

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF THE COMMISSIONERS
MEAGHER COUNTY, MONTANA

December 4, 11, 18, 2012

Wednesday

December 4, 2012

8:45am-2:40pm

Met in Commissioner's Chambers

Meeting Called to Order:

Chair Schlepp called the meeting to order at 8:45am.

Commissioners Present:

Chair Nancy Schlepp, Vice Chair Ben Hurwitz and Commissioner Herb Townsend.

Bruce Smith—Road Report:

Road Supervisor, Bruce Smith, visited with the commissioners to give his monthly report. They discussed the state of the gravel on a few county roads, some speed limit signs that were put up near Rick Jacobs's residence, and some equipment that was no longer needed. As for the equipment, which includes three discs for snowplows, Smith said there was not quite enough for an auction. He wondered if they could list it in the newspaper. Hurwitz asked if he could put it in an auction somewhere. Schlepp wondered if he could trade it for something useful. Hurwitz commented that the equipment is so specific and expensive, that no one in Meagher County would likely be interested.

Smith reminded the commissioners that the City has been using the roller, which he estimates to be between \$7000-8000 in value. Schlepp reminded Smith that any County property for sale would need to be listed and bids solicited. Smith understood but wondered if he could list the equipment in Great Falls and Billings, for example, where there might be more interest. Hurwitz suggested a trade journal. It was agreed that Smith would make a list of the equipment and possible places to list it. He left the meeting at 9:15am.

Minutes:

Action 1:

Hurwitz moved that the minutes from the November 13, 2012 meeting be approved with one change, and the minutes from the November 20, 2012 meeting be approved with no changes. Townsend seconded. A vote was held and passed unanimously (3-0).

Ambulance Garage:

Hurwitz raised the issue of the ambulance garage. He mentioned that he had spoken a few weeks ago with Ambulance Board Chair, Sara Driemeyer, about the delay in receiving the correct plans from Coast to Coast Carports. She was frustrated and did not know what they could do. He had seen her more recently, however, and the plans had been fixed. They are just waiting for the materials now. Hurwitz had asked her what the delays had cost the County in case they decided to pursue legal action. She replied that it really had not resulted in any added costs.

The commissioners briefly discussed a letter County Attorney, Kimberly Deschene, had drafted to Coast to Coast Carports sharing the County's frustration and asking them to rectify the situation, either by waiving or reducing the cost of the building. No further action was taken at the time.

Airport Courtesy Car:

The discussion regarding the possible airport courtesy car was tabled till public comment period when the Airport Board could be present.

Aerial Predator Control:

Schlepp raised the issue of the aerial hunting of coyotes that is currently carried out in Meagher County by the USDA Wildlife Services. She had received an e-mail from John Steuber from Wildlife Services outlining the program in Meagher County over the last three years. She pointed out that all contracted rates with the USDA are the same regardless of the county. Hurwitz commented that the \$450 per flying hour seems incredibly low, especially taking into account two people in the helicopter. At 101 hours over 3 years and 319 coyotes killed aurally, Townsend pointed out that is about \$141 per coyote killed. Hurwitz suggested including the entire \$22,000 the County pays a year for the services and it is closer to \$206 a head. He did concede, however, that it is nice when there is a problem to be able to call in the "air force." He added that Bill Galt, who recently expressed interest in the hunting, said he cannot do it for less than \$1500 an hour.

The commissioners briefly discussed the idea of paying a bounty on coyotes and letting the public take care of the problem. Schlepp said she liked the idea but wondered how they could guarantee that the coyotes were actually killed in Meagher County.

Grassy Mountain resident, Mike Leonard, joined the meeting at 9:50am.

Budget Amendment—Public Hearing:

Clerk & Recorder, Dayna Ogle, joined the meeting for a public hearing on a budget amendment for the library. There was no comment.

Action 2:

Resolution 2012 – 94

Budget Amendment

WHEREAS, the 2012-2013 budget has been set, and

WHEREAS, the City Mills for the Library (2220) totaling \$ 9384.00 were inadvertently left out of the Library's revenue budget and,

WHEREAS, the Library budgeted to receive \$16,734 from PILT and the Board of Commissioners have chosen not to utilize PILT money at this time and,

WHEREAS, the Meagher County Commissioners have agreed to increase the Library's Entitlement share to a total of \$19,203.00.

