



## **PUBLIC MEETING**

July 26, 2022  
MINUTES

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners Public Meeting was held on Tuesday, July 26, 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, Phil Gonzalez, Nicho Hash, Jessica Makus, Jenny Chambers, Scott Settle, Kelly Settle, Jordan Vana, and Nadine McCarty, Recording Secretary.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Everyone recited the pledge.

### **Consent Action Items**

There were no consent action items.

### **Resolution 2022-53 to Create the Long Gulch Rural Improvement District No. 2022-6. (Jessica Makus)**

Jessica Makus, Special Districts Program Coordinator, presented the resolution to create the Long Gulch Rural Improvement District (RID). Staff received a petition to create the district for the purpose of improving and maintaining Long Gulch Road, about a 0.6 mile stretch of the road located just outside of Marysville. The petition to initiate the RID was signed by 71% of property owners, satisfying the Lewis and Clark County policy of a required 20% of property owners in order to consider the RID petition. There are seven properties in the proposed District boundary.

Improvements includes drainage remediation, culvert installation, surface preparation with the PTH crusher, grading, and compacting. Financing of the improvements is estimated at \$22,085 with each benefited property proposed to be levied a 15-year debt service assessment of \$294 annually. The character of maintenance includes snow plowing and sanding, annual grading, gravel maintenance, drainage maintenance, and other items as necessary to preserve the road improvement. Annual maintenance is estimated at \$1,225 with each benefited property proposed to be levied a maintenance assessment of \$175 annually.

On June 16, 2022 the Commission passed the resolution of intention, and a 30-day comment period was opened, with an additional two days for the July 4th holiday as required by statute. Notice of the

intention to create the district and this hearing was sent to all property owners within the proposed RID and legal ads were published in the Independent Record on June 19 and 26. Two protests were received, totaling 29% of the district benefiting properties, therefore, there is not sufficient protest to bar proceedings. It is anticipated a resolution to levy and assess will be brought before the Commission prior to August 31, 2022, so the assessment will take effect the next tax year. Staff recommends approval of the resolution.

Ms. Makus explained the maintenance and assessment schedule and noted the RID will save money due to its location being on the way to the ski hill as the County snow plows up to the ski hill and would include this section of road. The predicted assessment created based on what they think the annual maintenance would cost with 1.5% inflation factored in each year.

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.

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

Phil Gonzalez, Planner I, presented the Settle Ranch Open Lands application. The Settle Ranch seeks a financial request for a conservation easement on the Settle Ranch located in the Canyon Creek area, approximately 18 miles northwest of Helena. The considered property is 5,917 acres of highly visible and productive agricultural land along Highway 279. The conservation easement would be held and managed by the Montana Land Reliance (MLR). Approximately 50 acres are under review to be removed from the easement or feature an existing development. The property contains landscapes of grasslands, wetlands, riparian zones, and forested area that provide habitat for trumpeter swan, grizzly bear, bald and golden eagles, lynx, wolverines and many other species. The appraised value of the conservation easement was listed as \$5,900,000. The landowners are proposing a donation of 83% of the proposed value or \$4,900,000. Montana Land Reliance is requesting \$1,000,000 from the Open Space Bond to assist in the purchase of the conservation easement. If approved the landowners will reimburse MLR for associated costs and fees.

Mr. Gonzalez reviewed the Open Lands review process and noted the first step is submission of a level two application that was submitted by MLR on May 24, 2022. The project was presented to the Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) on June 7, 2022. A site visit by the CAC members occurred on June 21, 2022. On July 12, 2022, the CAC met and voted 6-0 to recommend approval of the project to the Board of County Commission.

Grasslands and sagebrush steppe dominate the ranch, with two miles of riparian habitat along Willow Creek and one mile of riparian habitat along Trinity Creek. Staff received 14 public comments all in support of the project. Staff recommends acceptance of the CAC recommendation.

Scott Settle, Settle Ranch Company, thanked everyone for considering the proposal and those citizens that wrote letters in support of the project. He gave some history of the family's agriculture success. He asked the Commission to approve the application.

Jordan Vana, Managing Director Montana Land Reliance, stated the Settle Ranch abuts 486 acres of public lands, over 18,000 acres of conserved private land within 10 miles of the Settle Ranch. The corridor is commonly used by elk and other wildlife. The Settles have participated in block management.

Discussion occurred on the project evaluation criteria.

Mr. Settle gave an overview of what is around the property.

No public comment was received.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hunthausen to accept the recommendation of the CAC for the proposed assistance in the purchase of the Conservation Easement and begin the 30-day comment period 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.**

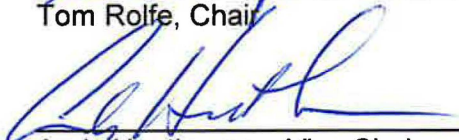
**Adjourn**


There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:53 am.

Meeting minutes approved on 01/31/2023

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Rolfe, Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Andy Hunthausen, Vice Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Candace Payne, Member

ATTEST:

  
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Amy Reeves, Clerk of the Board