

Missoula County Parks and Trails Advisory Board
March 19, 2026
Meeting Minutes –Approved

Parks and Trails Advisory Board		County Staff	Guests
Present	Absent		
Jeff Koch, President Ron Schlader, Vice President Juanita Vero, Commissioner Jane Plummer, first alternate Ria Overholt, second alternate Paige Judnich Ian Rufe	Steve Snyders Jessica Glebke Jennifer Thomsen	Bethany Gunther Nick Zanetos Kelsey Phillips Dede Lienau Randy Arnold Jackson Lee	

1) CALL TO ORDER

President, Jeff Koch, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) January 15, 2026, and February 19, 2026

Ron Schalder made a motion to approve the minutes from January 15, 2026, and February 19, 2026.

Ian Rufe seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

3) PUBLIC COMMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no public comments or announcements.

4) ITEMS INVOLVING GUESTS AND ACTION ITEMS

a) Scenic Montana Trails Bond – Scorecard Review and Board Recommendation

The board reviewed a trails project proposal and scorecard process, evaluating it across six criteria (like access, readiness, support, and maintenance) totaling a possible 100 points. The project received very high and consistent scores from both board members (~93.7 average) and staff (~95.7 average), reflecting strong overall support, especially in project backing and maintenance planning.

Discussion was minimal since the project had been covered in prior meetings. One member noted some hesitation about funding projects on federal land but ultimately supported it due to clear community benefits and partnerships.

Ron Schlader made motion to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners approve the expenditures of Trails Bond Program funding in the amount of \$250,000 (two hundred and fifty thousand dollars) for the Scenic Montana Trails – Seeley Lake Trail System project, with an expiration date of December 31, 2029. Ian Rufe seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

b) Board Bylaws Amendment

The board reviewed proposed updates to its bylaws as part of a county-wide effort to standardize rules across all boards and committees. Since the current bylaws were adopted in 2019, only a few changes were made:

- Updated description of board powers and duties
- Added a one-year waiting period before former members can reapply
- Introduced a three-year term limit for officers

They also discussed moving meeting materials to a new public platform (CivicClerk) to improve transparency and access.

Some concerns were raised about alternate members not being subject to term limits and about making the staff liaison title more generic.

Ian Rufe made a motion to recommend the Board of County Commissioners adopt the updated bylaws governing the Parks & Trails Advisory Board. Paige Judnich seconded the motion. The members voted 4 in favor and 2 opposed.

The board discussed ongoing issues with attendance and difficulty reaching quorum, noting that staff have been contacting members who miss meetings due to unique circumstances. They considered whether to change meeting times (e.g., evenings), but opinions were mixed, with some preferring daytime meetings for scheduling reasons.

Clarifications were made about bylaws: quorum requirements have been lowered (from 5 to 4 members), and meeting times can be adjusted without amending bylaws. However, concerns were raised about unclear language in the new termination policy, especially around member notification and the chair's role.

To address these concerns, the board agreed to revisit and review the bylaws in detail at a future meeting, possibly through a workshop to resolve unclear sections.

c) Horse Park Maintenance and Management Agreement

The board reviewed an updated maintenance and management agreement with the Missoula Horse Council for the equestrian area at Big Sky Park. The agreement combines two existing leases into one, updates terms, and adds requirements like posting event schedules and using camping waivers for overnight stays. The council has a long history of managing the site while keeping it open for public use.

Ron Schlader made a motion to recommend the Board of County Commissioners enter into a maintenance and management agreement with the Missoula Horse Council for operation and maintenance of an equestrian park complex at Big Sky Park. Jeff Koch seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

5) OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

6) NEW BUSINESS

The board was informed that staff is working on updates to the CPR grant program, including application questions and scoring. A workshop is planned for the April meeting to review proposed changes and discuss improvements as a group.

7) STAFF REPORT

The county officially secured a RAISE grant for trail planning along the Great American Rail Trail corridor. After some uncertainty, funding is now confirmed. The project involves collaboration with multiple jurisdictions from Butte to the Idaho border, with key areas in Missoula County receiving more detailed design work.

The upcoming MTRPA conference in late March/early April, is being co-hosted between the city, county and the University of Montana. The event will include workshops, keynote speakers, and site visits.

8) COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communication updates.

9) ADJOURNMENT

Ron Schlader made a motion to adjourn. Ian Rufe seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 2:16 p.m.

The Missoula County Parks and Trails Advisory Board meeting is held on the third Thursday of each month at 1:30 PM.