

**August 18, 2025 Regular Session of the Beaverhead County Commissioners**

The Board of Commissioners, in and for Beaverhead County, Montana, met in session on August 18, 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 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**

Road Supervisor Bob Ferris was present and reported the following. Blading and hauling gravel. Getting close to school starting so cleaning up bus routes. The following Road Department Report was submitted and scanned into the minutes:

**BEAVERHEAD COUNTY ROAD WORK**

August 10th to August 16th, 2025

Dillon, Lima and Wisdom Areas

**DILLON AREA**

- Blade Albers, East Bench, Trout Cr, Burma, Anderson Ln, Bloody Dick, and Coyote Flats
  - Haul Gravel Albers Ln
  - Repairs and Maintenance
    - Road Check

**WISDOM AREA**

- Load, Haul and Spread Gravel Miner Lake
- Spray Bloody Dick and Skinner Meadows
  - Blade Lower North Fork
  - Equipment Move and Repair
    - Check Local Roads

**LIMA AREA**

- Hauled Pit Run
- Bladed and Hauled Gravel on South Valley Rd
- Cleaned Berm Off Shoulder on South Valley Rd
- Dug and Lowered a Culvert on South Valley Rd
  - Checked Local Roads

School Superintendent Mike Miller, Clerk and Recorder Stacey Reynolds, Fairgrounds Manager Justin Kellabrew, GIS Coordinator Tracy Sawyer, Landfill Supervisor Nick Hoem, County Planner Tina Caron, Facilities Supervisor Shonna Graham, MSU Extension Agent Jack Bazemore, Food Sanitarian Joyce Pollastro, Land Use Sanitarian/DES Tom Wagenknecht joined the meeting.

Nick mentioned he is getting close to having the scale fully running. The football team was up on Friday picking up litter.

Tom commented that he is working on permits and enforcement issues. There have not been any fires yet in Beaverhead County but Madison currently has a few.

Jack added that he is busy getting ready for the Fair and nitrate tests.

Justin added that this week is the final push before the Fair and he is finishing up projects.

Shonna commented Brian Longie is coming in to tear up more concrete to the annex. Thursday he will lay part of the concrete so the entrance to the Sheriff Annex will be closed. Wiring for the generator will be put in next week and the trench for propane line being dug in the next few weeks. Fixed sprinkler lines that were damaged. The combo unit in the jail was torn up last week to work on plumbing.

Stacey added that the ballot proofs arrived for the general election. She will look them over and approve.



Joyce commented about the Jackson sewer district meeting last week and working on procedure and documentation. She will be in the Centennials today and helping with septic permits.

Tina mentioned that she was also out in Jackson helping with sewer and water issues. There is a flood plain violation next Monday on the Commissioners agenda.

Mike commented that Fall orientation for teachers was last week and went well. This week there are a few school board meetings. He mentioned homeschooling regulations and parents needing to notify him of intent to homeschool. Schools start after Labor Day. September 2<sup>nd</sup> is the budget in front of Commissioners.

Tracy mentioned that he is working on computers and phones.

#### **Discussion- Solid Waste Fees Increase**

Nick mentioned the Solid Waste Board met on Thursday August 14<sup>th</sup> and voted to raise the fee to \$110 per unit. The fees have not been raised since 2008.

There will be a Resolution signed by the Commissioners with the budget resolutions on September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

#### **Discussion and Action- Request for Letter of Support for Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group Travel Management Planning**

Vaia Errett with the Beaverhead Deerlodge Working Group was present. She emailed and called to get an audience with the Commissioners to request a letter of support.

Vaia began the discussion with explaining she is the CO-Chair of the group and Tom Rice is a member. This group comes together to discuss forest management of the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest with an aim to improve the decisions about the forest and cover concerns. One of the priorities is travel management on the forest regarding what roads are open and closed to what type of vehicles, etc. "appropriate access for forest use". They need a current travel management plan. This has been put on the back burner since there have been cuts to funding and staff this year. It is becoming a safety issue having no plan in place. There is not a system of reliable and stable access. Counties are a part of the collaboration to chime in.

McGinley added they have been fighting to get on the board as counties should have a vested interest in the forest, they were not told to be on the collaboration. Vaia added that travel management is about access to the forest and how you're legally able to do that.

The group wrote a letter asking to move requesting the appropriate funding, staffing and resources forward. They have approached all the counties that touch the forest for support. They are hoping all the counties accept this letter.

Rice asked if the Madison County names have agreed to this letter as is and how many total. Vaia answered yes Madison county people have and there are a total of 13 signed so far.

McGinley asked how long she has been on the collaborative- she answered since 2022.

Vaia briefly touched on the what representatives she has spoken to.

McGinley added this has been a priority to Beaverhead County for a long time. When the USFS was staffed and funded, this was not a priority. So now when they are cut back on staff why are we asking for this. NACO has been pushing this and secure rural school funding. He wants a paragraph changed about full funding. Vaia responded with addressing the request is for an "appropriately staffed team" so it is not saying "full". This means by whatever pathway they can get it done. In terms of secure rural schools she feels it is related but separate but she is willing to work with him to get the wording right and accommodate that. McGinley is in support of it but is hesitant until they edit the letter.



She responded with the specific requests are staffing and funding and resources so she is hesitant to change those words out of the request.

