

Missoula Board of County Commissioners

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES COVER SHEET



THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2025 – 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 Juanita Vero
Commissioner David Strohmaier
Commissioner Josh Slotnick

Staff Present:

Cheryl Hartman, Administrative Assistant, Commissioners' Office
Christina Dewar, Administrative Assistant, Commissioners' Office
Chris Lounsbury, Chief Administrative Officer, Missoula County
John Hart, Civil County Attorney, County Attorneys' Office
Andrew Czorny, Chief Financial Officer, Missoula County
Patrick Swart, Planner, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Kevin Dantic, Planner, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Anne Hughes, Chief Operations Officer, Missoula County
Annie Cathey, Lead Administrative Assistant, Commissioners' Office
Melissa Fisher, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Commissioners' Office
Mattie Scott, Administrative Assistant, Commissioners' Office/Facilities
Patrick Swart, Planner, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Kyla Lehnerz, Office Administrator, Lands and Communities
Michaelyn Grimmer, Budget Analyst, Finance Office
Katy Reeder, Planner, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Patricia Spotted Wolf, Administrative Support Specialist, Commissioners' Office
Kim Seeberger, Director, Clerk and Records' Office
Allison Franz, Communications Manager, Communications
Melissa Gordon, Director, Grants and Community Resources
Claire Biddick, Grants Administrator, Grants
Michelle Denman, Director, Finance Office
Ray Reiser, Diversion Coordinator, County Attorney's Office
Kayla Talbert, Grants Administrator, Grants
Heather Powers, Grants Technician, Grants
Jill Johnson, Administrative Assistant, Lands and Communities
Chet Crowser, Chief Officer, Lands and Communities

Randy Arnold, Director, Lands, Culture, and Recreation

1. **CALL TO ORDER** *[Time stamp – 0:00]*
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** *[Time stamp – 0:02]*
3. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** *[Time stamp – 0:12]*
Missoula County acknowledges that this event takes place in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people.
4. **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS** *[Time stamp – 0:20]*
 - a. Closed Captioning
 - b. Proclamation: 35th Anniversary of American with Disabilities Act
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA** *[Time stamp – 3:21]*
6. **CURRENT CLAIMS LIST** *[Time stamp – 05:38]*
Claims received as of April 24, 2025 to June 04, 2025 by the Commissioners' Office total of \$8,918,362.06.
7. **HEARINGS**
 - a. **Blanchard Family Transfer** *[Time stamp – 06:10]*
Patrick Swart, Planner, Planning, Development, and Sustainability

Commissioner Strohmaier made the motion that the Board of County Commissioners of Missoula County hereby approve the Blanchard family to utilize the family transfer MCA §76-3-207(1)(b) and aggregation MCA §76-3-207(1)(f) exemptions to divide the 20-acre property as presented by staff.

Commissioner Vero seconded.

[Motion Passed 2-0.]

[Letter 2025-121 was sent electronically to Dennis and Kristal Blanchard.]
 - b. **Paul Family Transfer** *[Time stamp – 16:35]*
Kevin Dantic, Planner, Planning, Development, and Sustainability

Commissioner Strohmaier made the motion that the Missoula Board of County Commissioners approve the Paul family to utilize the family transfer exemption to create and transfer a tract as presented by staff in the exemption application and affidavit.

Commissioner Slotnick seconded.

[Motion Passed 3-0.]

[Letter 2025-119 was sent to Marianne and Eric Paul.]
 - c. **Proposed FY2026 Preliminary County Budget-Open Hearing** *[Time stamp – 24:35]*
Andrew Czorny, Chief Financial Officer, Missoula County
Chris Lounsbury, Chief Administrative Officer, Missoula County

Commissioner Strohmaier made the motion that the Missoula Board of County Commissioners open the hearing to accept public comment for the proposed FY2026

Preliminary County Budget. The final hearing was set and announced for September 04 public meeting.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

[None]

9. ADJOURN

Chair Vero – Called the meeting to adjourn at 2:57 p.m.

BCC Public Meeting July 24, 2025 – Transcription

This transcription was produced by transcription software. There may be discrepancies between this transcription and meeting dialogue. You can view the recording of the meeting on the county's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/missoulacounty> or contact the commissioners' office to obtain a copy.

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.

BCC-Commissioners' Public Meeting-20250724_140009-Meeting Recording

0:02

The Republic for which stands one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

0:12

Missoula County acknowledges that this event takes place in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and police spelled people.

0:20

We have 01 public announcement.

0:24

We have a I'm sorry, closed caption.

0:26

Sorry.

0:27

Go ahead.

0:28

All right, alright.

0:30

Hello everyone.

0:30

If you're joining us for this meeting virtually today, instructions for turning on closed captioning are on your screen.

0:36

If you're joining us in person, we will have closed captioning on all the screens in the Sophie Moise room.

0:42

There will be multiple chances during the meeting for public comment virtually during those times.

0:46

If you'd like to speak, we ask that you use the raise hand feature.

0:50

If you're on Microsoft Teams, this is the small hand button.

0:53

If you're calling in on the phone, you need to hit *5 to raise your hand, then once called on you will need to hit *6 to unmute.

0:59

If you have any questions, please find me during the meeting.

1:02

Thank you, Christina.

1:04

We our monitors don't seem to be working or no image.

1:15

Well, while we are doing that with the technical difficulties, we have a proclamation this week, and this is in recognition of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

1:27

So it's a proclamation of the Missoula Board of County Commissioners.

1:31

Whereas, disability is a natural part of the human experience and more than 13% of Missoula County residents live with one or more disabilities.

