Missoula Board of County Commissioners

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
COVER SHEET

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 08, 2023 – 2 PM

Hybrid meeting – Missoula County Courthouse Annex Sophie Moiese Room/Microsoft Teams

Click here to view the meeting recording.

Time stamps (in green) correspond to meeting recording above. Please click to the time stamps listed to view a particular item in the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners Present:
Chair Vero
Commissioner Slotnick
Commissioner Strohmaier

Staff Present:
Violet Plummer, Administrative Assistant, Commissioners' Office
Slaven Lee, Executive Director, Library
John Hart, Civil Deputy County Attorney, Attorney's Office
Allison Franz, Communications Manager, Communications
Andrew Czorny, Missoula County Chief Financial Officer
Kyla Lehnerz, Administrative Assistant, Commissioners' Office
Amanda Henthorne, Budget Analyst, Finance
Debb Clark, Finance Manager, Public Works
Mel Fisher, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Communications and Projects
Lisa Beczkiewicz, Health Promotion Supervisor, Health Department
Pirrie Durkee, Accounting Clerk, Weed/Extension Office
Anne Hughes, Missoula County Chief Operating Officer
Shane Stack, Director, Public Works
Chris Lounsbury, Missoula County Chief Administrative Officer
Bryce Christiaens, Weed District Manager, Weed/Extension Office
Jerry Marks, Department Head Extension Agent, Weed/Extension Office
Emmie Bristow, Community Engagement Coordinator
Shirley Faust, Missoula County Clerk of District Court
Nancy Rittel, Grants Administrator, Community and Planning Services
Ethan Redfern, Construction Manager, Facilities
Carey Powers, Communications Coordinator, Communications
Sarah Bell, Grants Administrator, Community and Planning Services
Shyra Scott, Recording Director, Clerk and Recorder's Office
Amy McGhee, Chief Deputy, Clerk of Court's Office
Vincent Pavlish, Civil Deputy County Attorney, Attorney's Office

Kayla Talbert, Grants Administrator, Community and Planning Services
Annie Cathey, Administrative Assistant, Commissioners' Office

1. **CALL TO ORDER** *[Time stamp – 0:01]*

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** *[Time stamp – 0:00]*

3. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** *[Time stamp – 0:00]*
   Missoula County acknowledges that this event takes place in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people.

4. **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS** *[Time stamp – 0:04]*
   a. Proclamation: Suicide Prevention Week (9/7/22-9/13/22)

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA** *[Time stamp – 1:37]*

6. **CURRENT CLAIMS LIST** *[Time stamp – 1:50]*
   Claims received as of August 26, 2022 to August 30, 2022 by the Commissioners' Office total $613,728.20.

7. **HEARINGS**
   Final Budget Hearing and Approval – Fiscal Year 2023 *[Time stamp – 2:10]*
   Andrew Czorny, Missoula County Chief Financial Officer

   [Resolution 2022-094 Book: 1081 Page: 576]

8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

9. **ADJOURN**
   Chair Vero – Called the meeting to adjourn at 3:04 p.m.

BCC Public Meeting September 08, 2022 – Transcription

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Dialogue in the transcription attributed to "Sophie Moiese Room" is for all speakers that attended the meeting in person. Attendees that participated virtually are labeled individually.

0:04
Whereas this proclamation recognizes suicide as a community wide problem and suicide prevention as requiring a community effort.

0:11
And whereas Montana suicide rate is the third highest in the nation and has ranked among the top five states with the highest rates of suicide for the past four decades.

0:21
And whereas since 2017, Missoula County has suffered 143 suicides.

0:28
And whereas suicide by firearm accounts for 50% of all suicides in the United States and 62% of all suicides in Montana and guns stored in the home are used for suicide 40 times more than for self-defense.

0:41
And whereas it is important to support our new National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Call Center here in Missoula, along with our new mobile response units who can effectively and empathetically intervene in crisis situations.

0:56
And whereas our community will support suicide prevention efforts to the maximum extent possible with initiatives like Project Tomorrow Montana, which works to reduce Missoula County suicide deaths and attempts through educational programs and evidence based policy.

1:13
Now, therefore, in coordination with National Suicide Prevention Week, we, the Missoula Board of County Commissioners in Montana do hereby recognize the week of September 7th through the 13th, 2022 as Suicide Prevention Week.

1:28
Thank you.

1:31
Well, we just have one item here.

1:37
Is there any public comment on items not on the agenda?

1:44
You don't see any in the room and I don't think we see any online.

1:50
Our current claims list as of August 26th through August 30th by the Commissioner's Office totals $613,728.20.

2:00
That's a a lower number than it usually is.

2:03
Yeah, I guess belt tight, belt tight.

2:10
So we have one hearing, final budget hearing and approval for fiscal year 2023.

2:15
Andrew Chorney, excuse me, that's OK.

2:23
We forgot to get Andrew his headset.

2:26
We have a special I'm and we didn't do that.

2:29
It's in front of me.

2:30
So I'm going to try to speak directly on the microphone this time.

2:35
Welcome to the 20/20/23 final budget hearing.

2:39
I'm Andrew Trine, Chief Financial Officer from Missoula County.

2:45
I'm going to try a couple of few cover a few items today.

2:48
The final budget presentation will consist of the budget challenges and priorities the commissioners faced, the proposed 2023 appropriations or expenses, the budget revenue to support those appropriations and the tax impacts to the to the taxpayers.

3:06
And then we want to touch a little bit on the public comment we received through the various channels that we identified in your earlier presentation.

3:19
We received public comment.

3:20
It was mainly focused on frustration about the property taxes increasing, not keeping pace with wage increases across sectors was which is historically been the case in the United States over many, many years.