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE KNOWN AND HEREBY RESOLVED that the Meagher County Board of Commissioners are amending the Library's revenue budget to include the City Mill totaling \$9384.00 (nine thousand three hundred eight four dollars) and Entitlement totaling \$19203.00 (nineteen thousand two hundred three dollars).

Dated this 4th day of December, 2012

Attest:

Board of County Commissioners:



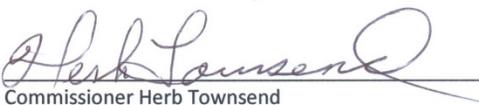
Dayna Ogle



Chairman Nancy Schlepp



Commissioner Ben Hurwitz



Commissioner Herb Townsend

Open Sealed Bids—Polaris Ranger:

Schlepp opened the two sealed bids for the 2011 Polaris Ranger being sold by the County Weed Department. The first bid was from Randy Porter for \$7600.00. The second bid was from Ken Ogle for \$8167.00.

Action 3:

Townsend moved to accept the higher of the two bids, from Ken Ogle for \$8167.00, for the 2011 Polaris Ranger, being sold by the County Weed Department. Hurwitz seconded. A vote was held and passed unanimously (3-0).

Fire District Taxation:

Joining this portion of the meeting were County Assessor, Becky Hurwitz-Leger; County Attorney, Kimberly Deschene; County Extension Agent, Nico Cantalupo; Grassy Mountain Fire District Board member, Rich Siebken; and Grassy Mountain residents, Mike Leonard, Rita Hickey, and Karen and Alex Gordon. County Fire Chief, Rick Seidlitz, joined the meeting by phone from Indianapolis.

Deschene began the meeting by telling the commissioners it was her understanding that changing the taxation of a fire district was something to be handled between the Department of Revenue and the Commissioners. Hurwitz-Leger countered that all she did in this case was take what information the County gives her and plug it into her system. Schlepp told Deschene they need her to draw up a resolution changing the taxation. Seidlitz told her it needs to be based on taxable valuation.

Schlepp clarified to the group that they were currently only discussing the Castle Valley Meadows Fire District, but that it was also her understanding that the Grassy Mountain Fire District had decided to dissolve. Deschene mentioned the possibility of a countywide fire district and said it would be easier for Grassy Mountain to be annexed into it if they did not dissolve, as it would only require approval from the Board of Trustees, as opposed to 40% of landowners and 40% of land mass in a petition.

Siebken stated he was unsure whether the people of Grassy would be interested in joining a countywide district. He said he was against any tax increase without an offsetting insurance benefit. Seidlitz told him that the assessment for County Fire generally is around 4 mils a year, give or take. He said the Grassy Mountain Fire tax would go away but the annual assessment would likely need to go up to around 6 mils. That would allow the County to retain the status quo, but also make the County all-risk, instead of just wildland.

Schlepp pointed out that most of the County currently is not in a fire district, which means there would still need to be 40% approval from those not covered in a district before Castle Valley and Grassy Mountain would need to decide whether to be annexed or not.

Karen Gordon shared her frustration that she and her husband have been paying the Grassy Mountain Fire tax since 1996, yet her neighbor, who does not live in Grassy and does not pay the tax, receives the exact same coverage. She said she wants to be taxed like those neighbors are. The commissioners agreed with her, saying that is what they want too. Hickey told her that the County sent a letter to Grassy landowners in 2010 giving an explanation of where all the funds collected through the tax had gone. Hickey said it is just the way it is, that one either needs to accept it or not, and then move forward. It was agreed to get Gordon a copy of that letter.

Schlepp stated that the County has tried for years to address the Fire District. The Board has been doing it as of late. And she feels that they are finally at a point where they can make progress. She also praised the great volunteers the County has, and Chief Seidlitz for the hard work he does in coordinating everything and bringing in funds to the County.

