

JOINT MADISON and JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING

DATE: February 24, 2021

LOCATION: Borden's Conference Room, Whitehall, Montana

COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA at 10:00 a.m.

ATTENDEES: Madison County Commissioners Ron Nye, Jim Hart and Dan Allhands; Jefferson County Commissioners Leonard Wortman, Bob Mullen and Cory Kirsch; and those on the attached attendance roster.

Welcome & Introductions: Commissioner Wortman called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., those present introduced themselves, and each Commissioner briefly reviewed current projects.

- **Commissioner Allhands:** Ongoing COVID concerns; lack of a jail in Madison County and farming out detainees to other counties; upcoming improvement project at the County's nursing home in Sheridan.
- **Commissioner Nye:** Development of Fairgrounds improvement foundation; buy-sell agreements in the works for the Children's Center in Twin Bridges.
- **Commissioner Hart:** Gien Bridge and Varney Bridge were replaced in 2020; plans in place to work on Jack Creek Road with Big Sky community support; Western Federal Lands access grant in process for work on 13 miles of Cliff and Wade Lakes Road; no COVID cases in office buildings, but nursing homes have had some cases.
- **Commissioner Kirsch:** Replacement of Meridian Bridge by Willow Creek important for emergency access, with funding provided by grants and contributions from Broadwater and Gallatin Counties; Land Access road work on Whitehall Road between Whitehall and Boulder was a big project, is much improved and almost completed; the new road supervisor is working out very well.
- **Commissioner Mullen:** New bridge construction across Hot Springs is almost finished; no TSEP projects and roads are fairly well caught up for now; economic development projects.
- **Commissioner Wortman:** Meat processing feasibility study almost done, had some water issues, figuring out financing, a couple of sites have been identified and the project sounds very promising; Legacy Center to be located in the former Forest Service building off the interstate; agreed to take a lead role in putting together the Montana Pro Rodeo Hall and Wall of Fame; Big Sky grant was awarded for developing a master plan and PAR for the Western Legacy Center in Boulder; looking at offering a veteran's center in collaboration with the VA with services such as education, pain management, PTSD treatment, etc; Highway Patrol wants to move headquarters, including airport and helipad, to Jefferson County, talking with Colonel and Deputy Attorney General and expect it may happen rapidly.

Discussion of Solid Waste Issues: The Commissioners discussed Solid Waste issues. Ron stated that the Solid Waste Board has not yet agreed to what has been discussed previously, and the Commissioners discussed successful sites and those that are experiencing issues. Problem-solving options were discussed including limiting hours and manning the sites, and further discussion ensued about out-of-county users, the distances people travel to use various sites, fees, fencing, ease of use, inter-county cooperation, and educating customers and workers. Brian Hohn, Jefferson County Solid Waste, reviewed an agreement for Willow Creek and Three Forks to use Gallatin County's landfill, described changes made to Whitehall's trash service, and emphasized the need to look at the process differently. He described how a recent project to improve operations at the County's busiest site in Montana City is working and said people are adjusting to the change. He also stated that if an attendant is added to any site, traffic will decrease.

Discussion of Ambulance District: The Commissioners discussed ambulance districts. Commissioner Nye said a plan for establishing an ambulance district for the area south of Whitehall is being worked on, he has heard positive feedback from people who want the coverage, and it may take several months but will get done. He noted that Madison County has a new Clerk and Recorder, and briefly reviewed the districting process. Susan Pullman, Jefferson County Ambulance Board, said there is a vacancy on the Ambulance board and it could be filled by someone from Madison County, and she reviewed plans for improvements such as installing an ambulance lift system using CARES Act grant funds. Jim reviewed Madison County's two existing ambulance services, now operated through the County's two hospitals, and reviewed considerations involved in setting up a County-wide ambulance district.

