

August 18, 2020

The Board of County Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. in regular session in the Commission Office of the Granite County Courthouse with Chairperson Bill Slaughter and Commissioners Scott Adler and Charles Hinkle attending. Also attending was County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw and Executive Assistant Mike Kahoe. The session convened with the pledge of allegiance. The Board is practicing the recommended social distancing (keeping people at least 6-feet apart) in order to slow or stop the spread of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Masks were worn by many people in attendance. The session was livestreamed through the Zoom computer program available to the public to view the session and comment, and the public was also allowed to attend in person and provide comment.

Road and Bridge Superintendent/Solid Waste Manager Paul Alt met with the Board and gave his report. The report included that he has been contacted again by a private party which is interested in widening the East Fork Road at their expense. The crew continues to haul millings utilizing additional contracted trucks. He is awaiting more information on a mower.

Chip Sealing Project bid opening was held at 9:00 a.m. with Executive Assistant Mike Kahoe opening the bid. One bid was received from Pavement Maintenance Solutions of Columbia Falls. The bid was for \$20,566.00 per mile for a total of \$143,956.00 for seven miles and a bid bond was included. The Chip Sealing Project was advertised in the August 6 and 13, 2020 issues of the *Missoulian* newspaper. Commissioner Adler moved to award the bid to Pavement Maintenance Solutions and do 1½ miles of road at Georgetown Lake and wait until budgets are finalized to decide whether to do any additional chip sealing. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. The contractor later recommended that any chip sealing wait until next year because it is getting so cool in the evenings and they will honor this year's price. Commissioner Adler then moved to wait to do any chip sealing until next year (2021) in view of the new information and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. An amended contract will be drafted and executed.

Jacob Pierson, Foreman with Battle Ridge Builders, and engineer Jonathan Weaver, with Great West Engineering, met with the Board for the weekly coordination meeting on the Flint Creek Dam Face and Spillway Rehabilitation Project. Jonathan Weaver presented a written update report and noted that construction began on 8-17-2020 and that work last week was for warranty work on the spillway, so substantial completion will be beyond August 31, 2020. Jonathan Weaver noted that he will present a change order at the next meeting. Commissioner Hinkle moved to set the date for substantial completion at September 15, 2020 and Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried. Jacob Pierson reported that work is progressing on the coffer dam. He noted that only half the road over the dam will be closed this week for about one-half hour and next week a one lane closure will occur for three days (Monday through Wednesday). Commissioner Hinkle noted that he will inform the Georgetown Lake

Homeowners' Association and it will be put on the county's website. Jonathan Weaver explained that there has been a change in the way the joints will be prepared and filled. It will include additional material, but Battle Ridge Builders will not charge anything additional. Jonathan Weaver presented a written Construction Progress Report. Jacob Pierson agreed to present all project photographs to the Board and to the engineer at the end of the project.

Georgetown Lake level was reported at 6,429.23 feet, according to the USGS gage and the dam tender's report. The lake is approximately 3.24 inches below full pool. The outflow is estimated at approximately 46.5 cfs according to the USGS outflow gauge. The Board considered the report dated 8-17-2020 from Dave Amman with DNRC, outlining three scenarios for current dam operation which all maintain the lake level at no less than one foot below full pool. Commissioner Slaughter noted that additional water has been requested for irrigation. Commissioner Hinkle noted that additional outflow for irrigation is water that would not be used for power production. Commissioner Adler moved to select scenario three to release 75 CFS beginning now for seven (7) days and then reduce the outflow to 30 cfs. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. Brad Liermann, FWP, indicated that the FWP agrees with scenario three. The motion carried unanimously. The Board contacted Paul Tallon to release an additional 30 cfs of water now for seven (7) days and then reduce the flow to 30 cfs. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw will notify the other agencies to receive their consent, as required, and he will notify FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) of this temporary modification in operation.