1:40

And WHEREAS, on July 26th, 1990, the Americans with Disability Act are also known as the ADA, was signed into law ensuring the civil rights of people with disabilities and establishing a clear and comprehensive mandate to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

2:01

And WHEREAS, the ADA has expanded opportunities for Americans with Disabilities by removing barriers, challenging perceptions, and empowering individuals to participate fully in mainstream American life as equal and valued members of society.

2:16

And WHEREAS numerous organizations in Missoula County and across Montana work diligently to advance the AD as mission, vision of equality, inclusion, and opportunity.

2:27

And whereas Missoula County acknowledges the full promise of the ADA can only be realized through ongoing commitment to its implementation and continued efforts to reduce attitudinal barriers, stigmas, and outdated labels that people with disabilities still face now.

2:44

Therefore, we, the Missoula County Commissioners, do hereby proclaim July 26th, 2025 as a day to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act, Disabilities Act in Missoula County, Montana.

2:59

We recognize that full inclusion of people with disabilities strengthens our community and affirms our shared values of equity and dignity.

3:07

Today we celebrate the progress made, reaffirm our dedication to the principles of the ADA and renew our commitment to achieving full compliance, accessibility and inclusion for all.

3:21

Signed your Missoula County board of county commissioners thank you next we have public comment so come on up to the microphone.

3:31

We have a three minute limit and just make sure to state your name and Travis, I think make sure the it's on.

3:38

Hi there.

3:39

Excuse me.

3:40

So it's been a it's been a while.

3:41

Travis Matir, 25 year Missoula resident.

3:44

Normally I might call critical about stuff when I'm making comments, but today I wanted to say how excited I am at the possibilities of the sheriff office's new location right on the river.

3:54

The the Sheriff's Office might be able to expedite the determination of accidental drownings.

3:58

We have so, so many, so, so many accidental drownings now that they're right next to the river.

4:03

They could expedite the determination of like, you know, if this drowning is one of those many accidental ones.

4:09

But sometimes there might be corpses we just want to let go down to Mineral County.

4:13

I know that Ryan Funk having direct conversations with him.

4:16

There's this jurisdictional game that likes to get played, and water doesn't seem to respect jurisdictions.

4:20

But maybe if we had something like a corpse Cam, like a corpse camera, we could use AI to determine which corpses matter and which ones don't.

4:27

And the ones that don't matter, we can just kind of let float down to Mineral County, you know, and let the, the Sheriff's Office in Mineral County do their thing.

4:35

I've been passing out Flyers and bringing attention to what I'm calling hashtag serial killer Summer.

4:39

I had this list of 10 names.

4:41

I, I, the list is like the suspected death by killing Jermaine Charlo is one of those names.

4:47

And I just want to continue raising awareness of the challenges of resources.

4:50

And if we don't have the resources to be totally inclusive with every corpse, maybe we should use AI to determine which corpses can be allowed to float down to Mineral County, where Mineral County can do its thing by not really doing anything substantive.

5:02

And I say that as a citizen journalist.

5:03

It's actually seen Ryan Funk testify in court to to a maintenance worker loading a bail of marijuana into the county attorney's personal vehicle so that his cows in Clinton, Mt could be fed weed.

5:15

Isn't that crazy?

5:16

That was that happened in a court of law here, here.

5:19

It's amazing to me as a citizen journalist and I'm probably close to 3 minutes and I'm sure you guys have important business to do.

5:25

So I'm going to continue biking around, might play with Legos later and definitely going to try and wash some dishes professionally since that's what I do for actual money.

5:32

And good luck guys.

5:33

Thank you, Travis, thank you.

5:38

Our current claims list as of April 24th, 2025 to June 4th, 2025 by the Commissioner's Office.

5:47

This is the first time we've been able to read this in months.

5:50

Totals \$8,918,362.06.

5:57

We have 3 hearings and we'll begin with the Blanchard family transfer.

6:03

Patrick.

6:10

Good afternoon.

6:11

For the record, my name is Patrick Swart.

6:13

I'm a planner with the Office of Planning, Development and Sustainability, and today I'll be presenting the staff report on the Blanchard Family Transfer and Aggregation request.

6:22

This request comes to us from Dennis and Crystal Blanchard.

6:31

The subject property we can see on the screen here is addressed 20470 Whitetail Ridge Rd.

6:38

We're in the Nine Mile drainage area.

6:40

You can see Whitetail Ridge Rd.

6:43

transitions off a Nine Mile Rd.

6:45

here just on the northwest end of the Six Mile Creek drainage.

6:51

The property is currently described as Tract 4A of Certificate of Survey 2670.

6:57

It's a 20 acre parcel and it's currently developed with the single family residence and a detached garage with living space.

7:04

The applicants currently live on the property.

7:07

The property's unzoned and it's part of the 2002 Regional Land Use Guide, an amendment to the 1975 Comprehensive Plan, which gives us a land use designation of rural low density residential and recommends residential development at a density of 1 dwelling for 10 acres.

7:27

A little bit of additional context here on existing conditions.

7:30

We received a comment from the Missoula County Clerk and Recorder's Office that identified A deeded boundary that predates the current certificate of survey.

7:40

That boundary is shown.

7:42

I'm sorry.

7:43

I made a mistake and didn't see if there was any other public comment.

7:48

We just saw someone leave.

7:53

OK.

7:53

I was like, Chris, continue on.

7:56

Sorry.

7:57

We should be.

7:58

I can.

7:58

I can pause.

7:59

Yeah.

7:59

I'm sorry.

8:00

Apologies, everyone.

8:01

I was rushing through the agenda while Strohmeyer is heading out.

8:06

Does anyone have public comment?

8:12

OK, we'll wait here awkwardly for a bit.

8:14

Thanks.

8:45

Thanks so much.

8:46

OK, thank you.

8:48

Apologies for that.

8:50

OK, Patrick, continue.

8:53

OK, So in in reviewing this, this was sent out for agency comment.

