

September 3, 2025

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on September 3, 2025, in the Lincoln County Courthouse Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Teske, Commissioner Hammons, Commissioner Duram, Administrative Assistant Nikki Fox and Clerk and Recorder Corrina Brown.

Zoom participation: Chanel Geer, Dallas Bowe, Feleisha Storkson, Jesse Haag, Kathi Hooper, Melanie Howell, Scott Shindledecker, Sierra Gustin, Suzanne Resch and Traci Street.

10:00 AM **USFS:** Present were Brian Berreman, Chad Benson, Kate Stephens, Nick Raines and Ray Stout.

Chad Benson (USFS) discussed the following: Mitchell Jackson and the Fleetwood Jack 20-million board feet timber sale on the Jackson Creek side. The FS recently received \$9 million in reissued funding, enabling road work and project preparation to include Area 56 and Norman McCedar. Ripley’s biological assessment has been submitted to Fish and Wildlife for review following a court remand and the Knotty Pine project recently had its merits heard. He discussed the new statewide stewardship agreement under the Good Neighbor Authority—signed by Governor Gianforte and the USFS Chief—which is still in the planning phase, with mapping and delineation of the 200,000-acre focus area underway in collaboration with the Flathead; it is intended to supplement existing GNA efforts. Other projects include Greater Trego (active), Trojan Defense (bidding soon) and Battle Cry (currently solicited). He discussed a surge in fire activity, with 40 fires in the past week—many burning in 10-year-old fire scars—including the 600-acre Ransom Fire (about 23% containment). He noted the threat to reforested areas and high fuel loads from downed trees as major risks. Despite thin resources, fire response has been largely effective. Timber sales are performing strongly, with \$25–30 million in bids expected in the next couple of weeks and 62 million board feet sold to date—all receiving bids and all above minimums.

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues/Old Business: Approve Minutes. PILT Claims. Board Updates. Troy Rural Fire District Annexation Petition #317150:** Present were Brian Berreman and Ray Stout.

- Approval of the minutes: **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to approve the August 27, 2025 regular meeting minutes. Second by Commissioner Duram. No public comment. Motion carried.
- PILT claims: None
- Board Updates: Commissioner Duram advised of Eureka Dispatch 911 improvements and Fairgrounds meetings on electrical upgrades and sewer work coordination. Commissioner Hammons noted the Troy airport walking path will be closed Friday-Saturday for resealing and crack repairs funded by a Fish and Wildlife Parks grant.
- Commissioner Teske read a public hearing notice regarding property owner petition #317150 for annexation of 803 North Fork Keeler Road into the Troy Rural Fire District to be held here on October 1, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.
- Commissioner Teske advised the sewer ARPA grant project was officially closed out following completion of paving on Cedar Street.
- Commissioner Duram reported the CDBG grant has been resolved and is moving forward.
- Commissioner Duram reported that the DEQ denied the county's petition regarding selenium standards and will implement a new standard of 0.8 µg/L in Lake Koocanusa.

11:00 AM **Final Budget Public Hearing & Adoption:** Present were Brian Berreman, Ray Stout, Scott Shindledecker and Wendy Drake.

Commissioner Duram read Resolution 2025-31, adopting the final operating budget and setting appropriation authority for fiscal year July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026. Commissioners advised the mill value this year was \$52,621 with appropriations of \$14,785,962 and total resources of \$15,712,521. No public comment. **Motion** by Commissioner Hammons to approve resolution 2025-31 with a correction to the public hearing date. Second by Commissioner Duram. Discussion that while budget cuts were made, they were not substantial enough to close the budget gap, which was filled using the Local Tribal Assistance Fund. They discussed challenges of increasing demand for services, stagnant tax revenues and limitations due to a high percentage of untaxable public land for which the County received about \$900,000 in PILT funding this year—about \$0.50 per acre. Commissioners noted the long-term budget remains unsustainable without increased revenue. Potential sources include forest projects and the restoration of timber receipts in the upcoming Farm Bill, especially in light of anticipated U.S. Forest Service timber sales. It was acknowledged that budget amendments are necessary, particularly to account for grant-related entries labeled as “unanticipated.”

11:15 AM **Public Comment Time Non-Agenda Items:** Present were Brian Berreman, Ray Stout and Scott Shindledecker.

Traci Street questioned the funding source for the budget shortfall and was informed the County will use the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund and that this year’s LATCF investment returns helped cover County wage increases.

11:30 AM **Adjourned**

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Brent Teske, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Corrina Brown, Clerk of the Board