

March 14, 2017

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a special session on March 14, 2017, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Cole, Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Peck, County Administrator Darren Coldwell, Accounting Deputy Wendy Drake and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson.

Commissioner Cole opened the meeting with the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

10:00 AM Election Discussion/Election Administrator Leigh Riggleman:

Darren said we are looking at efficiencies and asked about the costs of elections in general for ballots, mailers, judges etc...is there any place cost savings? Darren said he is surprised by the cost of running elections. Right now Lincoln County has 7 polling places; could we go down to 4 or 5 to reduce costs?

Leigh said 3 or 4 years ago polling places were consolidated. McCormick is an active polling place, but there is potential for Yaak and McCormick to consolidate. Trego and Fortine voters are already unhappy with consolidating. Leigh stressed that the county will receive complaints with more consolidation of polling places. Wendy asked if possibly staff in the Clerk and Recorder's Office can prepare the envelope packets ahead of time to decrease judge costs. Robin said her staff has other responsibilities as well, but is willing to accommodate to help bring down costs. There are approximately 4,000 absentee voters in Lincoln County. Leigh explained the ballot prep process and the security issues of having too many ballot boxes in multiple areas.

Leigh clarified that in the upcoming Federal Election in May, that if Lincoln County held a mail ballot election, a ballot would automatically go to approximately 10,000 voters; absentee voting has a 95% return compared to 45% return at the polls. There was a brief discussion about the difficulty securing polling places for the May Federal Election due to graduation ceremonies. A possible location may be the Memorial Events Center.

Commissioner Cole asked about the cost savings of having a mail ballot election. Leigh said it would be approximately a 40% savings. Leigh commented that it is difficult to get election judges. Many judges are senior citizens in their 70's.

Commissioner Bennett suggested a dry storage area to help accommodate the large volume of space for ballot boxes and other election equipment, or potentially cleaning out a commissioner vault.

Leigh informed the commissioners that she is on the agenda tomorrow to discuss Resolution No. 985 authorizing a mail ballot election for the Federal Election to be held in May if HB305 passes.

10:45 AM FY 17/18 Budget Planning:

- Darren submitted a budget calendar that he worked on with Robin for FY 17/18 to the commission, asking them to be attentive to the dates.
- The Budget Committee will work through the entire budget process. A public survey would list all the high dollar services and ask about levels of service. Potential questions about increased levies to provide for services would provide good public input. April 6 and 7 is scheduled to meet with the Budget Committee members and Dan Clark.
- Darren said he visited with County Auditor Bob Denning about the Cost Allocation Plan. It will take some time to conduct the time analysis and change the current plan. Commissioner Bennett expressed that we should move away from allocated costs, indicating that not many counties are using this process. Wendy suggested that the General Fund charge for services; do it direct.
- Darren said the county has 18 employees over the age of 60 and we are almost at 50% employees with dual insurance. Darren commented that 80% of the counties are insured by MACo. Darren said the Buy Out option would reduce the overall age of county employees, potentially decreasing the premium. Darren said he is still researching the Retiree Buy Out and Cash in Lieu of Insurance.
- Commissioner Peck discussed dropping back one employee on each road department by not replacing retirees. Commissioner Peck also questioned the expenditures associated with the county plowing Schedule A roads.
- Commissioner Cole asked about putting limits on comp, sick and vacation time.
- Darren said he has spoken with GIS contractors about services vs. a full time employee. Darren will schedule a discussion on the commissioner's calendar.
- Darren brought up the state share entitlement money that is received annually. The percentages and distribution of those funds has not changed for many years. Commissioner Peck questioned why fire districts receive a portion of those funds when they have their own levying authority. Darren said he is asking the commission for guidance with the state shared entitlement going to districts. The commissioners agreed to stop the entitlement share going to districts. Robin suggested a letter should go out respectfully to each district notifying them of the change since it would be a loss in expected revenue.
- Wendy informed the commission that airport is almost over budget.

12:00 PM Meeting adjourned

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mike Cole, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Robin A. Benson, Clerk of the Board