8:59

We did also receive a comment from the Clerk and Recorder's office who identified A historic boundary that was created through deed which predates that Certificate of Survey number 2670.

9:11

The boundary of the Clerk and Recorder identified is shown in this hashed red line here as well.

9:19

So with today's exemption request, the applicants are intending to address that Clerk and Recorder identified boundary and create a tract to gift to their daughter.

9:27

So the family transfer would create a second tract within Certificate of Survey 2670 that tracked 4A and they would gift that one parcel to their daughter Kristen Blanchard, who is currently a minor child.

9:42

And within the application materials, they have submitted their trust paperwork document to show the property would be held in trust until Kristen's of age.

9:52

They are also requesting the aggregation exemption to clear up that historic boundary identified by the Clerk and Recorder's office.

10:03

This slide here shows the proposed conditions.

10:05

What would exist if these two exemptions are approved today.

10:08

We would have 210 acre parcels.

10:10

Lot 4A1 would be the remainder parcel which currently contains the applicants residence.

10:17

They would continue to live on that property with their daughter and then tracked for A2 would be the family transfer parcel that would be gifted to their daughter.

10:30

This this request was reviewed against the rebuttable presumptions and general evasion criterion Chapter 8 of the Missoula County Subdivision regulations.

10:38

And the only flag it raised under the rebuttable presumptions for family transfer is that there's no clear intent declared on the occupancy or use of the transferred tracks by the receiving family member.

10:50

And again, that's due to the fact that they're currently a minor child.

10:55

They did state that the intent would be for their child to one day build on the property and live on the property when they're ready to build a home.

11:04

Additional agency comments received include one from Missoula Public Health, who just noted that the project is going through Sanitation Review.

11:12

Public Works Building commented that there's an open building permit for an addition to the existing single family residence and the County Floodplain Administrator commented that this property is located on the edge of the one mile buffer of the Six Mile Creek zone, a floodplain, but noted that elevations in topography indicate that this will not conflict with the floodplain regulations.

11:36

With that, I believe Dennis is here today.

11:38

Dennis, if you wouldn't mind coming up to the podium here and if you could state your name for the record, and then we have a few questions to ask you push the button.

11:49

Oh, I think it's already great.

11:50

You're done there.

11:51

My name is Dennis Blanchard.

11:53

All right.

11:54

Dennis, did you purchase the property with the intent of dividing it?

11:59

Did you, did you or the transferee intend to transfer the property within the next year?

12:04

No.

12:05

Have you talked to anyone at the county about going through subdivision review?

12:11

Yes, due to the fact that that parcel, the boundary line aggregation.

12:17

So I've actually been through a lot of headache with John Hart and the what department is it the public health?

12:28

Well, not even public health clerk and reporters office, surveyor records office, the records office actually shows that boundary.

12:36

And so it's just been a nightmare trying to get this through.

12:40

And John recommended that we go through this process to aggregate that boundary line because it's actually cutting right through my septic system.

12:50

So.

12:51

OK, so the conversations were about the aggregation and family transfer process.

12:55

Yep.

12:55

OK, thank you.

12:57

Will the property be developed?

12:59

I hope so someday.

13:03

And then we've, we've kind of already addressed this in the staff report.

13:06

But the last question is, will the recipient of the property be residing on the property eventually?

13:12

Thank you.

13:12

Do you have anything to add, Dennis?

13:15

So I actually prepared a statement and this might give you guys some understanding as to why we kind of started this whole process.

13:25

I'd rather not read it.

13:26

Can I just give you guys copies of it?

13:28

Yep.

13:32

I'll just pass them out.

13:37

Thank you.

13:45

Thank you.

13:45

Oh, and Strommer has a question.

14:01

Dennis, good question for you.

14:02

So how old is your daughter the recipient of the property?

14:06

He's currently 12.

14:07

OK.

14:08

And just describe a little bit more.

14:11

You have a, a trust set up to hold the property.

14:17

OK, thank you for that.

14:20

We, we've seen instances where where that was the intent of the folks coming before us.

14:27

And without that in place, the property quickly gets flipped and does not remain available for the recipient.

14:35

So that that's not my intent at all, what I wrote there, actually, even just thinking about it makes me choke up a bit.

14:46

And that's why I wanted you guys to be able to read it.

14:49

Because preparation at this point is really key for for me and my family.

14:55

And setting this up this way ensures that if something happens to me, my wife can't manage our property where it's at on her own.

15:05

So she could possibly lose it, be forced to sell it, something along those lines, but this would ensure that my daughter would have the same environment that I grew up in, if that makes sense.

15:17

Thank you.

15:19

Thank you.

15:20

I don't have any questions.

15:22

No, I don't either.

15:24

Thank.

15:24

Thank you, Dennis.

15:28

That is the end of my presentation.

15:30

We are recommending approval, but I'll have a motion on the screen when you're ready.

15:33

Commissioners throw it up there on the screen.

15:39

Yeah, I believe we do have public comments still as well, too.

15:42

Thank you so much.

15:43

Is there any further public comment?

15:48

OK.

15:49

I see it on the screen.

15:50

Thanks.

15:53

OK.

15:53

I'd move to approve the request by Dennis and Crystal Blanchard to utilize the family transfer and aggregation exemptions to create and gift a single parcel to their daughter, Kristen Blanchard, as presented in the exemption application and affidavit.

16:06

Second, any further discussion or public comment?

16:10

OK.

16:11

All in favor, aye.

16:13

Thank you.

16:13

Thank you and thanks for sharing this, Dennis.

16:17

And sorry Mr.

16:18

Hart made your life so difficult.

16:22

That's what he does.

16:25

Thank you.

16:27

And you can stick around or or not.

16:30

There's there's more items yet to come.

16:32

Thank you.

