

November 24, 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.

Commissioner Adler said that he apologized for his language at the last meeting, but he said that he did not apologize for what he said, only the language used in expressing his points.

Commissioner Slaughter acknowledged the Flint Creek Titan's winning the state Class C Championship in Drummond last weekend, which speaks well for our youth and the entire county, especially during a tough year with the epidemic. Even with the epidemic, the team and coaches found a way to play and to win the championship.

Road and Bridge Superintendent Paul Alt met with the Board and gave his report. He reported that the crew is doing cold patching, he is looking for a new place to store asphalt millings and there are some possibilities being investigated, the crew is continuing to work four ten hour shifts per week until the weather changes, and more delineator posts are being ordered. He noted that chip sealing is being considered for the coming summer (already publicly bid out and base agreement reached) and the Board discussed the number of miles to be chip sealed. The proposed chip sealing agreement, a more substantial agreement than the base agreement, will be put on next week's agenda. An old county-owned Dodge pickup at the Drummond container site was discussed. The board agreed that it should be taken to the junk vehicle yard as it has no value and is of no use to the county, and this was done on the motion of Commissioner Hinkle and second by Commissioner Adler. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board discussed the house owned by the county at the Hall Road Department. The Board reviewed a quote dated November 20, 2020 from RC Cleaning Services LLC of Missoula in the amount of \$8,000.00 to professionally clean the house. Discussion was held on what the rent would be once the house is cleaned out and painted. The Board noted that if a county employee rents the house that it would be automatic security for the Hall Road Department Shop. Commissioner Adler moved to have the house professionally cleaned by RC Cleaning Services and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. After the house is cleaned, there would be more discussion in a noticed public meeting regarding renting the house and the monthly rent amount. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board discussed advertising for general trucking services for 2021 in case extra trucks are needed for Road Department projects. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw had drawn up a draft advertisement (notice to bid) for the Board's review. Commissioner Hinkle moved to advertise for the general trucking services in the local newspaper with bids being opened on December 22, 2020 at 9:00 am local time. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Slaughter reviewed that if trucks are needed that the lowest bidder is called first, then the next higher bidder is called, etc. The Board noted that the asphalt millings used on county roads are free from the State of Montana, Department of Transportation and the county does not buy the millings.

Georgetown Lake level was reported at 6,428.76 feet according to the USGS lake level gage. The lake is approximately 8.88 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.

As an administrative matter, the Board agreed that there will be no regular session the last week of December, as is the tradition.

Extension Agent Ben Hauptman met with the Board and presented the FY2021 Extension Services Agreement between Montana State University Extension and Granite County. The total cost to be paid by Granite County in the agreement is \$81,251.14, which includes agent salary support, support staff salaries and travel. Commissioner Adler moved to approve the agreement and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. The Board requested that when his supervisor does his evaluation that they meet with the Board to review and discuss the evaluation. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw commented that he feels that Ben Hauptman does an excellent job as County Extension Agent.

Dustin Muhly, PHEP Coordinator, met with the Board and gave the COVID-19 update. Commissioners Adler and Hinkle agreed to wear a mask if Dustin Muhly met with the Board in person. Through Zoom, Dustin Muhly reported that there are 21 active cases in the county, and total cases for Montana are 5,559 and 630 deaths. Butte-Silver Bow County is having a serious outbreak of COVID-19 cases, and is currently overrun with testing so they are only testing symptomatic people. He noted that the grant for public health can reimburse the FEMA Fund for money spent from that fund for COVID related activities before federal COVID funds were available. He noted that the tobacco prevention person is now doing contact tracing and he noted that he gets many emails from areas that need help with contract tracing. Also, the county health department would like some office supplies and track phones for contract tracing, plus an additional signage kit for immunizations. He noted that he has discussed the expenditures with the public health nurse. Commissioner Adler moved to expend up to \$2,500.00 of the new public health grant for the items stated. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously. 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 community spread is occurring and people are not wearing masks as they should. He emphasized that wearing masks is the only way to slow the epidemic but some people are not wearing masks in public places. Commissioner Slaughter asked what the Board of Health could do and there was a discussion on that. Commissioner Adler noted that any closing of businesses will be the end of many businesses. Dr. Ransford noted that larger hospitals in Montana are at or near capacity and some are not accepting COVID patients. Elena Gagliano inquired what the current COVID patients are treated with and also, which laboratories are used for the tests. Dustin Muhly reported that when the Montana State Laboratory is full, tests are sent to other laboratories in Salt Lake City and to Montana State University and the Rocky Mountain Laboratory in Hamilton. Scott Sylvester inquired whether any Granite County cases are hospitalized and no one present knew that answer.**

