

**March 3, 2026**

**The Board of County Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. in a regular session in the Commission Office of the Granite County Courthouse. Commissioner Adler, Commissioner McLure. Commissioner Kulaski had to zoom in to some portions of the meeting. Also attending were Commissioners' Assistant Maranda Williams and Granite County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw, who participated in a portion of the agenda items in person. The session was live-streamed through the Zoom internet-based program available for the public to view the session and provide public comment. The public was also allowed to attend in person and provide comment. The session convened with the Pledge of Allegiance.**

**Also in attendance were members of the general public, including Justine Richmond, A. Tobin, Ashley Todd, Elena Gagliano, phone numbers and a zoom user, Jen Walters, Derek Campbell, and Fred.**

**BOARD MINUTES: Commissioner McLure moved to accept the board minutes from February 24, 2026. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. During public comment, Justine Richmond pointed out an inaccurate sentence in the draft minutes stating she commented about a Commissioner's jail sentence in Missoula County. She clarified that she did not mention DUI or Missoula County. Instead, she had asked when Commissioner Adler would serve his jail sentence in the Granite County Jail.**

**The County Commission acknowledged the correction was warranted, and they revised the draft wording to make it accurate in the minutes; and the motion passed unanimously.**

**CORRESPONDENCE;**

**Electronic mail was received from Corey Lewellen with the Forest Service with the Public Hearing Notification for Proposed Sustain Yield Unit.**

**Mail was received from the Citizens Alliance Bank with the Granite Justice Court February Disbursement Detail of \$7,430.16.**

**Electronic Mail was received from Riddick Field via John McPhail with an email requesting the County Commission turn the airport beacon back on.**

**Electronic mail was received from Elena Gagliano with a Response to a letter from the Commissioners to her on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Letter and request for documentation. Commissioner McLure said we'd have to discuss some of this with our County Attorney.**

**Electronic mail was received from Seth Varty with the Courthouse Reroof Cost estimate and bid scheduling.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT: During public comment, Justine Richmond read a recent email from Granite County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw into the record. The email stated that while she has the right to give public comment, her recent remarks at Commission meetings were**

considered quarrelsome and personal attacks against Commissioner Scott Adler, and warned that continued behavior could lead to possible prosecution, sanctions, or limits on her participation. The County Attorney's letter did state that her participation rights were not unlimited as quarrelsome public comments are unacceptable.

Justine Richmond responded that the allegations were baseless, stating she had not made personal attacks and had only asked questions about alleged legal violations by Commissioner Adler, which she believes the public has a right to know. She also sent a reply to the sheriff after noticing he was copied on the attorney's email.

She then asked the Commissioners how her behavior was disruptive or quarrelsome. The Commissioners declined to respond because it was public comment, not an agenda item. The Commission did say they could set an agenda item if she wanted that. Justine Richmond declined, but inquired more. The County Attorney, Blaine Bradshaw, clarified that the letter represented his legal opinion, stating she had made comments that went beyond informing the public and made them personal and were rude and quarrelsome and not acceptable.

Justine Richmond asked whether the Commissioners agreed with the County Attorney's claims. When they did not respond, she concluded her comments.

**WEEKLY REPORT WITH ROAD & BRIDGE SUPERINTENDENT, PAUL ALT;** Paul Alt provided the weekly road report, During the weekly road department report, Road Superintendent Paul Alt said the crew plans to pick up cold patch material by Thursday for road repairs and is working on scheduling a road roller rental for early April due to long equipment wait times. The Commissioners discussed putting out gravel bids earlier than usual so road work can start sooner this year. They talked about requesting bids for up to 15,000 yards of gravel, making sure all local gravel pit operators are notified by email or phone and that there is a paper trail showing everyone was informed. The bid notice will also clarify that gravel could be delivered in the spring but would not be paid until July under the next fiscal year budget.

Paul Alt also raised a proposal from a company interested in placing a cell tower on county property at the road shop. This is just in the very initial stages, and Paul Alt wanted to know if he should meet with them or not. If the Commission is not interested from the start, there is no need for an initial meeting. The proposal would lease a 50-by-50-foot area, with the company covering installation costs and paying the county \$800 per month under a five-year lease with additional renewal terms. Commission interested they may possibly be interested but the matter will need to be researched out and put on their agenda for discussions and later decision. Paul Alt will meet with the company to determine if there is a suitable location before bringing any proposals back to the Commission.

**YEARLY FUEL TAX CERTIFICATION OF ROADWAY MILEAGE – FISCAL YEAR 26-27;** The commissioners reviewed the annual fuel tax roadway mileage certification. The county's roadway mileage increased from 721.540 miles to 754.3 miles, an increase of about 32.8 miles. Commissioner McLure moved to accept the yearly fuel tax certification of road way mileage for FY 26-27. Commissioner Adler Seconded. No public comment was received, and the motion passed unanimously.

