

March 2, 2021

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 Charles Hinkle, Commissioner Blanche McLure and Commissioner Scott Adler attending. Also attending were County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw (by Zoom), Clerk Sue Antonioli, and Assistant Billie Kulaski. 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 internet-based program available for 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* joined the session in-person. Also joining the session by Zoom were Elena Gagliano, DES Coordinator Jackie Bolster, and Drummond Mayor Gail Leaper.

ROAD AND BRIDGE SUPERINTENDENT/SOLID WASTE MANAGER WEEKLY REPORT: Paul Alt joined the session by phone. The estimate for repairs on the 4-wheel drive plow truck currently in the Philipsburg shop is between \$15K and \$20K. Commissioners discussed options for repair versus trading in, after concerns were raised regarding the budget the decision was made to get through this season and visit again about this at the end of the fiscal year with it being a Board agenda item.

Public Comment: Susie Browning e-mailed the Commission and County Attorney on the morning of March 2, 2021 asking questions and providing public comment. Susie Browning thought the agenda item to give a County road crew employee first option to rent the County house in Hall, from the previous week was not sufficient for the Commission to decide upon. The County Attorney responded to the e-mail and disagreed, stating the agenda line item was sufficiently broad regarding the rental agreement. Susie Browning also asked about the improvements in lieu in rental payments agenda item, and whether this was already decided by the Commission, or if it still needed to be decided upon. The County Attorney responded in the e-mail discussed above to say that this decision had not been made yet and would be made during the meeting by the Commission as it is on the agenda. Susie Browning questioned whether it was good policy to give first option to the road crew employees to rent this house, and she also encouraged the Commission to do a site visit to the rental house to see all the work that needs to be done firsthand. The Commission reviewed Susie Browning's e-mail and considered her comments in making the decisions discussed in this current paragraph. Commissioner Adler moved to proceed with the Hall Property rental agreement agreed upon the previous week with Nathan Brashear, but without the Commission allowing Nathan Brashear to deduct completing improvements from his rent payments. Nathan Brashear may sand the floor in the living room, but this work would not be deducted from any rent payments. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. Concerning additional repairs and improvements needed to the rental property, Paul Alt is responsible to return to the Commission on March 9th, 2021 with an itemized report of repairs and costs for final

improvements. Commissioners will then decide at that time whether to put the project out to bid or complete the repairs and other improvements with County contractors.

GEORGETOWN LAKE LEVEL OUTFLOW: The lake level was reported at 6,428.64 feet according to the USGHS lake level gage and the dam tender's report. The lake is approximately 10.08 inches below full pool. Over the past several weeks, the outflow has been set by the County at 25 CFS and it appears to be at 25 CFS for outflow. Commissioner Hinkle moved to keep outflow at the current level for this week. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

BIG SKY PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY: Elena Gagliano, County's representative on the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, reported via Zoom and had provided her written report for the website. She would like to see more people from Granite County involved in the project. She discussed the benefits of having the railway back in the County, especially in the Drummond area. Gail Leeper, stated that no one from the project has reached out to Drummond, but that she is interested in learning more. The Mayor will contact Elena to discuss further.

USGS WATER-RESOURCES MONITORING SERVICES; JOINT FUNDING AGREEMENTS: Commissioner McLure moved to continue with the USGS monitoring program, including approving USGS agreements, and Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. There was no public comment, and this motion passed unanimously.

CONTINUING THE USE OF ZOOM FOR COMMISSION MEETINGS: The Board held a discussion on continuing to use Zoom for weekly Commission meetings. Commissioner McLure felt that the Commission should continue to use Zoom. Commissioner Hinkle stated that it causes a lot of confusion and he prefers meeting to face to face. Commissioner McLure stated we are still in a pandemic. Maria Stoppler, joining by Zoom, stated that using Zoom increases community participation and access to our local agencies is a great benefit that should be continued indefinitely; she also added that masks and social distancing are still a recommendation in closed spaces. Gail Leeper also agrees Zoom needs to continue as she can't always drive up to Philipsburg, especially for a 10-minute meeting. Elena Gagliano agrees with both Gail Leeper and Maria Stoppler, and stated that this is the new norm and that the public should have the option on whether or not they want to attend in person or remotely. Gail Leeper made the point to the Commission that utilizing Zoom is about your constituents and what they want. Blaine Bradshaw reiterated that during the Legislative sessions held via Zoom that people are required to identify themselves when they would like to speak or give public comment, but are not required to identify themselves to attend via zoom. Sandra Barbara commenting via Zoom, stated that she doesn't generally identify herself because she doesn't speak, however she does like to attend the meetings via Zoom to listen in and would like to have the Board continue on the platform. With no further comment, Commissioner McLure moved to continue using Zoom, as well as integrating training for the Board and Assistants to support in the efficiency and ease of using the platform for future meetings. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. Scott Sylvester added an additional public comment, stating that he has been attending Commissioner

meetings for several years and has heard the Commissioners discuss at length different ways to garner public interest in attending meetings, pointing out the importance of having the platform and the amount that attendance has increased via Zoom. The motion carried with only Commissioner Hinkle dissenting.

