



## **PUBLIC MEETING**

June 9, 2020  
MINUTES

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners Public Meeting was held on Tuesday, June 9, 2020, at 9:00 AM in Commission Chambers Room 330.

### **Roll Call**

Chair Susan Good Geise called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Commissioner Andy Hunthausen and Commissioner Jim McCormick were present. Others attending all or a portion of the meeting included Roger Baltz, Nancy Everson, Nicho Hash, Jacqueline Isaly, Dan Karlin, Kevin Wright, and Nadine McCarty, Recording Secretary.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Everyone recited the pledge.

### **Consent Action Items**

There were no consent action items.

### **Public Hearing. Farmers State Bank Tax Abatement. (Nancy Everson)**

Nancy Everson, Chief Financial Officer, stated this is a public hearing that was advertised for the required two weeks and noticed, but then it was missed in getting on the agenda. The agenda was amended for today and it was determined to re-advertise for the public hearing to be held on June 23, 2020. Because it was advertised and a Farmers State Bank representative is present, Ms. Everson recommended the public hearing be opened, hear comment, take no action, close the hearing and reschedule as noted. Ms. Everson introduced Travis Brazill from Farmers State Bank.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT -**

Travis Brazill, Helena Market President for Farmers State Bank, they are a family-owned Montana bank that has been in Montana for 114 years. They are primarily in the Bitterroot area and this is the first time this side of the Continental Divide. The community has responded well to them. A substantial investment is going in on Farmers State Bank's behalf with a 12,000 square foot building and at this time about \$8.5 million, amounting to \$708 per square foot build cost. Those type of build costs is difficult for them to provide lease space to tenants at any lease rate that would accommodate success for a business. On the property will be a coffee shop lease space with a local tenant and a dram shop, another local business owner, both of which are expanding to a second location. The tax abatement helps Farmers State Bank to get the lease rates to where the business owners can be successful. There will also be a full-time food

truck area. The building and the concept is unique to banking. Mr. Brazill requested that the Commission consider the tax abatement.

Commissioner McCormick asked for the percentage of revenues that the bank expects to generate from out-of-area or out-of-state to bring into Lewis and Clark County and Mr. Brazill gave some recent examples of funding provided out of the Helena bank to include: \$2.5 million to hotels in Libby, Montana; approximately \$2.5 million to agriculture community in the Augusta/Choteau area; there is an opportunity in Rapleje, Montana of \$2.5 million for an out-of-state entity purchasing property. He added his history was more in commercial real estate development, so people tend to come to him for his ability to match up the development and financing needs. Approximately 40% of the loan opportunities have come from out-of-area to date. Mr. Brazill stated immediately 10 employees would come to Helena, with another 20 employees related to the lease spaces. Statewide Farmers State Bank is approximately a \$400 million in asset bank. They provided 10% of the PPP loans throughout the state of Montana. Mr. Brazill reviewed the current plans of the two businesses to locate the property. He added on average there are about 30 employees working on the construction site and they have tried to hire local subcontractors throughout the process.

Mr. Brazill gave examples of the bank's ongoing investment in the community: an annual \$10,000 scholarship provided to a high school student in Helena, they are heavily involved with Powell High School and started a mentoring program maintained through the Kiwanis.

Commissioner Good Geise asked what the \$708 per square foot reflects and Mr. Brazill explained the estimated build cost at \$6.9 to \$7 million and when the land purchase is included that is \$8.5 million investment into the property. He explained the calculation to get to the cost per square foot. Mr. Brazill did not have an exact decrease amount, if the tax abatement was received, as they are in the architectural design part of the plan and that dictates cost. He noted all of it would be applied to decrease the lease revenues. Even with the passing on they could not charge enough to make it worthwhile for the business owners and covering their costs would not work compared to traditional lease rates in Helena.

Mr. Brazill noted the vote to deny the request by the City of Helena was 4-1.

Commissioner Good Geise asked if the timing of this might be moved in some way due to COVID-19 and the possibility of businesses closing and Mr. Brazill gave examples of recent conversations: hot tub sales are up 300%; restaurants that he finances are at about a break even as of last week, he noted PPP money was very important for them; financed motels are down 40%, but up 10% from two years ago; a fence contractor has contracts at 110% higher than this time last year; laundromats are at break even. Tourism type of industries could have problems with others doing well.

Commissioner Hunthausen asked how the community would benefit from the tax abatement and Mr. Brazill understood there was not a tax revenue from the property previously, they will build a value that will have a positive tax implication for the community.

Ms. Everson explained the provisions under the commercial building reconstruction statute that allows tax abatements as follows: if taxable value is increased by 2.5% taxes can be abated for five years, phasing in over that time; if increased by more than 5% taxes can be abated for 10 years, in full for five years and phased in up to 100% in the tenth year. This project meets all statutory requirements. She added Farmers State Bank submitted their application on July 30, 2019, noting the City and County are the reason for the hold up. This is only on new taxes, if there had been a value on the property it would be the difference.

Commissioner Good Geise asked, if possible to see at the next meeting, some graphic illustrations on how the tax abatement program works for people to understand.

Commissioner McCormick asked to hear at the next meeting what the taxes were when the building was occupied by for-profit businesses prior to \$0 during the ownership of Helena Industries and what the estimated tax assessment would be for the new building.

Commissioner Good Geise stated the public hearing is closed. No motion is necessary.

**Public Hearing. Seeley Building, LLC Tax Abatement. (Nancy Everson)**

Nancy Everson, Chief Financial Officer, stated this tax abatement public hearing was advertised for the required two weeks and noticed, but then it was missed in getting on the agenda. The agenda was amended for today and it was determined to re-advertise for the public hearing to be held on June 23, 2020. Staff is recommending that the public hearing be opened, hear public comment, take no action, close the hearing and reschedule to June 23, 2020. The City denied this tax abatement and Mr. Kuntz did not see any reason to present to the County. They have explained to him the County operates independently from the City. She does not know if the request will be withdrawn or go forward.

