

April 7, 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 Kulaski, Commissioner Adler, and Commissioner McLure were in attendance. Also attending were Administrative 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, Elena Gagliano, Jen Walters, Spencer Parke, Monica Prince, Derek Campbell, George Brooker and a few phone numbers.

BOARD MINUTES: Commissioner McLure said there is 1 change: the spelling of her name, and moved to accept the board minutes from March 31, 2026. Commissioner Adler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE;

Mail was received from MACo HCT with a thank you card for choosing them for health insurance needs.

Electronic mail was received from Donovan Jones with questions regarding the recent board changes, decisions at Riddick Field and incorrect statements made.

Electronic mail was received from MACo regarding a Grant opportunity for Safe Streets and Roads for All.

An email was received from Paula Arneson via Becky Mickey, asking whether the CASA of Southwest Montana Program can place pinwheels on the Granite County courthouse lawn again. Commissioners' Assistant to send an email saying its ok.

Mail was received from the Montana Water Court, RE: Clark Fork Division, Flint Creek Basin 76GJ, with a Notice of Entry of Interlocutory Decree and Notice of Availability. County Attorney will research.

Mail was received from the Granite Justice Court with the March 2026 disbursement detail in the amount of \$6,551.00.

Mail was received from the Wills Subdivision regarding a parcel to be given to the county. This will be on the agenda next week.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Public comment was made from Elena Gagliano asked about the email from Donovan Jones and asked what they are going to do. Commissioner Kulaski said they would follow up with him and she suggested sending that letter to the airport board before their special meeting tomorrow. Derek Campbell made a public comment on Donovan Jones' letter, suggesting that if the board had included more community-focused stakeholders (rather than primarily airport-focused ones), the situation they faced in December might have been avoided. They clarify they are not against aviation and support maintaining the airport as a high-quality day-use facility.

WEEKLY REPORT WITH ROAD & BRIDGE SUPERINTENDENT, PAUL ALT; Paul Alt reported MAKRS conference went well. The road and bridge superintendent gives a weekly update, noting plans to send staff to grader training near Spokane, though details and costs are still pending. The road department is actively maintaining roads (blading, patching), but ongoing deterioration and heavy use are making repairs less effective, raising the possibility of needing more extensive reconstruction on some sections. Budget constraints are a major concern, with limited funding, rising fuel costs, and uncertainty about future support, forcing prioritization of only essential work. Equipment updates include repairs to a water truck expected back in service soon. Staffing is tight, with one worker out and limited light-duty options. The team plans to reassess road conditions and develop a more strategic plan for repairs, acknowledging that not all projects can be completed due to financial limitations.

SOLID WASTE DISTRICT'S WEEKLY REPORT; John Kendall and Todd Bahsteter sent in their weekly updates via email and text message. Their reports note that there were no breakdowns or major issues. Equipment updates include a pump (arriving soon) and a 50-gallon tank being set up, with plans to install it the following week. There's also discussion about possibly adding gravel to a muddy area, though no action has been taken yet. A burn permit is expected around the 8th or 9th, with coordination needed with the local fire departments. Minor updates include delivering a seat cover for equipment. Overall, operations are running smoothly with routine maintenance and small equipment improvements underway.

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 6429.00 feet, 6 inches below full pool. Paul Tallon joined the commissioners for this portion of the meeting and Brad Liermann of FWP, and Alex Scolavino. Commissioner Adler moved to go to 20 CFS for a week. Commissioner McLure seconded. Spencer Parke made public comment and asked to fill it all the way up and then dump it out. Commissioner Kulaski and Paul Tallon agreed the spillway should really only be used in emergencies. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW WATER BOTTLE FILLER STATION IN PLACE OF DRINKING FOUNTAIN ON 1ST FLOOR; Commissioner Adler moved to remove the old fountain and purchase this

newer water bottle filler station for just outside the Commission's Office. Cost would be \$1,869 for the unit, including shipment. Cups could be placed on the unit if anyone needs one for water. Commissioner McLure seconded. No public comment was received and the motion passed unanimously.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION BEARMOUTH SPEED STUDY PRESENTATION; Joel Boucher joined the commissioners for this portion of the meeting. He updated them on the speed study at Bearmouth. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) presented results of a speed study on I-90 near Drummond and the Barmouth area. The study found that current speed limits (80 mph) are appropriate, as most drivers are traveling slightly above that but within expected ranges. Crash data showed that accidents are mainly caused by weather conditions (snow/ice), driver behavior (speeding for conditions, impaired driving), and roadway features—not the posted speed limit itself.

Two main crash hotspots were identified: an S-curve area and near the Drummond interchange. MDT emphasized that safety improvements should focus on better signage, warnings, and possible roadway adjustments rather than lowering speed limits.

They all agreed that many crashes result from drivers going too fast for conditions, especially in winter and through the canyon. Suggestions included more warning signs, better road treatment (sand/salt), and increased awareness.

Additional discussion covered:

- A potentially unstable hillside/slide area being monitored, with limited funding available for fixes.
- Tight state budgets limiting road projects and maintenance.
- Questions about future road work (e.g., Highway 348) and coordination with the county.
- A local grant effort to repair West South Main Street, though ownership/jurisdiction is unclear but seems to be fully a county road.

MDT requested written comments within 60 days.

GRANITE COUNTY COOPERATIVE ROADS AGREEMENT WITH THE FOREST SERVICE; Cameron Rasor and Lara Chodelski joined the commissioners for this portion of the meeting. The county approved renewal of the cooperative roads agreement with the Forest Service, which is a standard five-year agreement with no significant changes from previous versions. They also approved the 2026 annual maintenance plan. Under this plan, the county will continue to handle winter maintenance such as snow removal on certain roads, while the Forest Service plans to carry out more extensive work, including maintenance on Boulder Creek Road and Wyman Gulch Road and replacing a structurally deficient bridge on Wyman Gulch Road.

