

Bonner–Milltown Community Council Meeting Minutes

Date: March 9, 2026

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Bonner School Cafeteria & Zoom (Hybrid Meeting)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 PM after confirming a quorum of council members present.

Council Members Present:

Rick Hall – Chair

Jane Kipp – Vice Chair

Emily Herndon – Secretary

John Wilke – Member (via Zoom)

Jessica Glebke – Alternate Member

Council Members Absent:

Kaaren James – Treasurer Absent

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion: To approve the March 9, 2026, agenda by Emily Herndon

Second: Received by Jessica Glebke

Vote: Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes from the February 9, 2026, meeting by Emily Herndon

Second: Received by Jessica Glebke

Vote: Approved unanimously.

4. Bonner History Tidbit

A historical presentation was shared highlighting the long tradition of dancing and social gatherings in Bonner and Milltown by Judy Matson.

Highlights included:

- Bonner Hall (built 1889) served as an early gathering place for dances, card parties, and community events.
- During World War I, soldiers stationed near the tunnel to guard the Milltown Dam participated in community dances.
- Local venues such as Dalberd Pool Hall, Fin Hall, and Riverside Saloon hosted dances with live music from local performers.
- Dances were held weekly in the early 1900s, often on Wednesdays and Saturdays.
- A historical 1917 “Strikers’ Dance” poster supported labor strikes in the community.
- In 1949, the Bonner Lumberjacks baseball team hosted a St. Patrick’s Day dance.
- More recent traditions include dancing at Harold’s Club (now the Moose Lodge) and music events at the Cattle House Amphitheater.

Upcoming community event:

- St. Ann’s Pasties Dinner & Program

- Topic: Living with Wildlife: A Historical Perspective
- Date: March 16
- Time: Program at 3 PM
- Cost: \$10

5. Public Comment (Items Not on Agenda)

Bonner Mill Property Update

A representative of the Bonner Mill industrial complex shared an update regarding property occupancy and future plans.

Key points:

- Universal Forest Products (UFP) is leaving the facility.
- The complex contains approximately 750,000 square feet, with roughly 440,000 square feet currently vacant.
- A potential tenant has been identified: a small AI data center.

Data Center Proposal Highlights:

- Zoned appropriately according to Missoula County Planning.
- Energy source includes hydropower from Energy Keepers (Salish & Kootenai Tribes) and renewable energy credits supporting wind and solar projects.
- Closed-loop liquid cooling system with minimal water consumption.
- Initial capacity expected around 9 MW.
- Less noise than previous mill operations.
- Estimated 20–30 permanent jobs plus construction jobs.

Housing Discussion

Community members discussed attainable housing and potential workforce housing impacts connected to the proposed Blackfoot Crossing development.

6. Announcements

None.

7. Speakers

None scheduled.

8. Public Comment

No bouquet period on agenda. Gary Matson bouquet for Bonner School Book Fair and Chili Feed

9. Communications

Missoula County Subdivision Regulation Amendments

Missoula County Planning, Development & Sustainability is proposing updates and corrections to subdivision regulations including mapping corrections distinguishing urban and rural areas.

Missoula County Housing and Community Development Survey

Residents are encouraged to participate in the 2026 Housing and Community Development Survey.

Survey Open: March 2
Survey Close: March 31
Location: missoulacountyvoice.com

10. Treasurer's Report

Balance: \$110.41

11. Action Items

Donation of Remaining Funds

Motion: Donate \$110.41 to Friends of Two Rivers to support the purchase of a reusable banner for the community picnic by Jessica Glebke

Second: Received by Emily Herndon

Discussion included designing a reusable banner for the annual community picnic (typically the last Wednesday of July).

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

12. Discussion Items

Blackfoot Crossing Development

Updates were shared regarding recent Missoula County Commissioner hearings.

Upcoming hearings:

Public Comment Hearing – March 12 at 2:00 PM

Possible Decision Meeting – March 19 at 10:00 AM

Community members were encouraged to attend and testify.

Possible Blackfoot River Quarry

No new updates reported.

Open Positions on the Community Council

Three positions are expected to be open due to expiring terms.

Applications open April 1.

Council will continue outreach through social media and community communication.

13. Additional Public Comment

Workforce Housing Policy Hearing

The workforce housing TIF policy hearing was rescheduled.

