Missoula Board of County Commissioners

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES COVER SHEET

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 04, 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
Melissa Fisher, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Commissioners' Office
Chris Lounsbury, Chief Administrative Officer, Missoula County
Patricia Spotted Wolf, Administrative Specialist, Commissioners' Office
Anne Hughes, Chief Operating Officer, Missoula County
Andrew Czorny, Chief Financial Officer, Missoula County
Brian West, Civil County Attorney, County Attorneys' Office
Michaelyn Gimmett, Fiscal Budget Analyst, Finance
Allison Franz, Manager, Communications
Kyla Lehnerz, Office Administrator, Lands and Communities
Erin Kautz, Manager, Grants
Ray Reiser, Diversion Coordinator, Community Justice Department
Kevin Dantic, Planner, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Melissa Gordon, Manager, Grants and Community Resources
Melissa Richards, Administrator, Grants
Heather Powers, Technician, Grants
Tenzin Lhaze, Community Engagement Coordinator, Communications
Claire Biddick, Administrator, Grants
Kim Seeberger, Director, Clerk and Recorders' Office
Michelle Denman, Director, Finance
Samuel Scott, Assistant Recording Director, Clerk and Recorders' Office
Vincent Pavlish, Civil Attorney, County Attorneys' Office

Casey Gannon, Project Analyst, Commissioners' Office
Shyra Scott, Director, Clerk and Recorders' Office

1. **CALL TO ORDER** *[Time stamp – 0:37]*

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** *[Time stamp – 0:39]*

3. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** *[Time stamp – 0:58]*
Missoula County acknowledges that this event takes place in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people.

4. **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS** *[Time stamp – 1:03]*
   a. Closed Captioning
   b. Proclamation: Suicide Prevention Week

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA** *[Time stamp – 7:09]*

6. **CURRENT CLAIMS LIST** *[Time stamp – 07:17]*
Claims received as of August 14, 2025 to August 27, 2025 by the Commissioners' Office total $1,430,343.34.

7. **HEARINGS**
   Final Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Presentation *[Time stamp – 07:36]*
   a) Seeley Lake Refuse District
   b) Missoula County Fairgrounds District
   c) Missoula Local Government (John Engen) Building
   d) Missoula Rural Special Improvements District
   e) Final Budget FY 2026
   Chris Lounsbury, Missoula County Chief Administrative Officer
   Andrew Czorny, Missoula County Chief Financial Officer

   Commissioner Slotnick made the motion that the Board of County Commissioners of Missoula County hereby approve and adopt the final budget Resolutions as presented by staff.

   Commissioner Slotnick seconded.

   [Motion Passed 3-0.]

   [Resolution 2025-081 Book: 1117 Page:657]
   [Resolution 2025-082 Book: 1117 Page:656]
   [Resolution 2025-083 Book: 1117 Page:659]
   [Resolution 2025-084 Book: 1117 Page:660]
   [Resolution 2025-085 Book: 1117 Page:661]

   a. **Resolution: Converting voter approved mill levies to dollars for the purpose of complying with HB 20 from the 2025 Legislative Session.**
   Chris Lounsbury, Missoula County Chief Administrative Officer *[Time stamp – 40:33]*

   Commissioner Strohmaier made the motion that [the Missoula Board of County Commissioners] approve the resolutions establishing the method of levying voted mills as required by laws 2025 passed in the 69th Legislative Session.

   Commissioner Slotnick seconded.

[Motion Passed 3-0.]

[Resolution 2025-073 Book: 1117 Page:650]
[Resolution 2025-074 Book: 1117 Page:651]
[Resolution 2025-075 Book: 1117 Page:652]
[Resolution 2025-076 Book: 1117 Page:653]
[Resolution 2025-077 Book: 1117 Page:654]
[Resolution 2025-078 Book: 1117 Page:655]
[Resolution 2025-079 Book: 1117 Page:656]

8. **OTHER BUSINESS** *[Time stamp – 44:45]*
   [None]

9. **ADJOURN**
   Chair Vero – Called the meeting to adjourn at 2:45 p.m.

BCC Public Meeting September 04, 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.

0:37
Welcome to our public meeting.

0:39
We'll begin with a pledge.

0:42
I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands.

0:49
One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

0:55
Thank you.

0:58
Missoula County acknowledges that this event takes place on the aboriginal territories of the Salish.

1:03
And please pay people and we'll Cheryl has a closed captioning announcement.

1:15
Hello everyone.

1:16

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

1:22
If you're joining us in person, we'll have closed captioning on all the screens here in the Sophie Louise room.

1:27
Just a reminder, there will be multiple chances during the meeting for public comment virtually and in person.

1:32
During those times, if you like to speak, we ask that you use the Raise Hand feature.

1:36
If you're on Microsoft Teams, this is a small hand button at the top of your screen.

1:40
If you're calling in on the phone, you'll need to hit *5 to raise your hand.

1:44
Then once called upon, you'll need to hit *6 to unmute.