16:32

You bet.

16:35

Next we have the Paul family transfer with Kevin Dantic.

16:49

Sorry.

16:50

When you're when you're ready.

17:09

Hey, good afternoon, commissioners.

17:10

For the record, my name is Kevin Dantic, a planner with the Missoula County Department of Planning, Development, Sustainability.

17:17

Today I'll be presenting the Paul family transfer request.

17:20

This request is brought forth by Marion and Eric Paul who are representing themselves for the subdivision exemption.

17:29

The property's address is 19448 King Rd.

17:33

This property lies approximately 1.6 miles north of the Ravalli, Missoula County line and approximately 5 miles South of the US Hwy.

17:43

93 and US Hwy.

17:45

12 W intersection in Lolo.

17:51

Here we see a close up view of the property.

17:55

The parcels included in Part 1 Citizen Initiated Zoning District 40 created in 1976 and is also included in the 2002 Lolo Regional Plan, both with a recommended density of 1 dwelling unit per five acres.

18:12

The parcels accessed by King Rd.

18:15

which is a public Missoula County maintained roadway before you are the existing conditions on the parcel.

18:25

N is to the left on the map in front of you.

18:29

Property in question was created by Meats and Bounds Survey.

18:32

It was first recorded as a as a Warranty Deed Exhibit A on June 10th, 1994, Book 416 Micro, page 1032, and it contains 10.64 acres in total.

18:46

Tracks in the immediate vicinity vary in size from 86.81 acres to the West, 11 acres to the north.

18:55

We have 11 or 3.91 acres to the east and there are two tracks that border the southern boundary of each at 5.39 acres.

19:09

The claimants proposals to utilize the family transfer exemption to divide the 10.64 acres subject property located on King Rd.

19:17

currently owned by Marianne and Eric Paul.

19:20

The family transfer will result in the division of the parcel into A5 acre tract to be owned by recipient Thomas Ball, Son and a 5.64 acre tract to be retained by the claimants Marianne and Eric, who intend to continue to reside on the tract.

19:40

The proposed family transfers intend to give Thomas Paul, the landowner's adult son, a homestead where the claimants can live close to their children and grandchildren.

19:50

The applicants intend to retain ownership of the remaining parcel as was previously mentioned.

19:55

As proposed, Tract B which would be 5 acres and tracks 5 A 5.64 acres would be within the acreage range of a geographically adjacent lots.

20:11

Track B to gifted to Thomas Paul and this is the remainder right here.

20:18

As part as the the review process, the proposal was sent out for agency comments.

20:24

Three agency comments were received on the proposal.

20:28

Missoula County Public Works Building Division noted there's an open electric permit that needs final inspection and close out and that of course future structures need building and or trade permits.

20:39

Missoula County Public Health Sanitation or the property will need sanitation review or applicable exemptions, and any cesspool will need to be upgraded before the final plat sign off.

20:51

Finally, Missoula County Public Health Water Quality noted that the area of the proposed transfer does have sporadic elevated arsenic levels and definitely recommends testing of both existing and future wells.

21:08

In reviewing the request, there is one criterion under rebuttal presumptions and evasion criteria that possibly indicates evasion, that being that the original tract was transferred to the claimants less than two years ago.

21:25

However, this is the most appropriate exemption to use for what the claimants aim to accomplish based on the information submitted in the application and affidavit.

21:38

Our Marianne and or Eric Paul in the room are online.

21:43

You folks can come right up.

21:47

And for the record, I'll have you folks state your names.

21:50

Marianne Paul.

21:51

Eric Paul.

21:53

Thank you, Folks, did you buy the property with the intent of dividing it?

22:01

Do you or your transferee intend to transfer the property within the next year?

22:07

OK, You're going to have to say yes and no.

22:09

Yeah, that's right.

22:10

OK.

22:11

What do you.

22:11

Well, what do you mean by transfer it to somebody else?

22:13

Oh, to somebody else?

22:14

After this?

22:15

After this transfer, No.

22:18

Have you talked with anyone at Missoula County about going through the subdivision review?

22:25

Once again, this is an exemption that we're doing today.

22:28

No.

22:30

OK.

22:31

Will the property be developed just one home to the the recipient and will the recipient of the property be residing on the property?

22:44

Yes.

22:45

Perfect.

22:47

Thank you.

22:47

Do you guys have anything to to add?

22:51

No, just that we hope that it goes OK.

22:56

Thank you.

22:56

Thank you.

22:57

We wouldn't be near our grandbaby.

23:00

That's right there.

23:05

Oh, yes.

23:06

Is there any other public comment?

23:11

OK.

23:14

In conclusion, staff recommends approval with the motion presented on the screen before you Commissioners, here is your language.

23:25

Thank you.

23:26

I don't have any questions.

23:28

I do not.

23:28

Thanks so much for writing it in the active tense.

23:32

I appreciate that every time Dave.

23:34

Medical thing.

23:35

So I move to approve the request by Marianne and Eric Paul to utilize the family transfer exemption as presented in the exemption application and affidavit.

23:44

Second, any further discussion or public comment?

23:48

OK, All in favor.

23:49

Aye, aye.

23:51

Good luck.

23:51

Thank you.

23:58

You guys can hang around for the preliminary budget presentation just to go to the next step.

24:06

OK.

24:12

OK.

24:12

Evander Chorty and Chris Lowndesberry.

24:35

Good afternoon, Commissioners.

24:36

Thank you for the opportunity to present the preliminary budget for Missoula County for fiscal year 2026 today.

24:43

At the end of this will be asking you to formally open the public hearing, which will be held open until the final budget is adopted later in the end of summer at the beginning of September.

24:54

For the record, my name is Chris Lansbury.

