

**October 6, 2025 Regular Session of the Beaverhead County Commissioners**

The Board of Commissioners, in and for Beaverhead County, Montana, met in session on October 6, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners Room of the Beaverhead County Courthouse. Present Commissioner John Jackson, Commissioner C. Thomas 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 not present.

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

**BEAVERHEAD COUNTY ROAD WORK**

September 28th to October 4th 2025

Dillon, Lima and Wisdom Areas

**DILLON AREA**

- Blade Bannack Bench, Hwy 324, Sweetwater, Bollick, Lover Leap, Ten Mile, and Argenta
  - Chloride on Ten Mile and Argenta
  - Equipment Repair and Service
    - Road Check

**WISDOM AREA**

- Culvert Install on Upper North Fork, Steel Creek, River Rd, Big Swamp, Little Lake and Twin Lakes
  - Cattle guard Clean on Upper North Fork
- Load and Haul Gravel Little Lake, Steel Creek, and Twin Lakes
  - Willow Removal River Rd
- Spot Blade Twin Lakes, River Rd, Big Swamp and Little Lake
  - Check Local Roads

**LIMA AREA**

- Bladed Ruby Divide Rd, North Valley Rd, and Stibal Ln
- Hauled Gravel on Ruby Divide Rd and North Valley Rd
  - Repair Cattle Guard on Ruby Divide Rd.
  - Moved Equipment and Shop Maintenance
    - Checked Local Roads

Finance Assistant Becky Hankinson, GIS Coordinator Tracy Sawyer, Landfill Supervisor Nick Hoem, County Schools Superintendent Mike Miller, County Attorney Sky Jones, Weeds Supervisor Amber Burch, Facilities Supervisor Shonna Graham, Justice of the Peace Randi Braddock, MSU Extension Agent Jack Bazemore, and Fairgrounds Manager Justin Kellabrew joined the meeting.

Nick commented that he had the high school come over the weekend to grab rocks and he has been fixing the trucks.

Jack added that 4H restarted last week and as of Friday there were 12 signed up in Beaverhead County. This week is National 4H week. The Project Fair is Friday night as an open house at the fairgrounds.

Justin mentioned that all the fairground equipment has been serviced and winterized. Bathrooms have been winterized.

Shonna commented that last week they moved Becky and Dana's offices. They got one of the 4-wheelers serviced with new tires. The other one is having electrical issues. She is taking the tractor to get serviced this week. They plan to starting up the boilers tomorrow



and the inspection for that is 2<sup>nd</sup> week in November. There was an issue with the sump pump last week in the jail so she is getting the plumber this week to look at it.

Becky mentioned that the final budget report was turned in last week. She is out tomorrow.

Mike added he has been busy at conferences and meetings for OPI and Montana Retired Educators. Jackson is hosting a health fair tomorrow. Polaris has been selected to host an OPI observer for spring testing. There are over 100 homeschoolers in Beaverhead County this school year.

Amber mentioned it has been a busy summer. They got their equipment mostly put away on Thursday for the winter. They may get out once or twice more this year to try and get more weeds taken care of. Some more outreach is needed for rush skeleton weed.

Randi added last week was the Food for Fines event. There were 4 people that took advantage and over 80 items for the food bank. This week she has some change of plea cases and other big cases.

Tracy commented that he is getting everyone upgraded to Windows 11.

Sky added that his office has been busy. They are looking for a new county attorney as Coty is leaving in a few weeks. A new felony investigation came to his office this weekend. He will be wrapping up some civil issues this week and staying busy.

\*\*Commissioner Jackson was absent for the County Update but joined the meeting at 9:30a for the next agenda item.

#### **Discussion and Action- SWMT Conservation Coalition BLM WSA Releases**

Present: Nancy Conover, Amber Burch, Jim and Nancy Mayne, Casey Elliot, JS Turner, John Breen, Jerry Turner, Frances Strodtman-Royer,

JS Turner began the discussion with a brief background of the coalition. This is a group of people that are in timber, ranching, mining and recreation in the county. They are looking to get the BLM WSAs released. There are 4 wilderness study areas in Beaverhead County that BLM has looked at for close to 50 years and studied them. In 1991 they stated that these 4 do not have wilderness characteristics. The four areas are: East Fork of the Blacktail Deer Creek, Hidden Pasture Creek, Bell/Limekiln Canyons, and Henneberry Ridge. The group has a packet they put together to send to Senator Daines. They are asking for support from the Commissioners that they are working in the best interest of the county. They created a letter and presented it to the commissioners to sign using verbiage from the 2011 letter.

