

April 23, 2025

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on April 23, 2025, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Teske, Commissioner Duram, Commissioner Hammons, Administrative Assistant Nikki Fox and Clerk and Recorder Corrina Brown.

Zoom participation: Aleana Woody, Beth Archer, Bryan Alkire, Chanel Geer, Colette F, Darren Short, Deb Burrell, Feleisha Storkson, HR, Jesse Haag, John Hyslop, Melanie Howell, Nikole Hofmann, Noah Pyle, Pete Shatwell, Ray Stout, Roland Jorgenson, Sierra Gustin, Traci Street and Tony Wickham.

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

09:00 AM **EBMS Health Insurance Update/Renewal:** Present was Dallas Bowe.

Dallas Bowe, Human Resources, presented a 2025 medical cost comparison. Pete Shatwell, Leavitt Group, reviewed renewal options, noting an 8.8% overall increase for the Joint Powers Trust (JPT) administered by EBMS, 10.36% for Blue Cross Blue Shield (with a \$80,000 transition credit and no life insurance, with a 9.5% rate cap next year), and 31.14% for Pacific Source (with a \$116,000 transition credit and no life insurance). He advised JPT has averaged a 4% annual increase since 2017. He noted this year's increase was affected by higher retiree utilization. Commissioner Teske remarked that the transition credits don't offset the overall costs, while Dallas affirmed JPT's satisfactory service. **Motion** by Commissioner Duram to renew with JPT. Second by Commissioner Hammons. Commissioner Hammons requested that Pete collaborate with Dallas to educate employees on lower-cost prescription drug options. Pete advised that Smith RX offers the Connect Program, providing alternative sources for medications. He encouraged employees to respond to outreach regarding these alternatives and noted the available copay incentives. No public comment. Motion carried.

09:30 AM **EPA: Update on the Libby Asbestos Superfund Site:** Present were Beth Archer, Dania Zinner, Christina Progress, Melody Wunderlin and Nick Raines.

Dania Zinner, EPA, provided an update on the Libby Asbestos Superfund site, including a handout and online presentation as follows. She reviewed the status of operable units, noting that OU1 (export plant), OU2 (screening plant), OU5 (Stimson Lumber mill), OU6 (rail lines and rail yards) and OU8 (transportation corridors) have been partially deleted from the national priorities list. OU4 and OU7, which cover residential and commercial properties in Libby and Troy, remain on the list. The GIS and Response Manager system continues to be updated, and the 2009 public health emergency declaration remains in effect, allowing continued federal health care funding. OU3 remediation efforts at the mine site and surrounding forest areas are ongoing, with phase 1 focused on forested areas and phase 2 on the mine site and waterways. The remedial action objectives include reducing exposure risks to commercial loggers, firefighters, and rockhounds and minimizing asbestos migration. The EPA will present its preferred remedial option in a proposed plan, followed by a 30-day public comment period next summer. She reported a five-year review is underway, with results expected in June and a review meeting planned for July. The LARP planning meeting was held yesterday. It was mentioned that protecting against particulate matter offers additional health benefits and additional wildfire related information will be shared with Tony Wickham. The importance of the Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program (ARP) in supporting cleanup activities was emphasized. Commissioner Teske reported that materials such as crushed rock, topsoil, and pit run located on a Port property will need to be relocated from a sold parcel to one retained by the Port. He also referenced the LASOC quarterly report and highlighted the success of the program. Discussion on enhancing public awareness of ARP's role in property cleanup, including potential outreach through the Montana Realty Association.

10:00 AM **Administrative Issues/Old Business: Approve Minutes. Planning Project Contract MCR Grant Approval. Opioid Abatement Funding for K-9 Request. Drop-in Center Grant:** Present were Alisha Barrows, Brandon Holder, Darren Short, Deb Burrell, John Hyslop and Tina Oliphant.

