Prairie County Board of Commissioners Meeting

October 8th, 2025

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 9:00 a.m. In attendance Administrative Assistant Harry McNall.

9:00 a.m. Pledge of allegiance and call to order. Public Comment

Harry McNall: I am asking the Commission for the support of, "Rescission of the 2024 *Conservation and Landscape Health Rule",* through the federal registry. This would rescind the decision to make conservation a leasable use on public lands. There have been a lot of comments summited in opposition of rescinding this rule, and I am asking that you support it through a letter, and resolution to go with it, examples have been submitted to you. This is a time sensitive issue, comments and supporting documents can be submitted online through the federal registry.

Shane Eaton: Why did the commission take the position not recognize Columbus Day? The Commission set the federal holidays in 2024 as set in a resolution.

Commissioners responded that they believed it was an oversite when signing the resolution and didn't mean to exclude Columbus Day.

Reene Pirtz: The governor had not recognized it at that time, and I don't believe it is a federal holiday. Was it an oversight or overreach on the office?

Harry McNall: I am at all these meetings, even spoke that you didn't sign off on this change. Then it was pointed to me that you signed a resolution; I read it and missed it too.

Shane Eaton: Read and submitted a letter he wrote concerning comments from Crowley Fleck Law Firm, during the September 30th, 2025, commissioners meeting. You should be looking at the Citizen Initiated Zoning petition. Go to sheep mountain and look west and see the Wind Energy conversion system, which is a preexisting use. But look East and there is nothing. How can they put a litigation hold on the county without any standing?

Reene Pirtz: there is a conflict on the 22nd at 7 p.m. and there is the same type of meeting in Glendive at 6:00 p.m. Would you consider adjusting the Date, either ahead or behind?

Sheila Dixon: She is very upset about the discord here, take the heat down a notch. There are elections if you don't like how the commission is doing. Thank you, commissioners, for your hard work.

Lisa Everrett: The letter was brought into the commission because he received it and gave it to the commissioners. They didn't have a chance to read it before it was brought up during public

comment. Its not fair to give the commission a hard time considering they had not even read the letter.

Shane Eaton: The letter was 2:07 minutes on audio (1) the letter from Nextera was described and presented to the commission.

Reene Pirtz: Arron Martinson had said he wanted communication between attorney and NextEra, and you said you were going to take care of it. It was taken care of for you before the end of the meeting.

Commissioner Teske commented that he is frustrated that the commission cannot communicate at all outside of the office with other members of the board, which makes doing business difficult.

Reene Pirtz: commented that she understands the position the commissioners are in and doesn't blame them for some of the issues that have arisen due to outsider conducts during meetings. She appreciates your service.

9:30 a.m. Road Supervisor Todd Henry joined the meeting. He updated the commission on activities with the road department. They have been busy mowing, grading etc. The cost of mowing has been higher this year; the new machine wears much faster than the old one.

10:00 a.m. Commissioners discussed sending hearing letters out concerning the Big Sheep Mountain Zoning District.

Commissioner Keltner made a motion that all landowners of Prairie County North of the Yellowstone River receive a letter concerning the hearing for the Big Sheep Mountain Zoning District, seconded by Commissioner Teske, "all in favor" motion passed.

Commissioner Devlin ask to have the scheduled October 29th commissioner meeting moved to October 30th, 2025. Commission all agree to move the date.

10:25 a.m. Commissioner Keltner read the minutes from the September 17th, 2025, commissioner's meeting.

10:33 a.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to accept the minutes form the September 17th, 2025, commissioners meeting as corrected, second by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

10:45 a.m. Commissioner Keltner read the minutes from the September 30th, 2025, Commissioners meeting.

10:58 a.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to accept the minutes from September 30th, 2025, Commissioners meeting as corrected, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

11:00 a.m. Dale Hellman in to speak to commissioners about fee increases with the cemetery services. They have received a few applications for open positions and will wait a couple more weeks before moving forward and bringing the applications into the commission. The current

position is $20.90/hr. and works part time of the year. The proposed new hire wage would be $19.00/hr for the caretaker. The cemetery technician is currently paid out of the fees for doing the grave opening and closing work. Dale Hellman went over other service fee changes that he recommended.

11:50 a.m. Commissioner Keltner made a motion to for Todd Devlin to be the signer for the CDBG Grant forms, seconded Commissioner Teske, "all in favor" motion passed.