**SOLID WASTE DISTRICT'S WEEKLY REPORT;** During the Solid Waste District weekly report, Commissioners reviewed updates from staff. Todd Bahsteter, from Philipsburg site, reported it was a relatively slow week with a busy Saturday but no major breakdowns. John Kendall, from Drummond site, reported routine work including plowing snow, pushing and compacting garbage, assisting customers, and maintaining the burn and compost piles. Commissioner McLure suggested changing the dump gate opening time to 10:30 a.m. so the site attendant would have time to complete maintenance tasks before the facility opens to the public. The proposal was intended to address complaints that staff do not have enough time to complete maintenance before customers arrive. The commissioner noted that residents would still have about 7.5 hours each day to use the facility. Blaine Bradshaw discussed whether the issue mainly occurs during winter due to snow removal and potentially tracking how many people arrive right at opening might also help address the problem. They also noted that past schedule changes had led to public complaints. The Commissioners agreed to place the issue on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss it further.

**DAM TENDER'S REPORT, GEORGETOWN LAKE OUTFLOW;** According to the USGS lake level gauge and the dam tender's report for the week, the lake level was reported at 6428.44 feet, 12.72 inches below full pool. Commissioner McLure moved to stay at 6 CFS for a week. Commissioner Adler seconded. The commissioners would like an update from Todd Blythe.

**INSPECTION OF BONDS;** The Commission reviewed a bond related to the elevator installation project. They noted that the elevator is now operational, though it operates slowly, and discussed letting the public know through signage, the website, or a newspaper notice. The Commission confirmed the bond for the contractor (TCS) remained valid and approved it. Commissioner McLure moved to agree to and approve the bond discussed, which is in place for this year. Commissioner Adler seconded. During public comment, Elena Gagliano asked for clarification about whether the bond discussed was related to the elevator project. The Commissioners confirmed that the bond was connected to the contractor installing the elevator and said it would be posted online.

**GRANITE COUNTY COURTHOUSE ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT WITH OTIS;** The Commissioners discussed a maintenance agreement for the courthouse elevator with Otis Elevator Company. The agreement would provide routine preventive maintenance for the elevator at a cost of \$218 per month, while repairs would remain separate. They noted that the elevator installation already includes 12 months of warranty coverage, so the maintenance contract would begin after the warranty expires on February 10, 2027. The Commission voted to accept the contract and to pay the maintenance fee annually to receive the lowest cost. Commissioner McLure moved to accept this contract with Otis, and that it be paid annually and not monthly. Commissioner Adler seconded. No public comment was received and the motion passed unanimously.

They also briefly discussed how project bonds work, clarifying that the bond tied to the elevator contractor exists as protection during the project and typically ends once the project is completed, though there is some follow-up (tail) coverage if issues arise later.

Later in the conversation, Commissioners discussed funding efforts for a major road and bridge project on South Main Road in Drummond. They are applying for Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) funding, which could potentially fund an estimated \$8–10 million projects. The funding would require about a 14% local match, which Commissioners said could be difficult to afford. They discussed whether to request funding for the entire project at once or break it into smaller sections, and planned to place the topic on the agenda for further discussion at the next meeting.

**VACANT COUNTY BOARD APPLICATIONS;** Derek Campbell put in an application for the Granite County Airport Board. The Commissioners discussed an application for the Airport Board but decided not to act on it yet because the Airport Board is currently reviewing its bylaws regarding board size. The bylaws currently allow a minimum of five and a maximum of seven members, but there has been discussion about limiting the board to five members. There are currently 6 members on the Airport Board. Since the Airport Board is scheduled to meet on March 18 to discuss this issue, the Commissioners decided to hold the application on file until a final decision is made about the number of board members.

During public comment, Justine Richmond asked when the application was submitted and why it was sent in. Staff explained that the application was signed February 24, 2026, and that the County had recently published a notice seeking applicants for open volunteer board positions.

Eric Anderson, a member of the Airport Board, suggested that any applications be forwarded to the Airport Board for review so the board can provide recommendations to the commissioners. The commissioners agreed to send the application to acting chair David Lee for distribution to board members.

The applicant, Derek Campbell, also spoke during public comment, saying he understood the decision to wait and noted he has experience with writing bylaws and may attend the meeting as a spectator. The commissioners confirmed they will reconsider the application after the Airport Board’s March 18 meeting.

**MACO HEALTHCARE PLANS FOR GRANITE COUNTY EMPLOYEES; COUNTY CONTRIBUTION;** Pam Walling with MACo Healthcare Trust joined the commissioners for this portion of the meeting via zoom. Joanne Romasko also joined the commissioners for this portion of the meeting. The commission discussed Granite County’s employee health insurance renewal with representatives from the Mako Healthcare Trust. They needed to choose whether to adopt an “alternate tier” structure (Option 1 or Option 2) designed to make dependent coverage more “family friendly” by reducing the cost for employees who add spouses or children, while slightly increasing the employee-only premium to keep overall premium dollars balanced.