McGinley added he spoke with Daines recently at the MACo Conference regarding these areas. In 2017 they sent a letter to Senator Daines that states the Commissioners have always gone with the recommendations of the BLM and Forest Service as far as WSAs. In 2011 there was a letter sent stating there is strong local support to release these. He believes we should send this letter to Daines to recommend getting the WSAs released.

JS added the reason they were only looking at the 4 is because they believe they can get those dealt with right away. If they lump all together it will get stopped. They are pushing for all but in due time with public discussion and meetings.

Frances added Senator Daines field rep out of Butte has been in discussion with them. When she talked to Senator about them, there is a big possibility to get these due to them having no wilderness characteristics. Their coalition has a packet they are presenting to Daines with testimonies from ag, mining, water and noxious weeds that needs to be addressed. They also have a petition that is signed. It will all be turned in by October 17<sup>th</sup>. As far as what Daines wants, it is the Commissioners, the residents of the county, and their testimonies.

Nancy added she understands where Commissioner McGinley is coming from and following the rule of law. She agrees to tackling the best we can to get them released.

Jackson asked if we back these 4 will it affect the others going forward. McGinley responded there are more that do not have wilderness characteristics. He would be for sending all 7 to Senator Daines for release.



Frances added then he can state they want all 7 but they support the release of the 4. Jerry mentioned we have public support for these to be released. We all need to be on the same page and a combined front.

Rob M. with Montana Sportsman for Fish and Wildlife commented that his organization is in full support of what Frances and JS are doing.

Allen Conover added that he doesn't want to give up at the first 4, he wants them all released. They are in the middle of a logging area.

Nancy stated that in the Blacktail area part was recommended but part wasn't. She wants to continue the push for the rest of them.

Frances added comment of they are not stopping at the 4, they are starting with the 4 and moving from there.

Alan added about the size of one of the areas and the motives behind the original drawing them up.

McGinley asked about the collaboration in working with this. He thinks Daines office is getting mixed messages as to what is coming from Beaverhead County. The Commissioners are in agreeance of getting rid of these not adding more.

Frances responded the collaborative is working on a quid pro quo in releasing some but adding others. They are not working on that, they want them released and no new added.

Rice added he thinks this letter is well done and he is in support.

McGinley added he does too, we have been pushing this for a long time. He wants to be on the record he wants them all released but these in particular for now.

MOTION: Commissioner Rice moved and Commissioner McGinley seconded that the Commissioner support this letter and this groups efforts. A verbal vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

JS added he thanks the Commissioners for this and all the work that was done on the Resource Use Plan.

Amber asked the Commissioners if her department can assist in writing a letter in support to address the noxious weeds part. She has a no lobbying part she needs to clarify with the County Attorney to make sure she is able to help.

Frances and JS elaborated on WSAs and other avenues for protections or special management areas.

Nancy asked if they can add the noxious weed inventory map in their packet from Amber. Amber responded she will get it updated and to them.

### **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 September 29, 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**

Douglas Egbert, a landowner near the corner of Laknar and Schuler would like to complain about the smell and dust and annoyance affecting his daily quality of life due to a company moving in across the street. Respiratory issues, compression brake issues near residents.



Rice directed him to write a letter and they will get it to the Land Use Sanitarian, Tom Wagenknecht, to see what can be done.

Dillon Fire District 2 Chief BJ Klose joined the commissioners and presented a letter on the topic of updating subdivision standards for water sources for the fire department. He feels there are limited resources in the county. He is asking the county to address changing the current standards in developments with inadequate water sources for fire hydrants. He would like to collaborate with the Commissioners to help the growth of the county and the future of the subdivision standards. Discussion ensued about homeowners insurance, liabilities, the Dillon volunteer fire department preparedness and current regulations. The water on wheels impact fee was discussed going through the county treasurers office directly or through the planners as part of the plat. It currently goes through BJ and then he submits it to Cathy. He also mentioned adding a letter to the final plat stating limited services to the area due to location of fire department or water supply not meeting standards to the developer that stays with the land through owners.

Every house should be within 1,000 feet of a hydrant if further than 5 miles from the fire station.

McGinley added comment on fire sprinkler systems versus a buried tank.

The letter from BJ can be viewed in the Commissioners Assistants Office.

### **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**

9/29/2025

Ck 218879-218880 \$420.00 Fair Workers

The Commissioners reviewed and approved invoices for a total of \$77,849.33 beginning with check #218881 and ending with check #218925. 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