3:32
Other comments included broad request holding increases back to expenditures and scaling back services but the comments lacks specific specificity and where those direct those reductions.

3:47
I did have a conversation with the Mr.

3:49
Kenneth Cole Kenneth Cole this morning of the Tower district and you relate to me his concerns and and it was more in the light of fixed income and increasing taxes.

4:05
He and his wife are both on Social Security and they bought a home a number of years in the Tower district and it's gone up exponentially since the two year reappraisal.

4:18
I'm sorry I I spoke to a a man by the name of Kenneth Cole this morning who relayed to me that he and his wife had bought a home over in the Tower District I believe in 2014 and they're both in Social Security.

4:33
Fixed incomes in the in the tax continue to increase and they're having trouble affording their homes.

4:41
And so we we talked about a number of options or and he asked me to include him in a potential legislative testimony.

4:50
He'd be happy to come up and to lay out all his books and show what it's doing to him and his family.

4:56
So it was a it was an interesting conversation productive conversation.

5:00
I thought in terms of assessed value this, this kind of speaks to your reappraisal cycle.

5:13
You can see that right now we started in 2016 with an assessed value and this is assessed value of the, this is an assessed value of the entire county.

5:23
This is the value that the Department of Revenue places on the county every other year.

5:31
And in 2016 it was 12 billion, it's jumped at 18 billion in 2023.

5:41
So you'll notice that the IT went up to 18.74 billion and you notice that the little spikes there the the off years, the non appraisal years, so the ones that really level off and then the reappraisal years just jumped tremendously because of the value of your homes increased.

6:04
The important part of the of the tax system is the newly taxable property that's the property that's built or is substantially improved so that it can add value to the tax rule and spread out those taxes among a bigger tax base because there's new houses or new developments or what have you.

6:27
So that's what that's very interested in each year.

6:31
This year it went up a little bit, 7.349 million, a little more than last year, but but a million of it was gobbled up by increases in the urds and tiffs as well.

6:48
And URD and TIFF stands for Urban Renewal, District Taxing, taxing, financing.

6:59
And those are in the city.

7:00
Yep.

7:04
And this this long student here we the development enhancing change value.

7:19
The total property for all new one continues to increase for taxable values.

7:25
And Andrew, I'm sorry, I can't, I can't hear you.

7:28
I'm sorry.

7:29
Thank you.

7:29
The total taxable value for all of my Missoula County increased $292,000 for the fiscal year.

7:39
It's because it's it's divided in so many different taxable classes.

7:46
The assessed valuation is derived for residential classes at 1.35% of that assessed value.

7:54
So that taxable value is brought down by the different asset classes.

8:01
So Andrew, what's the difference in between taxable value and assessed value?

8:07
The assessed value is is the overall what the closest thing I can compare to it and it really isn't market value, but it's what the Department of Revenue assesses as as a total value of of the county.

8:25
The taxable value is what they assess each tax class percentage of that assessed valuation.

8:34
So that tax will value for that tax classes derived from that assessed valuation.

8:39
And it's a a percentage for residential, a percentage for commercial, right percentage for there are I'm guessing 200 different tax classes.

8:48
Wow.

8:53
Again set by the legislature And yes, yes, annual Department of Revenue.

8:59
OK, wait, OK, so this last bullet, total taxable value for all property for Missoula County for fiscal year 2020, one 292.5 million.

9:13
But then your question, so and if I understand it right, assessed value is what the Department of Revenue says the value is of all those properties.

9:22
But all those properties are taxed at different percentages if they're residential, commercial, agriculture or apparently 197 other categories.

9:29
If you're to take those two, all of those, the all those percentages divided into that total value, this is what we get up, that's the taxable value.

9:42
So if there's a billion dollars worth of residential value and it's at 1%, then there'd be $1,000,000 worth of taxable value and your assessed value that.

9:54
That's not the same as if you were going to put your home on the market.

9:57
What you would likely get at some point in time is looking at my assessed value for my home.

10:03
I'm I'm guessing I could probably sell my property for more than what this for sure has identified as the assessed value.

10:11
If if I understand it right, it's because when the state did that assessment, they didn't send an appraiser over to Dave's house and stand there and look at it and go inside and check it all out.

10:20
They just looked it on paper.

10:22
We got this much square footage a finished basement or not and and you know up garage or not and then an algorithm spit out what the price is.

10:30
It didn't do what an appraiser would do which would go look at the place and do a bunch of comps.

10:34
So the the market value is always going to be higher than the assessed value.

10:37
Every two years they go out and assess like properties and they do big swaths of property and and similarly increase the percentages which yeah, thanks man.

10:51
My next point which I keep hammering on but maybe somebody someday somebody will listen.

10:58
Property tax is broken.

10:59
It's an archaic and it's a punitive method method of taxation.

11:05
A person's wealth isn't measured by the size of his homeowner's property.

11:08
May make sense.

11:09
In old England, one the Royals derive their income from their lands.

11:16
Today, a person's wealth or ability to pay is not determined by the size of the value of the home.

11:20
They're they own or they rent form needs to be.

11:25
We need Montana to step up and do some real tax reform based on person's ability to pay and not how much inflation or other factors have driven up the price of their homes.

11:37
The system is funding services.

11:39
The the system for funding services is the local level.

11:42
So it's broken.

11:43
We need property tax reform.

11:46
Property taxes cannot be the only source of income local governments rely on.

11:50
For Prop.

11:51
Prevent to provide essential services to residents.

11:54
Residents who serve Montana needs a tax system that will tax visitors who come to to enjoy Montana while providing tax relief to those who have paid and continue to pay for county services and infrastructure that we use.