**Pam Walling explained that Option 2 provides the bigger discount for dependents, such as lowering the spouse and children tier ratios (for example, spouses and children would cost less relative to the employee-only premium), potentially making it more affordable for employees to cover family members. Staff discussed the difference between high-deductible plan options and confirmed the county, as a small group, can offer four plan choices.**

**The commission weighed whether the change would actually lead more employees to add dependents, noting that only eight of 37 employees currently cover dependents (four cover a spouse, two cover children, two cover a full family). They also clarified that adopting alternate tiers changes how costs are distributed across tiers, not the total amount needed to fund claims, and that rates are driven primarily by claims experience.**

**They reviewed cost estimates showing Option 2 would increase the county's annual cost by roughly \$29,748 compared with staying status quo, and ultimately voted to adopt Alternate Tier Option 2 for the 2026–2027 plan year. The county contribution was set at \$1,679 per employee for medical plus \$43 for dental (total \$1,722), with the intent of helping employees who insure dependents without shifting the cost onto employees. Commissioner McLure then moved to approve Option 2 with MACO with the \$1,722 to be paid monthly for each employee who receives health care benefits. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**GRANITE COUNTY'S GROWTH POLICY, PLAN TO UPDATE, LINDA BOUCK; Linda Bouck discussed the Granite County's Growth Policy. A growth policy is non-regulatory planning document, but is required. Planning Director Linda Bouck presented a proposal to update Granite County's Growth Policy, which was last updated in 2012. She explained that the Granite County Planning Board had delayed updating it earlier because the Town of Philipsburg was completing its own growth policy update, which has now been finished. The Planning Board recently reviewed the issue and recommended moving forward with updating the county's policy.**

**Linda Bouck said the Montana Department of Commerce currently has funding available and will cover the full cost of the update, including hiring a consultant and managing the bidding and payment process. The update is expected to take about one year. She emphasized that the growth policy is not a regulatory document and does not create zoning, though the current policy includes language stating the county will not pursue zoning except in a small area near Georgetown Lake.**

**Commissioner McLure voted to allow the planning board to proceed with updating the growth policy and to accept the state funding. Commissioner Adler seconded.**

**During public comment, Elena Gagliano asked about public meetings and notices during the process. Linda Bouck confirmed there will be multiple public meetings held over the next year to gather input before adoption, and a public hearing will be held. She also noted that Drummond will update its section at the same time, and that decisions about including a capital improvement plan will depend on input from the planning board and the public. The motions passed unanimously.**

**QUARTERLY CALL WITH FERC; Kareem Bynoe of FERC and Jeremiah Theys of GreatWest Engineering joined the commissioners for this portion of the meeting via Zoom. Jackie Bolster, Safety Coordinator, joined the commissioners in person. The commissioners held their quarterly call with FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) representative Jeremiah regarding dam safety compliance and upcoming inspections. Jeremiah reminded the county about annual reporting requirements, including the Emergency Action Plan status report, owner dam safety plan verification, and dam safety monitoring reports. He noted the county's most recent status report had been received and accepted without issues.**

**They discussed the upcoming Part 12 Comprehensive Dam Safety Inspection, which is scheduled for May 18, 2026. Jeremiah explained that the preliminary inspection preparation report (PIPR) must be submitted by April 18, 2026 so FERC has time to review it before the inspection. The inspection will involve the county, FERC, and the independent consultant team and will be followed by a Potential Failure Mode Assessment (PFMA) meeting, likely held at the Philipsburg fire hall.**

**The County's engineering consultant, Jeremiah Theys, confirmed that annual reporting documents would be sent to the county for approval soon and then submitted to FERC. Jeremiah also stated that the inspection team has already received most of the digital project archive files related to the dam.**

**During public comment, Elena Gagliano asked whether the Town of Philipsburg would be involved in the inspection. Kareem Bynoe clarified that the inspection and PFMA session are technical regulatory processes involving the county, FERC, and engineers, and the town will not participate, though the meeting location may be in Philipsburg.**

**After the call, Commissioners briefly discussed logistics for lodging for the inspection team and whether they should arrange accommodations locally or allow the visitors to make their own arrangements. They also moved on to other administrative items, including documents for the Southwest Montana Drug Task Force agreement.**

**SOUTHWEST MONTANA DRUG TASK FORCE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, FISCAL YEAR 26-27; Sheriff Rico Barkell joined the commissioners for this portion of the meeting. The commissioners reviewed the Southwest Montana Drug Task Force Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for fiscal year 2026–2027, which runs from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. They noted that the agreement is renewed annually and that there were no major changes this year, aside from the involvement of a new sheriff and a federal agent working with the task force. Commissioner McLure moved to accept the Southwest Montanan Drug Task Force Memorandum of Understanding for the fiscal year 2026-2027. Commissioner Adler seconded. No public comment was received and the motion passed unanimously. The Commission discussed how to finalize signatures and send the document to the task force, deciding they would coordinate signatures and determine whether to mail or electronically send the signed agreement.**

**As administrative matters, it was also noted that two former officials' names were still listed on the County Public Health Department's Medicare paperwork, and Commissioners**

**acknowledged they may need to update and submit revised information to correct the records. Additional paperwork, including a Medicare revalidation form, was signed before the Commissioners adjourned the meeting.**

**Meeting Adjourned at 11:33 a.m.**