1:47
And if you have any questions during the meeting, please come and find me.

1:50
Thank you, Aunt Anita.

1:53
Thank you.

1:54
We have a proclamation to read.

1:56
Which of you would like to read it?

1:58
You're going to do it.

2:00
Sure.

2:01
OK, WHEREAS Montana has the second highest suicide rate in the nation and is ranked among the top five states with the highest rates of suicide for the past four decades.

2:16
And whereas suicide is a community wide problem and suicide prevention requires a community effort.

2:22
And WHEREAS, since 2018, Missoula County has had an average of 28 deaths due to suicide per year.

2:30
And whereas suicide by firearms accounts for 55% of all suicides in the United States, 67% of all suicides in Montana, and 71% of all suicides in Missoula County.

2:44
And safe storage of firearms is known to reduce the risk of death by suicide.

2:49
And whereas, it is important to support the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988 call center here in Missoula along with our mobile response units who can effectively and empathetically intervene in crisis situations.

3:06
And whereas, our community will support suicide prevention efforts to the maximum extent possible, including promoting free gun locks and other safety materials available for Missoula public health and initiatives like Project Tomorrow Montana, which uses educational programs and evidence based policy to work to reduce Missoula County suicide deaths and attempts.

3:29
Now, therefore, in coordination with the National Suicide Prevention Week, we, the Missoula

Board of County Commissioners and Andrea Davis, Mayor of the City of Missoula, Mt, do hereby recognize the week of September 7th through the 13th, 2025 as Suicide Prevention Week signed by the Mayor of Missoula and your Missoula County Commissioners.

3:51
Thank you.

3:51
And we have a representative from Missoula Public Health.

3:54
Come on up.

3:59
Good afternoon.

4:00
My name is Hannah Peprock.

4:01
I work as the suicide prevention coordinator with Missoula public health.

4:05
I wanted to thank you for recognizing Suicide Prevention Week as a focused opportunity for us to come together as a community to educate, connect and take action.

4:14
Since 2014, Project Tomorrow Montana, a collaboration between Missoula Public Health and United Way of Missoula County, has LED a network of community organizations focused on promoting awareness, providing support, and offering educational opportunities in suicide prevention and post pension.

4:30
While we find it important to raise concern for this issue, it's also important to raise hope.

4:35
Suicide rates in Missoula County have decreased over the last three years.

4:40
In 2024, the suicide rate for the county was 17.5 per 100,000.

4:46
This is the lowest rate we've seen since 2019 and a dramatic decrease from the prior year's rate of 27.8.

4:54
In the past year, we've trained hundreds of community members to recognize and respond to signs of suicidal thoughts and behaviors and their family members, friends, and colleagues.

5:03
Providing this education to the community remains a top priority of Project Tomorrow.

5:07
As you heard in the proclamation, firearms are the most lethal and most common method of suicide in our county and in our state.

5:15
We know that suicidal crises are often brief.

5:17
When individuals have have easy access to lethal means.

5:20
During those moments of intense distress, the risk of a fatal outcome increases.

5:25
So by creating time and space between a person and a potentially lethal mean, like a firearm, we give them a greater chance to survive the crisis and seek help.

5:34
And this is how we know that gun locks work.

5:36
Over the last year, we have distributed nearly 900 gun locks for free to the Missoula community, prompting important conversations with firearm owner, firearm owners and their families.

5:46
We continue to see a rising demand and curiosity for gun locks and other lethal mean safety materials such as prescription lock boxes.

5:55
And we know that the increasing number of calls to the 988 Crisis Lifeline launched here in Missoula in 2022 reflects our community's growing willingness to seek help.

6:04
We're proud that Montana operates one of the best 988 programs in the country, resolving 80% of the calls on the line.

6:11
Project Tomorrow is proud to be a part of a network of devoted organizations and programs working to prevent suicide in our community, such as 988, CIT and the Mobile Support Team and the local Advisory Council and so many others.

6:24
We all play a role in saving lives, building resilient communities, and ensuring that everybody has access to the care and connection they need.

6:30
I want to thank you again for proclaiming next week is Suicide Prevention Week and helping us work together to foster community where understanding, care, help and hope are at the forefront and invite any questions you may have.

6:43
Thank you.

6:44
Thank you.

6:44
Hannah.

6:47
Is there anyone else who'd like to speak to this?

6:54
I, I miss the person online.

6:57
OK.

7:01
OK.

7:02
Thank you.

7:03
Thank you so much.

7:09
Is there any public comment on items not on the agenda?

7:17
OK, our current claims list as of August 14th to August 27th, 2025 by the Commissioner's Office total 1,430,301 million, $430,343 and there should be a period there $0.34.

7:36
We have 5 hearings and looks like it's, yes, the Chris Lansbury, Andrew Torney show.

7:48
Thank you.

7:49
Commissioners give teams just a moment here to catch up on the PowerPoint presentation.