Deschene reiterated her advice for the Board to sit tight and see what happens. Schlepp reminded them that the County would have to receive 40% approval before a countywide district went into effect, at which point Grassy would still have the option to disband. Hurwitz wondered what happens to the money the County has already collected from the Grassy landowners for the fire tax. Seidlitz said he was unsure. Hurwitz-Leger said it would normally go into the new fire district. It was agreed that they would find out.

LUNCH:

The commissioners broke for lunch at 11:45. They returned at 1:00pm.

Derek Johnston and Charlie Marks, Stockgrowers—Stockyards Taxation:

Johnston and Marks met with the commissioners to discuss the Stockyards and how they are taxed. Also present was County Assessor Hurwitz-Leger. Johnston began by telling the commissioners the Stockyards are assessed \$615 a year in taxes. According to Hurwitz-Leger, he continued, the ground is outside the city and the property is valued at \$77,000, or over \$4000 an acre. She had reassessed it as Non-Qualified Ag land, which brings its new value to \$24,000. Johnston said that the \$615 they pay in taxes and the \$260 to certify the scales leaves very little left for maintenance and other issues.

Hurwitz-Leger added that is not an active business. She said she could not get the reassessment to happen before FY13 so they would still have to pay the FY12 taxes. They charge \$1.00 per

head and had 1300 head cross the scale this year so \$1300 in revenue. After taxes and certification, that only left \$400.

Hurwitz wondered if there was some way the County could help.

Action 4:

RESOLUTION 2012-#95

Hurwitz moved to forgive the taxes on the Stockgrowers for the year 2012, as they have been overpaying for a couple years due to incorrect assessment. As they have already paid the first half of the taxes, they would only be forgiven the second half, or \$307.50. Townsend seconded. A vote was held and passed 2-0, with Schlepp abstaining. It is therefore resolved.

Marks then mentioned land the Stockgrowers own at the Rodeo Grounds. It is used primarily by 4-H. They have buildings there. They would like to gift the land to 4-H but do not want 4-H to get hit with the taxes. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the best course of action would be to give the land to the County, as 4-H is supported by the County. That way 4-H could continue to use the land, but the land becomes exempt from taxes.

Jon Lopp—Sheriff Report:

Sheriff Lopp shared his monthly report with the commissioners. Of note, he said that his office has been less busy since hunting season came to an end. He also mentioned a donation to Search & Rescue from a doctor from Helena who was trying to land his plane at the airport on an extremely windy day. Undersheriff Dave Wendt and Deputy Shane Sere day saw the plane struggling and came to its rescue. They helped the doctor and his wife get shelter for the plane. He was so thankful he donated \$250 to Search & Rescue.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Airport Courtesy Car

Members of the Airport Board (Ed Roatch, Bill Galt, Kurt Burns, John Zawada, Sam Berg) and local businessman and City Council member, Mike Eby, joined the commissioners to discuss the possibility of the County providing the Airport with a courtesy car. This item was on the agenda for the morning but was tabled so the Board could be present.

Schlepp reiterated her opposition to the idea arguing that it was not the job of government to provide such a car. Burns countered that 30 airports statewide have courtesy cars, 16 of which were acquired with grants from Montana Aeronautics. He added that Sheriff Lopp was okay with having a lockbox for the key and his department taking down the information from the drivers. Schlepp asked how many of the airports with courtesy cars were County owned. Galt said he was not sure but that every courtesy car he has ever used had County tags.

Roatch added that having a car really promotes the community, as pilots will tend to visit airports with courtesy cars so they can leave the airport. Burns added that with the airport getting jet fuel in the near future, there should be even more interest.

Hurwitz asked who would own the car. Burns said the County would, but with the \$7000 they have from selling the old fence, they could purchase it themselves. What about tires and insurance, Hurwitz asked. Burns said titling and insuring a \$2000 car would cost about \$329 a year. Schlepp asked about liability. Burns said Townsend airport requires the drivers to sign a release stating they will be using their own insurance.

Hurwitz asked if there was any chance some kind of private enterprise would do this, maybe the Chamber of Commerce. Galt said with avgas and jet fuel, the County will benefit along with the local businesses. Burns presented the commissioners with a list of five local businesses who would support a courtesy car: Roadhouse, Tenderfoot, Red Ants Pants, Branding Iron, All Seasons.