New Date: April 2, 2026

Time: 2:00 PM

Location: County Commissioners Public Hearing

Missoula County Consolidated Land Use Board Update

Town Pump Sign Variances

Town Pump requested updates to signage.

Outcome:

- Allowed to maintain nine signs
- Signs moved to building façade
- Total signage area capped at 320 sq ft

Billboard Policy Discussion

Recommendation made to prohibit new billboards and electronic billboards in Missoula County.

Existing billboards cannot be replaced once removed.

14. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- Special district and train crossing discussion
- Possible presentation on native plants
- Possible presentation from Missoula County Health Department

15. Next Meeting

April 13, 2026

7:00 PM

Bonner School Cafeteria & Zoom (Hybrid)

16. Adjournment

Motion made by Jane Kipp and seconded by Emily Herndon to adjourn.

Motion Passes: Unanimously

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 PM.

Complete History Tidbit

People in the Bonner-Milltown area worked hard but they played too. Among the main diversions were the dances.

Built in 1889, Bonner Hall was once located at the end of Bonner and was the site of the first Bonner School. Card parties, dances, and Chautauquas were enjoyed by the residents.

Photos in the Jack L. Demmons collection confirm the presence of American soldiers stationed to guard the railroad tunnel near the Milltown Dam during World War I, specifically around 1917. Along with photos of soldiers guarding the tunnel are photos of local girls dancing with the soldiers probably in Riverside Park.

Saloons in Milltown flourished from the turn of the century (1900) until prohibition in 1918 when most of them became pool halls. They were also popular dancing venues. Music for the dances was furnished by local talent. Billy Thibodau played the mouth organ in his establishment (which became Harold's Club now home of the Milltown Moose Lodge) and others occasionally played the violin and piano. Mr. Doucette sang in the Riverside Saloon.

The dances were also held in locations like Dalhberg Pool Hall and Finn Hall.

Finn Hall was where the action was and people from Missoula often attended. The greatest activity in Finn Hall, or the Sunomi Club as it was called, was from 1913-18. Dances were held regularly on Wednesday and Saturday nights.

I love this photo of a poster advertising a Strikers Dance: Strikers Dance Milltown given by Women Pickets. Only real humans invited so scabs and gunmen stay away. Finnish Hall, July 14, '17. Free. Finn Hall now resides in West Riverside and is a storage building. Thanks to the Olean family for the photo.

Another dance, which I'm guessing was also held around 1920 – 1924. the Milltown Library was built in 1920 and the war taxes lasted until 1924. "Masquerade Dance – Benefit Milltown Library – Milltown Hall, Saturday. Admission \$1.00 including War Tax. Everybody welcome!" Benefit dances and parties for the library were held in Dahlberg pool hall. Thanks to the Jack Demmons collection for the flier.

Some of the dances in 1928 were organized by the Milltown Social Club. They began at 8:00 PM and supper was served at midnight. As one resident commented, "Dancing was the poor man's pastime....All people went to events at the dance hall. People were unhappy when the dances stopped."

Historically, these events were often held at least weekly, featuring live bands and lasting late into the night.

BMHC recently received what was left of a box of tickets to a St. Patrick's Dance sponsored by the Bonner Lumber Jacks' Baseball Team held on Saturday, March 19th, 1949. Hats,

horns, and whistles were provided along with music by Cliff Carley's orchestra. Tickets were 60 cents each, including tax. Thanks to Rick Gendrow for the tickets.

Harold's Club, now home of the Milltown Moose Lodge, was also a popular spot to dance. "The wife and I would come up and dance every Friday night (at Harold's Club)," said Mark Wildung who recognized the potential of Harold's Club when it closed and helped make it the home of the Moose Lodge.

And don't forget the KettleHouse Amphitheater which hosts major live music events, continuing the tradition of musical gatherings.

Beyond dancing, the area hosted community events like the Pasty Dinner at St. Ann Catholic Church.

Speaking of that, the last Bonner History Roundtable of 2026 will be held this Sunday, March 15, at St. Ann. The topic is Living with Wildlife – a historical perspective. If you haven't heard FWP biologists Jamie Jonkel and Torrey Ritter speak – you're in for a treat. They can really put the story in history. At 3, after the Roundtable, get ready to enjoy St. Ann's Better Than Butte pasties – eat there or take out for \$10