

December 11, 2019

The Board of Granite County Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m. in special session at the Drummond School and Community Library with Chairperson Bill Slaughter and Commissioner Scott Adler attending for a joint session with the Towns of Drummond and Philipsburg. Commissioner Charles Hinkle was absent this day. Other Granite County personnel attending was Executive Assistant Mike Kahoe. Attending from the Town of Drummond were Mayor Gail Leeper, council members Cary McLure and Ray Powell, and town attorney Jana R. McGill. Attending from the Town of Philipsburg were Mayor Daniel Reddish, council members DuWayne Ulrich, Derek Kuhl and town attorney Robert Medof. Members of the public attending were Monica Prince, R. Motta, E. Gagliano, David B. Lee, Tim Allen, and Emily Petrovski with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper. James Seidensticker and Shea Schroeder with Headwaters RC&D, and Shelly Mitchell with Oreo's Refining also attended.

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Gail Leeper conducted the session and called the meeting to order, followed by the pledge of allegiance.

#### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Self-introductions were made.

#### **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Motion made by Cary McLure and seconded by Commissioner Adler to approve the minutes of the September 11, 2019 joint meeting as presented. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Mayor Reddish reported that Philipsburg had a busy summer and that it was a good year for tourists. Commissioner Adler reported that the county has purchased two new snow plow truck and two new blades, so the county is set for equipment. Commissioner Slaughter reported that the Philipsburg Airport looks good for federal funding for improvements and maintenance. Also, Commissioner Hinkle is extremely interested in the county's role in forest management. Mayor Leeper reported that she is working with Shirley Cornelius at the Granite County Medical Center to have a bus to take people from Drummond to Philipsburg. They have received a \$7,500 grant for improvements.

#### **GRANITE COUNTY UPDATE**

**Flint Creek Dam Improvements:** Commissioner Adler stated that the Dam Fund is out of money and the FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) requirements are excessive and expensive. Commissioner Slaughter said that safety items have always been a priority and have always been done, like the new valves and the work done on the dam face. However, expensive studies, for earthquakes and snow melt, are expensive and tend to sit on the shelf. The FERC is coming to meet with the County in February to discuss the situation. Also, the

agreement with Hydrodynamics (Flint Creek Hydroelectric) may be able to be changed to allow more funds for the county to maintain the dam. The Commission has written to the Montana Congressional Delegation, with a copy to the FERC, which got FERC's attention. He noted that this is a policy fight, not a personal fight, and the Commission is frustrated but hopeful. Commissioner Adler noted that the FERC inspectors change every two years and each has a different perspective. Commissioner Slaughter said that the Board is working on alternatives and will present them to the public when they are finalized. He noted that some work begun last summer will be completed in August of 2020, which will allow funds to build up and the budget will be in a new fiscal year.

#### **TOWN OF DRUMMOND UPDATE**

Mayor Leeper reported that approximately \$22,000 has been spent towards improvements of the water tower. The town cleanup is going well thanks to the County Attorney and the Sheriff; two buildings need to come down. New LED street lights are planned for Drummond. They are experiencing generator problems, which is part of the sewer and now runs on propane; they may go to a diesel generator. Also, the heater is out in the Town Hall. She is working with Action Inc. and Kiwanis on Christmas dinner boxes and also enrolling people in the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP). She has received information from NorthWestern Energy regarding partial ownership in Colstrip.

County Plowing: Commissioner Adler reported that the county road crew is now working four ten-hour shifts a week and will go to five days a week when winter hits. Commissioner Slaughter noted that Road and Bridge Superintendent Paul Alt had requested an extension of the ten-hour shifts because the crew gets so much more done in a work day.

#### **TOWN OF PHILIPSBURG UPDATE**

Mayor Daniel Reddish reported that is has been an active summer with tourists. He noted that the sewer lagoon is a perpetual problem, currently under a one-year permit extension. The town has received a planning grant for sludge removal from the lagoon and the hope is that it will be completed by the end of next summer. Discharge permit renewal for the lagoon is due after the first of the year. Mayor Reddish indicated that infiltration problems, from the storm sewer into the sanitary sewer, have been taken care of, which should improve the operation of the lagoon. He expressed interest in street light improvements due to ever increasing power bills. The town plans to submit a RAC (Resource Advisory Committee) application for road work to Fred Burr Lake, the town's major water supply source.