12:12
And just the last point of the little example that this is from the Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana, County Services and Infrastructure seeing increased demands on them put year by year by by non residents.

12:30
Just about 30% of the over 12 million people that visited Montana in 2021 came to Missoula County.

12:39
They spent an average of 6 1/2 nights here.

12:43
55% were here for recreation and vacation.

12:47
The routes varied.

12:48
These were the primary route that we thought we would list because they're kind of direct into Missoula and affect our roads.

12:56
And what was interesting that 65% of them made over $75,000 a year and 12% / 2000.

13:04
There were two layers between those that were there.

13:07
These are wealthy folks coming in that can afford to help pay for these services.

13:14
And a resort tax.

13:17
Yeah, that would provide some property tax relief for residents, I think would make a lot of sense, OK.

13:42
So getting into the budget presentation priorities and challenges that the Commission faced this year #1, we've heard from department.

13:51
We had heads, we heard from chief officers, we heard from managers.

13:56
They just could not keep or retain county employees.

14:02

We had folks being hired off the lines in the treasurer's office this year for higher wages and we're just having a very, very difficult time retaining and recruiting employees.

14:16
So to do that, over 85% of the employees here are governed by a collective bargaining unit or reunion that takes care of their their salaries and their negotiations.

14:30
We have a small percentage of the staff here which is not represented by a union.

14:36
They're called the personal plan plan individuals, we implemented a plan this year that would bring in market wages as they gain experience in a shorter period of time has been done before it was we got the the market wages from a national survey and a local survey.

14:58
It's in the same system the universe or the Mozilla is using with slight changes, but we believe it'll will help retain and recruit some employees that we've lost.

15:12
We have made increases at the lower end of the pay scale to ensure all regular employees make at least $15.00 an hour, which seems awfully low now.

15:23
We did have a 5% increase in medical and insurance premiums this year for all 855 FT ES and the big one was in fiscal year 23 by the 27th pay period because two weeks doesn't divide into a year equally.

15:43
So you have this incremental piece at the each of at the end of each year that in the 13th year provides you with that 27th pay period.

15:54
And do we know what the figure is for or is there Chris or Ann, do we know what that number was, what this 27th pay period is costing us.

16:07
I meant to look that up to sorry, I mean it's so sorry.

16:10
I that's OK.

16:11
Don't worry about it.

16:12
And and if I understand it right, going forward, we're just going to put a little money away every year.

16:18
So 13 years from now it won't be as big a hit.

16:22
That's exactly right.

16:23
At least we're in our positions 13 years ago to ask that this had been done.

16:28
You know we we have devised a fund and we're putting money from each and every department into that fund and eight hour increments each year for each month for to accommodate those 13 periods.

16:53
Another one of the obstacles or the challenges you really face this year was inflation and it's just like everybody else.

17:02
I'm not, I'm not telling anybody, anybody anything new.

17:06
But it did hit the county, you know, hard and as it did with with the residents, oh, here we go, you know, the Mountain West.

17:31
Unfortunately through year over year up until last month, we leaded the entire nation in the consumer price index at 9.6%, cost of gasoline up 37%.

17:46
County costs were up to 726% up to $726,000.

17:54
Natural gas 47%.

17:56
Electricity 4.3 and 21.

17:59
Projected 3.922.

18:01
County combined energy costs were up $123,000 or 90 or 6%.

18:09
Costume at all.

18:10
Construction materials increase at least 21%.

18:13
Asphalt which we felt spike 20% and increase the cross of the roads fairly substantially.

18:34
Then we look at the the capital projects that we had proposed for the year and we took a look at just the the ones that we thought were necessary really had to go forward with these.

18:47
The radio replacement project with the Sheriff's Department the all the frequencies are going to new bands that provide better reception.

18:57
And for the handheld units I believe it was $1,000,000 for the the cars was 500,000.

19:05
So this is first of three payments there that we managed to have some cash savings for the first payment elections office renovation.

19:16
Now we're finishing up that we wish some some debt for that the detention center items are all and replacement of his existing items with the exception of the safety railing and the maximum security facility.

19:39
And we've had some suicide attempts and the railing prevents that from happening.

19:45
Door key and access.

19:46
We've got a antiquated access system here that is only supported by 1 vendor an entire United States and it's it's failing financial software for $100,000.

20:00
I guarantee you will triple that investment back in the next year open space county that's those are property that's debt we've already issued and we're going to go ahead and expend that spend those monies on open trails and and and the trails opens the land trails for the.

20:21
Residents here in the county range improvements for the sheriff, they've got a pretty sad looking range out there and they need some somewhere to practice courthouse exchanger that we have one that's very bad and one that's failing.

20:41
If it goes down, one side of the air conditioning in the courthouse goes down.

20:45
So that's not a good thing.

20:48
LED replacements of lights, that's a 3 1/2 year payback that was a no brainer.

20:55
Rocky Mountain Garden Exploration Centers, they've they've raised nearly $6 million for this project, $14 million would be issuing debt parking lot expansion at the tension center and the Tsos 530,000 that that was something we need to go forward.

21:19
And the Y infrastructure survey which is being funded by the Y increment that's being collected out there from the businesses in within district and some cash savings from our land sales account will fund that survey that will help us project and develop a plan for putting in infrastructure, improving the Y area.

21:44
Andrea, I just wanted to point some out just for for Brett.

21:47
When this says cash savings, that means not new taxes right now that's money from from all from a long time ago that got saved up by.

21:56
And these all relate, you could trace them all back to a specific department.

21:59
So those departments have saved money over the years by being thrifty and they're using that savings to fund these projects.

22:06
These aren't these projects though they have big dollar amounts next to them, aren't coming from new taxes.

22:12
Thank you, Andrew.