24:56

I'm the Chief Administrative Officer for Missoula County and I'm joined today by our Chief Financial Officer, Andrew Chorny, who will walk us through the numbers when we get to that section.

25:04

But before we do that, I'm going to try and set the stage a little bit here for folks around the way county budgeting works and the challenges and opportunities were faced as we head into fiscal year 2026.

25:15

So just to start off here, we are today starting off our budget process from the public perspective at the preliminary budget hearing.

25:23

But prior to this, internally for the last several months, staff has been working across departments on the budget and the commissioners have been hearing the needs from departments in the form of enhancement requests at your administrative meetings throughout June and July of this year.

25:46

Just making sure we're advancing slides there.

25:49

So just a reminder for folks that property taxes are both in the local government's control, but also we share that responsibility with the State of Montana.

25:57

And so when we talk about property taxes, there are three main components to that.

26:01

The first is the value of a person's property.

26:05

That's determined by the State of Montana through the Department of Revenue.

26:08

Folks should have received or are in the process of receiving notices of what the Department of Revenue has valued property at across Missoula County.

26:16

The second is the tax rate for each of the property classes in the state of Montana.

26:21

And we'll talk a little bit more about that because there were some legislative changes this year to tax rates, but again, that's set by the state in the form of the Legislature during each of their biennial sessions.

26:32

And so that has changed for this year and we'll talk about that on the next slide.

26:38

And then the last thing that is part of what determines property taxes is the number of mills that are necessary for either local governments or schools or special districts in order to be able to carry out their statutory functions.

26:53

And that's the piece that is in local control, the number of mills that we levy.

26:57

The other two pieces of that budgeting piece related to property taxes is in control of the state.

27:03

And then also weighing into that are the piece that are approved by our voters here locally.

27:08

We have a number of bonds and other levies that have been approved locally, and those also impact what people see on their property tax bills.

27:19

So I want to talk just briefly about what happened at the Legislature this year because I'm sure

folks have read or seen online that there were some pretty big changes that happened to our property tax system this year in the form of House Bill 231 and Senate Bill 542.

27:34

So starting this year, residents who have owned their primary residence in Montana for the previous year will be able to apply for a one time \$400.00 rebate from the state of Montana to offset some of the property taxes that they pay.

27:49

In addition to that, for Class 4 residential and commercial properties, the tax rates were adjusted during the Legislature and the tax rates this year for fiscal year 2026, which started July 1st, 2025.

28:06

For the first dollar of property taxes up to the 1st \$400,000 in value on the home, the property tax rate dropped from 1.35 to 0.76% and then for the next from \$400,000 to \$1.5 million, the tax rate increases to 1.1%.

28:28

And then for properties valued at more than \$1.5 million from the \$1.5 million mark up, it's 2.2% for this tax year.

28:38

Those numbers and break points 400 thousand \$1.5 million change as those bills are implemented over a two year phase in for the following year.

28:49

So what we're doing this year will look different again next year.

28:53

And I just want to set the stage for folks because that will cause some fluctuation in tax bills just based on the rate changes that are occurring during those two years.

29:07

So where we are today during preliminary budget, what we're presenting to you is the base budget of the county.

29:13

And what that base budget consists of is the increases in contracts or personnel costs that are necessary for the county to just continue the functions that it does today.

29:24

That's not adding any new services or personnel to the budget, just continuing the work that is done today as part of it.

29:33

And it assumes at least right now, because we do not yet have certified taxable values for from the state of Montana, which is a that last piece, one of those two or sorry, the first piece of one of those two, those three pieces of property taxes that we talked about, we have to assume the previous year's revenue even though we know the certified values in Missoula County will have gone up from the growth that we experienced.

29:59

So what we're presenting today is just that base budget, but we assume no new revenue will occur from newly taxable properties or other things that have occurred over the last two years since the last reappraisal cycle.

30:15

So you may have seen this slide before.

30:17

This is the focus of Missoula County's budget.

30:19

It ties directly back into the county's mission, vision and values.

30:23

And this is where we look at how is it that we provide services to our constituents in Missoula County.

30:29

And we're highlighting here this year kind of four main target areas that we're working on and we've been working on for the last couple of years.

30:36

And the first is providing an open and transparent budget process that includes access to the enhancement requests and this presentation as well as a preliminary budget book that is up on Missoula County's website in the Missoula County Voice section, as well as our public meetings today and the upcoming subsequent public meetings when you'll take public comment on the proposed budget.

30:58

Also, as folks may remember, we've been working pretty hard towards some of our core service areas, including public health, public safety and the criminal justice system over the last several years, as well as looking to make sure that we can maintain the quality workforce that we have for Missoula County.

31:15

And that has included increases in the personnel line items for budgets that are included in the base budget, again, continuing that same staffing level that we've had previously.

31:26

And so Missoula County is part of 13 different collective bargaining agreements and those include raises that we've negotiated with our collective bargaining partners, our labor partners that range from about 3 to 7% to try and keep our workforce at or near kind of the folks that we compete with in order to be able to recruit and retain staff.

31:49

Sorry, we're having a little problem moving forward on slides.

31:53

There we go.

31:54

Wanted to highlight a few areas where we are continuing to see some challenges, especially around recruitment and retention in our public safety area in particular.

32:03

So last year, I was able to report that we have been able to close the gap for our Sheriff's Office, but you'll notice they're up still up there.

32:10

And that is because we are still experiencing some challenges recruiting in our detention center.

32:14

We have been able to close that gap from at one point almost 19 open positions down to about 7 positions now.

32:21

So we're making good progress in that area, but we still have a ways to go.

32:25

The same is true for 9/1 services and other public service public safety area.

32:30

We have been able to close that gap, but we still have about 5 open positions in our nine and one services division.

32:37

One of the big areas that we're seeing and folks may have read about is real challenges in our public safety infrastructure and just our public infrastructure across Missoula County in general.