7:53
And then we'll start here on the fiscal year 2026 final budget hearing.

7:58
So thanks for the opportunity.

7:59
With my name is Chris Lansbury.

8:01
I'm your Chief Administrative Officer.

8:02
And with me is Andrew Charney, the Chief Financial Officer for Missoula County.

8:06
We'll be walking you through the Missoula County fiscal year 2026 budget, which covers the first five or first four, I'm sorry, hearings that the commissioners have today.

8:19
So just a reminder of where we are, a little bit of feedback, where we are in the budget process here.

8:25
We started our budget back in January of this year, then went into department meetings, and then in July you had your preliminary budget hearing.

8:33
We received certified taxable values on August 4th, which is what allows us to set the mills for the year, and that's what leads us to our final budget presentation today.

8:44
What we'll be covering today is the fiscal year 2026 budget, which includes the Missoula County Fairgrounds Special District, Missoula Local Government or Engen Building Special District, the Seeley Lake Refuse District, and the Missoula Rural Special Improvement Districts.

8:59
For all of those budgets, with the exception of The Maine Missoula County fiscal year 2026 budget and the Lolo RSID, none of those have increases.

9:08
The Lolo RSID for sewer and water is slated to go up by 5% this year.

9:13
And then we'll go through the primary budget for the county.

9:19
So just a couple of informational slides before we get into the numbers to set the stage here.

9:24
Just as a reminder, Mizzou County is a limited powers government, which means the county is required to carry out services on behalf of the state for its residents.

9:33
And those state, those services that we provide are required by statute.

9:37
And just these next two slides kind of go through that list of all of the statutes and services that are required.

9:43
So that includes things like the Sheriff's Office, detention facility, county attorney's office, district courts, clerk and recorder, treasurer's, finance department, Commissioner's Office, surveyor, human resources, and then some of the lesser known departments that folks might not think about like weed and extension, the fairgrounds, elections, Superintendent of schools, auditors, etcetera.

10:04
But what you can see is that there are a long list of statutory statutorily required duties that the county has to provide.

10:12
So when you look at your property tax bill, if you're a county resident, what you'll see is that about 28% of the taxes that are collected by Missoula County.

10:20
And as a reminder for folks, Missoula County collects taxes for all local taxing jurisdictions.

10:24
So you just get one tax bill with Missoula County's name on it.

10:27
But those taxes that are collected get divided up among a lot of different districts across.

10:32
When you look at the piece that goes to Missoula County out of your tax bill, as a county resident, it's about 28% of your tax bill that actually goes to fund local government services provided by the county.

10:42
The rest go to a combination of special districts, the state and schools.

10:49
And then when you look at the county's portion of that 28% of your big tax bill, you can see that about 1/4 of it goes towards what we call the general fund.

10:58
And I just want to give a quick definition of the general fund for folks 'cause that can kind of sound nebulous.

11:03
What is the general fund fund?

11:04
And so it funds things like the county attorney's office.

11:07
It funds things like Justice Court 91, the Office of Emergency Management, kind of all those general government services.

11:14
That's where that general piece comes from.

11:15
It the next biggest chunk of the budget is the Sheriff's Department and detention facility.

11:19
That's about another 27% of the budget.

11:22
And then broken up or smaller pieces for things like district courts, for things like, excuse me for things like extension and weed and those other types of departments here at Missoula County.

11:38
So we'll start off with our one time budget request.

11:41
This is just an overview of some of the requests that were before the county commissioners.

11:45
The complete list is available on the Missoula County Voice website, but the commissioner is considered a number of one time requests.

11:51
These one time requests are from savings that departments have put aside, money that is specifically for expenses that we know will occur in one fiscal year and won't necessarily occur in the subsequent fiscal years.

12:04
So this can be things like replacements of equipment, one time staff training or travel, things of that nature.

12:12
And so the commissioners reviewed a number of those requests this year.

12:14
Again, the full list is available on the Missoula County Voice website.

12:19
And as we look at those kind of one time requests this year, there were about $2,959,000 worth of one time requests that were put before the Commission this year that were considered and approved as part of the county's one time request.

12:34
Again, these one time requests do not result in property tax increases.

12:39
When we look at the totality of the budget, these were one time requests, money that was put aside specifically to address these one time needs.

12:49
The next thing we'll talk about is our ongoing requests.

12:51
These are ones that can potentially have an impact on property taxes.

12:54
This year, the commissioners considered 3 requests for one or for ongoing funding that were not funded by property taxes.

13:02
That was a request for an additional land use sanitarian at the Health department, which is funded by the fees paid by licensed establishments that need to be inspected to be in compliance with state law.

13:12
Those fees cover the cost of the additional land use sanitarian.

13:16
The revenue that's expected to be generated by those fees is about $120,000 and that exceeds the cost of the land use sanitarian.

13:22
So the commissioners approved that request.

13:25
The same is true for an increase in contracted services by our building codes department.

13:29
Again, building codes is you can think of as building inspections as the other piece of that.

