

**November 10, 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 were 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.**

**As an administrative matter, Commissioner Slaughter reported that Paul Alt is busy this morning with an equipment dealer and will not be available to meet with the Board. He reported that the Road Department is continuing to sand roads. He also reported that a professional cleaning company has been contacted for a price to clean the house the county owns at the Hall Road Department, and it is possible that a county employee may want to rent the house when it is cleaned up. The Board agreed to put the matters related to the house on a future agenda.**

**Georgetown Lake level was reported at 6,428.82 feet according to the USGS lake level gage. The lake is approximately 8.16 inches below full pool. The outflow is estimated at approximately 35 cfs. Commissioner Hinkle moved to make no change in the outflow and Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.**

**In an administrative matter, the Board considered the letter from Roland Hultman and Denise Hultman dated October 19, 2020 objecting to paying for solid waste disposal overages. Following an investigation into the matter, Commissioner Slaughter moved to send them a bill for \$542.01 for solid waste overages and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Dustin Muhly, PHEP (Public Health Emergency Program) Coordinator met with the Board and gave the COVID-19 update. There are currently 16 active confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Granite County for a total of 83 during the pandemic. He noted that the state system for accounting for active cases is not working properly. There have been 457 total deaths in the state. Dustin Muhly indicated that Public Health Nurse Debbie Robinson and clerk Jackie Bolster are doing an excellent job of contact tracing. He noted that some people are verbally abusive during the telephone calls and County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw said that those people can be charged with disorderly conduct and he emphasized that the people doing the contact tracing do not have to put up with that conduct, and they should contact the Sheriff's Office if it happens. Commissioner Slaughter requested that Dustin Muhly and Public Health Nurse Debbie Robinson get some wording put together, to be posted and noticed on the county's website, that advises people that if both people are wearing masks that they are not considered contacts and will not be required to quarantine if one of them**

tests positive for COVID-19. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. In response to a Zoom question, Dr. Mark Ransford noted that people are considered recovered when the fever is gone and there are no clinical symptoms for 72-hours. Dustin Muhly reviewed the grant for the Public Health Department and he would like to get public comment on what is needed. Commissioner Adler questioned Dustin Muhly about not returning a telephone message and being gone during the middle of a pandemic. Commissioner Slaughter indicated that he had also left a message and did not get a return call from Dustin Muhly. Commissioner Slaughter stated that this matter will be put on the agenda for next week. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

Granite County Board of Health met with Dr. Mark Ransford and Commissioners Slaughter, Adler and Hinkle present, constituting a quorum of the Board of Health. Dr. William Reiter was absent this day. Dr. Ransford reported that the number of cases is holding steady and that can be expected to continue through the winter. Zoom questions: If a person has a cold, should they get tested? Dr. Ransford answered yes, if you have cold, cough or fever you should get tested or you should isolate and presume you have COVID-19. If you are ill, you should call the hospital, they will come to your car to do the test; tests are done in the morning, so people should get tested before noon, to get results as quickly as possible. Discussion was held on the possibility of using federal COVID-19 funds to repay the county funds used prior to the county receiving COVID-19 (CARES Act) funds. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

Maria Stoppler, CEO/DON of Granite County Hospital District, met with the Board and presented the monthly financial report. She noted that the laboratories for COVID-19 testing are overwhelmed and as case numbers rise, more delays are anticipated. The Montana Immunization Program is being ramped up for the COVID-19 vaccine; first vaccines will be given to healthcare workers and people over 75, then to the general public. CVS and Walgreen's will vaccinate all the people in nursing homes in the country. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw inquired what would happen if healthcare workers refuse to get the vaccine. Maria Stoppler responded that it will be strongly recommended and the staff will be educated on the benefits of the vaccine; protocols will vary from facility to facility. She noted that the usual family dinners for Thanksgiving and Christmas with families and nursing home residents have been canceled for this year. She also noted that the mill levy to support the facility passed on the November 3, 2020 election. There were 15 CT scans so far in October. The Financial Report dated 11-10-2020 stated projected cash available as \$236,000, projected deposits of \$218,000, accounts payable of \$(150,000), for a projected cash reserve of \$304,000 (26 days of operation). She noted that it was originally directed that revenue lost due to COVID-19 could be replaced with federal COVID funds, but that directive may have changed and she is following that closely; the Montana Hospital Association and the legislature are supporting the original directive. Scott Sylvester inquired if the hospital has the facility to store the vaccine. Maria Stoppler indicated that it will arrive in dry ice and then can be stored in a regular freezer. She noted that all refrigerators and freezers for vaccines and medications in the medical center are on generator power in the event of a power outage. Commissioner Hinkle inquired about the hospital assisting with

the Philipsburg Volunteer Ambulance service. Maria Stoppler noted that providers have taught EMT classes and some employees are EMT's which go on runs while at work; otherwise, she does not have the staff to provide much assistance beyond what they are doing. Also included with her report were utilization results, a revenue analysis, a balance sheet, and an accounts receivable aging report. The Board complimented Maria Stoppler and her staff for doing an excellent job of keeping people safe, particularly in the nursing home. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