32:47

And so folks have undoubtedly seen things like the closure of Boy Scout Bridge last year, the fact that McClay Bridge was closed for a period of time when it was in need of critical repair.

32:58

And they've undoubtedly noticed more weight restrictions going up on our bridges as well.

33:02

And Missoula County is facing real challenges and attempting to address those issues around that.

33:07

Missoula County is responsible for all bridges either in the city or in the county.

33:11

And then we have roads outside the city limits that were responsible for maintaining.

33:16

And right now we need about an additional \$4.1 million per year just to begin to make a dent in that backlog of infrastructure.

33:27

We're not proposing a \$4.1 million increase in public infrastructure funding.

33:30

That's beyond the county's ability to accomplish because of the way funding is set.

33:35

But that is the real challenge that we're facing in public works.

33:38

And we have a almost 26 year old detention facility now.

33:42

It's hard for me to believe that because I was here when we first constructed the facility and moved into it, but we are facing real challenges there as that facility ages in the needs for it.

33:52

We've been fortunate enough to work with partners to be able to replace things like the roof to add solar to that facility.

33:58

But we have real challenges in some of the internal systems for heating and air conditioning and for supplying water throughout the facility that will impact our budget as we head into this next year and subsequent years.

34:14

So just as a reminder for folks, when we talk about those personnel increases in particular that the county's made a commitment to address both our understaffing, but also the cost that our

employees have related to that kind of pressure that comes from the competitive nature of our employment market here in Missoula.

34:31

And so we've committed to using as a component of our wages this market study idea, which is where we go out and conduct a salary survey every other year to help us determine what are the appropriate wage rates for Missoula County in terms of those wages for employees.

34:49

And so this is a year where we will be conducting that study again to help us make that determination of what is the appropriate rate that we we pay for each of these different positions.

35:00

In addition, this year, we will continue to move to some enhanced services on our criminal justice side, including additional pretrial misdemeanor probation services as well as some changes to the layout of the courthouse to address security challenges around cases in our court system.

35:22

So two key things here before I turn it over to our CFO here to talk about the actual numbers for fiscal year 2026.

35:31

And those two key things that I wanted to highlight for folks is that for every dollar that folks pay in property taxes in Missoula County, 90% of that goes directly towards performing the statutory functions that Missoula County is required to provide.

35:48

We run a very lean operation.

35:50

I know sometimes it's hard for folks to believe that when we talk about government and we hear a lot of things on the national and state stage about that.

35:58

But 90 cents of every dollar that we collect in property taxes goes directly towards providing A statutory service that we are required to provide, which leaves us with a little less and in reality

than about 5% of the services being kind of ancillary services that help to conduct those primary statutory functions.

36:18

And those kind of ancillary services involve things like our ability to do outreach to the public and provide mailings to the public when we have changes in tax rates or in rural special improvement districts, making sure that we have robust grant reporting so that we can stay in compliance when we receive federal dollars and those kinds of things.

36:39

And so while this year we will see a more substantial request to the Commission for an increase than we have seen in previous years, in previous years we've tried to stay at or below the inflationary rate, and we've done a fairly successful job of that.

36:54

But the continued pressures coming out of the pandemic and out of the last few years has meant that we are looking at a more substantial request to the Board this year in order to maintain that just continued level of service that we provide today without enhancements in it.

37:10

And with that, I will turn it over to Andrew, who will talk through kind of what those numbers look like for the public and then I will be back on to talk a little bit about what that actually means to property taxpayers in Missoula County.

37:24

And Andrew?

37:58

Oops, oops.

37:59

We're getting Ron.

38:00

Can't.

38:01

No sound from Ron not coming through.

38:06

Andrew, I'm going to stick that mic right there.

38:08

All right?

38:09

Can you just double?

38:11

OK, maybe just start over again.

38:14

Just.

38:16

All right.

38:16

I what I was saying was I was going to start with a couple definitions.

38:22

One was for the county wide mills.

38:24

Those are mills that everybody within the county pays whether you live in the county or not.

38:32

The county only mills are those are that are paid by people only in the county.

38:35

But the benefit there is that they do not pay the city, city taxes.

38:40

So that's the difference between between the two and I'm going to talk about the increases to county wide and county only mills.

38:50

The other definition I want to talk about is these five different categories.

38:54

Up here you see general fund, library extension, detention and technology, the last four, all departments, the first one general fund that that's really the heart of county services.

39:08

That includes the Commissioner's Office, communications, Justice court, county attorneys, Financial services, clerk and recorder, elections records management, treasurer's office, auditor's office, facilities management, Office of Emergency Management, 911, Human resources, central services, the Superintendent of school, surveyor, GIS project management, financial administration.

39:33

So there's a lot of different departments within the general fund and that's why I wanted to preface the increase here, the general fund, and that's almost entirely personal.

39:43

Well, it is entirely personal.

39:46

It's a million one 64911 increase proposed for general fund.

39:52

The actual increase this year is a million 94169.

39:57

We're offsetting that with some cash and and taking some hits and other areas to facilitate that library \$235,450 increase.

40:11

They have a personal increase of 195,150 of this year.

40:16

The revenues been flat last few years.

40:20

They're going to end the year with \$9262.00 in the bank ext 240,000.

40:29

This is also personal related.

40:32

There is a small portion of operational expense in there, but it is also personal related.

40:40

The detention center, this is the big one, \$2,377,000.

40:48

This is a combination of two very unfortunate events, one, well, one unfortunate event I should say.

40:55

We lost the mask unit, which were state prisoners that were housed here and they weren't paying the rate that that they need to be charged.

41:07

There's a whole issue behind that, but we ended up losing \$1,660,000 from that state.