22:17
So as far as the range improvements for the Sheriff's Office, it seems like a while back that it was uncertain the cash status of of of whether we'd be able to defund that.

22:30
I I'm I'm assuming at some point maybe I missed a meeting where this was discussed but the the cash situation of the Sheriff's Department must have looked better than we had thought at one point.

22:45
This had originally been allocated for the Gardens at the extension center and then it was reallocated to the the OK.

22:57
So this piece you're certain of as opposed to the estimation on the entirety of cash at the Sheriff's Office.

23:04
That is correct.

23:07
OK.

23:08
At some point, I'd like to maybe talk about the the Gardens thing.

23:12
I'd.

23:13
I'd forgotten that that I got nixed.

23:15
That was 2019.

23:17
Yeah.

23:17
Right.

23:17
Yeah.

23:17
And then because of changes at the jail, it can't happen.

23:21
It was it was oriented entirely around mask.

23:25
Oh, OK.

23:26
Which is going away.

23:27
So.

23:27
OK.

23:28
Very mask stands for.

23:30
I know what it is.

23:31
Sanction corrections.

23:33
Look at you.

23:33
But no, I don't know.

23:35
I don't know what the M stands for.

23:36
Montana.

23:37
So it's the Missoula, Missoula Assessment and Sanction Center.

23:41
Thanks for saving us, Chris.

23:42
Yeah.

23:42
Yeah, no worries.

23:44
Thought maybe it had been determined that they could not do gardening with without the use of sharp implements.

23:49
Yeah.

23:49
So.

23:51
OK, Thanks.

23:52
Thanks for that clarification, Andrew.

23:58
Yeah.

24:01
Talking about proposed 23 operations, that's the computer.

24:58
There we go.

25:02
This shows the A transfer all 15.5% or 15.5 million versus 13.6 million.

25:12
That's.

25:13
Yeah, that's primarily internal with some external transfer that doesn't really affect.

25:19
It does not affect property taxes whatsoever.

25:22
The debt service went from 10.2 to from 8118.110.2 for the addition of the Rocky Mountain Gardens Exploration Center and the Election Center and the parking lot out at the detention center.

25:44
Andrew, could you go back just a second to just for everyone's edification here in the room or online?

25:50
What again do the transfers out constitute?

25:55
It's it's essentially a transfer in and out of county funds and it doesn't really they should actually equal.

26:04
But we have a tiny portion of transfers that go out to say like the museum that's that's a transfer out.

26:14
Yeah.

26:15
So that it's almost entirely that should equal each other.

26:20
But we have a couple that we're trying to transfer a new expenditures route and transfers out.

26:25
It's a, it's an accounting mass.

26:30
OK.

26:30
If that makes any sense at all.

26:32
I'm sure it doesn't make any sense.

26:33
I'm sorry.

26:35
Thanks.

26:43
Then capital, we went over the capital, the operations that was basically all the the inflationary factors and all the other options that we had going on.

26:59
A lot of the operational costs are also PHC related so they're but can you explain a little bit more about what that sure that I was back can can you that was the Rocky Mountains Exploration Center and the Election center primarily 14 and and is be showed on one of these slides on all the we listed all these capital projects most all of them were paid for with cash some debt service but most all with cash and some ARPA and so that increase doesn't equal the same amount of increase in in property tax liability.

27:48
Thank you.

27:48
OK thanks Josh.

27:54
So the operations that whether it was primarily the inflationary increases and and some other increases and then personnel of course the recruitment or retention issues, it's 9% increase in personal expenditures, 20% increase in operations expenditures.

28:19
And then because of the big capital projects, we also had 220% increase in budgeting capital expenditures, 211,000,000 total expenditures.

28:35
And then we'll talk about revenues ribbon is that they actually look like it looks like about 12.12% increase which is different than 10.6 that I mentioned earlier that we're actually increasing and that has to do with the gosh, what was it the trying to think of, I don't remember in that I'll come back to it, excuse me.

29:20
And then entitlement share went up 3% plus we had a slight offset for HP1O3 that reduce the personal business property tax will increase the exemption from 100,000 to $300,000.

29:39
So we did not receive that portion of the property tax, but because it is one of the tax classes, they didn't want to upset the equalization of the taxes.

29:51
So they reimbursed us through the entitlement share for 2023 that holds truer for 2024 or we just lose that piece of tax as yet to be seen transfers in that.

30:11
A lot of that has to do with the grant monies and some other things that come in debt proceeds.

30:19
We'll be issuing the debt for those projects this year and the other revenue kind of split that up this year for you.

30:31
So you can take a look at the assessments, licenses and permits, intergovernmental revenues, charges for services.

30:40
It's everything from the Sheriff's Department to library to building funds and fortunes.

30:51
I just want to point something out about how entrepreneurial we're being.

30:54
If charges for services fee for services which is an entrepreneurial activity is almost equivalent to property taxes, it is, yeah.

31:05
We we do get quite a bit of of money up from the charges for services the $62 million that's yeah that's 3030% of our budget compared to 32% for property taxes that's pretty good.

31:17
Yeah.

31:18
So Andrew, these charges for services are not to be confused with charges for services that would be coming back to us by way of entitlement shares.

31:29
No, no, no, these these are actual charges for servers fees and services that we charge.

31:35
I mean do do we have an example of like our top five good.

31:39
I was thinking like building permits where that that division is funded by this service, by the fees it generates.

31:54
But I'm just guessing now.

31:56
Yeah, that's way more than I think a lot of folks realize.

31:59
Yeah, it's huge Amanda, there's someone who has it like on the tip of their there.

32:06
So one of our largest is when we take in prisoners from other counties or jurisdictions at the detention Center for 6.1 million.