13:33
And the fees generated by that program again cover 100% of the program cost.

13:37
So there is no impact to taxpayers related to that increase.

13:41
And then the final was a request to move from a temporary position to a permanent position, a position in the Clerk and Recorder's office that works specifically with GIS data.

13:51
This position is funded by an increase passed during the 2025 Legislature for the cost of recording documents in the Clerk and Recorder's office.

13:58
And again the revenue is expected to exceed the cost of that position.

14:06
Next, we'll move into the request that do have an impact of property taxes.

14:09
This is the complete list of one time requests that will impact property taxes.

14:14
These represent targeted investments that the commissioners began in many cases in fiscal year 2025 to address challenges that were occurring across the county.

14:23
The first two of those are funding for positions in our grants department.

14:28
Those two positions, one is specifically looking at assisting departments in the acquisition of grants across Missoula County and we'll work with departments to help them in that process.

14:38
Just as a reminder, when we look at the totality of the county's budget, about 1/3 of the money that comes into the county actually comes from non property tax source revenues like grants.

14:47
And so the commissioners last year as part of their budget process set out moving forward with

grant positions this year to help fund those, excuse me, to help fund that department through property taxes to be make sure that we were able to successfully go after and acquire grants.

15:05
The next is an increase in a part of an FTE, approximately 1/4 of an FTE in the health department.

15:13
This will allow them to hire a cross programs division manager and a business manager by upgrading to existing FT ES for a cost of about $25,000.

15:24
And this will allow them to address some of their cross divisional programs.

15:28
So things like their finance team, their accreditation team, that's when we talk about cross departmental, meaning that they impact each and every one of the services provided by the health department.

15:40
The next two is an increase for funding for the Crime Victims Advocate program.

15:44
This is a process that we began 3 years ago in the fiscal year 2024 budget, and this was to provide stable funding for the folks who work with victims of crime, specifically in justice and District Court, to assist them in being able to access the court system and access services as needed.

16:01
So we'll have an increase in the cost to departments for the cost of telephone services this year.

16:06
This is an inflationary increase to help cover the cost of that contracted service and the staff that supports it.

16:11
And so that will be spread across multiple departments, but the increase is approximately $3 per line and that will result in an additional increase across departments of about $19,000.

16:23
The next is a request to transfer $50,000 to the ongoing Housing Innovation Fund.

16:29
This is a fund that the county has used successfully to help in several acquisitions of property around mobile home parks in partnership with other non profit entities and land land banks and land use, sorry, development institutes to help address some of the housing challenges that are happening.

16:46
And this in this particular case, that money for the Housing Innovation Fund actually comes from lease dollars that the county receives from other revenue sources.

16:55
As we lease out space around the county, lands and communities will be increasing its public access space by having some space on the first floor of the building that they are currently occupying.

17:05
And that comes with an increased cost for rent for that additional space that will begin at about halfway point through the year.

17:12
So there's a request to increase their available funding by approximately $57,000 for that.

17:19
The next is an increase to the County Attorney's Calibrate program.

17:21
This is a program that diverts folks.

17:24
It's a kind of pre adjudication diversion program run by the county attorney's office to help get people out of the court system and back connected with society and structures that can help support them.

17:34
There was a request to fund one FTE or sorry 2 FT ES in that department.

17:38
The commissioners approved funding 1 FTE out of property tax dollars.

17:42
The annual cost for that is approximately $79,000.

17:46
The next is a request to begin a process of setting aside funding to replace the core infrastructure servers that we use, virtualized servers called the RX, and that's to the tune of about $78,500.

18:00
That's the core infrastructure that most of the county services run on.

18:04
The next was a request to increase funding for the vehicle replacement fund at the Animal control department for $20,000.

18:11
And this allows them each year to turn over 1 vehicle used by animal control officers who travel across the county to deal with animal control issues.

18:21
The next was an increase to upgrade the fiber connection to Larchmont Golf Course.

18:25
Just as a reminder, Larchmont is the public golf course under the county's umbrella.

18:29
Came with a minimal cost of about $1500, but will allow a better connection back into Missoula County.

18:35
And then the final is the result of a collective bargaining agreement with the deputy Sheriff's.

18:39
There was a request to increase the cost of or the clothing line, clothing allowance line in that

budget by $10,000 to help cover some of the special teams and other specialty equipment that's needed by deputies in the performance of their duties across the Sheriff's Department.

18:57
So just a little bit of history now on where we are.

19:00
So this is just a look at Missoula County's mills over time.

19:04
We have two different types of mills in Missoula County.

19:06
We have what are known as county wide mills and those are mills that are assessed against every property in Missoula County.

19:12
And then we have county only mills and those mills are specifically for roads, health department and animal control.

19:18
And those are only assessed to residents outside the city limits because the City of Missoula levies a tax for those services inside the city limits.

19:25
And what you can see on this chart is that we've had significant growth over our mill values over the last couple of years, but this year we did actually see a reduction in our mill value by about $20,000.