Sheriff Scott Dunkerson met with the Board for a work session regarding a proposed nuisance dog ordinance. He advocated for the ordinance, and that hunting dogs and rancher's dogs should be exempt. Commissioner Hinkle objected to the language in the draft ordinance that defined a nuisance dog as one continuously barking for fifteen minutes as Commissioner Hinkle believes this language will open the floodgates of complainers. Sheriff Dunkerson said that he would like to have a tool to deal with the problem. Commissioner Adler indicated that he is not in favor of the ordinance because it will make more work for the Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Dunkerson said he is getting the calls now and responding to them, so it would not be additional work. Commissioner Slaughter noted that the calls are being responded to and the deputy would use his discretion on whether or not to cite the dog's owner. Sheriff Dunkerson noted that there are currently nuisance dog ordinances in Drummond and Philipsburg, but not in the county. Discussion was held on some language changes. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw indicated that the proposed ordinance would make a bright line rule and it is similar to the Town of Philipsburg's nuisance dog ordinance. The Board discussed having the County Attorney make some language changes and put a one-year sunset clause, so it would be reviewed in one year to see if it is working or not. Scott Sylvester inquired if it would be more work for the Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Dunkerson responded that they are taking the calls and responding to them now. Zoom question: Are the dogs licensed? Response: No, there is no dog licensing in the county. The Board agreed to have the County Attorney revise the language and review it again on the agenda. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

The Board considered the appointment of Sheriff's Deputy Rick Olsen as Deputy Coroner. Commissioner Adler moved to appoint Sheriff's Deputy Rick Olsen as a Deputy Coroner for Granite County. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. Sheriff Dunkerson noted that the current deputy coroner is planning to move on, so he is keeping the position filled. He noted that Deputy Olsen is scheduled to go to coroner school next month. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

The Board reviewed the Granite County DUI Task Force Annual Plan for 2020-2021. The plan was approved on the motion of Commissioner Adler with second by Commissioner Hinkle. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. Sheriff Dunkerson noted that both drugs and alcohol are included in the plan. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

Kimberly Richardson met with the Board for discussion on improving participation of volunteers on the Philipsburg Volunteer Ambulance. She had prepared a PowerPoint

presentation, which could not be shared on Zoom due to technical difficulties. (The PowerPoint presentation was posted to the county website later in the day.) The Board agreed to review a printed copy of the presentation. Kimberly Richardson reviewed the questions of: What is currently available, who do you want on the ambulance crew, what is the training required, what type of services are being provided, where are volunteers located and what are the dispatch areas. Commissioner Slaughter noted that many EMT's are located at The Ranch at Rock Creek because The Ranch offers incentives. Patrick Little, president of the Philipsburg Volunteer Ambulance, reported that there have been several EMT classes, but people move or request to be taken off the roster. Kimberly Richardson indicated that incentives can be in many forms, not just money. She discussed determining the hours of operation; putting together an active roster; selling the community on the importance of the ambulance service to the community; how people are recruited; and determining the incentive. Commissioner Hinkle suggested that a meeting be held with the key people to really solve the problem. He noted that the legislature will be meeting next year and now is the time to determine if legislation would be beneficial. Commissioner Slaughter noted that volunteer fire departments have a small retirement, which could be offered as an incentive to EMT's through legislation. Patrick Little discussed having a coordinator to plan training and staffing of the ambulance; with COVID it is difficult to do the required hands-on training. He noted the difficulty in getting EMT's and that he is willing to do a training for drivers at any time. Commissioner Slaughter noted that there are usually anchor people (key volunteers who make it work as they go on a majority of the ambulance runs) which are available and they tend to wear out. Commissioner Adler indicated that the educational requirements for an EMT are very difficult and possibly could be less strict for rural areas. Kimberly Richardson noted that there are some tools to determine the reasons for people to volunteer, particularly the younger generation. Patrick Little indicated volunteers have left because they left the county, had a traumatic call or they are scared about getting COVID. He noted that there may be one call in two weeks or four calls in one day. Patrick Little again offered the idea of an EMS coordinator who could schedule the callout roster, training and ride-alongs, and do recruitment. Commissioner Hinkle again suggested a face-to-face meeting to get things moving and get a coordinator. Patrick Little said that he feels that a coordinator would be of benefit to the Drummond Volunteer Ambulance also. Jordan White said that a coordinator would be beneficial to figure out the issues and bring out public knowledge of the program to offer something beneficial. Commissioner Slaughter noted that a coordinator is something that has not been tried and he is willing to put some money into it. Patrick Little agreed to send a draft position description for an EMS Coordinator to the Board for consideration. Carl Sundstrom recommended a task force be formed to include the hospital administrator and the former ambulance coordinator. The Board plans to follow-up on the matter after receiving the documentation requested from Patrick Little.

The Board discussed issues with the Philipsburg Cemetery Board with Sexton Matt LaTray and Board member John Johnson. William L. Hoehne said that he has applied to be appointed to the Philipsburg Cemetery District Board. Matt LaTray said that meetings have been held, but it is difficult to do with COVID. He noted that people are being interred in

the proper places and there haven't been recent issues. The Cemetery Board will meet to discuss whether they recommend William Hoehne or not regarding his board application. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw indicated that liability insurance for the cemetery district needs to be obtained still, and this is crucial. Matt LaTray said that he has tried several insurance companies which would not insure the cemetery because it is not directly affiliated with the county. John Johnson, cemetery board member, said he was not aware of the insurance issue. Matt LaTray said the cemetery district would look into the insurance issue and obtain insurance if possible.

**Public Comment:** Scott Sylvester inquired whether the upcoming mediation with Flint Creek Hydroelectric LLC will be open to the public. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw advised that the meeting be closed since it may involve future litigation.

**Correspondence:** The Board noted receipt of a letter from Michael L. Miller of Philipsburg dated November 1, 2020 regarding the Georgetown Lake Dam. He offered several informal observations with respect to the financial challenges of operating the dam in the current regulatory environment and under the current agreement with the operator. The information by Mr. Miller was considered by the Board, but any decisions will be on a future agenda of a publicly noticed meeting. Kevin Dietz verbally informed the Board that he will be placer mining next year off Bear Gulch Road at Deep Creek.

The Board reviewed draft minutes for the October 27, 2020 regular session. The minutes were approved as presented on the motion of Commissioner Adler and second by Commissioner Hinkle. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

The session adjourned at 2:30 p.m.