Extension Agent and JDLC Report: Kaleena Miller, Madison & Jefferson County Extension Agent, reviewed office staff and what they do, and the number of calls and walk-ins handled by the office which increased from 2019 to 2020 even though due to COVID the flow of traffic was controlled. Alison Richardson, MSU/JLDC, reviewed the staffing and organization chart of Jefferson Local Development Corporation (JLDC) and its interaction with MSU/Extension, presented MSU Extension highlights for 2020, and she and Tom Harrington, MSU/JLDC, discussed ongoing projects for both organizations, including tailing reprocessing with Golden Sunlight Mine, Sunlight Business Park, meat processing, wind development, work on the historic Borden's building to improve commercial/meeting space and upstairs AirBNB rental, Montana Development Center (MDC) reutilization, establishment of a Western Legacy Center along the interstate near Whitehall featuring a Pro Rodeo Hall and Wall of Fame, and implementing the County Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Eric Seidensticker, JLDC, reviewed additional ongoing projects including South Campus redevelopment in Boulder, tax district management and development, business development, and partnering with Headwaters and Anaconda Local Development to utilize a Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) grant. Eric went on to review additional areas of community development engagement: work with the Jefferson River Watershed Council on drought management, a completed groundwater study, and reclamation in the Bismarck Mine/Lake Louise area; economic development support to both counties including education and classes, business planning and resource assistance; successful wrap-up of 15 projects under the Boulder Development Fund; community outreach through Montana Economic Developers Association; and meetings with the Community Transition Advisory Committee (CTAC) and Boulder Transition Advisory Committee (BTAC). Alison discussed working on establishing child care and affordable housing in the community, the Jefferson County Mental Health Local Advisory Council, and the other various organizations she is working with including the Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Headwaters RC&D Board.

Ag Agent Report: Kaleena discussed agriculture and natural resource activity for 2020, noting that she has been in the Ag Agent position for two years. She discussed priorities and results from conducting a needs assessment a year ago, and aspects of her job such as pest applicator training, Master Gardener classes, Rancher Roundtables, assisting community members with tree pruning, and youth gardening workshops. She reviewed several of her activities in response to 200-250 individual inquiries such as bringing in pest management experts, helping new farmers and farmers markets, and conducted taste tests for kids. She discussed partnering with local entities to build programs such as meat processing, babysitting courses, pollinator projects with mason and honeybees, and working with organizations including the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group, County weed departments, and the TriCounty Firesafe Working Group. Looking forward, she anticipates adding more field days into her schedule, conducting tree care workshops in response to many fruit tree questions, establishing a rural etiquette education program to teach new residents about the area and being good rural neighbors. She emphasized that the needs assessment was helpful in being able to develop new programs, especially since she and the 4-H Agent were new in their jobs, and she has seen an increase in 4-H program enrollment, greater involvement in State 4-H, and improved trust and relationships with the Jefferson County fair council.

4-H Agent Report: Mikayla Hudson, 4-H Agent, reported on 4-H activities for 2020 and enrollment trends for Madison and Jefferson Counties. She reviewed activities including executive committee meetings, conversations with community members and volunteers on evenings and weekends when they are more available, working with award committees, and attending meetings and working on projects with the Jefferson County Fair Board, health boards, junior leaders, and 4-H clubs. She reviewed training and education conducted in areas such as adult and junior leadership, social media, Dining with Diabetes certification, and financial wellness education. She also worked with the State Land Committee on horse shows and 4-H in the schools. The 2019-2020 4-H year Jefferson County fair was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID, but Mikayla reported that the Madison County fair was

a huge success due primarily to the hard-working volunteers – all shows and sales were able to be held in person, and even with the decrease in animals, gross sales were over \$400,000. Looking ahead, Mikayla discussed the Executive Committee’s emphasis on kids in the coming year, focusing on leadership and positive role models and improving communication and outreach. She also discussed continuing the successful Babysitter Training courses, having informal club leader sessions to make sure people are getting what they need from the Extension office, support for youth opportunities at the Jefferson County Fair, and continuing with junior leadership development.

Discussion of Extension Agent Relationship: The Commissioners and several attendees discussed extension agent relationships with the community, communication needs, what has and has not been working, ideas for improvement, advances in Ag and 4-H in the last year, working hours, the time it takes to establish trust and effective teams, programs, and partnerships, responding to complaints and constructive criticism, community and County support, and the benefits of having two agents.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Jane Bacon, Madison County Commissioner’s Clerk.

Minutes approved by the Board of Madison County Commissioners on June 1, 2021.

Dan W. Allhands, Chairman

Attest: _____
Paula McKenzie, Clerk and Recorder

Ronald E. Nye

James P. Hart

Minutes approved by the Board of Jefferson County Commissioners on _____.

Leonard Wortman, Chairman

Attest: _____
Bonnie Ramey, Clerk and Recorder

Bob Mullen

Cory Kirsch