19:38
The other piece that plays a big impact into our budget and funding picture is newly taxable values, newly taxable values.

19:44
These are new properties that have come on the tax rolls over the last year as determined by the Department of Revenue.

19:49
And these are what tell us the kind of growth that we're seeing across the county.

19:54
And what you can see is that in fiscal year 2026, we did see a slight decrease in this from about $7,000,000 down to about $5,000,000.

20:01
And I think that corresponds with some of what folks are seeing for.

20:04
Decreased growth as interest rates have kind of gone up in the private sector.

20:11
All right.

20:12
So why are newly taxable properties in mill values so important?

20:15
Well, mill values are how we determine what is the available funding available for Missoula County to carry out the services that we have.

20:21
And newly taxable properties help to reflect the growth in the community and also mean that the burden gets shared across more property owners in Missoula County.

20:30
Additional increases in services as we see an increasing population.

20:36
So when we look at the county's budget overall for fiscal year 25 compared or sorry for fiscal year 26 as it compares to fiscal year 25 in our county wide non voted mills, we're looking at an increase of just more than $5,000,000, which is about 8% for growth in this.

20:52
And then we have some smaller increases as we look at things like county wide debt service.

20:56
This includes the Sheriff's building, our elections building, and some others.

21:01
We have some increases in our permissive levies, specifically around Sheriff's Department retirement.

21:05
The state of Montana has increased the contribution from employers towards the Sheriff's retirement system to help increase its level of solvency and that has resulted in some increases in our permissive levies across the county to be able to fund those retirement contributions.

21:22
And then we had some minor increases in our voted levies and our open space levies as we've sold some additional bonds across those as well.

21:34
Yes, so that's, I'm sorry.

21:35
So that that 8% represents all of these numbers combined.

21:38
So our overall growth across all the funds, but just looking at the county wide non voted, that's the $5,000,000, but 8% across the entirety the county's budget.

21:49
Thanks for that clarification, Andrew.

21:52
OK.

21:53
Now before we get into what those impacts look like to a homeowner, just want to throw out a few terms here because we'll use them kind of across the next several slides.

22:00
So the first is market value.

22:03
Everybody got a notice who owns property, got a notice from the Department of Revenue and that showed a few different things.

22:07
The first was market value, and that's the approximate value that the piece of property could sell for if it were put onto the market.

22:15
The piece that drives your taxes, though, is actually what's called taxable value.

22:19
And the taxable value is determined by taking the market value of the home and then multiplying it by the tax rate for the property class that you're in.

22:27
And that that piece determines the taxable value or what we assess mills against.

22:33
Next important term is tax rate.

22:35
These are what are set by the legislature during each legislative session and we had some pretty significant changes that we'll walk through and what those impacts mean to home owners here in Missoula County for residential Class 4 and long term rentals, as well as smaller scale commercial properties.

22:50
There was a pretty significant shift in tax rates this year, newly taxable.

22:54
We talked about those are the new properties coming on to the tax rolls.

22:57
And then we always talk about this thing called a mill.

22:59
And a mill is basically a unit of measure as defined as one, one thousandth of a dollar.

23:06
So it's used to calculate the amount of taxes by multiplying the number of mils times the taxable value of the property.

23:11
So that's how you determine what the actual tax impact will be for a property.

23:18
OK, so if nothing had changed during the 2025 legislative session, here's a look at three different properties across Missoula.

23:27
And I'm going to start in the in the chart here at the top.

23:30
So if we had a property in 2025 that had a taxable value.

23:34
So again, the taxable value is the piece where you multiply the tax rate times what the home might sell for.

23:40
And it had a tax value of $10,484.

23:43
Because of the increased property values in Missoula County, that house would now have a taxable value of $14,604.00.

23:51
And what that means is in fiscal year 2025, the county would have assessed $2383.14 in taxes, and even if the county had not raised one more dollar in property taxes, that home owner's tax bill

would have gone up to $3951.55 just by the increasing value of their home had the legislature not adjusted the tax rates.

24:16
Looking at a house down in Lolo, if it had a taxable value of $7926 in 2025, it would now have a taxable value of 9450 or 445 dollars.

24:28
Which means instead of paying in fiscal year 20 five, $1801.00, it would have now been required to pay $2555.63.

24:38
And then the last one is a median home.

24:40
So in fiscal year 2025, a median home was worth $399,000.

24:45
In fiscal year 26 that same home is worth $507,000 in market value.

24:49
So it's taxable value was 5387 in fiscal year 2025.

24:54
In fiscal year 2026, it's taxable value was $6845, meaning that it's property taxes would have gone in fiscal year 25 from 1224 dollars to 1852 in fiscal year 2026.

25:10
And that is without any increase in taxes.

25:13
And it just goes to highlight exactly how important the tax rate component is to determining market or the difference between market value and taxable value in properties over the last couple of years.

25:25
We saw some pretty significant shifts during 2023 to 2025 where we saw this big shift from other property tax classes into Class 4.

