



PUBLIC MEETING

August 30, 2022
MINUTES

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners Public Meeting was held on Tuesday, August 30, 2022, at 9:00 AM in Commission Chambers, Room 330.

Roll Call

Chair Jim McCormick called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Commissioner Tom Rolfe and Commissioner Andy Hunthausen were present. Others attending all or a portion of the meeting included Roger Baltz, Carrie Lutkehus, Phil Gonzalez, Ann McCauley, Susan Good Geise, Misty Brewer, Kelly Flaherty-Settle, Scott Settle, Jordan Vana, Theresa Ortega, Sharon Kucneli, Karen O'Donnell, and Brandi Spangler, Recording Secretary.

Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone recited the pledge.

Consent Action Items

- a. Resolution 2022-89 Declaring County Property Surplus Property. (Amy Reeves)

Roger Baltz, Chief Administrative Officer, reported on consent action item 2a and recommended approval.

No public comment was received.

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

Subrecipient Agreement Between Lewis and Clark County and Trinity School District. (Carrie Lutkehus)

Carrie Lutkehus, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Program Specialist, presented the subrecipient agreement with Trinity School District #4 for implementation of an ARPA Direct Allocation Grant in the amount of \$112,000. The grant period of performance is March 3, 2021 through December 30, 2024. Through this sub-award, Trinity School District will add 2 classrooms, and conduct upgrades to the school's water supply and sewer systems to meet the demand of increased enrollment. They have 38 students enrolled, increasing from 16. Staff recommends approval.

Commissioner Hunthausen asked for background on the intent of the funds. Ms. Lutkehus explained the process of ARPA funds. There are 2 pots, A and B. One is direct allocation, and one is minimum allocation. This specific one is for Pot A. One allocation was approved in February and later was decided to increase the funding due to needs of more classrooms.

Commissioner McCormick asked about the water situation at the school. Ms. Lutkehus explained the students are currently drinking bottled water. The sewer is not slated for the influx of enrollment and is not sustainable as it is now. This is just one of many drinking water projects allocated through ARPA funds. With the increase, the kindergarten class is being held in the gym so there is no gym area available for physical activity.

No public comment was received.

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

Contract Between Lewis and Clark County and Good Samaritan Thrift Store and Ministries. (Ann McCauley)

Ann McCauley, Grants and Purchasing Director, presented the contract with Good Samaritan Thrift Store and Ministries for the Housing Navigation Services for fiscal year 2023 in the amount of \$30,000 which has been the ongoing allocation. The period of performance is July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. The Housing Navigator position supports employed County residents secure affordable workforce housing. This project has been going since January of 2020. The City of Helena has contributed \$30,000. Staff recommends approval.

Theresa Ortega, Good Samaritan Executive Director, shared that it started out as a pilot program and was ongoing through COVID. Community members who are working to better themselves are benefited from this program.

Misty Brewer, Good Samaritan Housing Navigator, has assisted 97 individuals and families with income from \$1500 to \$4000 per month. Around 27 of those have been housed. All kinds of individuals come for support for housing. One of our community's biggest challenges is affordable housing. Montana Emergency Rental Assistance Program (MERA) funding has been able to assist homeless individuals who are working to get into temporary housing.

Commissioner Hunthausen asked about the cost of a 1-bedroom apartment. Ms. Brewer stated that they are going from \$1100 to \$1400 per month. Property owners are engaging but it has been difficult to find property owners to rent to people in that income bracket because they prefer to have renters that make 3 times what they pay in rent. Seventy percent are long term Montana residents and is a mix from individuals to families that are all employed. She is seeing that people are getting evicted for the landlords to remodel the housing to rent at a higher cost. Just last week she had 22 people come in for support and was only able to house 2 of them.

Ms. Ortega stated this is the third year with the Housing Navigator position. There are three positions, each assigned to a different group of people. One for employed population, one for homeless population and one for people who are in danger of losing their housing. There are changes that need to be made to the application process.

Commissioner Rolfe asked about homelessness and mental health issues and the percentage of that in Helena. Ms. Brewer stated about 80% that she has seen suffers from mental illness.

Ms. Brewer stated that MERA is to assist in housing and stated that people need more services. She is working with Rocky Mountain Development Council (RMDC), direct individuals, and other partners to assist in more needs like mental health, training for employment, budgeting, childcare, and food. The individuals are being assisted in all areas of their lives.