Commissioner Good Geise asked Ms. Everson to let the applicants know about the conversation and questions asked today regarding tax abatement requests.

Commissioner Good Geise stated the public hearing is open.

No public comment was received.

Commissioner Good Geise stated the public hearing is closed. No motion is necessary.

**Task Order No. 3 Between Lewis and Clark County and RESPEC. (Dan Karlin)**

Dan Karlin, County Engineer, presented the task order with RESPEC. He added in 2018 Public Works submitted a grant application to FEMA for a Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grant. The purpose of the grant is to provide more detail to the Helena Valley Flood Mitigation Master Plan and update the County Hazard Mitigation Plan flood chapter. The proposed scope was to brainstorm potential projects with local stakeholders, model the proposed projects within the established valley flood model, determine a project sequence, and establish working cost estimates for each project. This will result in a roadmap for future mitigation efforts.

The grant application proposed Lewis and Clark County match the \$25,000 grant with \$29,050 from the Valley Flood Mitigation Rural Improvement District (RID), established for such this type of grant request. Working from the proposed scope, RESPEC created a project scope that fits within the project budget and achieves the stated goals in the grant application. The task order is in the amount of \$53,917 to implement the FMA grant. Staff recommends approval of the task order with RESPEC.

Mr. Karlin added there are four public meetings planned, two of which present the existing 2013 master plan; highlight the need for more detail; explain what has been done; invite community members and stakeholders to present their ideas; compile, review, find what is workable, and model those ideas; with a second round of meetings once all of that has been vetted. It will then be finalized and updated into the 2013 master plan, essentially replacing it, then added to the overall County mitigation plan as an annex.

Commissioner Good Geise asked that Mr. Karlin work with Jeni Garcin, Communications Coordinator on this so those in the Valley Flood Mitigation RID are informed on how their money is being spent.

No public comment was received.

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



**Task Order 21-07-4-51-103-0 Between Lewis and Clark Public Health and Department of Public Health and Human Services. (Jacqueline Isaly)**

Jacqueline Isaly, Community Health Promotion Division Administrator, presented the task order with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services to provide HIV medical case management in Lewis and Clark County. Lewis and Clark Public Health is currently contracted with PureView Health Center and would continue to subcontract with them for the execution of case management for HIV infected individuals and their families. The program provides case management services, assistance with uncovered outpatient medical and dental office visit copays, supportive services for HIV positive individuals. The task order is not to exceed \$7,500 and begins July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Staff recommends approval of the task order with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

Commissioner Good Geise asked where the County is standing on the number of HIV diagnosed individuals and Ms. Isaly stated she would have to get that information.

No public comment was received.

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

**Contract Agreement Between Lewis and Clark Public Health and PureView Health Center. (Jacqueline Isaly)**

Jacqueline Isaly, Community Health Promotion Division Administrator, presented the contract with PureView Health Center and noted they are currently contracted with PureView Health Center for the execution of medical case management for HIV infected individuals and their families in Lewis and Clark County. Lewis and Clark Public Health holds a master contract with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. The subcontract allows Public Health to direct case management patient service care through PureView Health Center rather than through Public Health as they provide the direct services in the community. The program provides case management services, assistance with uncovered medical and dental care copays, supportive services for HIV positive individuals. The contract is not to exceed \$6,750 and begins July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Staff recommends approval of the contract with PureView Health Center.

Ms. Isaly explained the \$750 difference between the money received from Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and the PureView Health Center subcontract amount is Lewis and Clark Public Health's 10% administration fee for any grants or funding that comes into the County.

No public comment was received.

A motion to Approve was made by Commissioner McCormick and seconded by Commissioner Hunthausen. 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.**

Shawn White, lives in Helena, stated she arrived at the Motor Vehicles window at 8:02 am and picked number 209, they are now at 97 and they started at 85. It is packed in the middle of a pandemic. She added something has to be done, there has to be a better way.

Commissioner Good Geise informed Ms. White this is a very common complaint and she gave her some reasons it is that way that include the computers are hooked up to the state system with a program that

has never worked well, the job is difficult with a high turnover, two new people have been hired, but apparently it takes about 6 weeks to train someone. She added appointments can be made to register a new vehicle or have title work, but they are a week to 10 days out. The fix on the problem might be a legislative fix and will cost a lot of money.

Ms. White suggested a desk be setup where people can check-in to ensure they have the correct information and Commissioner Good Geise stated when they are not shorthanded they do have someone verifying documents.

Commissioner Hunthausen stated it is difficult to staff with rush periods and then no one, that is why they added the camera that people can view online. And right now it is people that are trying to make up for the couple of months that were closed due to the pandemic.

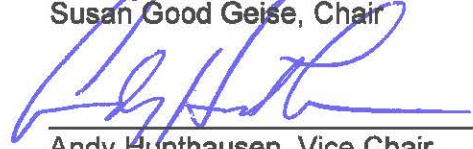
**Adjourn**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:05 am.

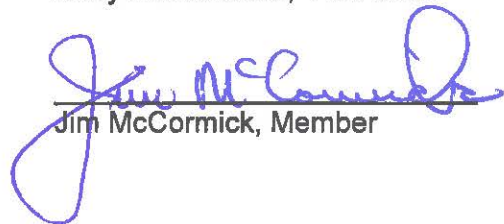
LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Susan Good Geise, Chair




Andy Hunthausen, Vice Chair



Jim McCormick, Member

ATTEST:

  
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Amy Reeves, Clerk of the Board