25:36
And the legislature during this last legislative session made some changes to that.

25:39
And what we're seeing because of that is some shift back.

25:42
So using those same examples that we just talked about, we'll talk about $100,000 home, $100,000 in market value, meaning it could solve for that in fiscal year 2025, it would have been assessed with a taxable value of $1350.

25:58
But because the Legislature changed tax rates, that assessed taxable value now is only $760.

26:07
You can see the example for 300,000.

26:09
A $300,000 home would have been had a taxable value of $4050 versus now having a taxable value of $2280.

26:18
And then we also have a $600,000 home example up there.

26:21
But what it translates to is even with the additional revenue that the county is requesting this year from taxpayers, that increase for $100,000 home is only $14.40 or for a $300,000 home, $43.19 or about $1.20, roughly a month of increase in property taxes.

26:40
When we talk about the increase this year of that 8%, so for 100,000 and $300,000 home, and the $600,000 home is up on that slide as well.

26:52
So then the question becomes, is that what you will actually pay on your tax bill?

26:56
And the short answer to that is no.

26:59
And that is because of this pretty significant change that we saw during the Legislature.

27:02
So for fiscal year 2026, the changes to Class 4 property mean that for the 1st $400,000 of your home, instead of being assessed at 1.35%, you're now being assessed at .76%.

27:16
Whoops.

27:16
And I somehow managed to advance a slide.

27:18
Sorry about that.

27:20
For a 400,000 from $400,000 up to 1.5 million, you're assessed at one point 1%, and then above $1.5 million, you're assessed at 2.2%.

27:30
And that means that more than 50% of the homes in Missoula County actually saw their taxable values go down because of this change.

27:39
And we will see even more downward pressure in fiscal year 2027 when the second piece of this legislation kicks in.

27:47
So here's what that number looks like for $100,000, three, 100,000 and $600,000 home in reality in Missoula.

27:55

So in fiscal year 2025, using fiscal year 2025's mills, a home at $100,000 would have paid $323.89 in taxes.

28:04
But in fiscal year 26, even with the additional 8% in revenue, that home will only pay $205.64.

28:12
In other words, it's tax bill will go down by $118.25 per year for a $300,000 home.

28:21
Instead of paying $971.68, that home, even with the increase in county taxes will pay $616.92 or decrease of $354 from what it paid the previous year.

28:35
And for a $600,000 home, instead of paying $1943, that home will now pay $1417 or a decrease of about $525 in taxes that are paid to the county of Missoula.

28:50
So expanding on that example, here's a few example properties for us to look at.

28:55
And again, I'm ended up two slides ahead.

28:57
So when we talk about that median home, it was worth 399,000 in fiscal year 2025 and worth 507,000 in fiscal year 2026.

29:06
So in fiscal year 2025, it paid $1005.75 in taxes.

29:12
In fiscal year 26, it will pay $929.43 or a reduction of $76.32 per year or 8% in what it pays in county taxes if they live in the city of Missoula.

29:26
Because again, county wide taxes are assessed across all properties, even those inside the city limits.

29:32
If they're outside the city limits, they would have paid $1292.00.

29:35
Remember I talked about those county only mills for roads, health department and animal control?

29:39
That's why it's a little more expensive on the county residents because they're paying for those additional services.

29:44
But even still in fiscal year 2026, they will see a reduction to 1141 dollars or a reduction of about $151.41 per year.

29:55
So some real world examples of that.

29:56
Our home in Lolo that was worth $587,000 and now is worth $699,000.

30:04
We'll see a decrease in its taxes annually as a county resident of about $179 or 9% this next year, even with the county collecting additional revenue.

30:15
Now that is true so long as the value of the home, the taxable value, not the market value went down and it did not cross that threshold where the tax rates go up.

30:25
So here's an example of what would happen for a home where that that threshold has been crossed.

30:31
So here's a home that was worth $776,000 in fiscal year 25.

30:35
It's now worth a little more than $1,000,000.

30:38
So it's on an increase in its market value of about $305,000 or about 28%.

30:44
It's taxable value though only increased by 1% going from 10,484 to 10,494.

30:52
So the $10 increase and it's county taxes will go up by about $324 or 13%, even though it's a 28% change in its market value.

31:04
In the past, under the old system, that 28% market value change would have also been reflected in its county tax change.

31:11
It would have also gone up by about 28%.

31:15
So while it's still increases in this year, the increase is minimized by those changes in tax law that occurred during the 2025 legislative session.

31:24
So just a quick comparison for the number of mills and if you want to be able to do all this fun math that I've just walked us all through at home, you can take the taxable value that you received on your Dor statement and to calculate your county taxes, if you live in the county, you multiply that taxable value by 0.27058.

31:45
And if you look over at our fiscal year 2026 column of mills, you'll notice that there we are levying 270 mills .58.

31:53
That's exactly where that number comes.