"By any path or means"- they are looking for authorization of resources to make this happen.

The mid-level is where the things are getting lost at and it has been bad for Beaverhead County. There have been a lot of people promising to get stuff done but are never able to get them done. He agrees travel management needs to be done but we can do it on our own with just needing forest service to sign off on it.

Vaia asked for consideration as is but they can work with the wording. She is recommending maybe Beaverhead County send an additional letter with our specific needs/requests.

Tom Rice added he would sign off on the letter but would like to add an additional letter with emphasis on our specifics.

She added this isn't the last of the conversation- after they get their attention, they can specify the gap and what is needed to fill it.

Rice motioned to add our name to the list with an accompanying letter.

McGinley commented he is still concerned with the rural schools funding. He would like the edits made to the letter before he will agree to the letter. We need to prioritize where the county is asking for funds to go.

Vaia is open but also hesitant because the legislators told them to be specific with what is needed and staff, funding and resources are needed.

Rice was hesitant to be the only county to not agree.

McGinley said fix the two sentences and he will agree.

Vaia asked for clarification on use of the word funding- if you're asking for resources, you're asking for money.

McGinley is hopeful that we as a county can get the travel planning done ourselves.

Vaia added they want to leave the letter as is if they can but would recommend the county write a separate letter.

McGinley added he is not against travel management, he is hesitant in asking for more funding when we are wanting other projects funded.

MOTION: Commissioner Rice moved and Commissioner Jackson seconded to have Beaverhead on the list of supporting counties for this letter with an accompanying letter from Beaverhead. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried 2 to 1. (McGinley opposed)

Vaia thanked the Commissioners for their time.

#### **Recess**

At 12:00 noon, Commissioner Jackson recessed the meeting. At 1:30 p.m., Commissioner Jackson, Commissioner Rice and Commissioner McGinley reconvened the meeting with Assistant Dana Basile present.

#### **Action on Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of the August 4 and August 11, 2025 meeting were read and the following motion was made:

MOTION: Commissioner Rice moved and Commissioner McGinley seconded that the minutes be approved. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **Public Comments on Subjects Under County Jurisdiction Not on Agenda**

#### **New or Unfinished Business/Other Topics of Discussion**

Justin Kellabrew came in to discuss the opportunity of becoming full-time, working more hours and medical insurance. He currently has 2 positions as Fairgrounds Manager and



Arena Director but he would like to combine them and be year round as a full time position.

McGinley added that currently as a  $\frac{3}{4}$  time employee he could currently get  $\frac{3}{4}$  insurance paid for.

Justin added that the fairgrounds can support full time of 40 hours per week but they do need to look at the budget on where to support this.

Discussion ensued regarding steps and grade for pay and benefits.

Jackson questioned what he would do in the winter full time as that is not typical for Fairgrounds. Justin answered there is work there to be done for the next few years at least.

McGinley asked where the funds would come from for his salary and supplies to continue working the winters.

Justin answered he has been working with the committees that use the Fairgrounds and how they need to put in also so it is not all from his budget.

Justin expressed concern with the Fairgrounds charging some and not charging others to use the facilities and if that were clarified, more funds could potentially come in.

Discussion ensued regarding Justin being an hourly employee but moving to salary.

McGinley questioned if Justin would need seasonal temps next summer if he was full time and Justin answered no- he would need a landscaper but would assume the rest of the duties from the other temp hire.

Discussion regarding revenue for the Fairgrounds, the current lease agreement, and charging ensued.

Jackson asked if we could find the money because the county wants to keep Justin and if that means finding funding to make him full time, they need some time to figure it out but will look into it. The Fairgrounds revenue should be able to support Justin's position.

This discussion is tabled until the Commissioners can look further into the Fairgrounds budget.

Keith Testerman and Andrew Jansen with Barrick Gold Exploration were present and requested an audience with the Commissioners for a discussion regarding their mine up Ten Mile Road and Argenta, Mag chloride and water source. They are looking to start construction mid-September and start drilling in Argenta. Main topics of concern are dust control, road maintenance and hauling water back and forth.

McGinley asked about the water source being at the dump versus out of Rattlesnake creek in Argenta in lieu of hauling it. They answered it was due to permits and pressure from the hydrants. The concern was to avoid driving through the town but they could not get around the water rights.

They are permitted for 12 pads but will only get up maybe half of them this year due to winter weather and safety.

McGinley mentioned they need to see about having a conversation with the solar panel farm regarding dust.

Their claims are on a mix of BLM, private and Forest Service around Rattlesnake Creek. Thursday at noon they will be doing a presentation at a Lunch and Learn with the Chamber.

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 \$40,596.22 beginning with check #218454 and ending with check #218478. The Invoice Payment Schedule is located in the Financial Administrator's Office.

### **Public Comments on Subjects Under County Jurisdiction**

### **Adjourn**

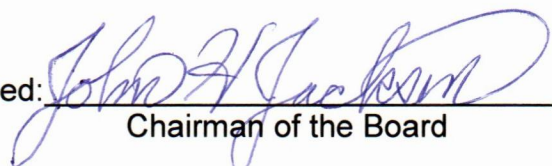
There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Attest:



Clerk of the Board

Approved:



Chairman of the Board