32:17
The another large area is the fair brings in income.

32:26
It is projected to bring in almost $791,000.

32:33
The health department when it gives someone a vaccine or visits with them will bring in $866,000.

32:42
The biggest why in in that bunch is partnership Health Center and the services it's pharmacy provide is over $33 million.

32:53
There you go.

32:54
Yeah, as as it is with PHC with so many things a huge chunk of money but none of it is tax money it's it's it's PHC is its own animal funded like fee for services.

33:07
Thanks Amanda.

33:08
Thank you, Amanda for having that so clear.

33:18
And do you do you recall what the other two property taxes were that increase that to the number it does there was the aging services voted bill and the judgment levy.

33:35
Thank you.

33:39
OK.

33:39
So that if we take those out that drops it back down to the 10.6% that we've we've been talking about.

33:46
OK, thank you.

33:49
Or 10.37, I see Amanda's been fine tuning her numbers again.

33:54
So total revenue increased by 22.81%.

34:04
Any questions on any of those categories?

34:08
Maybe just to hit home again for Brett to Yeah, what do you wanna make sure folks know?

34:16
Good question.

34:22
Gosh, that you don't want her to miss.

34:28
So yeah, can I throw a couple out, please?

34:32
Great.

34:33
Brett, to note that 30% of this revenue is coming from fee for service, not from property taxes and that entrepreneurial activity is roughly equivalent to property taxes.

34:43
Also really great to know and these are repeats, but I'm just kind of putting exclamation marks on them that most all of those capital projects are coming from savings from specific departments, not new property taxes as well.

34:56
And that we have prioritized and you could see this in personnel retention and recruitment.

35:01
Essentially the county is people doing stuff, people doing stuff.

35:05
That's people providing services for the residents of our county And it's essential for the quality of those services that we have really good folks in place to deliver those services.

35:14
Everything from immunizations at the health department to making sure your Rd.

35:17
is roads are plowed.

35:18
And because of inflation and because of the crazy changes in the job market over the past couple years, we have to keep up to some degree.

35:26
We don't match market, but we come close.

35:29
If we don't do that, we don't have any staff and we're facing the same challenges in the market as everybody else.

35:34
So this year we prioritized making sure the folks who work for us stay working for us as opposed to buying a bunch of new gear whether that's for public works or in in IT.

35:46
And maybe going back to just something that we hit on earlier that I think significant enough to take note

of is, is this $62 million charges for services this, this is a huge amount of our our well 30% of our total revenue.

36:04
So if folks on 1st blush might look at this $211 million total revenue figure and say Oh my gosh, there, there, there's this bags of cash laying around in the courthouse that could be utilized for various services.

36:23
Well, the the reality is that a good chunk of this is, is kind of value neutral as it relates to property taxes when we're talking about partnership Health Center as a major component of that several to the tune of several 10s of millions of dollars.

36:38
So that's part of the back story that I think many folks, maybe most folks in Missoula County are not aware of.

36:50
Thank you mostly.

36:56
Tax impacts $100,000 SIS value.

37:04
County wide taxes.

37:07
The annual increase would be $22.72 or buck 82 a month.

37:14
County only levies $25.07 annual increase or $2.09 per month.

37:22
You may need to swallow that microphone.

37:24
I'm oh, I'm sorry, I need a miracle ear.

37:26
I don't know.

37:29
OK the county wide levies, the annual increase will go up $22.72.

37:37
The monthly increases of buck 89 county only levies $25.07 annually, $2.09 monthly.

37:49
And if we're going to equate this to the approximate $500 value of an average home in Missoula, the annual increase would be $125.00 Countrywide and the county only $113,000 or 113 dollars 113,000 Oh my God, $10.45 for county wide levies monthly and $9 and 4547 cents for county only levies wide monthly.

38:19
So if I could just throw something out here looking at these numbers, we are all paying at least $10 more for groceries for gas every month than we were last year, and our increase in costs reflect that same thing.

38:35
We are in the same market whether we're hiring employees or buying tires for the sheriff's trucks.

38:40
And essentially that's what that's what this is.

38:45
We are buying stuff in the same market that everybody else is buying things in.

38:48
And if you look at it by the month, as most economies, most home economies live, I feel, I don't feel good about it because nobody wants to pay any more money for anything.

38:58
But I feel good that these numbers are as low as they are because they reflect what we are all facing.

39:18
That concludes my presentation.

39:21
Thanks, Andrew.

39:22
And please, Sir, please ask away with given the mad crowd here.

39:26
You can, you can have lots of dialogue.

39:30
Hello.

39:30
OK.

39:31
Yeah, I had all my notes.

39:33
I'm sorry.

39:33
Help me with your name again.

39:35
My name is Greg Sousa.

39:36
I'm a county resident.

39:37
I had all my notes and I walked out the door without the ones that I prepared.

39:42
The thing of it is, is these wages and retention.

39:47
I I I don't understand the retention part of it.

39:52
I got online and I pulled up everybody's salary and everybody's salary that works for the county is above the the people that live in Missoula and and work in the private sector.

40:09
So I don't know what this retention is that we're talking about.

40:16
For the new budget, you know, you've got jailers at the detention center.

40:23
They come and go because it's probably a rotten job.

40:27
And you've got people in the county attorney's office that can probably make more money in the private sector.

40:38
I get those two jobs, but for retention in wages, the wages are already acceptable from what I can tell on the looking at the Internet.

40:51
Mr.

40:51
Mr.

40:52
Souza, I would love to.

40:53
If you're OK, can I please?

40:54
Yeah, I totally don't want to interrupt you and I appreciate you coming back after last time too.

40:58
Thanks for taking the time to come.

41:00
As you can see, not very many people comment and we all wish more people did.

