

December 8, 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. The session convened with the pledge of allegiance.

Scott Sylvester, reporter with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper, attended the majority of the session.

Road and Bridge Superintendent Paul Alt was not able to meet with the Board today. Commissioner Slaughter reported that Paul Alt is getting a second repair estimate on the damaged John Deere tractor/mower. A decision on the who does the repair work will be made soon, and there is insurance coverage for the work, but a deductible will need to be paid. Also, Paul Alt would like to complete the rip-rap project on Rock Creek which was begun under an emergency exemption due to flooding. The Board will investigate if a 124 Permit is required. Commissioner Slaughter reported that RC Cleaning is making good progress on cleaning the house that the county owns at Hall. The cleaning company will submit before and after photographs when the project is completed.

Georgetown Lake level was reported at 6,428.56 feet according to the USGS lake level gage. The lake is approximately 11.28 inches below full pool. The outflow is estimated at approximately 35 cfs. Commissioner Hinkle moved to reduce the outflow to 30 cfs and Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. Paul Tallon with Flint Creek Hydro was notified to reduce the outflow to 30 cfs. Commissioner Adler commented that the Commission has the lake level on the agenda every Tuesday, but the public and state agencies only come when there is an emergency.

Dustin Muhly, PHEP (Public Health Emergency Preparedness) Coordinator, met with the Board and gave the COVID-19 update. Jeremy Aal, Board of Health appointee effective January 1, 2021, attended. Dustin Muhly reported that there are 8 active cases in Granite County, 859 new cases in Montana and 763 deaths in Montana. He said that he feels that the numbers are good and reflect that people are following the guidelines. The CDC rolled out new guidelines last week, including that quarantine is now 12 days, if a negative test is received on day 5 people are off quarantine on day 7. Scott Sylvester inquired about the delay in getting test results and how it affects the program. Dustin Muhly indicated that the Health Department will work with people and it usually takes 5 days for the virus to be detected. The Pfizer vaccine has been received in Montana, about 10,000 doses, for larger

hospitals in the state. Moderna vaccine will be distributed by the end of next week or so. All of the vaccines will be administered under a phased implementation program. Granite County Medical Center will soon receive some of the Moderna vaccines for medical workers and nursing home residents in Phase One; Phase Two calls for providing vaccines for people over 65 or with underlying medical conditions; Phase Three will be the general population. The Pfizer vaccine, an mRNA vaccine, is a two-dose vaccine, with the second dose being administered approximately one month after the first. Phase 1A – health care workers and nursing home residents; Phase 1-B - other critical workers, like the sheriff and deputies. He noted that vaccinations for the general population will probably be available by spring of 2021. There are resources for people who have had the virus, and they will be encouraged to receive the vaccination.

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 one of the side effects of the vaccination is soreness at the injection site and many of the other side effects are unknown at this time. The youngest age at which the COVID-19 vaccine is administered is not known at this time. The Pfizer vaccine is going to larger populations because it is packaged in such large units which must be used in a short period of time, so the Moderna vaccine, which is packaged in smaller units and does not need to be kept cold, will come to Granite County. Scott Sylvester inquired if a COVID-19 vaccine will be required of all staff at the medical center and Maria Stoppler, CEO/DON of the Granite County Hospital District, responded that it will not be mandated for staff, but staff will be educated on the benefits of the vaccine. Dr. Ransford noted that the county Health Department reported that there are 10 active cases in the county as an update to Dustin Muhly's earlier report; local high schools will allow 6 spectators per player during home basketball games (practicing now but games are starting in January 2021) and students are requested to be compliant with the COVID-19 guidelines. Only the home team can have spectators, per the rules set by the basketball conference. Jeremy Aal informed the group that he is a medical student at the Washington State University College of Medicine. He lives on Rock Creek and would like to return here when he completes medical school. Dr. Ransford complimented Jeremy Aal for stepping up and Dr. Ransford offered any assistance he may be able to provide. Scott Sylvester inquired why Jeremy Aal was not wearing a mask. Jeremy Aal responded that there is a question of what the coronavirus and COVID-19 are, a collection of symptoms, like the common cold; he feels that this is another type of cold or flu. Is this a tremendously deadly type of virus? No, it's not, except for a certain susceptible part of the population. Also, what is the effectiveness of wearing a mask in public? He reads many studies and one study indicated that masks provide only a .2% effectiveness and create a greater hypoxia in people and germs remain on the mask. In his opinion, there are more down sides than upsides to wearing a mask. Dr. Ransford respectfully disagreed from the information he reads and it is important that leaders set a good example. Jeremy Aal read the results of a trial which indicated that not wearing a mask has benefits and he noted that people have the right to make their own choices and assume the consequences. Dr. Ransford indicated that he will wear a mask so that he does not infect other people. Jeremy Aal indicated that the psychological stress from

masks and shutdowns is far more detrimental. Commissioner Slaughter indicated that this type of discussion is very educational. Carl Sundstrom suggested that the medical center publish when certain groups of people will be able to get the vaccine. Scott Sylvester indicated that he would write a story for the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper regarding vaccines and their availability in phases.

The Board considered potential projects to be submitted for 2021 to the Tri-County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) which must be related to the national forest. Commissioner Adler discussed the merits of reapplying for the Stony Creek Bridge Project and obtaining letters of support. Commissioner Adler moved to apply to the RAC for \$75,000 for 2021 for the Stony Creek Bridge Project. Commissioner Adler stated he is willing to go to the RAC with others to present and promote the county's request. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was also considerable discussion by Commissioner Adler on requesting letters of support from Fish & Game, bridge users, and local property owners, and this was agreeable to the other commissioners. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board considered the proposal of Executive Assistant Mike Kahoe for a revised remote work schedule until June 30, 2021. Commissioner Slaughter reviewed the proposal. The Board discussed an alternate proposal and agreed that County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw would do research on a proposal which would involve Mike Kahoe being in a consulting position in return for the county paying his health insurance until June 30, 2021.

The Board considered the supplemental pay for essential county employees who stayed on the job during the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner Adler moved to postpone the matter until next week's meeting due to Deputy Clerk and Recorder Becky Mickey's emergency absence today. Commissioner Slaughter seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. Due to additional information received from County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw, Commissioner Adler revised his motion to go ahead with the supplemental pay up to \$1,000.00 for essential county employees who stayed on the job during the COVID-19 epidemic using CARES Act funds, subject to an advertised public hearing to be held later before the Board. Commissioner Slaughter seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board considered the Continuation of Operations (COOP) Plan for county government in the courthouse. The matter was discussed with Jackie Bolster. Due to Deputy Clerk and Recorder Becky Mickey's emergency absence today, Commissioner Adler moved to postpone the matter until next week's meeting. Commissioner Slaughter seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment: None.

Correspondence: The Board noted receipt a letter from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) dated December 3, 2020 regarding permission to delay the tabletop exercise of the Emergency Action Plan to 2022.

The Board reviewed the draft minutes for the December 1, 2020 regular session. The minutes were approved as presented on the motion of Commissioner Adler and second by Commissioner Slaughter. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously with Commissioner Hinkle's verbal proxy.

The session adjourned at 1:50 p.m.