Prairie County Board of Commissioners Meeting

July 15th, 2026

Prairie County Court House Commissioners Room
217 West Park St Terry, MT 59349

www.prairiecounty.org

Prairie County Board of Commissioners, Todd Devlin, Christine Keltner and Dennis Teske met in regular session at 8:00 a.m. In attendance Administrative Assistant Harry McNall.

8:00 a.m. Call to order, pledge of allegiance.

8:00 a.m. Road Supervisor Todd Henry to discuss road budget. Discussed hiring a new supervisor prior to Todd Henry leaving the position. There was discussion on how to trim the budget down if needed to keep it under the cap for the department.

9:00 a.m. Commissioner Keltner read the minutes from the June 30th, 2026, commissioners meeting.

9:07 a.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to accept the June 30th, 2026, commissioners meeting minutes as corrected seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

9:10 a.m. Commissioner Devlin read the minutes from July 8th, 2026, commissioner meeting.

9:18 a.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to accept the minutes from the July 8th, 2026, commissioners meeting as corrected, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

9:15 a.m. Ashley Vande Bossche with Healthy is Wellness to discuss progress and updates. The county has 27 employees that use this program, and we visit the county every other month and have been serving the county since 2021. Over the last few years, we have seen positive results in the county. She offered the county the possibility of Healthy is Wellness coming in and doing a blood draw once a year. She would like to increase her time from 2 hours a visit to 3 hours a visit. She is asking for an increase of $125 going from $425 to $550 for their visits.

Commissioner Teske made a motion to approve the additional hour of time and to cover the A1C blood draw for employees once a year, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

9:30 a.m. Public Comment. No public comment.

10:30 a.m. Sharla Sackman for the fair board to discuss selection and notification on request for qualifications architects for new fair building. There were two firms that submitted qualifications.

11:00 a.m. Commissioners reviewed correspondence.

11:17 a.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to send a letter of support for "Notice No. MT-26-07 for the DEQ General Permit; Pesticide Applications To-or-Over State Surface Waters Permit Number MTG870000", seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

11:30 a.m. County Treasurer Garrett Lapp provided the commissioners with the June Investment Authorization Report and cash reconciliation for the year end.

11:35 a.m. Commissioner Keltner made a motion to accept the June Investment Authorization Report, seconded by Commissioner Teske, "all in favor" motion passed.

11:56 a.m. Commissioner Keltner made a motion to use the letter of support created by Harry McNall for the DEQ MTG870000 permit, seconded by Commissioner Teske, "all in favor" motion passed.

12:00 p.m. lunch break

1:00 p.m. Andrea Bybee ambulance supervisor to discuss budget. Discussion on wage increases for the EMT with endorsement, no endorsement and registered nurses.

1:34 p.m. Rolane Christofferson with the library to discuss budget.

2:00 p.m. Dwight Tague into discuss the airport budget.

2:12 p.m. Dwight Tague discussed county fire budget.

3:00 p.m. Sharla Sackman to discuss weed board budget. Sharla went over the budget details with the commission.

3:20 p.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to sign the audit contract with Olness and Associated for FY2026 Audit, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

3:25 p.m. Sharla Sackman went over budget for the extension office.

3:40 p.m. Sharla Sackman and Tom Pisk went over budget for the fair board. She explained what money is used during the fair, and other expenses that come up throughout the year.

4:27 p.m. Sheriff Lewis to go over budget for his office. He read a letter that explains what his department does and what is really needed in his department (Exhibit A). He also read a letter that explained his position concerning county attorney Dan Rice, and how important he is to the sheriff's department and the county (Exhibit B).

Sheriff Lewis went over three budgets, one that had 5 employees, another with 4 employees and the final one with 3 employees. He wanted to show the commission what the department saves the county by running just 3 employees even though it's difficult. He explained his budget in detail to the commissioners with an overall increase of 3.59%. He also went over the Coroner Office budget. The sheriff's budget also reflects the cost of prisoner care and bed rates at jails.

5:25 p.m. Commissioner Devlin made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

Signed this 22nd day of July 2026

Christine W. Keltner

Christine, Keltner Commissioner

ATTEST: Shari L Robertson

Shari Robertson, Clerk & Recorder

Exhibit A

Keifer Lewis • Sheriff/Coroner • 217 Park Street West • Terry Montana 59349

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It has been mentioned by a county commissioner that the Sheriff's Office needs 5 people. I could not agree more and simple math proves this. Based off the math it looks like this:

24/7 Law enforcement services x 365 days per year equal 8760 hours of service. Normal hours per year of 2080 hours, it would take 4.22 people to handle this. Providing that the county provides a benefit of vacation days and sick leave, it would stand to reason that an employee should be able to utilize these benefits. That is where the 5th person becomes so important. It allows for complete coverage, being able to take time off without forcing overtime and extremely long shift weeks. As it stands now we each put in around 2900 hours per year. A portion of that is on call hours which are paid out at 2 dollars per hour, but it can easily be argued under federal labor law that this time in the law enforcement community is not our own time and therefore would need to be paid out at full wage. (see addendum). I am not asking for that, Just the consideration of what this situation looks like. Currently when we get called out we go to full compensation of hourly rate and then back to on call rate when the call is over.

