

## February 14, 2024

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on February 14, 2024 in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Letcher, Commissioner Teske, Commissioner Hammons, Administrative Assistant Jennifer Brown and Clerk and Recorder Corrina Brown.

Meeting allows for zoom participation. Present online were Rebecca Nelson, Ray Stout, Jesse Haag, Chanel Geer, Michelle Byrd, Scott Shindledecker, Jerry Regh, Darren Short and Alyssa Ramirez.

Commissioner Letcher opened the meeting with the **Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer**.

09:45 AM **Jesse James Mullen – Secretary of State Candidate**: Present were James Mullen, Sue Orr, Melanie Howell, Sierra Gustin, Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Michael Webb, Kevin Peck and Glen Hollingsworth.

Jesse James Mullen, a candidate for Secretary of State, introduced himself as a Deer Lodge native and a former journalist. He shared his background as a reporter and explained his desire to advocate for and serve the community has motivated his decision to run for office. Emphasizing transparency, Jesse underscored the importance of conducting public work in the open. Reflecting on his executive experience as a newspaper owner across six states, Jesse highlighted his role as a listener to leadership, aiming to support their efforts. He believes that the Secretary of State should serve as a facilitator, fostering collaboration between counties to realize their visions without imposing unfunded mandates. Jesse expressed his desire for elected representation from rural areas, advocating for a more balanced representation across the state. Commissioner Teske inquired of Jesse's opinion regarding hand counting versus using tabulators. Jesse responded by stating that tabulators, provided they lack internet connectivity, are a highly secure system. Jesse also mentioned having conversations with twenty-six election chiefs across the state, expressing his support for the serious approach taken by the state's Clerk and Recorders in safeguarding elections. Commissioner Teske asked about Jesse's position on mail-in ballots and concerns about potential fraudulent votes. Jesse acknowledging there is always a slight risk of fraud associated with any type of ballot. He noted that with over 50% of the state voting mail-in ballots that ship has sailed. Jesse stressed the importance of voter ID and suggested as technology evolves, there will be a push for alternative voting methods and emphasized a need for thorough vetting of these alternatives. Commissioner Teske reiterated a statement he had heard, suggesting that there's a trade-off between convenient elections and secure elections. Jesse stressed the significant error factor in hand counting. Jesse pointed out a future hurdle with mail-in ballots is the changes occurring within the USPS. He mentioned the closure of the Missoula sorting center and shift of operations to Spokane will likely result in longer turnaround. Commissioner Letcher voiced concern with individuals utilizing same-day registration. Jesse responded by stating that if individuals are eligible to vote, they should have the opportunity to register to vote. He emphasized the importance of accommodating those who wish to vote. Jesse advised digital ID will become a serious conversation in the near future. Commissioner Letcher mentioned the effectiveness of a statewide database in improving the accuracy of voter rolls.

10:00 AM **Health Department – Task Order for Immunization Services**: Present were Jennifer McCully, Kathi Hooper, Bryan Alkire, Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Michael Webb, Kevin Peck and Glen Hollingsworth.

- Jennifer McCully Public Health requested approval of an amendment to task order 24-07-4-31-125-0 Immunization Services for additional covid funds. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve the amendment to the task order for Immunization Services. Second by Commissioner Hammons. No comments. Motion carried.

Jennifer advised a Mental Health/First Aid curriculum is set for the Eureka High School in March. She added Troy Superintendent Christina Schertel is presenting the curriculum to the school board and it may be scheduled this year.

Kathi provided an update on Environmental Health, stating that the EPA has reduced the national annual air quality standard for particulate matter. This adjustment necessitates a return to monitoring. The previous standard was 12, now lowered to 9, while the current reading for the area is around 11.

- Kathi presented 2024 cooperative agreement renewal between DPHHS and Health Department for Licensed Establishments with no changes: 24-07-4-21-125-0. **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to approve the cooperative agreement of licensed establishments. Second by Commissioner Teske. No comments. Motion carried.

Kathi provided an update of letters on community decay. She currently has compliance plans for nine properties. She stated four properties have complied this year while seventeen are in various stages of the process.

Kathi advised the Libby landfill expansion is still pending DEQ review and she will continue to follow up.

Bryan provided an update on ongoing activities: Libby landfill logging operations are currently in progress, with sawing nearing completion and hauling set to commence next week. The Eureka landfill wall construction, which engineers confirmed aligns with the original design criteria, are under discussion. Safety gate will be installed at the reload building. Metal crushing will begin Monday, weather permitting and the road department is preparing to commence digging.