Townsend told Burns the Board should pay for the courtesy car. Galt responded that purchasing the car was not the problem. Hurwitz again asked about maintenance. Eby said that the pilots themselves often replace things, like a battery, or tires, for example.

Burns added that most airports require their courtesy cars to stay within the County. Schlepp said she is not comfortable with a pilot bringing his or her family and going to Showdown for a ski weekend in a County-owned car. Galt countered that it is exactly that kind of thing that encourages commerce.

Schlepp conceded that she agrees with most of the Board's points, but she still does not feel government should be involved. Hurwitz agreed. Galt asked the commissioners if they would license and insure the car if the Airport Board managed to acquire it. Townsend told him to buy a car and stick it out there and leave the County out of it. He added that he would even pay the license fee out of his own pocket just to keep the County out of it. Hurwitz agreed. Schlepp wondered if the Chamber would help out.

In the end, it was decided by the commissioners that the County would not provide the Airport with a courtesy car. No formal action was taken.

Donna Morris—Health Insurance

Clerk of the Court, Donna Morris, visited with the commissioners to discuss some health insurance issues she has been having, and some potential solutions to these problems.

Claims:

Commission was presented Voucher #1333, CK#44827 through CK#44879, totaling \$22,633.48. Commission approved and signed checks as presented. Also presented was Voucher #1330, CK#44826, totaling 243.87. Voided were CK#44669 from Voucher #1320 and CK#44808 from Voucher #1329. Also presented were Health Insurance Voucher #1331, CK#218331 through CK#218337, totaling \$21,934.17; Payroll Deduction Voucher #1332, CK#218338 through CK#218344, totaling \$94,163.93; and Payroll Voucher #5, CK#218305 through CK#218330, totaling \$10,301.45. Commission approved as presented.

Meeting Adjourned:

Chair Schlepp adjourned the meeting at 2:40pm.

Next Meeting:

Commissioners are scheduled to meet Tuesday, December 11, 2012.

CLERK & RECORDER

CHAIRMAN

SEAL

VICE-CHAIRMAN

COMMISSIONER

Note: Minutes taken by Assistant to the Clerk & Recorder, Nate Sanders.
Distributed December 11, 2012 to Chairman Schlepp, Commissioner Hurwitz, Commissioner Townsend, and Clerk & Recorder Ogle

Tuesday
December 11, 2012
9:00am-2:00pm
Met in Commissioner's Chambers

Meeting Called to Order:

Chair Schlepp called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

Commissioners Present:

Chair Nancy Schlepp, Vice Chair Ben Hurwitz and Commissioner Herb Townsend.

Sue Phelan—Treasurer Update:

Treasurer, Sue Phelan, visited with the commissioners to discuss the County's cash. She told them she had received a letter from Bank of the Rockies President, Mike Grove, telling her the bank was going to drop its pledge on the County's deposits by 10 basis points. She has already decided to begin purchasing CDs at Dutton State Bank, \$100,000 a month, but wants to look elsewhere as well since FDIC insurance only covers \$250,000 of deposits total.

County Extension Agent, Nico Cantalupo, joined the meeting at 9:05am.

Ten basis points on the \$4 million the County has at Bank of the Rockies is \$4,000. Schlepp told Phelan to do whatever she sees fit. Townsend agreed. Hurwitz commented that it sounds like Meagher County is burdening the local banks. Phelan said she would investigate STIP and also shop around at other banks.

Courthouse Closing Christmas Eve:

Phelan remained for this part of the meeting. Schlepp said she was against closing the courthouse on Christmas Eve but if it was going to happen anyway, she wanted to make sure it happened fairly. People who must work that day—Sheriff's Department and Dispatch—should receive holiday pay, as long as anyone not working gets paid as well, she suggested. Phelan noted that in the past, when the County closed on Christmas Eve, employees were required to take vacation time. Hurwitz felt that letting the employees have the day off is already one bonus. He did not feel it necessary to give two bonuses by paying them as well. Phelan countered that the County does so little for its employees as it is, this would be a nice gesture.