- Approval of the minutes from April 16, 2025: **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to approve the April 16, 2025 regular commissioner meeting minutes. Second by Commissioner Duram. No comments. Motion carried.
- Planning Project Contract MCR Grant Approval: Continued due to pending legal review.
- Opioid Abatement Funding for K-9 Request: Commissioner Teske read a letter from Zach Sherbo, Health Department, endorsing the Sheriff's Office K9 and handler training request with funding of \$22,500. **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to fund a K9 unit out of the county opioid funds. Second by Commissioner Duram. Discussion of K9 unit use in detection as well as in promoting public education. No public comment. Motion carried.
- Drop-in Center Grant: Commissioner Teske opened discussion of the drop-in center grant proposal. Deb Burrell explained the grant offers free funds with no required match and that the application deadline is today and has an option to terminate. She stated that she and Alisha Barrows are willing to put this together, emphasizing the community need for such a facility to assist with paperwork, doctors and travel. Commissioner Hammons requested documentation showing that the county has the capacity to manage the facility. Sheriff Short expressed his support, noting that it would be a tremendous resource for law enforcement, which encounters individuals in crisis on a near-daily basis. Alisha added that the center would serve as a place to bring people in crisis. **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to move forward with the grant with the option to terminate if it does not work out as it has no cost to the county. Second by Commissioner Duram. Deb clarified this is 8-5pm Monday–Friday only, with a restricted level of care. Commissioner Teske noted Judge Sheffield will administer this with 2.5 more employees. No public comment. Motion carried.
- Commissioner Duram noted an upcoming meeting with Boundary County.

10:15 AM **Public Comment Time – Non-Agenda Items:** Present were none.

Tony Wickham noted the executive order signed by President Trump includes the HECLA mine on the approved list. He emphasized the potential economic benefits to this area. He also mentioned legislation recently passed by both the House and Senate concerning the Election Administrator reporting to the governing body and anticipates authorization by the Governor this week. Commissioner Teske confirmed they are aware.

10:30 AM **Update on BRIC Grant and Additional Funding Opportunity with Lincoln Electric:** Present were none.

Commissioner Teske announced the BRIC grant and additional funding opportunity with Lincoln Electric has been rescheduled for April 30th.

11:00 AM **Title III Funding Proposals:** Present were DJ Welch, Jennifer Nelson and Noah Pyle.

Jennifer Nelson, County Forester, presented an overview of Title III funding as part of SRS, noting a current balance of \$498,494.50. She explained that Title III has traditionally been her main funding source for fuel reductions, but recent federal actions require unused funds to be returned to the U.S. Treasury. She added the current continuing resolution does not include reauthorization of SRS or new funding, meaning no additional funds will be available in April 2026. She initiated the annual noticing process and reached out through EMA to various groups that could benefit. She advised four proposals were received through the comment period, all of which meet the requirements for Title III funding. Jennifer submitted a total funding request of \$278,000, recommending approval of the following:

Libby Volunteer Fire Dept.	Develop a 32,000-gallon water site for firefighting in the WUI (Snowshoe or Flower Creek Road)	\$86,000
Troy Volunteer Fire Dept.	Purchase 25 LC3 Harris fire-rated radios to replace outdated models	\$82,000
Troy Volunteer Fire Dept.	Equip a 2008 water tender with tank, radio, lift, lights, siren, plumbing, and electrical supplies	\$41,000
Lincoln Co. Search & Rescue	Option 1: Purchase & outfit a new Dodge Ram 2500 truck with rescue gear and components	\$69,000
Lincoln Co. Search & Rescue	Option 2: Purchase truck only (Search & Rescue)	\$61,000

She advised Title III projects need to be initiated by September 30, 2025 and funds obligated by September 30, 2026. Commissioner Teske questioned the remaining balance if the request is approved, and Jennifer listed prior agreed to obligations and emphasized the importance of supporting local fire departments given the unpredictable fire season and reduced availability of federal and state workforce. Jennifer advised the notice addresses emergency services. **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to approve the Title III funding of the four proposals to include the outfitted truck totaling \$278,000. Second by Commissioner Duram. No public comment. Motion carried. Claims will be filed through Jennifer.

11:30 AM **Public Hearing: TRFD Annexation Iron Creek, Freeman Ridge, Shannon Lake Rd Area:** Present was DJ Welch.

Commissioner Hammons read the public hearing notice on petition #314478 from Troy Rural Fire District requesting annexation of properties in the Iron Creek, Freeman Ridge and Shannon Lake Road Areas. No public comments. DJ advised these annexations will be coming in all summer. Commissioner Teske requested a resolution next week.

11:45 AM **Resolution 2025-16 Annexation of Shannon Flats/Itsaview Subdivision into Troy Rural Fire District:** Present was DJ Welch.

Commissioner Hammons read resolution 2025-16 annexing Shannon Flats - Itsaview subdivision into the Troy Rural Fire District. **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to approve resolution 2025-16. Second by Commissioner Duram. No public comment. Motion carried.

11:48 AM **Adjourned**

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Brent Teske, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Corrina Brown, Clerk of the Board