41:04
So when we're saying retention and and keeping our wage scale where it ought to be, we didn't make those numbers up.

41:11
We didn't do it by anecdote.

41:13
We did real work and Chris is still on the line.

41:16
And I hate to put you on the spot Chris, but I know that you have this at the on the tip your tongue too.

41:21
We engaged folks doing real research on on wage scales and then we committed to being a little bit less than market and getting to market rate over time.

41:30
So if a person starts with us, they're going to start below market then over time get to market rate we intentionally are a little bit less.

41:38
And though those some of those numbers may seem high.

41:41
I would say if if if if you had a look at this research and Chris could send it to you if you like, you can see and I get anecdotally and be like what the heck we're paying somebody 19 bucks an hour.

41:51
I used to do that job for less and I understand that people have feelings that way.

41:56
We did real research.

41:57
We engaged real researchers to do this and that's how we came up with this scale.

42:01
And Chris, are you OK speaking to that?

42:07
Sure, commissioners, I'm, I'm happy to.

42:10
So yes, we, we engaged a a firm to specifically look at salaries not only of our direct competitors in the public sector around the state, but also our direct competitors in the private market.

42:21
And so when we look to compare our entry level jobs, it's not exactly a one to one comparison because you're right, you know, Missoula County is for example, the only place that has a treasurer's clerk.

42:31
But when you look at those as entry level positions and you look at positions that have it the same equivalent educational and work experience.

42:38
And then we see places like Shields hiring $21.00 an hour.

42:42
You know, fast food restaurants starting at 17 or $18.00 an hour, starting at $14.00 an hour, which is where we were, doesn't allow us to compete and actually get applicants in through the doors.

42:53
So what has happened is Missoula County in the past has had, you know, 3 or 4 applicants for each position.

42:58
But what we're seeing now is we have recruitments that fail pretty continuously where we get 0 applicants.

43:05
And so we're having to make changes to address that because we can't fill positions that have been open sometimes, you know, in cases for more than a year.

43:15
I realize that what you're saying.

43:18
You've contracted out to some agency to check the prices.

43:22
All I can tell you is from my experience living here in Missoula.

43:29
I worked for a large utility company here in Missoula.

43:33
I was there for 40 years before I retired 40.

43:40
I know what decent wages are because I had livable wage job that was bargained for here in Missoula and when I go online and pull up the salaries of some employees that work for the county, I was almost floored.

44:02
Now maybe you can correct me, but when I pulled up the salaries for the county commissioners you 3.

44:12
Is it true that you make between 90 and $100,000 a year?

44:18
And Andrew, do you make $127,000 a year?

44:25
It's pretty good wages for Missoula, Mt for us to pay.

44:30
Like I said, I worked for a big utility here for 40 years and I nowhere near came up to that and this was a job that I went through eight-year apprentice program to get to top craft pay.

44:47
And so the people that are making decent money in this town, this increase in the property tax, it's not going to face them one iota.

44:57
It's the lower people that make maybe 50 grand a year or less that have to come up with this amount of increase.

45:08
So you know it it just blew me away.

45:13
Now I could not find the salaries of county employees on the Missoula County website.

45:23
Is there some place that I can find that information on the Missoula County website?

45:30
It's public records, so they should hang on just just a moment.

45:33
Allison, can you, do you have some insight on that?

45:52
Oh, is that what you have to do?

45:54
But that that isn't an onerous thing.

45:56
On our website there's a basically a button.

45:58
Can you can you describe how that could be done?

46:03
I I found an online portal but it was not connected in any way with Missoula County.

46:10
I maybe I was on the wrong one, but, you know, I didn't know how accurate those numbers were because it was not coming from Missoula County.

46:22
It was somewhere else.

46:24
But they're saying those figures are it are fairly accurate.

46:30
Allison's right now making sure you have the info so you can get to making a public records request and then so that there are a few things at play.

46:39
There are, there's our pay plan for non Union County employees.

46:48
So that's that's one thing that lays out kind of the the matrix by which folks who are non union employees will be paid.

46:56
Then there are the collective bargaining agreements with we've got any number of unions that we collectively bargain with for salary.

47:06
So, so there is that and and there's a process by which we we execute those contracts and then there are the individual employees.

47:15
It's like, yeah, you can have the pay matrix before you, but it's like who specifically is attached with each of those positions is a separate question.

47:26
So anyway, I think Allison can get you some additional information on how to drill down into our pay plan.

47:36
I'm just going to stand by the I don't believe our wages are inflated.

47:41
I believe they are market rate, if not if not less, with all the positions, even the positions that are paid well.

47:47
If you were to look at the at the private sector at similar budget sizes, similar sets of responsibilities, you're going to see that those folks are actually making a little bit less than the private sector.

47:58
That's not me saying those aren't high wages, they are high wages.

48:01
But if you looked at ACFO of an organization that had a $200 million budget, that woman or man would be making more than Andrew does.

48:08
That's just the reality of it.

48:10
Even though it's a high wage, for sure it's a high wage.

48:12
We're also talking about less than 10 employees out of a about 855 and where we put our emphasis in lifting wages was on the bottom, not on the top.

48:23
Anyway, you cut it.

48:24
It's pretty good wages.

48:25
I I can see why you'd want to be re elected for another term.

48:30
Making 90 grand or 100 grand in Missoula is pretty good wages no matter what you do.

48:36
You know, like I said, it's, it is what it is.

48:39
And I'm sorry that I left my notes back at home because I had prepared some questions here and you're still welcome to ask them.

48:47
Man, we're not going anywhere.

48:48
You could come back next Thursday and ask the same questions.

48:52
You're very welcome to.

48:53
Are you going to approve the budget today?

