD	Email or Phone #: Address:	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Match
Name / Title: Sally Lerner D. Hor DNRC	Email or Phone #: Address:	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Match
Name / Title: Casey Elliott Dillon Tribune	Email or Phone #: Address:	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Match
Name / Title: Katie Menden CBID	Email or Phone #: Address:	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Match
Name / Title: Tom Rice Commission	Email or Phone #: Address:	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Match
Name / Title: Tracy Sawyer Bvhd	Email or Phone #: Address:	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Match

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POINT OF CONTACT OR LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Tom Wagenknecht							
EVENT/OR MEETING NAME: Drought Task Force							
LOCATION: Beaverhead County Courthouse, Commissioners' Room							
DATE AND TIME: 8/11/2025 @ 11am CONTACT HOURS:							
Name / Title: <i>Jim Mayne</i>	E-mail or Phone #: 208-720-7613	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Watch
Organization:	Address:	Yes / No					
Name / Title: <i>Nancy Mayne</i>	E-mail or Phone #: 208-721-3205	EMPG/Federally Funded? Yes / No	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Watch
Organization:	Address:	Yes / No					
Name / Title:	E-mail or Phone #:	EMPG/Federally Funded?	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Watch
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Organization:	Address:	Yes / No					
Name / Title:	E-mail or Phone #:	EMPG/Federally Funded?	Trip Miles	Total Hours	Cost Per Mile	Hourly \$ for Volunteers	Total Soft Watch
Organization:	Address:	Yes / No					

National Weather Service

Jane Fogleman, Hydrologist from the National Weather Service joined the meeting virtually on Teams and began her presentation. A copy of the presentation can be viewed in the DES Office.

Bureau of Rec/East Bench Irrigation/Clark Canyon Water Users

Kaycie Mikunda read the progress report (a copy of which can be viewed below) and reviewed it aloud.

EAST BENCH IRRIGATION DISTRICT

Drought Task Force

August 11, 2025

PROGRESS REPORT

CLARK CANYON RESERVOIR:

	<u>ELEVATION</u>	<u>STORAGE</u>		
YEAR: July 2025	5524.81'	82,686 a/f	47% Full,	87% of avg.
YEAR: July 2024	5531.67'	108,250 a/f	62% Full,	115% of avg.
	Difference	- 25,564 a/f		

Present Elevation: 5522.22 feet: 74,144 a/f Storage: 43% Full, 86% of avg.

Inflows (Last five (5) days Average: 174 cfs/day

Present releases: 485 cfs

INFLOWS FOR:	July 2025	12,359 a/f	201 cfs/day	59% of avg.
INFLOWS FOR:	July 2024	14,444 a/f	235 cfs/day	69% of avg.

RELEASES FOR:	July 2025	42,967 a/f	Storage Loss:	30,608 a/f
RELEASES FOR:	July 2024	45,033 a/f	Storage Loss:	30,589 a/f

SNOW PACK: Above Beaverhead Basin

	August 4, 2025	0% of avg.
	August 4, 2024	0% of avg.

Above Red Rock Basin

	August 4, 2025	0% of avg.
	August 4, 2024	0% of avg.

Lima Dam:

August 10, 2025:	Elevation:	6,570.53 ft	Storage:	31,125 a/f	37% Full;	93% of avg.
August 10, 2024:	Elevation:	6,576.15 ft	Storage:	50,442 a/f	59% Full;	154% of avg.
			Difference	- 19,317 a/f		

Inflows last five (5) days Average: 20 cfs/day

Present releases: 276 cfs

DNRC

Jay Lemon reported that the fire activity has been minimal. There are a few guys out on assignments. Over the next couple of weeks, they will lose some seasonal staff due to school starting back up.

Recess

At 12:00 noon, Commissioner Rice recessed the meeting. At 1:30 p.m., Commissioner Jackson, Commissioner Rice and Commissioner McGinley reconvened the meeting with Multi-Department Secretary Rochelle Hoerning present.

Safety Meeting

The minutes from the Safety Meeting will be located in the Finance Office.

Action on Previous Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the August 4, 2025 meeting will be read next week.

Public Comments on Subjects Under County Jurisdiction Not on Agenda

*this portion was not recorded due to technical difficulties.

Rodger Peters joined the meeting at 2:30 pm. He stated that he was here once before about the Hwy 324 paving proposition. On April 11, 2022 he provided a letter to the Commissioners expressing his concerns. Rodger recently had someone come to his property from an engineering firm, he denied access to his property. He received a call from someone in Butte that said he had to let them onto his property. He is wondering when the comment period was for this project? Commissioner McGinley stated that his understanding was that the comment period was back in 2022. Rodger stated that the only reason he found out this project was moving forward was because of the Surveyor that wanted access to his property.

He expressed his concerns about not being represented correctly by County Commission. Per Commissioner Rice, that's State right of way. Commissioner McGinley stated that this project has been on the top of the list since the beginning of 2025, the public has been made aware of it.

Rodger read out loud several letters of concern from Horse Prairie residents.

Commissioner Tom Rice stated that there was funding tucked away for this project and some of the project goes over the States border into Idaho. Rodger reiterated that he did not know this project was being pushed through.

Commissioner Rice stated that the feds did an (EA) Environmental Assessment of the project. Rodger stated that he is formally requesting a copy of the EA. Per Commissioner Rice, the County doesn't have it. You would have to go to the feds for it. It is approximately 40 years old.

Commissioner Rice stated that he doubts that the right of way is being expanded. Per Rodger, that's not what he heard from the lady in Butte from (MDOT) Montana Department of Transportation. They are going to start repaving Hwy 324 on the north side of the Lemhi pass turn off. Rodger informed the Commission that 21.8 is where it will start, marked from mile marker 22.

Before leaving, Rodger expressed his disappointment once again to the Commissioners. Rodger left the meeting at approximately 3:00pm.

New or Unfinished Business/Other Topics of Discussion

Routine matters occupied the attention of the Board for the remainder of the day.

Payment of Invoices

The Commissioners reviewed and approved invoices for a total of \$114,842.04 beginning with check #218328 and ending with check #218371 and checks beginning with #218397 and ending with check #218421. Voided checks #218372-218396.

The Invoice Payment Schedule is located in the Financial Administrator's Office.

Public Comments on Subjects Under County Jurisdiction

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: 

VICE Chairman of the Board