

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF THE COMMISSIONERS
MEAGHER COUNTY, MONTANA

Tuesday

July 18th, 2023

8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Met in Commissioner's Chambers

Meeting Called to Order:

Chair Brewer called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Commissioners Present:

Chair Rod Brewer, Vice Chair Ben Hurwitz, and Commissioner Errol Galt were present for the meeting.

Minutes:

ACTION #1

Commissioner Galt moved to approve the minutes from July 11th, 2023, Commissioner Hurwitz seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved.

Library Report – Rachel Wahlstrom:

Rachel Wahlstrom enter the chambers at 8:50 a.m.

Rachel opened by reviewing the wildflowers at the library. The Friends of the Library prepares a flyer every year identifying the wildflowers blooming at the Library. Wahlstrom stated a small portion of the wildflowers were inadvertently mowed last week. She has met with the United Stated Forest Service (USFS) and a split rail fence will be constructed to define the boundary between the USFS and the Library. The area the wildflowers are growing is mowed at the end of the growing season.

Wahlstrom then reviewed the statistics for Fiscal year 2022 - 2023. The Library had 1100 more books checked out this year than a previous year. From January – June 2023 through the Library Partner Program our library lent out 2324 books and our patrons checked out 2307 book from partnering libraries.

The Summer Reading Program has grown by 50% over last year and the added free lunch program sponsored by Mountainview Medical Center at the end of summer reading has helped increase participation over last year. The Hoopla App allows library patrons to check out 7 e-books per month.

Wahlstrom stated the ADA door is not finished. They are waiting on the electrician to finish the wiring. Currently the door is turned on and off each day by the library staff.

Citizens' Concerns Tax Appraisal Notices:

Beth Hunt, Steve Hicks, Shannon Lenz, Rick Ellison entered the chambers at 9:30 a.m.

The group voiced their concerns regarding the 2023 Tax Appraisals Notices. The appraisal notices were mailed out mid-June. Hunt stated her property has a considerable increase in the estimated taxes and is very concerned the elderly community members may not be able to pay the increased property taxes. Hunt stated that 65% of Meagher County is elderly compared to 17% nationwide.

Hicks stated his appraisal notice showed a considerable increase over previous years. The Commission stated per MCA 15-10-420 counties are limited in the number of mils that can be assessed each year.

Ellison stated the unfairness of taxing property owners on sales prices when the intent is to live on the property and not to flip the property.

Lenz stated she will not be building on her property in fear of an increase in property tax on the improvements.

Galt added counties have no control over the State School levy (95 mils) and the State Levy - University (6 mils) totaling 101 mils, those mils go directly to the State of Montana. Galt stated approximately 63% of the mils support schools (20% to the State of Montana (101 mils) and 43% to the local school) leaving the county with control over approximately 37% of the mils.

Hunt expressed a need for the legislature to protect our community and shared a letter written to Governor Gianforte expressing her concerns and asking for a special legislative session.

Galt stated a special legislative session can be called to order by the Governor or by a 2/3 majority of legislatures. Neither has been done to date.

Congressman Matt Rosendale Representative Randy Bogden:

Cancelled

1030 am US Senator John Tester – Caitlyn Avery:

Caitlyn Avery, Claire Kloster

Avery, Kloster and the Commission discussed several topics of interest including immigration, county roads, work force housing, mining, agriculture and business.

Hurwitz touched on our recent Forest Land Access Program (FLAP) grant application. for stabilizing the Smith River Road. The application was denied because the project was not large enough or under One million dollars. The road is used heavily by recreationalist floating the Smith River and accessing the United States Forest Service (USFS) land. Avery will look into some USDA funding opportunities.

Galt touched on the issues from the 2021 fire season with the USFS when they would not let county firemen fight the fire in the Big Belt mountains allowing the fire to blow up into what is now known as the Woods Creek Fire, one of the larges fires ever in Meagher County.

Avery inquired about mining in the county. Hurwitz replied the county is in support of Tintina and the Black Butte Copper Mine and we are waiting for a Supreme Court Ruling in the Trout's Unlimited vs. DEQ & Tintina oral arguments. A ruling is expected in 6-12 months. When the mine becomes fully operational, work force housing will be an even larger issue than it is right now.

Ogle inquired about any potential for funding for a local Public Information Officer. Avery will look into some funding options.

11am Treasurer's Report – Maura Kusek:

Maura Kusek entered the chambers at 11 a.m.

Kusek presented the June Treasurers Cash report along with the Harmon quarterly report and interest adjustment.

The Commission discussed the Harmon quarterly report with US Bank and the possibility of moving the Harmon Investment to another firm. Further discussion will take place on August 1st at 10:30 a.m.

1130 am Department of Revenue – “Road Show” appraisal Notices

Public Meeting 11:30a.m. – 3:00p.m.

Commissioner’s adjourned to the courtroom to attend the Department of Revenue “Road Show” Presentation on Property Appraisal Notices. Several members in the community attended the meeting.

The Department of Revenue was represented by Jason Boggess, Katie Kakalecik, Ray Masse and other employees from local field offices.

Boggess presented an overview of the tax appraisal process and answered questions from the public. A link to the Department of Revenue power point presentation is below:

<https://mtrevenue.gov/property/>

1230 Public Comment:

No Public Comment

Claims Approved:

Commissioners were presented with Check #60488 through Check #60510 totaling \$12,944.19. All Checks were signed as presented.

Meeting Adjourned:

Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Next Meeting:

Commissioners are scheduled to meet Tuesday, August 1st, 2023.


CLERK & RECORDER


CHAIRMAN




VICE CHAIRMAN


COMMISSIONER

Note: Minutes taken by Chief Financial Officer Dayna Ogle
Distributed August 1st, 2023 to Chairman Rod Brewer, Vice Chair Ben Hurwitz, and Commissioner Errol Galt, and Clerk & Recorder Liv West.