Dustin Muhly, county PHEP (Public Health Emergency Planning) Coordinator, met with the Board and reported that there are nine (9) active COVID-19 cases in Granite County and contact tracing is being done. He anticipates that several will be released from quarantine this week, so that number will hopefully go down. There were forty-five (45) new active cases state-wide yesterday. He is distributing flyers to inform the public that hand sanitizer is available without charge. Commissioner Slaughter requested that Dustin Muhly and Jackie Bolster check on where the Drummond Ambulance atomizer (to sanitize the ambulance) is located, as it has been ordered and not been received. It was found out to be back-ordered due to the high demand and it will be a few months before it will be delivered. Public Question: How many are tested and how are they treated? Dustin Muhly responded that he is not aware of how many tests are done and treatment is that people stay home in quarantine unless they exhibit severe symptoms. Dr. Ransford noted that school athletes must stay home at least 10 days after being ill. Scott Sylvester inquired how mask compliance is going in other counties. Dustin Muhly noted that larger cities have good compliance and more rural places have compliance that is not as good. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

The Granite County Board of Health met with Dr. Mark Ransford, Commissioners Bill Slaughter, Scott Adler and Charles Hinkle present. Dr. William Reiter was absent. A quorum of the Board of Health was present. Dr. Ransford reported that he has spoken to both school superintendents and they have a plan in place, modified homecomings, no intermingling of home and away fans at sports events, Drummond is having concessions with strict conditions in place including a splashguard, and Philipsburg will have very limited

concessions. He estimates that there will be less than four active cases in the county when school starts. Sports and school will go on and hopefully there will be no cases in the schools, particularly among teachers. It will be up to the school boards to enforce mask compliance and if the number of cases goes above four, according to the governor's directive. Dr. Ransford indicated that the schools are so small that social distancing should be able to be maintained. Dr. Reiter indicated to Dr. Ransford that face coverings are not that beneficial in school settings. Philipsburg Mayor Daniel Reddish inquired if the local health board motion of requiring masks is still in effect and County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw indicated that the Board of Health resolution requiring masks is in effect no matter how many active cases are in the county. Dr. Ransford noted that the governor's directive was a political move, rather than a scientific one.

The Board reviewed county claims for July 2020. Commissioner Adler recused himself from voting on the claim for Adler Towing. Commissioner Adler moved to approve the July 2020 claims and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board held a budget work session on preliminary budgets for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The Board agreed that budget work sessions would not be available through Zoom, but people are welcome to come into the Commission Office and observe the work session with five minutes for public comment at the end of each session.

The Board considered the request of Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator Sarah Graham to have a mail ballot general election on November 3, 2020. She had presented a written plan and additional information for the Board's consideration, and that the plan was authorized by Governor Bullock's recent directive due to COVID-19 concerns. Letters were received in favor of a mail ballot election from Judy Davis, Stephanie Burd, Judy Paige, Michael Miller, Jim Jenner, Sue and Randy Peterson, Jodi Oberweiser, Kathleen Sweet, Maureen Connor, Gail McIntyre and Shelley Johnson. A letter from Ann Mullen requested a safe election by observing proper COVID-19 guidelines. Election Administrator Sarah Graham expressed her desire to have an all-mail election to keep people safe during the COVID epidemic for this election only. Commissioner Adler inquired how deceased voters are managed clerically to avoid voter fraud. Sarah Graham indicated that death certificates are filed in her office, the decedents names are checked against the voter list and if found to be registered they are promptly removed from the list. Sarah Graham noted that it is all through Montana Votes, a statewide program; the ballot goes out with a secrecy envelope, people vote their ballot, they put ballot into yjr secrecy envelope and put that into the verification envelope, which is signed by the voter; it can be mailed or brought to the courthouse and put in the ballot box. Also, there will be a drop-off site in Drummond on election day. When ballots are received at the Election's Office, the bar code is scanned and every signature is verified; there is also a process for lost ballots, which can be replaced; every signature is checked against the voter registration card; cost would be \$2,000 less than a regular poll election; there was an excellent turnout for the most recent primary, which was an all-mail election; people can come to the courthouse and vote at any time between October 2nd and November 3rd; ballots will be mailed on October 9th; elections in the county return to normal once COVID-19 health concerns are over; she has purchased new voting