Commissioner Teske questioned open hours at Libby Creek. Kathi stated they are posted at the site and can also be found on the website. Troy Ball Park site signs are also being updated. IT has requested bids on camera systems.

Bryan distributed and discussed the 2023 Annual Report of Lincoln County Solid Waste and Recycling. Bryan advised gates are ready for installation at the Troy transfer site and confirmed there is a rover in Eureka which will allow adjustments to the site access hours.

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues/Old Business: Approve Minutes / Water Heater Replacement Decision:** Present were Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Michael Webb, Kevin Peck and Glen Hollingsworth.

- Review of February 7, 2024 regular meeting minutes for approval: Commissioner Letcher recused himself due to absence. **Motion** to approve the February 7, 2024, minutes by Commissioner Hammons. Second by Commissioner Teske. No comments. Motion carried.
- Water heater replacement decision: Commissioner Hammons reported inspecting the leak currently running to a drain and expressed concern about potential damage if it breaks, given its rooftop location. Commissioner Teske noted that both units, dating back to 1978, have exceeded their useful life. He highlighted a lead time for the work and presented cost estimates: \$73,112 for one unit and a discounted price of \$136,377 for both units. He emphasized the need to restore the circulation pumps to operation. Discussion ensued regarding the scarcity of companies willing to bid on the project. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve option 2 replacement of both boiler systems at the same time due to a reduced cost of \$136,377 from PILT. Second by Commissioner Hammons. No comments. Motion carried.
- Commissioner Letcher advised he attended the Western Montana Conservation District meeting last week as the MACo small town representative discussing changes coming regarding septic's and water quality.
- Commissioner Letcher advised construction on the Eureka fairgrounds is planned to commence this September.
- Discussion of RAC committee replacement request. Commissioner Hammons expressed an interest.

10:45 AM **Public Comment Time:** Present were Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Michael Webb, Kevin Peck, Glen Hollingsworth, Patty Rambo, Kathi Hooper and Jesse Haag.

Michael Webb expressed concerns about Granite Concrete, citing last week's article in The Montanian regarding air quality standards. Commissioner Teske inquired of Kathi any regulations governing the output of such plants. Kathi mentioned plants have permitting requirements and if they exceed the emissions on their permit then the Health Department becomes involved. Kathi advised the Health Department doesn't issue permits; they address violations of permits. Commissioner Teske stated just because you smell it that doesn't mean there is a violation, if they have excess emissions then the Health Department would get involved. Michael mentioned the smell prompts residents to close their windows. Commissioner Teske noted Noble has a batch plant near the old PAMIDA that has operated for years without complaints. Michael expressed frustration over the impact on property values. Commissioner Teske explained that without a violation, neither the county nor the state DEQ can intervene. Patty asked about the approval process and expressed concern about the lack of awareness until the plant started operating. Michael asked about the plant water source. Commissioner Teske suggested checking the Montana DEQ website regarding the permitting process for an asphalt plant as this facility should be listed. Patty confirmed her concerns should be directed to the DEQ who issues the permit. Patty noted that while the plant may not be visible from the road, the smell is unavoidable. Kathi mentioned they do have emissions requirements for particulates. Glen Hollingsworth inquired about zoning. Commissioner Teske explained there is a citizen zoning process but noted that once a permit is issued, zoning regulations can't override it. Glen questioned who did not inform property owners about the installation of the plant, who takes care of us.

11:00 AM **County Building Insurance Coverage Update – Kevin Peck MACo:** Present were Veronica Bovee-Anderson and Kevin Peck.

Kevin advised the MACo board approved a 5 ½% increase in insured value (ITV) during the renewal process, based on replacement cost. MACo utilized the last appraisal from June 2020 to assess all county buildings. The discussion focused on buildings, their contents, and coverage. Kevin explained there is a rate per 100 of value. MACo provides a liability premium as it operates as a pool and seeks carriers. Ken calculated that last year, the rate was about .24 per 100 of value, and the normal industry is seeing a 15-20% increase. Kevin stated last year, the total property premium was about \$78,800 on roughly \$28 million of coverage value. Kevin mentioned all this equates to approximately \$9-10k, with the majority of liability in law enforcement environment. Property remains the only option as liability is tied to the number of employees and lost data. Kevin suggested reviewing each building and its associated coverage while considering their uses. Kevin requested a thorough review of structures be conducted and returned to him.

11:35 PM **Adjourned**

**LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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Josh Letcher, Chairman

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

Corrina Brown, Clerk of the Board