COVID-19 UPDATE; IMT REPORT; Dustin Muhly joined in person to present his PHEP (Public Health Emergency Program) report. There are currently zero active COVID cases in Granite County and nationally Montana is doing well. Currently 800 vaccinations have been administered to persons in Granite County (1/3 of the population). He said the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine was recently given emergency use authorization from the FDA. Hopefully he said, we will be moving to Phase 1C (60 years and over) in the next couple of weeks. Granite Pharmacy has vaccines available and the public can access their website (www.granitepharmacy.com) for more information and to sign up to receive a vaccine. The breakout rate is currently at six cases per 250K statewide; breakout case refers to contracting COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated. State is currently set up for variant testing and will continue to test different strains of the virus as time goes on. Scott Sylvester made public comment, asking Dustin Muhly if he had any information on people transmitting the virus after being vaccinated. Dustin Muhly stated that it is still possible to transmit virus after vaccination. Maria Stoppler stated that there is not a lot of definitive information on transmission after vaccination, and that it is still the recommendation from the CDC to wear masks and social distance.

COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH UPDATES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND DECISIONS ON BOARD POSITION OPENING, INFECTION CONTROL POLICES & OTHER DECISIONS ON COVID-19 HEALTH ISSUES; USE OF DRUMMOND HEALTH OFFICE FOR GRANITE PHARMACY VACCINATIONS: Currently the County Health Board is still looking for a new Board Member. Commissioner Hinkle stated to the public in Zoomland that we need one Health Board member for a full Board of Health. After discussion Commission Adler moved to allow the Granite Pharmacy to utilize the Drummond Health Office to provide vaccination to the public. County Attorney Bradshaw had drafted a proposed, written use agreement, a Letter of Understanding. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. There was no public comment and the motion carried unanimously.

LETTER OPPOSING SECRETARY of U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR APPOINTMENT: Commissioner Hinkle moved to send the letter. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. Commissioner McLure stated that she doesn't think it's the Commissioners' role to dispute any federal confirmations and is not in favor of the letter. Elena Gagliano gave public comment agreeing with Commissioner McLure. The motion carried with only Commissioner McLure dissenting.

LETTER TO MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES (MACo) IN REGARDS TO OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 421: The draft letter lightly criticizes MACo for its lack of response (notice of opposition) and communication with Granite County, and asks them to work with Granite County going forward to help House Bill 421 get the amendments needs

and get it passed. Commissioner Hinkle reported that the volunteer ambulance personnel pension bill (House Bill 421) was tabled in the Legislature. County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw attended via Zoom and stated that under House Bill 421 that it would be discretionary for Montana counties to be part of pensions and discretionary on whether to use 911 Funds or not to fund the program for personnel in each county. The House Bill is tabled for two years to study the bill. Commissioner McLure made a comment about working with Beaverhead County, and Blaine Bradshaw followed up stating that it would be good to work with Beaverhead County to get a resolution. Blaine continued that it is legal to use 911 funds as currently written into the draft House Bill, but MACo disagrees with the legislative lawyers who approved legalities of House Bill 421. Elena Gagliano also commented via Zoom asking about PILT funds, to which Blaine Bradshaw replied that House Bill 421 as currently proposed (before being tabled) would allow Counties to use PILT funds for the volunteer ambulance personnel pensions. Commissioner Hinkle stated that many counties have not completed 911 mapping and will start from scratch so they will use all of their 911 funds, and that our County is not one of them but was lumped into that executive action. As proposed, Montana counties can use other funds to fund the pension though, not just 911 Funds. Commissioner McLure responded to provide comments about her conversation with Eric Bryson at the recent MACo convention. The proposed bill was sent directly to the sponsor legislator and was not submitted to MACo, therefore MACo didn't understand that this was coming from Granite County. Commissioner Hinkle stated that the matter is critical at this point in regards to ambulance services in the County, and there are people in this county that will die if this process takes two more years. Commissioner Adler moved to send the MACo letter and include that it be sent to all Counties in the State of Montana as well as all State Representatives. Commissioner McLure seconded the motion. Public comment was given by Scott Sylvester, asking Commissioner McLure if MACo had any alternatives to this legislation. Commissioner McLure responded that MACo wants us to work together to get the funds. The motion carried unanimously.

GRANITE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE; Maria Stoppler, via Zoom, reported on hospital district's financials. Utilization was decent for the month of January. The hospital has met their benchmarks in cat scans, ER, and hospital days. Drummond Clinic visits have been picking up. She provided explanation of COVID funds and how they are to be appropriated. COVID hospitalizations are going down. The majority of people in Phase 1B have already been vaccinated. The hospital is receiving approximately 100 COVID-19 vaccines a week generally, but this depends on shipping and availability. There are several nursing positions currently open.

COUNTY HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN OPTIONS / RENEWAL: Pam Walling from MACo joined via phone to provide additional information on the County Health Plans. Pam Walling explained again that health premiums are going up 5% to Granite County and she encouraged the County offering four health insurance plans. Commissioner Adler would like to have some time to hear from the County employees to get feedback on what plans they would like. The issue has been tabled until next week.

Commissioner Adler did not attend the afternoon session.

COUNTY SHOP IN PHILIPSBURG, ENCROACHMENT PROPOSAL; FINAL AGREEMENT: This session was tabled until next week as the final, proposed agreement from Jo Durgin's legal counsel is not completed, but should be in the near future.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Elena Gagliano asked the Board if Commissioner Adler was present? Commissioner Hinkle responded no.

CORRESPONDENCE: NONE

BOARD MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 23, 2021: Commissioner McLure moved to approve the February 23, 2021 minutes. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT: The session adjourned at 1:23 p.m.