48:56
Yes.

48:57
OK.

48:57
Well, we can still have, we can still have dialogue and go back and forth.

49:00
If there are questions, I imagine you want an answer and we could provide you with those answers.

49:04
OK.

49:05
Thank you.

49:06
You bet.

49:07
Thank you.

49:18
I heard that.

49:18
I'm sorry.

49:19
I hope you're feeling better.

49:20
I'm feeling fine with just this spasm.

49:22
Thank you.

49:24
And it's not COVID, sorry.

49:28
Do we have anybody out there with a raised hand?

49:41
No, no public.

49:43
Fred, do you have any questions?

49:44
Slaven, you're here.

49:45
Do you have any questions or you just checking it out?

49:50
That is very kind of you.

49:52
And I'm embarrassed.

49:53
We're forgetting your name.

49:54
I'm forgetting your name in the back.

49:56
Randy, do you have any questions?

50:01
Come on, Come on up.

50:02
Come on up, man.

50:09
And before you say anything, Randy, we would just like to say thank you for being here.

50:14
We really appreciate the service you provide.

50:17
All the folks who work in the courthouse had to do it.

50:19
So to start with, my name is Randy Victor.

50:21
What I'm saying here is not anything to do with the company that I work for, courthouse security.

50:27
One of the conversations that I had first thing this morning was discussing the upcoming weather changes and snow removal and such, and it was brought to my attention that they have one of six positions for grounds keeping filled.

50:41
So my background is AutoZone retail.

50:45
When I left, we were at 38% of staffing where it was supposed to be, where AutoZone struggles with the same thing that everybody else in town is.

50:55
But as far as as far as those things go, that that issue is definitely a real one.

51:01
Yeah.

51:02
And you know, the one of the big things with being competitive pay wise, it's not always pay.

51:09
You know, many people that come and go with different employers.

51:14
It's it's pay, it's treatment, it's job satisfaction.

51:18
And the reality is that anybody who has a steady job that is a reliable employee has a ton of options and that's something that you know the DMV has gone through some major changes and working at the security desk, we get a lot of feedback and lately that feedback has been, wow, I'm amazed they got me in and out within an hour.

51:39
Wow, so great to hear, good to hear, good to see that on a regular basis.

51:44
And it obviously it's a workforce issue that goes far beyond the county but it is something to the definitely keep in mind is that even as we fill positions the the workload is not decreasing ever.

52:00
Yeah.

52:00
The the issue with people coming in from out of town.

52:05
They're consistently transients moving through the property that I'm.

52:08
I try to learn the population, talk to him, get to know where they're from.

52:12
And a large percentage of them are not from Missoula and they're coming to Missoula because they know that we have the services.

52:18
So keeping those services going is definitely a a real, a real issue.

52:24
You see a turnover in that population.

52:26
There's a lot of turnover in the population.

52:28
People are here and they disappear and new people come, people here and they disappear.

52:32
Just this morning one of our gentleman that was consuming some drinks on the lawn, he's like, man, I went to Great Falls.

52:38
Great Falls didn't work out.

52:39
So here I am.

52:40
Yeah.

52:41
And so it's it's something that I think the the challenges are not gonna go away for sure.

52:47
Yeah.

52:48
But that that struggle to keep employment and keep people here, it's a real one.

52:53
And you know, you have people with, I think there's a gal and it was 2 weeks ago, it was their last day, 43 years with the county.

53:00
And it's getting to the point where you see five or ten years.

53:03
And that's impressive.

53:04
So I think we definitely need to keep that focus going.

53:08
Thank you for all that.

53:09
Thank you.

53:11
Yeah, thank you.

53:11
No, those are excellent points because there's real value in having folks who stick around for a while and there are some specific job classifications that as as we've heard earlier, just difficult to fill those positions and retain those employees.

53:29
One that we haven't mentioned is in IT where there is just no way we can compete adequately with the private sector.

53:39
So it's a matter of how can we think creatively to incentivize folks to want to work for Missoula County when we.

53:49
There's just no way that just on wages alone that we can match one for one what the private sector is offering and same with attorney's office.

53:59
Yeah, I would have never thought at one point, in one point in time, I would have never thought that the state of Montana being the institution of largesse that it is, would be stealing away folks from the county attorney's office or or maybe others.

54:16
But that day is no more, and it is the case that that the state of Montana and the Attorney General's office and others might be offering what we cannot offer.

54:29
John only stays with us for the snacks.

54:34
I'm not going anywhere, Commissioner, thank you.

54:37
We, we actually appreciate that.

54:38
But I am in a I'm in a unique position.

54:40
I I worked in the private sector for over 20 years before I came to public service.

54:46
And so you know, I bought a house in Missoula when they were much more affordable than they are now.

54:54
I, you know, I was able to get ahead a little bit with my family and my retirement finances and things like that.

55:02
So I'm not a very good example to use.

55:06
And and I can tell you that the younger attorneys in our office, the younger staff people on our officer we're we're really having trouble retaining them and then bringing them in.

55:17
It's because the private sector is just far more attractive.

55:23
Brett, I want to throw one thing out of piggybacking off of, Mr.

55:26
Richter said.

55:26
I really appreciate your comments on the our transient population is in a transient that means come and go and that some people may come for services and then they disappear, like the gentleman who was here for Great from Great Falls and then went somewhere else.

55:41
So I just want to push back a bit.

55:44
If people were flocking here for services they would come and stay but instead we see turnover it and transient is the right word and that that means continually moving who was a point in time survey not too long ago where it was something like 65% of the folks who were on housed actually we're from Western Montana.

56:04
I was just going to say then looking Bozeman salaries they are significantly hired in as low salaries.