booths and if she felt that elections were not returning to normal, she would not have purchased those. Commissioner Hinkle commented that there is a nation-wide movement that people don't understand that would make all elections through the United States universally all mail-in and he believes that would lead to removing American citizens their right to an in-person polling place election. Sarah Graham responded that she is only concerned about Granite County and her office has a lot of experience with mail ballot elections; she does not believe there is a country-wide movement going to mail ballot elections. Commissioner Hinkle quoted Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who stated that there is no harm to people who vote in person so long as precautions such as physical distancing are practiced. He stated that anyone can vote absentee or people can come into the polling place; he is trying to keep it normal. Commissioner Adler said that he is concerned about someone coming in and infecting a lot of county employees, possibly shutting down an office. Becky Mickey, Deputy Clerk and Recorder, said that there will be in-person voting available in the courthouse and there is difficulty in getting election judges. Commissioner Hinkle indicated that he has a problem with going nationwide with all mail ballots. Commissioner Slaughter said that he was concerned that this would not be a temporary situation, but that has been explained. Commissioner Adler moved that the Board follow the election administrator's recommended plan for a mail ballot general election for the health of county employees and the public. Commissioner Slaughter indicated that he is concerned about the health of the workers. Blanche McLure noted that federal elections must be adopted by the legislature and there was a directive that a mail ballot can be used at this election and it does not set a precedent. Zoom comment; one in support of Commissioner Hinkle. Richard Willett and his wife Liz said that they support Sarah Graham's proposal. Leslie Seward is not in favor of this and she has lived in other states where there was valid concern about fraudulent mail-in ballots; she feels that COVID can be avoided as noted by Dr. Fauci. Susan Sundstrom stated that she is in favor of a mail in election since there is a polling place in the courthouse. John Spaeth stated that he trusts Sarah Graham; ballots mailed all go to Missoula; like to see normal polling places remain with absentee ballot option. Blanche McLure noted the last couple of days prior to the election the post office does not send ballots to Missoula. Sarah Graham noted that 52% of all active registered voters in this county are permanent absentee voters. John Spaeth inquired when the polling place at the courthouse is open. Sarah Graham responded that it will be open any time the Clerk and Recorder's Office is open and the drop off site in Drummond will be open only on election day. John Barbara stated that he is against the proposal, this is just the first step and there is no guarantee that voting will return to normal. Commissioner Hinkle noted that Washington, California and other states have used mail in ballots and look at who is running those states. Elena Gagliano indicated that it is not the same as voting in a regular polling place. Elena Gagliano further indicated that if masks work, why not allow in-person voting, and she further commented that Flathead County originally considered mail ballot election but declined to do so for very good reason. Linda Wallis feels that this is the ideal way to handle the situation in view of COVID. Comment; if a person cannot travel can someone bring their ballot to the courthouse? The response was yes. Commissioner Slaughter questioned Commissioner Hinkle about what he is suggesting. Commissioner Hinkle said that absentee voting is different than a mail in election. Commissioner Hinkle also indicated that his wife stated that the voting list is highly inaccurate. Sarah Graham said that this is not part of a movement, but a way to keep

Granite County people safe. Blanche McLure, former election administrator, noted that ballots are sent only to active voters, not to all voters on the list. Commissioner Slaughter inquired what the difference would be by having one polling place and having people vote by absentee. Sarah Graham responded that it would put all of the voters in the one polling place which may affect social distancing. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw said that it would not be constitutional to only allow one polling place with a regular in-person election as it would unreasonably impede voting. Becky Mickey disagreed with the County Attorney on this point based on information from the Secretary of State's office. Becky Mickey explained that Sarah Graham's plan is to have ballots mailed to all active voters, where in a normal election an absentee ballot must be requested. Public comment was that the turnout for the primary election was very large, which was good. Public comment; there is no way to know who votes the ballot. Blanche McLure noted that there are checks and balances and that special elections conducted by mail have a much higher turnout than a regular election. John Barbara inquired who does the ballot verification. Response was that the Election Administrator and her deputy verify all ballots. Susie Browning previously expressed her verbal approval of Sarah Graham's plan. Public comment was closed by Chairperson Slaughter. Commission comment: Commissioner Adler said he is staying with his motion. Commissioners Slaughter and Adler voted in favor of the motion and Commissioner Hinkle voted to oppose the motion. The motion carried to accept Sarah Graham's mail ballot general election plan.