Action 1:

RESOLUTION 2012-#96

Townsend moved that Meagher County employees receive Christmas Eve 2012 off with pay. Those employees required to work will receive holiday pay. Hurwitz seconded. A vote was held and passed 2-1, with Schlepp opposing. It is therefore resolved.

Castle Valley Meadows Fire District Taxation:

Action 2:

Resolution 2012-97

WHEREAS, the Castle Valley Meadows Fire District has been assessing taxes based on acreage,

WHEREAS, the fire district tax should be assessed by property valuation.

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE KNOWN AND HEREBY RESOLVED that the Meagher County Board of Commissioners is resolving to change the taxation method for the Castle Valley Meadows Fire District from acreage to property valuation beginning January 1, 2013.

Dated this 11 day of December, 2012.

Attest:

Board of County Commissioners:


Dayna Ogle


Chairman Nancy Schlepp


Commissioner Ben Hurwitz


Commissioner Herb Townsend

Minutes:

Action 3:

Hurwitz moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting (December 4, 2012) with one change. Townsend seconded. A vote was held and passed unanimously (3-0).

Rick Seidlitz—Fire/DES:

Fire Chief, Rick Seidlitz, joined the commissioners for his monthly update. Schlepp informed him they had passed the resolution changing the taxation of Castle Valley Meadows Fire District from assessment based on acreage to one based on taxable valuation. She then mentioned an e-mail that had been sent by Karen Gordon, a resident of Grassy Mountain, demanding an accounting and an audit of the funds that have been collected by the County from the Grassy Mountain landowners for the purpose of fire protection. It was their common opinion that the County would not pay for an audit, but since the County's financials are audited on an annual basis, she would be welcome to come in and examine the records and reports herself.

They briefly discussed the funds that had already been collected and are sitting in an account unspent. Townsend asked Seidlitz what would happen to those funds. Seidlitz replied that he was pretty sure the law requires those funds to go into the new district, assuming the countywide district becomes reality and Grassy is annexed into it, but they need to be certain before it happens.

They discussed how wonderful Meagher County's volunteers are, and how so many people are so generous with their time. Seidlitz acknowledged the difficulty getting volunteers to fight fires during the work day, as volunteering would cost most firefighters lost wages. They also discussed Martinsdale Fire Area and Castle Bar and Two Creeks as well.

Road Department Equipment:

Hurwitz mentioned that Road Supervisor, Bruce Smith, had found a trade journal in which to list the County equipment that is no longer used—namely three discs and a roller. The journal is called "Little Salesman" and a listing costs \$595. Townsend suggested Smith just keep the equipment and start using it. Hurwitz wondered if maybe Smith's CAT salesman would be able to help with this. Perhaps he could tell Smith which counties are disc-ing their roads. Maybe Smith could contact them then to see if they are interested.

Kimberly Deschene—County Attorney Update:

Deschene was unable to attend the meeting as she had a hearing in Great Falls.

Hurwitz left the meeting at noon.

LUNCH:

The commissioners broke for lunch at noon and returned at 1:00pm.

Kari Jo Kiff—Health Nurse Update:

County Health Nurse, Kari Jo Kiff, gave her monthly report to the commissioners. Of note, she discussed the Family Outreach Program, which is run out of Livingston. Townsend complimented her on being involved in this, as he feels there are too many children in the community whose needs are not being met.

She also mentioned the CSBG funds, which she was assuming had the same allocation as the previous year: \$2000 to public health and \$2000 to youth employment. (Administrative Assistant, Nate Sanders, is going to contact the CSBG office to confirm those numbers.) She also told the commissioners she intended to apply for another Bair Grant for 2013. The Medicaid reimbursement, which has not changed since 1996, is set to rise to \$21.32 from \$14.13 as of January. She mentioned the Springdale Colony would be splitting soon. And she had a new IAP contract, which Schlepp signed. It would entail the same tasks and the same dollar amount of \$2611.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Claims:

Commission was presented Voucher #1335, CK#44884 through CK#44910, totaling \$22,471.27. Commission approved and signed checks as presented.