Currently with just 3 sworn officers, if one of us takes time off, it forces the other 2 into overtime hours and days. If one of us goes to training, or sometimes 2 of us have to go to the same training. We are required to receive 20 hours of CE each 2 year period for law enforcement. We are required to receive 16 hours of CE each year for coroner. Furthermore, we are required to recertify in certain areas annually or biannually. If you are in a specialty field, then you have to add that training time in as well. In our profession training NEVER stops. It is nothing for me to receive more than 100 hours of training annually.

For the health, safety and well being of the law enforcement professionals, we absolutely need to add these additional positions authorized. Can we fill them is always the next question.

Sheriff/Coroner

Keifer Lewis

On-Call Time

An employee who is required to remain on his or her employer's premises or so close thereto that he or she cannot use the time effectively for his or her own purposes is working while on-call.

Whether hours spent on-call is hours worked is a question of fact to be decided on a case-by-case basis. All on-call time is not hours worked.

On-call situations vary. Some employees are required to remain on the employer's premises or at a location controlled by the employer. One example is a hospital employee who must stay at the hospital in an on-call room. While on-call, the employee is able to sleep, eat, watch television, read a book, etc. but is not allowed to leave the hospital. Other employees are able to leave their employer's premises, but are required to stay within so many minutes or so many miles of the facility and be accessible by telephone or by pager. An example of this type of employee is an apartment maintenance worker who has to carry a pager while on call and must remain within a specified number of miles of the apartment complex.

Is your employee required to remain on your premises while he or she is on-call?

- Yes
- No

Exhibit A

An employee who is not required to remain on his or her employer's premises but is merely required to leave word where he or she may be reached is not working while on-call. Next we must determine if your employee is able to use the on-call time effectively to engage in personal activities.

Although you may require your employee to be accessible by telephone or paging device, or you may establish rules governing use of alcohol or participation in other activities while your employee is on-call, he or she may still be able to use the on-call time to engage in personal activities, such as cutting the grass, going to the movies, going to a ball game, or engaging in other activities of his or her choosing.

The other consideration in determining whether your employee can use the on-call time for his or her own purpose is the frequency of the work calls received during his or her on-call time. If your employee is interrupted to such an extent the he or she cannot conduct his or her regular activities, your employee probably cannot use the on-call time for his or her own purposes. For example, if he or she is unable to finish a meal, read a story to his or her child or read a newspaper during the same on-call period, he or she probably cannot use the time effectively for his or her own purposes.

While on-call, is your employee able to use his or her on-call time for his or her own purposes?

- Yes
- No

Your employee's on-call time is probably hours worked.

An employee who is on-call must be able to use the idle time for his or her own purposes or the on-call time is probably hours worked. When an employee is on-call, all time spent responding to calls is hours worked.

Exhibit 5

Keifer Lewis • Sheriff/Coroner • 217 Park Street West • Terry Montana 59349

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County Attorney Recommendation

I would like to make my position regarding the County Attorney very clear.

County Attorney Dan Rice is an invaluable asset to my office. While the full scope of his responsibilities may not always be visible, the work he performs for the Sheriff's Office is critical to the safety and success of our county. He prosecutes criminal cases at every level and is available to me and my staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide legal guidance when questions arise. His counsel ensures that we make legally sound decisions and helps protect the county from unnecessary liability.

Additionally, we remain in the midst of a homicide case that is still moving through the prosecution process. Dan's knowledge of the case and his continued involvement are essential to seeing that matter through to its conclusion.

There are also practical budget considerations. A change in the County Attorney's Office could impact my administrative assistant's position. I have sufficient work to justify keeping her employed full-time, but there is no guarantee that a new County Attorney would retain her or that she would choose to work for a different administration. If that were to occur, it could create additional costs within the Sheriff's Office budget.

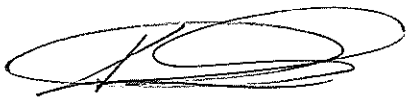
Dan's advice, legal counsel, and unwavering support have been invaluable to my office and to the citizens of this county. I strongly encourage you to consider the operational, financial, and public safety implications of losing his experience and institutional knowledge.

While I understand it is not yet time to appoint a County Attorney, it is not too early to begin considering the ramifications of replacing Dan Rice. From the perspective of the Sheriff's Office, continuity in this position is in the best interest of our county.

Respectfully,

Keifer Lewis
Sheriff/Coroner

Sheriff/Coroner



Keifer Lewis