41:15

The state animates never not being housed here anymore, and we had a personal increase of \$769,735 for a total of 2,000,400 and 29735.

41:30

We're asking for a little less.

41:31

We're making up the difference elsewhere, technology 482,229 that's increased for Information Services, support operations personals cost of \$230,000, approximately another \$375,000 in service costs.

41:56

Next slide, please, Just a little bit late in getting up there.

42:00

OK.

42:03

Looking at the county only levies, there were no operational or personal levies there.

42:12

What we do have is 3 pieces of debt service for the public works.

42:18

They're acquiring A crusher and we're going to be financing \$1 million of that crusher for for public works of the entirety of the crusher is just under \$2,000,000.

42:29

As I recall, the health department, we got an HVAC system over there.

42:34

We're fixing fixed about \$1,000,000 worth of HVAC there.

42:40

And then capital debt services is our share of the animal control facility, which we share costs with the city.

42:49

We each are spending \$2,000,000.

42:51

This is \$166,000,000 in debt service for the animal Control Center.

42:59

I mean, sorry, 1000 Thank you slight error there.

43:09

And these these are the levies that the commissioners do not have any control over the 1st is the Sheriff's retirement system permissive retirement levy Chris, you can better explain what happened with the sure.

43:23

So just so folks are aware, during the the last several legislative sessions, in order to make the sheriff's retirement system more structurally sound, the legislature has chosen to increase the rates that employers of which Missoula County has won, both our deputy sheriff's and detention officers are part of this retirement system.

43:40

They've chosen to increase those rates.

43:42

We, of course, have to match what the state sets by law for the rates for that.

43:47

And so that's where this permissive levy is required.

43:50

This is the increase that we are required to pay by the state of Montana into the retirement system for those employees.

43:57

Thank you, Chris.

43:59

We have judgment levy that's going on the rolls this year 421,000 that was from a wage dispute that were ordered to put on by District Judge voted levies.

44:10

These are the open space bond levies that the voters in the city and state or county of Missoula voted on a number of years ago.

44:18

We still have some capacity there and we're issuing I believe \$2,000,000 and and debt there.

44:26

So total voted and permissive is \$846,760.

44:38

So the county wide operational capital debt service comes to four million 580-3063 county only which is the CIP debt services 320-2252 for a total of 4 million 9/15 3:15 levies We don't have any control over as the permissive retirement levy of three O 7787, the judgment levy of 421 O 26 and the voted open space bonds of 117,947.

45:12

Subtotal there's eight, 46750 total needed is 5,762,000, 75, an additional property tax to fund just the base budget.

45:24

What we do today, that's before we, we, that's what the number is.

45:31

Now there's an estimate.

45:32

We don't know what that number will be come September because there's other values that haven't.

45:38

Yeah, so correct.

45:39

So and thanks Commissioner Rio, that's a great segue.

45:42

So that is, is just the amount that's needed to continue the same operations that we have today.

45:48

And at the end of the presentation, again assuming there were no changes in our values, I will show what the impact will be to homeowners for residential property for that in terms of \$100,000 house, 300,600 thousand dollar home.

46:02

We know that our residential and our commercial values have gone up.

46:06

And so our anticipation is that in the long run that will allow us to potentially bring these numbers down.

46:12

But we just don't have that information until the beginning of August when we get those certified taxable values from the state.

46:19

But again, that is just what's needed to cover the base budget, continue the existing operations.

46:25

And we do have some requests that have been put forward by departments.

46:28

The entire list for both one time and ongoing is available online on that Missoula County voice page and we'll have the link for that at the end.

46:36

But just as a reminder for folks, one time requests or requests for goods or services that require us to not raise property taxes in order to do them.

46:44

So they could be funded by things like a grant or department may have been budgeting for a cost.

46:49

And so they've been putting money aside in order to be able to cover that.

46:52

We're basically going to spend the money one time.

46:54

Once we have that good or service, we're not going to need money to support it going forward.

46:58

And then we have ongoing requests, and these are the requests for goods or services or personnel that will be needed.

47:05

And those usually require ongoing property tax support.

47:12

So just a few examples of some of the ongoing budget requests for folks to get an idea of what's out there for needs across the county.

47:21

And as we look across our organization and one of the things that you heard during your budget presentations from departments was the fact that the demand for services as Missoula County continues to grow in population, we also continue to see an increase for demand.

47:35

And so we do have some personnel requests this year from departments that you'll consider and

later in August, once we have certified taxable values, and those include changes at the fairgrounds, for example, or at the detention facility in our county attorney's office.

47:51

And all of those are available online for folks to be able to look at what those requests are and provide feedback to the Commission on ones they think might be important enough for you to consider funding this year or items that they may think are not necessary or may not be of the most value.

48:10

Then we have the one time requests, and these are the ones that don't require any property tax support.

48:16

And that includes things like the crusher that Andrew was mentioning.

48:18

And what that does basically is it pulverizes rock so that we can produce our own gravel.

48:23

We can do that at a much reduced cost than if we had to buy it commercially because the county has several gravel pits and gravel sources that are under its control.

48:32

But that does mean occasionally we have capital expenses like the crusher where we have to replace that piece of equipment.

48:37

The current one, if I remember right, O is circa 1950 something.

48:43

And so it's about time that that crusher get replaced.

48:46

That will allow us to operate more efficiently, which will also result in less noise for folks who are

next to those gravel pits because the hours of operation will not need to be as long because of the efficiency.

48:58

And it includes things like replacements for equipment that has worn out or pieces of safety equipment at the courthouse annex or other places in those kinds of one time requests.

49:12

So in addition to the public hearing that you're opening today, just as a reminder for folks, we are also opening the public hearing for rural special improvement districts.

49:21

Rural special improvement districts include things like lighting districts, water and sewer districts.