Meeting Adjourned:

Chair Schlepp adjourned the meeting at 2:00pm.

Next Meeting:

Commissioners are scheduled to meet Tuesday, December 18, 2012.

CLERK & RECORDER

CHAIRMAN

SEAL

VICE-CHAIRMAN

COMMISSIONER

Note: Minutes taken by Assistant to the Clerk & Recorder, Nate Sanders.
Distributed December 18, 2012 to Chairman Schlepp, Commissioner Hurwitz, Commissioner Townsend, and Clerk & Recorder Ogle

Tuesday
December 18, 2012
9:40am-1:30pm
Met in Commissioner's Chambers

Meeting Called to Order:

Chair Schlepp called the meeting to order at 9:45am.

Commissioners Present:

Chair Nancy Schlepp and Vice Chair Ben Hurwitz.

John Dracon—Ambulance Garage Funding:

John Dracon dropped by to share an idea with the commissioners. He presented them a letter he wrote in response to the fundraising letter Meagher County Ambulance sent the community. In it he suggests that the County consider using Harmon funds and the 8 mills originally assessed for the hospital, to fund the construction of the new ambulance garage. Schlepp assured him that the Ambulance had sufficient funds to finance what they are doing at this time. The County would help out when things got tight. Hurwitz thanked him for his idea.

WSS TV District Taxation:

Schlepp explained to Dracon that this agenda item was to fix a technicality in the way taxes are assessed for the TV District. It was not changing anything. Rather it was simply fixing the wording of the District taxation to reflect reality.

Action 1:

Resolution 2012-98

WHEREAS, the White Sulphur Springs Television District had authority to levy taxes per person owning a television set,

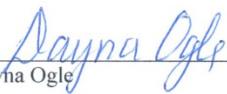
WHEREAS, the White Sulphur Springs TV District tax should be assessed by household.

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE KNOWN AND HEREBY RESOLVED that the Meagher County Board of Commissioners is resolving to change the taxation method for the White Sulphur Springs Television District from per person owning a television to per household beginning January 1, 2014.

Dated this 18th day of December, 2012.

Attest:

Board of County Commissioners:


Dayna Ogle


Chairman Nancy Schlepp


Commissioner Ben Hurwitz

Commissioner Herb Townsend

Dracon left the meeting at 10:00am and Clerk & Recorder, Dayna Ogle, joined the meeting at 10:00am.

Public Hearing—Budget Amendment:

There was a public hearing for a budget amendment on \$2000 of unexpected expense in paying a deductible for an ambulance accident. There was no comment. It was agreed that the \$2000 would be paid out of entitlement funds.

Planning Board Funding

Ogle had a copy of the budget and pointed out to the commissioners that the Planning Board had \$3000 listed as non-tax revenue. She was wondering where that came from. Hurwitz said he remembered they had decided to fund the Board for the year but did not remember where the funds would come from. Schlepp suggested they take it from entitlement. It was agreed.

Annual Financial Report

Ogle gave the commissioners copies of the FY 2011-12 Annual Financial Report, which is due by year's end. The County's auditor, Sharon Tripp, would begin her audit on January 7, she added.

Liability Insurance Loss Control Credits

Ogle told the commissioners the County had received two checks from MACo for loss control credits. One was in the amount of \$338, the other \$1600.

Insurance for Employees of Medicare Age

Hurwitz raised the issue of a County employee who is eligible to receive Medicare but is currently on the County health plan. She would like to go on Medicare because it is cheaper and the coverage is better. To support his point, he said she had a CT scan coming up which would cost her \$3000 out of pocket under the County insurance, but which Medicare would cover in its entirety. She had no choice but to leave the County insurance plan for Medicare.

Hurwitz added that she will not be the only employee that faces this issue. There will likely be more in the near future and the County has to figure out how to continue covering their insurance premiums even when they enroll in Medicare. They need to do it legally without discriminating against other employees. He said he would like to pass a resolution addressing employees of age to qualify for Medicare. Schlepp said maybe it was something they could do with a stipend. Ogle wondered how much the stipend would have to be. Hurwitz said he personally pays about \$300 a month for his Medicare and supplement. It would benefit everyone for the County to cover those costs for employees who decided to go on Medicare. It would save the County money and give the employee better coverage.