31:54
If you just move the decimal .3 places, you can multiply your taxable value times the number of mills and you will get what you will pay in taxes.

32:00
So if you have a 600 home valued with a taxable value of $6000, you will pay $1623.48.

32:08
If you live inside the city, you have to take out those county only mills.

32:11
So the rate that you multiply by drops to 0.22 O 4.

32:16
So a $600,000 home would pay $1322.40 in property taxes for all county services.

32:26
So next, we'll jump into the public comment we've received online and during your public meetings.

32:32
So we had four comments this year that highlighted the need to understand the pressure of property taxes on those with fixed incomes.

32:39
I think we've addressed that as best we can through both the nature of the requests that were approved by the commissioners, but also through the changes that have come through the two legislative bills that passed, which have put downward pressure on property tax growth, specifically as it hits residential class for property.

32:56
We had two comments that asked for the commissioners to move away from the base budget model, which is how we determine needed funding for the following or subsequent fiscal years, and to more closely examine each aspect of the county for reductions.

33:10
We had one comment to us that was that Missoula County was growing too fast and the tax dollars should only be spent on programs that benefit all residents.

33:19
And then we had one comment that was asking why the library staff or county employees instead of city employees where the library is inside the city limits.

33:28
Just to clarify for folks, while the library is inside the city limits, the library actually provides library services to all of the communities, including having satellite libraries in Lolo, Frenchtown, Seeley, and Condon.

33:38
So it actually does provide countrywide services even though the main library branch is located inside the city of Missoula.

33:47
So here's what all of that means for today.

33:49
What we are asking you to do is adopt the budget today and fix the mills for the county as well as set appropriations and staffing level for the next year.

33:58
The documents kind of just in an easier to digest format that show the breakdown by department of property taxes collected and being spent or we call attachments AB and C.

34:07
And those were in the published packet today, but they are also available on the Missoula County Voice page.

34:12
And in the next couple of days, we'll be up on the county's main finance website as well, once the fully adopted budget is compiled.

34:19
But before we move on to the adoption of the budget, at this point, I would ask the commissioners to open up the meeting to public comment specifically around the county's fiscal year 2025 or sorry, fiscal year 2026 budget.

34:31
And also related to the 5% increase for the Lolo RSID, which is the RSID that will see an increase this year.

34:39

Can we, before we do that, can we just go back to slide #7 where it shows that the, the all other, which is like 1/4 of the the pie?

34:57
And can you explain to folks what all other means?

35:01
So certainly.

35:01
So all other includes literally department budgets or pieces of jurisdictions that we levy for that don't equal 1%, even though they add up to a large piece.

35:12
And this includes things like the voter approved mills for things like open space, Fort Missoula Regional Park, the library building construction, those kinds of things, as well as addresses budgets that are extremely small in nature, like the commissioner's budget or the communications budget that are just really small pieces of the pie that that wouldn't we wouldn't actually be able to meaningfully break out.

35:36
Perfect, Thank you so much.

35:41
OK, public comment.

35:49
Don't see any in the room, any online.

35:55
OK.

35:56
Either of you have anything before we continue on with the slides?

36:00
Yeah, of course.

36:04
I just want to say thanks, Chris.

36:06
That was a great presentation.

36:08
This stuff is super complicated and I really appreciate how you broke it down and defined terms and moved through the presentation in kind of an iterative way.

36:17
So each piece added on to the piece before it's super complicated stuff and did a great job.

36:22
I also wanted to do a shout out to the the the legislature, which I guess would be a rare thing for us to do, but really want to give them true compliments in a bipartisan way.

36:34
They created a bill that did indeed for many, many people lower property taxes by adjusting tax rates.

36:42
And very thankful for many people the intent of that law will be realized.

36:49
They did a great job.

36:50
Thanks.

36:53
Yeah, I'm second that.

36:57
OK.

36:57

And then I guess also to recognize that we're just talking about 1/4 or 1/3 of someone's property tax bill when we've gone through this entire presentation and then people compare to what they actually receive in the mail.

37:10
Folks need to realize that we're only talking about the county portion, not the school or the city.

37:16
So it's hard to the state and, and I will say commissioners, those downward pressures will be seen across those taxing jurisdictions as well.

37:24
So again, Commissioner Vero, very important to highlight that this is the county's portion, but those same downward pressures should apply to the state's equalization mills, also known as the 95 mills and other things.

37:35
So people should see relief in those adding up more cumulatively across those other taxing jurisdictions.

37:41
I also realized if the commissioners will and does me for just one second that I forgot to at the beginning of my presentation, acknowledge a couple of really important people who play more than a small piece in this role.

37:51
I just talk as opposed to actually doing that.

37:53
And that would be, of course, our Chief Financial Officer, Andrew Chorney, Michelle Denman, our Finance Director, Micah Grimolt, who is our budget analyst, and then Allison and Carrie in particular this year, who spend an inordinate amount of time trying to help make all of this digestible because to say that it is complex would be to understate what actually occurs on the back end.