**The Board reviewed a preliminary draft position description for a Director of Emergency Medical Services for Granite County. The preliminary draft position description was drawn up by Patrick Little, president of the Philipsburg Volunteer Ambulance Association. The matter was on the agenda for discussion purposes only. Commissioner Adler stated that he is not in favor of hiring a coordinator until the number of volunteers improves. He also said that the hospital should be involved. Commissioner Slaughter said that if a plan is formalized that it should be taken to the hospital district board. Commissioner Hinkle suggested that a member of the hospital board meet with the Commission. Monica Prince questioned the Commission about what a coordinator will solve when there are basically no volunteers to coordinate here in Philipsburg. Commissioner Hinkle responded that the hospital should be involved and support a coordinator position. Commissioner Slaughter responded that the coordinator would schedule the responders and conduct training. Commissioner Adler said that he does not feel that a coordinator would solve anything since there are no volunteers. Commissioner Hinkle noted that the people are paying taxes to have an ambulance service which is not being provided. Monica Prince suggested that you lead by example. Commissioner Slaughter reiterated that at this time no one is being hired, that this is just a discussion. Monica Prince said that there are 25 members on the Philipsburg Ambulance roster, but no one is going on calls. Discussion was held that some volunteers became tired of going on repeated calls to the same residence. Commissioner Slaughter noted that there are no anchor people in Philipsburg. Monica Prince said that two people, who were working part-time to be drivers, requested to be drivers, but were never called for training. She continued that it does not matter what equipment is purchased if there is no one to go on runs; it may be an internal problem. If there are 25 volunteers on the Philipsburg Ambulance, where are they? Commissioner Slaughter responded that there have been advertisements and articles in the paper to get volunteers. He continued that when COVID hit, the Board was able to pay the ambulance people, but when they were no longer paid, they did not volunteer. Monica Prince indicated that the Drummond Ambulance works well because there are four dedicated people who go on most of the runs. Commissioner Adler said that it may not be beneficial to offer incentives because they are volunteers.**

Monica Prince suggested that letters be sent to all the people on the Philipsburg Ambulance roster and ask them if they are going to volunteer or not. She said that a coordinator is not the answer. Sheriff Scott Dunkerson commented that a coordinator would have nothing to coordinate and he said that other services are being called in if the Philipsburg Ambulance is not able to respond. He noted that every rural volunteer ambulance service in the state is suffering. He continued that in Anaconda, the ambulance and the fire departments were consolidated, but they have a different form of government. Sheriff Dunkerson noted that the sheriff's department often responds to ambulance calls and the Town of Philipsburg Road Department is great about volunteering to assist to get injured or ill people into a private vehicle for transport to medical facilities. He felt that there would be pushback if the local fire departments were asked to combine with the ambulance service. He noted that there is a model that is working well in Philipsburg and it is the fire department. He has been advising businesses that if they are planning a big event that they should plan to provide their own emergency service. Blanche McLure reviewed the difference in revenue between the Drummond and Philipsburg Ambulances with the Drummond Ambulance routinely bringing in \$30,000 or more each year and, so far this fiscal year, the Philipsburg ambulance has brought in just over \$300.00; also, a position is being considered to be created in the middle of a fiscal year. The Board indicated that the position is only being discussed and if it were decided to create the position, it would be considered with the next fiscal year's budget. Cary McLure spoke before the Board, and also presented a letter outlining her comments and also asking several questions about the possible coordinator position and ambulance service in the county.