The Board considered the proposed agreement with the Philipsburg Marketing Group for redesign and maintenance of the county's website. John Skousen, joint owner of the marketing group, attended. The Board discussed the agreement and County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw explained that the agreement contains everything that the Board had requested and he noted that Executive Assistant Mike Kahoe would be the county's contact person during the development of the website. Commissioner Slaughter noted that search capability is a very important aspect of a new website. It was noted that the website would be searchable, but the archived Commission minutes has a separate third-party search engine. Commissioner Hinkle moved to approve the agreement and Commissioner Slaughter seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried.

The Board reviewed the proposed agreement with Great West Engineering of Helena for on-call engineering services. Great West Engineering was selected after an advertised Request for Proposals (RFP). The agreement is for five (5) years and may be extended for up to three (3) one (1) year terms. Commissioner Adler moved to approve the agreement and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

Frank Prince with the Drummond Volunteer Ambulance met with the Board to discuss an ambulance on-call list. He noted that the ambulance budget is \$45,000 for the year. When in March being on call paid \$2.00/hour, it cost \$35,040 for two people being on call. A three-year average has been used for grant applications and is 102 runs. Paid \$100 per EMT, two required, so it is \$200 per run. Frank Prince said that the EMT's have advanced life support; paramedic is way above an EMT for education. He said that it is not going to happen because it is too expensive. Commissioner Slaughter said that the call list was originally used during

COVID and will hopefully be reimbursed by FEMA. Monica Prince said that people sign up as volunteers and they know that they are not paid. Commissioner Adler noted that it is a volunteer organization. Monica Prince stated that once people are paid they are not protected by their volunteer status. Commissioner Adler noted that Powell County has a levy of \$250,000 and that is not enough to support the ambulance service. Frank Prince said that it is important that any call-out list must be shut down immediately when it comes up at meetings. Commissioner Slaughter thanked the EMT's for their service. Public question; Does The Ranch at Rock Creek have a county vehicle (old ambulance) out there? Answer: There is a Quick Response Unit there but they do not have an ambulance which is authorized to transport but they do have an old county ambulance there used for medical supplies and equipment. Frank Prince said a vehicle that can go into rough country would be appreciated if one comes up.

Public Comment: None.

Correspondence: The Board acknowledged receipt of a letter from Tri-County Sanitarian Chad Lanes dated 8-17-2020 which stated that Assistant Sanitarian Mark Syverson went to businesses to remind them that the mask mandate is in place, answer any questions and offer any assistance they might need. The Board noted receipt of a letter dated 8-11-2020 from engineer Bill Lloyd with Great West Engineering regarding guidance on the Flint Creek Dam Face and Spillway Rehabilitation Project. The Board noted receipt of a letter from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that acknowledged letters from Granite County dated July 24, 2020 and August 5, 2020 regarding the resuming of repair work and construction on the Flint Creek Dam Spillway and Dam Face Rehabilitation Project

Commissioner Hinkle moved to approve the August 11, 2020 minutes and Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board noted that tomorrow they meet with Federal Highway Administration and Forest Service personnel at Georgetown Lake for a scoping meeting for the FLAP (Federal Lands Access Program) Project on Lakeshore Drive (Forest Road 8686). Commissioner Hinkle indicated that he will be unable to attend.

The session adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

August 19, 2020

Commission Chairperson Bill Slaughter, Road and Bridge Superintendent Paul Alt and Executive Assistant Mike Kahoe met at Georgetown Lake at 9:00 a.m. with Curtis Jorgenson, Project Manager with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), for a scoping field review of the FLAP (Federal Lands Acquisition Program) Project for Lakeshore Road (Forest Road 8686). Pintler District Ranger Cameron Rasor and other Forest Service personnel attended, as did two engineers with Robert Peccia and Associates of Helena. Curtis Jorgenson, Project Manager with FHWA, noted that the engineers will provide three preliminary engineering designs with cost estimates for the project and one design will be selected by the Forest Service and the county for the final project. County

personnel left the meeting at 11:00 a.m., while Curtis Jorgenson and the engineers continued their field review of the road until mid-afternoon.