38:15
Thank you.

38:19
OK, Slide 28, sorry.

38:24
So with that Commissioners, I do have a motion up for you.

38:26
No, no problem.

38:28
And this would would basically be to close and then adopt the budget including all of the special districts budgets as part of that inner details.

38:38
Happy to I moved to close the hearing on the Missoula County FY20 26 Budget RSIDS and special districts permissive medical and retirement levies and adopt the FY20 26 budget resolutions and associated documents setting mill levies and assessments for county and fixing appropriations as presented in the associated resolutions.

39:02
I will second that and also just want to add my thanks to staff for the many, many months of hard work that has gone into this budget and the hard decisions that were made throughout.

39:15
We clearly heard lots of compelling cases to invest more in programs and staff and, and I didn't hear anything that that really raised an eyebrow for me.

39:30
These were legitimate true needs in our community.

39:34
But nonetheless, we are in a very fiscally constrained situation And, and I think this budget will basically keep the status quo and, and, and allow us to continue delivering the level of services that we have been delivering with a very few exceptions to that.

39:58
And next year will prove to be another challenging budget year also.

40:02
But again, thank you for all the work that's gone into this and I think this is prudent budget and and a modest budget.

40:15
Thank you.

40:18
Been moved and seconded all in favor?

40:19
Or is any other public comment OK?

40:24
Additional discussion?

40:26
All in favor, aye, Thank you.

40:33
All right, Commissioners, I will move you to the second large chunk that we need to do today.

40:37
In addition to the changes that we talked about related to tax rates, there was one other significant change specifically impacting local governments during this last legislative session and that is related to voter approved levies that we need to address.

40:50
And so during the 2025 legislative session, House Bill 20 was passed, which requires jurisdictions to move from voted mills to voted dollar amounts for their levies.

41:02
And the county is given the choice of either staying with the existing fixed mill levy that would become frozen in time, or converting to dollars, which will allow for the inflationary increase for those programs that are funded by voter approved levies.

41:19

And so staff is recommending today that we move any of our voter approved mills from fixed mills into dollars.

41:27
And we'll walk through those different levies here quickly.

41:32
Without going into too much detail, but Missoula County has several voter approved levies.

41:35
They include a levy for the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, a levy for Missoula County Parks, a levy for Missoula County Search and Rescue, for the Missoula County Substance Abuse and Prevention Program, for the Missoula County noxious weeds, for the Missoula County Library and for Missoula Aging Services.

41:53
You will notice the asterisks on two of those in Missoula Library and Missoula Aging Services.

41:57
And that's just to indicate that each of those agencies boards specifically requested that the Commission convert their mill levies to the fixed dollars.

42:05
After going through and reviewing that information for those and just a reminder for folks that the Missoula Library operates under the Missoula Library Board as opposed to the auspices of the Missoula County Commissioners.

42:14
And then Missoula Aging Services also has its own board.

42:16
And so they are each requesting this of the Board of County Commissioners today.

42:20
So we are presenting their resolutions to you as part of that, but with their with their ascent.

42:27

So additionally, these legislative changes that we talked about specifically around Senate Bill 542, that's the one that will put downward pressure on mill levy values next year.

42:37

And Senate Bill 117, which is known as the property limitation bill will have impact on fixed mill levies, prompting the need to change to a dollar amount as opposed to that.

42:48

And the reason for that conversion is it will now allow the inflationary increase, which currently is half the average three-year rate of inflation, but starting next year under Senate Bill 117 will just be the rate of inflation for that to continue.

43:02

And all of those levies that we looked at, the Historical museum, the library, Missoula, Aging services, noxious weeds, substance abuse prevention, all are operational levies that pay for things that have escalating costs due to the pressures of inflation, be that personnel or materials, heat, light, power, all of those things.

43:18

And so the request again from staff today is to convert those fixed mill levies over to dollars.

43:26

And so while you have them as separate resolutions, I do believe you can adopt them as a packet of resolutions should you want to move those.

43:34

And so I do have a motion for you after you've heard public comment on these.

43:38

Thank you.

43:39

Is there any public comment in the room or online?

43:49

Either of you OK?

43:52
No comment.

43:54
Is there a motion?

43:55
Yes.

43:56
I would move to adopt the resolutions converting fixed mill levies to dollars for the following voter approved levies which include the Historical Museum levy, the Noxious Weed levy, the Search and Rescue levy, the Substance Abuse levy, the Missoula Library levy, the Missoula Aging Services levy, and all other voter approved levy.

44:13
Subject.

44:14
Subject to the provision of House Bill 20.

44:22
I'll second that.

44:23
Thank you.

44:25
Any further discussion or public comment all in favor?

44:30
Aye, aye.

44:31
Thank you, Commissioners.

44:35
And I believe with that we are through our fiscal year 2026 budget option.

44:38
Well done, well done.

44:45
Is there other business?

44:46
I think we're adjourned.

44:49
Have a great afternoon everyone.