56:09
We're not just low compared to the private sector but to the public sector as well.

56:14
And Michelle, my financial services director, was offered $40,000 more plus $10,000 signing bonus to signing bonus.

56:24
I guess all this conversation we had, it boils down to 111 little nugget here in that we at Missoula County are not immune to any of the pressures of the of the modern world.

56:35
We are in the same boat as residents, as commercial folks, as entrepreneurs, as people who are artists, all of it.

56:41
We are all in the same boat around inflation, around a tight job market, around a red hot real estate market, rising interest rates, etcetera.

56:49
We're in the midst of all of that.

56:53
Please.

56:53
I just wanted to say we all agree that the tax system here in the state is broken.

57:04
Everybody agrees to that.

57:09
When you how often do you talk to the legislators about trying to get some kind of sales tax, whatever, to help the property owners?

57:23
It's like when my property gets appraised every year, it goes up and up and up, but the thing of it is, it's like it's not for sale.

57:32
You can tell me it's worth anything, but until the day I sell it, it's not worth that value.

57:38
But I have to pay tax on it and you know, it's.

57:45
I've called the legislators, the two for this area, and I have gotten no calls back, nothing.

57:53
As far as I can tell, they're not going to help us one iota because if they try to implement a sales tax or whatever they're fearing for their job, maybe they won't get re elected.

58:08
And so every session they don't want to tackle the problem and they put the ball in your court to give us the bad news about these increases in our property tax.

58:20
So do you talk to the legislative you are preaching to the choir.

58:25
Mr.

58:25
that you are exactly preaching to the choir and and there is not a week that goes by that we don't bang our heads around and struggle with how to deal with this.

58:34
And we are even as we speak, actively working on creative solutions that may be palatable to a legislature for whom taxes a four letter word.

58:44
We are on it.

58:45
That doesn't mean we're gonna be successful, but rest assured we are super aware of this problem.

58:50
We all face this problem as individuals and are trying our absolute darndest to come up with a solution.

58:56
And the irony has not escaped us that the state of Montana is awash in $2 billion in a budget surplus, but that comes from income tax, not property tax.

59:08
And you are exactly right in terms of your assessment of of doesn't.

59:15
There's no correlation, no direct correlation between what your property is valued at and your ability to pay.

59:24
None.

59:25
I mean and Andrew pointed that out too, that this is an archaic 17th century system.

59:33
It'll be discussed during this legislative session and we are, we are working on it.

59:37
We're, you know, we're in the, we're, we are in the minority that the large counties on the western side of the state that are economically prosperous are in the minority and our problems are not shared by most all the counties in the state.

59:53
So it's an uphill battle, but I think property taxes are going to have a moment.

59:59
The the fact that CI 121 came and died means I think there's a little bit of space for conversation around reform that didn't exist even two years ago, OK.

1:00:10
I was just wanting to see what your thought on that was, if they're doing anything at all or they just turning a blind eye to when you try to bring up.

1:00:22
Getting some kind of sales to whatever, some kind of relief for us.

1:00:25
So, well, I I would encourage you to continue what you've been doing already and would encourage folks out there who are listening, should any of this get reported in the media that they absolutely should continue to reach out to their state legislators.

1:00:40
Because we'll continue to do what we can to reach out to those legislators.

1:00:44
But we we can't be the only squeaky wheel on this.

1:00:49
Thanks for thank you though ending to local affairs, I guess I would just just say in in general about this fiscal year's budget.

1:01:03
I think this is a prudent budget.

1:01:05
We prioritize personnel or maintaining services.

1:01:10
We have some very targeted investments.

1:01:14
We've turned back a couple $1,000,000 or so worth of budget request, 2.6 to be exact.

1:01:22
And these were not just extraneous requests.

1:01:24
Every one of these requests had absolute merit either to address a backlog of deferred maintenance to address some community need.

1:01:35
They were thoughtfully prepared and it pained me just to say no, but we just simply could not afford those additional expenditures and appropriations this fiscal year.

1:01:48
But I think this, this is a solid piece of work well done, Andrew and Amanda and Melissa and and Michelle and team.

1:01:57
We appreciate all your work and we're working very hard to find additional revenues for County and and specifically with their investment portfolio and program I have going this year, I think we'll see some good revenue coming in.

1:02:12
Great, perhaps as high as $2,000,000.

1:02:14
Great, good job.

1:02:15
I'm sorry, say that number again 2 million, Dave, is that a motion?

1:02:22
Yeah, I would adopt the resolution.

1:02:26
I would move that we adopt the resolution, the resolution adopting the F fiscal year 2023 budget.

1:02:34
I'll second that.

1:02:35
Any further discussion all in favor.

1:02:39
Aye, thanks.

1:02:42
We do it.

1:02:42
A little comment here.

1:02:43
I just want to say thanks to everybody for to Mr.

1:02:46
Richter, to Brett, to Slave and to Mr.

1:02:48

Sousa, everybody who just had a robust discussion about these things and appreciate everyone's involvement.

1:02:55
Thank you.

1:02:57
Yeah.

1:02:57
This all involves stewardship of public funds.

1:03:03
And we, we do not take this lightly.

1:03:05
And we see our role as a steward and are looking for ways to do business better.

1:03:15
Thank you.

1:03:16
Or Alison, did we miss anything?

1:03:20
OK, Brett, how do you feel?

1:03:26
Thanks, everyone.

1:03:27
Have a great afternoon.

1:03:28
Oh, Brett and Andrew, I'm not cutting slot.

1:03:30
OK, go ahead.

1:03:30
I was just saying Andrew and all of us are available for questions after standing around, if you like.

1:03:35
OK.

1:03:35
All right.

1:03:36
Thank you.

1:03:36
Thank you.