#### **HEADWATERS RC&D**

Shea Schroeder handles the loans and small business development, both of which are available to the people of Granite County. The current interest rate on loans is 7%, but that fluctuates. He said that he cannot comment on the Drummond grocery store, which has been closed for months. James Seidensticker handles the Food and Ag Network Center for this area. There are 8 centers across the state. He indicated that a Brownfields Grant has been received to be used for loans for remediation of old gas stations which are on DEQ's list. Mayor Leeper expressed interest in expanding the greenhouse at the Drummond School.

#### **OREOS REFINING (ELECTRONICS RECYCLING)**

Shelly Mitchell, owner of the business, explained the importance of recycling electronic equipment and of people taking charge of their own information. She has been in business for three years and noted that it takes her about 20 hours to dismantle a computer into the various recyclable pieces. She handles the City of Missoula and Sanders County electronics recycling. She offered to provide an e-waste event in the county this spring at a charge of \$800, including free hard drive destruction. The host provides tables and three volunteers and she provides herself and one volunteer. She requires payment two weeks prior to the event. The DEQ usually sends a representative to e-waste events. She requests that government agencies remove hard drives before recycling. Discussion was held about what the local schools do with old electronic equipment. Shelly Mitchell stated that she is vitally concerned about the environment and the proper recycling of electronic equipment. She gave Cathy Collins, who handles recycling in Sanders County, as a reference.

#### **RECYCLING SITE BEHIND SCHOOL IN PHILIPSBURG**

Mayor Reddish inquired about the status of the recycling. Commissioner Adler responded the Granite Disposal no longer provides recycling service as it is not cost effective and the recycling bins should have been picked up a long time ago. Discussion was held that dead animals are not to be taken to the county transfer sites. Commissioner Slaughter noted that the county is not in the carcass composting business and no rancher is planning to take it on at this time. The Granite Conservation District is waiting to see if the guy who pickups carcasses at county ranches will pick them up and take them to the Clearwater composting site.

#### **AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Commissioner Slaughter reported that the Philipsburg Volunteer Ambulance is having trouble recruiting volunteers. The Commission has just received a proposal from ambulance president Patrick Little and will put it on the agenda, likely in January, for discussion. Monica Prince, an EMT with the Drummond Ambulance stated that volunteers need help too. She noted that an ambulance run takes a minimum of three hours and training events are very time consuming. Also, EMT work is not for everyone. There is always a need for competent drivers. Robert Medof, an EMT, reiterated the need for volunteers as only 4 to 5 are actively responding. Discussion was held that Powell County passed an ambulance mill levy for over \$200,000, in conjunction with the hospital, which is expected to be \$100,000 short after one year. Also, it is reported that northern Powell County wants to pull out. Commission Slaughter said that the Commission is very appreciative of all EMT's in the county and it is important to keep the conversation going.

#### **SEPTIC DUMPING AT DRUMMOND AND PHILIPSBURG**

Discussion was held that septic pumpers are not able to dump at either Drummond or Philipsburg sewer facilities. Drummond Mayor Gail Leeper said that they need the answer to three questions (volume, frequency and concentration) before a decision can be made. Philipsburg Mayor Daniel Reddish said that Philipsburg is prohibited from taking it due to DEQ regulations. Commissioner Slaughter indicated that people who need the service will very likely have to pay more if it is hauled a longer distance. Butte was discussed as a possibility.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Dick Motta commented that the Flint Creek Dam lease agreement should not be a cost to the owner of the dam. He said that the contract has evolved and studies are expensive. When it started it was break even, but will now continue to be out of funds. He said that Ben Singer, engineer with Hydrodynamics, misrepresented the project in the beginning. Commissioner Slaughter said that the Commission has written a letter to Flint Creek Hydroelectric requesting a meeting with them.**

**Elena Gagliano commented that more discussion on the CSKT Water Compact is critical or no one will have any water rights or property rights. Commissioner Slaughter commented that Senator Daines had submitted a bill in congress today which takes 97% of the off-reservation water rights out of the compact.**

#### **NEXT JOINT MEETING**

**Plans call for the next joint meeting to be held on Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in Philipsburg.**

#### **ADJOURN**

**Motion made and seconded to adjourn at 7:45 p.m. Motion carried.**