There was discussion about past investments in roads like Lakeshore Drive and whether additional gravel work should be done, though no new work is planned this year. The group also talked about moving forward with easements to ensure certain roads remain open to the public, which will require formal resolutions and approvals.

Additional conversation touched on prescribed burns and a large upcoming project near Maxville involving timber work and fuel reduction. Concerns were raised about declining communication and coordination with the Forest Service in recent years, especially regarding road maintenance, and there was interest in reestablishing a more consistent working relationship, including possible cooperation on road work and materials.

Commissioner Adler moved to accept the 5-year Cooperative Road Agreement (Master Agreement) with Schedule A. Commissioner McLure seconded. No public comment was received and the motion passed unanimously. They spoke on the yearly maintenance plan. Commissioner McLure moved to accept the FY27 yearly Road maintenance plan. Commissioner Adler seconded. No public comment was received. The motion passed unanimously.

GCMC, HOSPITAL BOARD UPDATE; David Warden joined the Commissioners for this portion of the meeting. Doris Gilbertson, temporary or interim CEO and Hospital District Board Member, David Warden, also joined the Commissioners. David Warden updated the Commissioners on the status of the GCMC which is gradually reducing their debt load.

Jen Walters made public comment and asked about the bad debt. The hospital board provided a financial update, noting some improvement in cash flow as accounts receivable dropped from about \$1.7 million to \$1.4 million due to more efficient billing. However, the hospital is still operating at a significant deficit of around \$1.5 million. They are working to improve revenue and reduce costs through better billing practices, updated pricing (chargemaster), staffing efficiencies, and new programs like chronic care management. These efforts are projected to improve finances by up to \$1.5 million annually (this coming fiscal year).

Additional strategies include applying for grants (specifically an Intercap loan for over \$700,000), seeking funding for capital improvements, and exploring partnerships with larger healthcare systems for management support, shared services, and reduced costs. They are also considering whether to convert to a rural emergency hospital model, which could bring additional federal funding but would limit inpatient stays.

Challenges remain, including reliance on traveling nurses, vendor changes, bad debt, and uncertainty around Medicaid reimbursements. The hospital also depends on community support, such as donations from a thrift store that funds equipment purchases. Commissioners raised concerns about ongoing negative cash flow and the need for measurable improvement, while hospital leadership emphasized that recovery will take time but that multiple initiatives, as stated, are underway.

It was also emphasized that the hospital district mill levy has remained relatively flat for about a decade—around \$300,000 to \$400,000—while healthcare costs have more than doubled over that same period. Even if increased to around \$600,000, the levy would still represent only a small portion of the local hospital district's operating budget, though it remains an important source of support.

The outcome of the proposed levy is critical. If it fails, the hospital would lose about \$400,000 in revenue; if it passes, it would gain roughly \$200,000 for the year above the current revenues. Officials acknowledged that failure of the levy would make operations significantly

more difficult and could ultimately lead to closure, while passage would provide a temporary but important boost as longer-term solutions are pursued. Doris Gilbertson and David Worden said they could update the County Commission on a monthly basis.

PRE-INSPECTION PREPARATION REPORT AND COVER LETTER FOR FERC VIA HDR; RE: FLINT CREEK PROJECT; Jessica Rudd of HDR Engineering joined the Commissioners for this portion of the meeting. The Commission reviewed the pre-inspection preparation report and cover letter for the FERC (Flint Creek Dam) project, which must be submitted 30 days before the scheduled inspection. The consultant reported that the draft is complete and on track for the deadline, with only minor administrative updates, including notifying regulators about a temporary change in a hydrology team member.

No significant issues or changes were identified in the report itself, and the plan is to finalize it and submit it promptly. The commission approved the report and cover letter so it can be filed. There was also brief discussion about a valve vault at the site that may qualify as a permit-required confined space, with follow-up needed to confirm regulatory requirements. Overall, the item was handled quickly to meet the submission deadline.

Commissioner Adler moved to approve the pre-inspection preparation report and cover letter to FERC. Commissioner McLure seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

MACO DISTRICTS 8, 9, & 12 UPCOMING MEETING IN PHILIPSBURG, VENUE AND MEAL; This MACo meeting will be on May 29th from 9 am to 4 pm in Philipsburg as the Granite County Commission is hosting the meeting. The Commission discussed planning for an upcoming District 8, 9, and 12 meeting in Philipsburg, focusing on selecting a venue and organizing food for lunch for all participants. Several options were considered, including the museum, town hall, and a private building, with the museum emerging as the preferred location due to space and presentation value. They agreed to reach out to multiple locations to confirm availability and revisit the decision the following week. Catering options were also discussed, with a simple, affordable meal (around \$20 per person) being preferred, and the possibility of coordinating catering for both this event and an upcoming dam inspection.

DAMAGE TO COUNTY CARS BACK BUMPER; AGREEMENT WITH MMIA; Commissioner Alder moved to sign the agreement with MMIA in regards to the damage the Town snowplow caused to the back bumper of the County car (Chevrolet Traverse). The date of the incident was on 2/19/2026, 2026. The amount of the settlement was \$2,949.31 to repair the County's car's rear bumper (replacement). Commissioner McLure seconded. No public comment was received and the motion passed unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION – PERSONNEL MATTER; This was handled at 10:00 a.m. when there was a gap in agenda items.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:33 p.m.