12:00 p.m. Lunch Break

1:00 p.m. Deputy Clerk & Recorder Aria Walters provided the Commissioners with claims to review and sign.

Prairie County Voucher # 1040 $38,721.95

Prairie County Voucher # 1041 $26,647.65

1:30 p.m. Commissioner Devlin explained he had spoken with DEQ in regards to who is responsible for bonding and decommissioning. The state is responsible for decommissioning, the representative at DEQ was Kyla Maki 406-444-6459. From what he gathered from their conversation is that decommissioning is out of our control.

Chelle Harrington ask if there are any guidelines for decommissioning procedures.

2:30 p.m. County Treasurer Garrett Lapp provided the commissioners with the Investment Authorization Report.

2:43 p.m. Commissioner Keltner made a motion to accept the Prairie County Treasures investment report, seconded by Commissioner Teske, "all in favor" motion passed.

3:00 p.m. Public Comment.

Shila Dixon, why is the county attorney not at our public meetings concerning wind turbines? He should be available to answer questions.

Commissioners had a discussion about what has happened and other issues around the current conversations.

Sheriff Lewis joined the meeting.

3:30 p.m. Commissioners had a discussion on MACo Technologies vs DIS technical services.

3:35 p.m. Commissioner Keltner made a motion to accept the MACo Technologies Contract "Montana Association of Counties Member Cybersecurity & Technologies Services (MCT) Agreement, seconded by Commissioner Teske, open for discussion, "all in favor" motion passed.

Cheryl Morrison had a comment about doing this process, and not everyone wants this, and she doesn't feel good about the process. She feels MACo will drop us, if there are too many issues in the future. She is not a fan, but she has heard from other counties that have them and they have been happy with no problems.

Sheriff Lewis believes this product will be a good thing for his department and will save money for his department.

4:00 p.m. Public Hearing for Final Growth Policy Discussion for final approval.

Concerning the growth policy there was one written comment by Richard Carlton. The commissioners read the comment before proceeding. Richard briefly discussed with the commissioners what he felt about the growth policy. The tone was more protective than helpful, as an example state and federal government to get in touch with the county in a timely manner, was a bit over the top. County properties were not listed. No real examples of growth within the county, that shows future growth. And lastly, there were no board member names listed anywhere within the document. Thought there should have been more about wind turbines.

Shiela Dixon; she is currently on the board to develop the growth policy for the town of Terry. So much agriculture land limits the outward growth.

Various conversations about the growth policy concerning zoning, wind turbines etc.

4:40 p.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

Signed this 22nd day of October 2025

Todd Devlin

Todd Devlin, Commissioner Chair

ATTEST: Shari Robertson

Shari Robertson, Clerk & Recorder

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to express concern regarding comments made during the September 30, 2025 public meeting. You discussed a letter received from Crowley Fleck law firm which debated the issue of whether certain wind leases are "existing use" and not subject to zoning. Premature consideration of "existing use" is concerning.

The only issue presently before the County is the Petition for Citizen Initiated Zoning. That Petition has broad support by landowners in the proposed District. Since that Petition has not yet been voted on by the County, it is premature to consider the issue of "existing use."

Deciding the issue of whether certain wind leases meet the standard for "existing use" at this stage would be inappropriate and pre-decisional, since it risks bypassing critical steps in the zoning process, which are public hearings, and a vote by the Commissioners to adopt the zoning. A premature decision on the issue of "existing use" could undermine transparency, limit public participation, and potentially lead to unintended consequences that may not align with the best interests of our community.

If the Petition for Citizen Initiated Zoning is adopted by the County, only then would it be proper for the County to consider issues of existing use and only where an individual raised that issue directly with the County. Any earlier determination of "existing use" issues by you, are pre-decisional and improper because you would be deciding before an issue has been officially brought to you and before zoning is adopted.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to serving our community responsibly. I am happy to discuss this further or provide additional information if needed.

Sincerely,

Shane L Eaton 10·8·25

Shane L. Eaton

Prairie County
Montana

Board of County Commissioners
P.O. Box 125 • 217 Park St W • Terry, MT 59349
Phone: (406) 635-5575 • Fax: (406) 635-5576

October 8,2025

Dear affected Landowner:

The Prairie County Commissioners would like to inform you that a public hearing will be held October 22, 2025, at 7 pm at the Prairie County Courthouse for public input, either in support or opposition, and to assist the Commissioners in determining, whether or not "the public interest or convenience" requires that the Board of County Commissioners establish the Big Sheep Mountain Park Citizen Initiated Zoning District.