Commissioner McCormick stated there are lots for Habitat for Humanity from developers who are aware of the housing issue and wanted to contribute to the cause.

No public comment was received.

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

Settle Ranch Open Space Bond Level II Application. (Applicant: Montana Land Reliance) (Planner: Phil Gonzalez)

Phil Gonzalez, Planner I, presented a conditional approval to an application from Montana Land Reliance in the amount of \$1,000,000 from the Open Lands Bond to assist in the purchase of Settle Ranch conservation easement. The 30-day open comment period ended August 26, 2022. The proposed easement is located northwest of the Helena valley. The property is 5,917 acres including a 50-acre portion where existing and future development exist. It is a productive ranch and serves as a habitat for many species including trumpeter swan, grizzly bear, lynx, wolverine, bald and golden eagles, among others. The landowner will reimburse for costs involved in this process. Project has been approved by staff and open bonds committee. The Open Lands Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members discussed the application and voted 6-0 for approval. The due diligence period will begin upon approval. Project matrix shows criteria for the bond measure. Sixteen public comments of support were received. Staff recommends approval.

Commissioner McCormick stated on July 26, 2022, the public comments would be carried over to today. There were 13 conditions when the council first considered this project. They were rated in a list of highest priorities. There are 6 high priorities. Mr. Gonzalez listed the goals are to conserve working farms, conserve forests, protect habitat, protect water resources, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, and preserve open lands natural and historical value. This ranch has been in the family for generations. The original brand dates back to the late 19th century.

Commissioner Hunthausen stated it meets the goals and criteria of the program. The committee has seen tremendous support from the public. Mr. Gonzalez confirmed that the Open Lands committee feels it is a significant project. The ratio of donation and request is higher than any other project under the open lands bond.

Scott Settle, President of Settle Ranch, stated that the intent is to protect natural features of the ranch and is essential to agriculture and wildlife. Thankful of the Commission, Open Lands Advisory committee, and supportive public. The ranch was purchased in 1961 and has a commitment to care for the land and that is why Settle Ranch is still around. The ranch extends across Prickly Pear Valley. Extends from the foothills of the continental divide and creates a unique vista and a corridor for wildlife to pass from the divide to the river. Native Americans used the same path following the bison and he believes that is an important feature.

Kelly Flarity, reported on wildlife in the area and spoke of the beauty and the grace of the land.

Jordan Vana, Director of Montana Land Reliance, is prepared to move forward with due diligence items and looks forward to getting this done by the end of the year.

Susan Good Geise, CAC member, has come to appreciate the open space bond project. Of all the projects she has seen in the last 9 years, she sees this one rising right to the top. She is in support of this and future projects. She urges the Commission to bring the extension of the program to the public.

No public comment was received.

A motion to Approve was made by Commissioner Rolfe 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.

Susan Good Geise, Augusta resident, shared some thoughts about zoning. She is urging the Commission to work for urban and transitional zoning amendments and to complete them sooner rather than later. Zoning effects the housing shortage and should not be used for the purpose of opposing zoning. There is opportunity in the urban and transitional area to allow for around 8,000 housing units which far exceeds the number of units needed for the next 10 years. Information has been shared in the last 2 years that proves how essential zoning is and the Commission might be open to liability. She has heard a lot of issues with the ten-acre minimum and cannot wrap her mind around it. The comment itself indicates being arbitrary and capricious Her hope is that the Commission will move forward legally, properly and all due speed.

Karen O'Donnell, resident, shared her background in computers and professional endeavors. She brought copies of a letter and a report for the Commissioners to review. She is disputing election results from 2020. She has been involved in a statewide canvassing effort and shared research results with the Commission. There were at least 9,370 invalid votes in November of 2020. The tally was 31% according to the canvass's findings. The County and State should be in shock over the election. The records must be retained for at least 5 more years. Every request of voting records has been denied. In the last week, over 125 requests for this information have been delivered to the Treasurer/Clerk Recorder. She encourages the Commission to review the canvas reports. Reports can be found online.

Adjourn

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

Meeting minutes approved on January 24, 2023

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Tom Rolfe, Chair



Andy Hunthausen, Vice Chair



Candace Payne, Member

ATTEST:



Amy Reeves, Clerk of the Board