Potential legislative bills to benefit small volunteer ambulance services, like Drummond and Philipsburg, were discussed. Potential items for legislation included a pension as an incentive for people volunteering on a long-term basis (possibly using a part of 9-1-1 tax funds), increase the amount that a volunteer could make under the Good Samaritan Law, and making the EMT training less difficult for new first responders. Commissioner Slaughter said that it seems that it is a good idea to have a retirement, like the fire department, as an incentive. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw noted that the county has liability insurance in place for emergency services personnel and it may be a good idea to try to focus on the pension idea and new legislation allowing that, and leave the other matters alone to give the legislature one item to consider. Cary McLure inquired how it would be paid. The Board discussed using a portion of the 9-1-1 funds as a funding source, with the recognition that the legislature would have to amend statutory law to allow for that. Also, the 9-1-1 tax could potentially be raised slightly to allow for such pension funding. Discussion on how many proponents there would be and several people in the room said they would be a proponent at the legislature. The Board agreed not to request an amendment to the Good Samaritan statute in Montana law, but to concentrate on the retirement at this time. Scott Sylvester suggested that it would be a good idea to contact other counties that are in the same position to get support for the legislation. Commissioner Hinkle agreed to relay the decision to his son, Jedidiah Hinkle, who is a legislator in the House of Representatives. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

The Board reviewed the proposed Employee Leave Request Form for employees requesting leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw said that he had reviewed the form and it is acceptable. Commissioner Adler moved to approve the form and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw met with the Board to request permission to purchase a prosecutor case management computer system called Prosecutor by Karpel for his office, which is reimbursable with CARES Act funds. He noted that Karpel is putting this program in many county attorney offices across Montana and it is customizable to suit his office. He noted that other counties are doing this and has been reimbursed through the CARES Act. The cost of the program to Granite County, which includes start-up and one year support services, is \$11,850. Also, he noted that you do not have to commit to using the software program for more than one year. Commissioner Adler moved to approve the request for the initial purchase with the county attorney budgeting any upgrades in future years. Commissioner Slaughter seconded the motion. Commissioner Hinkle indicated that he would approve the purchase the program through the county attorney's budget, but he is not in favor of using federal money for the purchase. Scott Sylvester inquired how this would make the county attorney's job easier. Blaine Bradshaw noted that it contains a huge bank of legal forms and discovery information could be sent using the cloud, which would save postage of approximately \$1,000 per year. He feels that it would be a benefit to the county. The motion carried with Commissioners Slaughter and Adler voting in favor of the motion and Commissioner Hinkle voting to oppose the motion. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

Barbara Cahill, Director of the Philipsburg Area Community Library, met with the Board and presented a written report. She highlighted the current members of the library board and noted that the basement is rented until October 2021, the library is on budget for the year, a \$10,000.00 pay down was made on the loan by Friends of the Library, book sales during the summer netted \$800.00, some aspen trees have to be removed due to roots invading the sewer line, story time has started, and all COVID precautions are observed. Hot spots have been donated by the Montana State Library and can be checked out just like a book. She feels that it is fortunate to be able to keep the library open during the pandemic. She emphasized that and the library board is thrilled with the new building; it is everything they hoped for and more. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

The Board held the first reading of Granite County Ordinance No. 2020-1 Nuisance Dogs. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw noted that it is the same language as used in last week's discussion. Barbara Cahill inquired if it is for the whole county and County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw responded it includes all of the county, except the incorporated towns of Drummond and Philipsburg. Scott Sylvester with the *Philipsburg Mail* newspaper attended.

The Board reviewed the application of Linda Smith for appointment to the Valley Cemetery District Board. The Board noted that Linda Smith has served on that board for many years and that this was the only application received for the position. Commissioner Adler moved

**to appoint Linda Smith to the Valley Cemetery District Board for a term ending October 2, 2023 and Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Public Comment: None.**

**Correspondence: The Board agreed to write a letter to Senator Steve Daines in support of the XL Pipeline on the motion of Commissioner Hinkle and second by Commissioner Adler. The motion carried unanimously. The Board received written notice from Sheriff/Coroner Scott Dunkerson that Deputy/Coroner Thaddeus Smith is resigning from the Granite County Sheriff's Department effective December 7, 2020. The Board received notice from RAC Coordinator Jeanne Dawson with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest that 2021 grant proposals to the Tri-County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) are due on January 14, 2021.**

**The Board reviewed the draft minutes for November 17, 2020 regular session and noted that the mediation which had been scheduled for November 16, 2020 had been canceled and will be rescheduled. The minutes for the November 17, 2020 regular session were approved as amended on the motion of Commissioner Hinkle and seconded by Commissioner Adler. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.**

**The session adjourned at 2:15 p.m.**