



PUBLIC MEETING

February 23, 2021
MINUTES

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners Public Meeting was held on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at 9:00 AM in Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/5669454978>.

Roll Call

Chair Andy Hunthausen called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Commissioner Jim McCormick and Commissioner Tom Rolfe were present. Others attending all or a portion of the meeting included Roger Baltz, Nicho Hash, Peter Italiano, Cathy Burwell, Dan Karlin, Valerie Stacey, Jeremy Johnson, Paul Pacini, Calob Marquis, Misty Edwards, Nancy Everson, Charles Lane, Mark Juedeman, Jeni Garcin, Eric Griffin, Kim Loftus, Kerry Logan, Patricia Bik, Patricia Heiser, and Nadine McCarty, Recording Secretary. All attendees were present via Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone recited the pledge.

Consent Action Items

There were no consent action items.

Craig Resort Area Ordinance 2021-1 Providing for the Administration of the Resort Tax in the Craig Resort Area and Amending Craig Resort Area Ordinance No 2010-1. (Misty Edwards)

Misty Edwards, Finance Coordinator, presented the first reading of an ordinance amending the Craig Resort Area Ordinance No. 2010-1. On January 26, 2021 the Craig electorate voted 20-4 to increase the Craig Resort Tax by 1%. The increase will pay project costs and debts for the Craig wastewater systems as well as upgrades and replacement of that system. Additionally, voters approved 19-5 the question of extending the effective dates of the Craig resort tax. The measure will extend the resort tax to year round. All other areas of the ordinance remain the same including the items subject to the resort tax and the goods and services exempt from the tax. The new 1% can only be used for the wastewater infrastructure and will remain in effect until the debts are satisfied. Staff recommends approval of the first reading of the amended Craig Resort Area Ordinance.

No public comment was received.

A motion to Approve was made by Commissioner Rolfe and seconded by Commissioner McCormick. The motion Passed on a 3-0 vote.

Discussion Regarding the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority. (Roger Baltz)

Roger Baltz, Chief Administrative Officer, presented information on the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority. The Authority seeks to restore passenger rail to southern Montana. The Authority will create the governance structure to investigate, analyze, seek funding for and develop long-distance, inter-city rail service across southern Montana. County commissions in Montana are authorized to create regional rail authorities by adoption of a resolution by two or more counties per MCA 7-14-16. Currently, 12 counties have joined the Authority. A draft resolution was presented that would have to be approved if the Commission decides to move forward with joining the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority.

PUBLIC COMMENT -

Mark Juedeman, 1801 E Broadway Street, supports joining the Authority. The impact to the community would be significant for improving travel throughout southern Montana. The City of Helena passed the resolution to join in 2018. Mr. Juedeman mentioned other communities and counties that have joined.

Jeremy Johnson, 409 Knight Street, strongly recommends joining the Authority. Having the rail would make it much easier to travel around southern Montana and would be an economic stimulation to the towns along the rail line.

Becky Piske, 303 State Street, thanked the Commission for the consideration and stated she encourages the Commission to move forward with the public hearing to pursue passenger rail. This is an excellent transit alternative.

Cathy Burwell, President and CEO Helena Chamber of Commerce, stated that the Chamber is in strong support for the rail line. It would be appropriate for the line to come through Montana's capital city.

Paul Pacini, Helena resident, stated that he is in support of the project. Not every Montanan has the ability to drive to other cities and this would be an excellent alternative, especially since air travel is not an economically feasible way to travel and the bus line is not as dependable either. Rail travel would also positively effect businesses and would stimulate tourism. There is no cost to join, the only requirement is that the Commission appoint a volunteer to serve on the Authority.

Erik Rose, Carroll College, stated that Carroll is in support of the passenger rail. It is critical to the prosperity of Lewis and Clark County and Carroll College. The population growth that we are going to see will support the rail. Investing in another travel

Andrea Opitz, 9 Northern Lights Montana City, stated the possibility to unite the cities in southern Montana is great and is in support of joining the Rail Authority.

Patricia Heiser, Helena resident, stated this will also be a great way to connect to cities in the West such as Spokane. Mass transit is an investment in our future, both economically and for the climate.

Kim Loftus, 1439 N Harris, supports joining the Authority. Ms. Loftus stated she has had conversations with Senator Tester regarding the item and has encouraged him to support the passenger rail. It would also be a benefit for our Veterans who need to come to Helena for VA appointments.

Commissioner Rolfe stated he feels that the County should explore the costs and other issues to better understand the impacts of the rail. He believes the project has merit.

Commissioner McCormick stated he would take the much appreciated public comment under consideration. He added he has concerns and questions regarding the rights-of-way and impacts of the costs to maintain the infrastructure.

Commissioner Hunthausen stated he also has questions and concerns about feasibility, costs and viability but that the Authority will conduct the research and find out the answers to the questions.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rolfe to have a public hearing on March 18th to consider joining the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCormick. The motion Passed on a 3-0 vote.

Board Appointments. (Roger Baltz)

Roger Baltz, Chief Administrative Officer, presented the board appointments and recommended appointment of Michael Jensen to the Lewis and Clark County DUI Task Force as the Montana Highway Patrol representative to a term that expires December 31, 2023; the appointment of Susan Howsmon to the Lincoln Parks Board to a term that expires June 30, 2024; and the appointment of David Burch to the Weed Board as the West Valley representative to a term that expires December 31, 2023.

No public comment was received.

A motion to Approve was made by Commissioner McCormick and seconded by Commissioner Rolfe. The motion Passed on a 3-0 vote.

Public comment on any public matter within the jurisdiction of the Commission that is not on the agenda above.

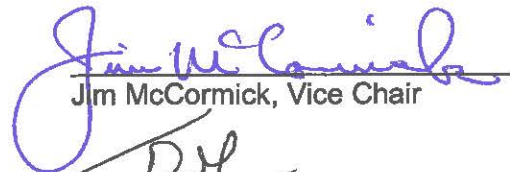
Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.


LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Andy Hunthausen, Chair



Jim McCormick, Vice Chair



Tom Rolfe, Member

ATTEST:



Amy Reeves, Clerk of the Board