49:27

This year, Missoula County is not proposing increases to most of those districts.

49:31

The exception is the Lolo Sewer and Water Rural Special Improvement District, which does have to have some upgrades that occur to it.

49:38

There is a larger conversation occurring around that, around the ideas of expansion and those kinds of things.

49:43

But we know even just to fund the improvements that are necessary for the existing district that will require an increase in that information is available online for folks to look at, but we will take public comment as part of that hearing today.

49:55

I'm also we have the Missoula Local Government Special District, which is the former federal building known as the John Engin building.

50:03

We do have assessments for that building as we continue to get ready to undertake the renovation

of that building, which will allow us to consolidate out of properties we currently have to rent and centralized services for folks to be able to more efficiently, more efficiently access them.

50:21

And then finally, we have the hearing for the Fairgrounds Special Improvement District that is largely wrapped up it's renovations, but that hearing is also open in case folks would like to provide comment on that hearing or anything occurring at the fairgrounds as well.

50:37

Andrew mentioned that we do have some permissive levies out there.

50:41

These are the ones that are really beyond the commissioner's control, but folks are still able to comment on them.

50:46

And that includes things like our permissive medical mills.

50:49

These are the mills that are used to fund benefits for county staff as well as the sheriff's retirement mill levy that Andrew mentioned that we will be using this year in order to meet our additional retirement contributions as required by state law.

51:10

Did that jump back for everybody else?

51:11

Sorry about that.

51:18

OK.

51:18

So now we get to the real question, which is what does all of this mean for the average homeowner?

51:24

So just as a reminder for folks, three pieces that impact property tax, property taxes for folks.

51:30

We have the assessment done by the state of Montana, we have the rates done by the state of Montana.

51:34

And then we have the number of mills that that you will see.

51:37

And then we have this complicating changes from those two bills.

51:41

So it does make it really difficult for us to predict exactly what the impacts will be to a property tax payer this year because of all of those changes.

51:50

But we've done our best to do that and to present a scenario that funds that based based budget.

51:58

And so with that, as Andrew mentioned, we have the two chunks.

52:01

So in the top box what you'll see here is the amount for 100,300 and 100,000 and \$600,000 home in Missoula County for the necessary increases to county wide mills for the base budget.

52:12

And that looks like for \$100,000 home \$10.38, for a \$300,000 home \$31.14 and for a \$600,000 home \$71.56 per year.

52:27

So that is not a per month or a per day, that is the total yearly increase for a \$600,000 home is \$71 for all of those services.

52:36

And then for the items that the commissioners do not have control over that Andrew mentioned for \$100,000 home it's \$1.79, for a \$300,000 home it is \$5.36 and for a \$600,000 home it is \$12.33.

52:52

So if you are a county only resident, so you live outside the city limits because again the city has its own budget process, Missoula County Public schools, fire districts all have their own for the county portion of your taxes on the county wide mills, the ones that are paid by all residents in Missoula County.

53:07

If you add up those two numbers and I'm just doing it for the \$600,000 home.

53:11

But if you add the \$71.56 and the \$12.33, you get just about adding those two things together, \$84 per year in total tax increase or about \$7.00 per month in order to be able to fund the base budget for this next year.

53:34

Just a reminder for folks before I have you open it up to public comment.

53:37

All of this information plus all of the information about enhancement requests are available on our Missoula County Voice page, which is Missoula County voice.com or you can get there by accessing the main county website, missoulacounty dot US.

53:50

In addition to that, we have published the entire draft fiscal year 2026 budget book, so you can dive into that.

53:57

It is also available online both on our website and up on the Missoula County Voice page, you'll see a link to do that.

54:03

A recording of this budget presentation as well as all of the budget enhancement requests are available online on our YouTube channel, which is youtube.com/C/missoulacounty.

54:17

And then finally, we will have certified taxable values from the state the week of August 4th.

54:24

So about two weeks from now, little less than two weeks from now, I guess you'll then have your opportunity to, as the Commission to review all of the enhancement requests and make decisions on those that will occur during your public meetings on August 12th, 14th, 19th and 21st of August.

54:42

And folks can provide input both today, but also to you directly through your e-mail, which is BCC at missoulacounty dot US or by calling the Commissioner's Office at 4 O 6258 4877.

55:01

And with that, commissioners, I would ask you to open the public hearing.

55:04

We'll take public comment today.

55:06

And then at every one of your subsequent both administrative and public meetings, we will have the opportunity for the public to provide comment.

55:13

We will capture all of those and then present a summary of the public comment when we get to the final budget.

55:21

Thank you, Andrew.

55:22

Chris, is there any public comment?

55:27

We'll keep our comments to 3 minutes.

55:33

Don't see any in the room or online.

55:38

Yep.

55:40

Andrew or Chris, it might be premature to ask this since we don't have certified values or know what newly taxable values would look like.

55:50

But at this point in time to simply cover the increases necessary for our base budget, would that likely take up all of our banked mills to do that?

56:04

Yes, Yes, it would.

56:05

Yeah.

56:06

I, we do have some available mills in our county only that we didn't use, but we essentially took up all the county wides.

56:15

OK, thank you.

56:16

Do we need to make a motion to open it or is it just open?

56:24

I believe it's probably just a good idea just to have the motion on record that you've opened a formally open the public hearing.

56:31

OK, I move that we open the public hearing on our FY20 6 budget.

56:36

Second all in favor, Aye, Thank you, commissioners.

56:40

And just one quick reminder for folks, which is that we'll continue to take public comment both online and in person at each one of your administrative meetings as well as your upcoming public meetings right up until final budget adoption, which will be on September 4th, 2025, which is the first Thursday of September.

57:00

Is there any other business?

57:03

OK, we're adjourned.

57:04

Thank you all.