Russell Country (Central Montana) Board Update:

Gayle Fisher, the Executive Director of Central Montana, and Deborah Eby, one of Meagher County's representatives to its board, joined the commissioners to give them an overview of their activities. Also present was Mike Eby. Fisher began by explaining that they had changed their name from Russell Country to Central Montana because many people from outside the area had no idea where Russell Country was.

She handed the commissioners copies their 2012 marketing brochure and encouraged them to consider it an opportunity for the County to promote itself. The Chamber of Commerce already does. A full page ad is \$1840 and a quarter-page is \$575. The 2013 edition is already at press but if the County were interested, the deadline for 2014 is October. She suggested contacting Tintina. They might be willing to contribute to cover the cost of an ad.

Fisher went on to explain how the bed tax for places of lodging is their primary source of funding. Their budget for the year is their largest yet, at \$455,000.

Deborah Eby added that if the County wanted to do a brochure or some kind of marketing piece and it was submitted to Central Montana and approved, they would receive a 50% match. Fisher added that they were not limited to just a print ad either. Mike said it does not even have to be used for marketing per se. Deborah said some of the funds have been used to replace windows at the Castle.

Fisher explained that the bed tax is 7%. Three percent goes directly into the State's General Fund. The other 4% works its way back to the communities it comes from (in Meagher County's case to Central Montana). There is concern that legislators will try to take more of the bed tax for other purposes. Deborah gave Washington as an example of why this is a bad idea. Their legislature took away their tourism money and it really harmed the tourism industry there.

Fisher then mentioned tourism BID (Business Improvement District) assessments. A BID in this case is an assessment levied to guests who stay in lodging. It is most often assessed as a flat rate per room. All of the major communities in Montana have such an assessment. The advantage to it is that it is not a tax, which means it cannot be touched by the State. The way it works is the County (or City) would designate a footprint, the area affected. Sixty percent of those businesses who would be affected within the footprint would need to approve it. The funds would be overseen by a board of lodging merchants, outfitters, etc. Generally the County would handle

collection. The funds go on the property tax notice. The funds go to the City. The City disburses the funds. Fisher encouraged the commissioners to consider establishing a BID to help fund tourism marketing for the area. She stressed that the assessments are paid by the guests in the hotels, not by the local merchants. And the money stays locally.

Mike then stressed that Montana is on par with other states on the money it spends for tourism. The difference is most other states fund tourism marketing out of their general funds. Where Montana does not. Montana even subsidizes its general fund through tourism dollars. A study recent study estimated that if no tourism dollars came in to Montana at all, the average property taxpayer would be paying \$450 more per year. So tourism clearly benefits everyone.

Kimberly Deschene—County Attorney Update:

County Attorney Deschene dropped by to let the Commissioners she had nothing to report.

Minutes:

Action 2:

Hurwitz moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting (December 11, 2012) without change. Schlepp seconded. A vote was held and passed unanimously (2-0).

LUNCH:

The commissioners broke for lunch at 11:45 am. They returned at 1:00pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

IT Issues

Meagher County IT Consultant, Jim McDanel, visited with the commissioners regarding \$1900 in fees that Tyler Technologies is trying to charge the County to move software to the County's new backup server. It was agreed to have somebody from Tyler Technologies visit the commissioners so the issue could be resolved.

McDanel also updated them on the new mapping program provided by Triangle Communications. He has it on the new server but is waiting to get all the updates completed before he makes it available to the public. He is hoping to have it done by the end of January.

Claims:

Commission was presented Voucher #1336, CK#44911 through CK#44937, totaling \$17,100.90. Commission approved and signed checks as presented. CK#44856 (from Voucher #1333) for \$151.30 was voided as the invoice had already been paid. Commissioners approved.

Meeting Adjourned:

Chair Schlepp adjourned the meeting at 1:30pm.

Next Meeting:

Commissioners are scheduled to meet Tuesday, January 8, 2013.

CLERK & RECORDER

CHAIRMAN

SEAL

VICE-CHAIRMAN

COMMISSIONER