A copy of the signed resolution of intent No. 26-9 can be obtained through the Clerk and Recorder's office.

All citizens have the right to provide written or oral comments concerning the need for the creation of the petitioned district.

Respectfully,

Prairie County Board of Commissioners

Richard S. Carlton
214 Garfield Ave.
Terry, MT

Observations and Commentary on the Prairie County Growth Policy (Draft) 2025

I began this undertaking the way most people would; I looked it over, skimmed it quickly, and then began to read in earnest. I read through quickly to get a feel for the document and then proceeded to begin a careful analysis. Topic/Title: "2025 Growth Policy Prairie County." Title Page: "August 2025 -- Planning Board Draft, Prepared by the Prairie County Planning Board" although no members of that Planning Board are named. Well, maybe on the next page...

Nope, Table of Contents ... looks good, very thorough, topics, sources, maps, images... nice. Pagination is a bit off but I'm sure that will be picked up in the final. Next --

Executive Summary ... no members yet and the summary is mostly an attempt to explain the Table of Contents in a more textual fashion. On to --

Coordination and Policy – hmm. I am immediately struck by a tone of astounding bellicosity. Wow, does it really make sense to tell ones' superiors how, when, and in what manner they are to contact you? No offense here, but I think they just might have the more weighted hand. Coordination is based on mutual discussion, not directive.

Your document references thirty-four (34) policies yet not a single one mentions "growth" or "increase" or any other synonymous term. Most policies, however, do instruct the State and Federal Governments how their policies are to be submitted to you – and in a timely fashion. Now this may seem like a rather silly critique, but I believe that coordination also includes an acceptance of the fact that others with whom one deals, also have requirements which need be accepted. Perhaps now we should move on to --

Goals and Objectives! It is here (on page 13) that I first note the word "growth" within the body of the text itself! This, of course, represents the noun form of the verb "to grow" but we'll take it because none of your thirty-three (33) goals otherwise makes mention of 'growth.' Such leads as "encourage, support, continue," are very plentiful – but not a single grow or growth or increase. Now let's move on to --

Oh! A couple topics which I did not see addressed at all in the Growth Plan but which probably should have been; energy and then toxic chemicals. On the energy front, there has been a bit of a dust-up over NextEra Energy wishing to bring wind turbines into Dawson and Prairie Counties – and perhaps as wide as they can spread. In spite of this current topic impinging on growth considerations, you make no commentary or observation of any kind within the Prairie County 2025 Growth Policy. How can this possibly be? That appears to be the greatest growth topic of the decade, with tremendous public opinion yea or nay, and the alleged most dramatic "Payout" of the Century for this county and yet you fail to make an entry in the Growth Plan? Beyond the NextEra proposal (of which you should be extremely cautious, by the way – personal opinion, sorry, no, sorry, not sorry!)l Anyway, there will be energy production growth within the county over the next ten years. Where does that fall within your growth plan?

Before leaving energy production, you make brief reference to "extraction" activities – coal, minerals, and oil, yet you did not detail how those activities will be managed within your growth plan, nor address the multiple new requirements that these activities will demand before becoming established within Prairie County. Now, let's move to --

Ahh, yes! Toxic materials. Handling, transportation, storage, use, and disposal. Regardless of the form or type these are, they are potentially highly dangerous. Wouldn't it be appropriate to address how this subject might be managed at the county level over the next ten years of growth? Now --

Whew we've made it to page seventeen (17), and a couple more, and that appears to be the substance of the 2025 Growth Policy. Again, a lovely index, but the rest of the document is primarily historical filler and, while it can definitely be of assistance in understanding what Prairie County is, and has been, it does little to discuss anything about the anticipated growth which will undoubtedly occur over the next ten (10) years. Most certainly people in Prairie County have opinions and desires pertaining to the county's evolution and growth — as do I. I assume (yes, I know about 'assumption') that the members of the County Planning Board, both as individuals, and as board members, likewise have opinions and desires regarding growth as the years progress toward 2035. I would have expected to find these opinions, desires, and expectations here within this new Growth Policy (Draft). Next --

To be candid, though, I do not find these opinions, desires, and expectations here. What I do find are lovely summaries of what Prairie County is, and has been; a great description of the county. Historical snippets, past years' grain production values, and more. While it often makes for interesting reading, it resonates more like a Preservation Policy than a Growth Policy.

Most Sincerely,

Scott Carlton
rsc37@cornell.edu