

MISSOULA COUNTY OPEN LANDS CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

April 9, 2026
6:00 p.m.

Approved Minutes
*Meeting recordings available upon
request.*



		Staff	Others
Present		Absent	
Sharon Sweeney Sarah Holden Noel Treat Brad Hall	Caroline Byrd Bonnie Buckingham Tim Hall Ginny Sullivan	Helene Michael	Jenny Zaso

A. Call to Order and Roll Call

Sarah facilitated and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. Land Acknowledgement

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

C. Approval of Agenda

There is an error in the date of the approval of meeting minutes. Request it be changed to March. Sharon moved and Tim seconded the motion; the agenda was approved as amended.

D. Approval of OLC Meeting Minutes –March 12, 2026

Noel moved and Caroline seconded approval of the minutes as amended. All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

E. Public Comment and Announcements on items not on the agenda

There were no public comments or announcements.

F. New Business

a) 2026 Land Stewardship Award Timeline and Materials Review

- Nominations will be due June 8th (final date to be clarified), with the review committee meeting that same week ahead of the OLC meeting on June 11.
- The award process remains the same: nominations are reviewed by a subcommittee, which then makes recommendations to the larger group and county commissioners.
- A story map on the county website shows past award recipients and is a useful reference.
- Eligibility has expanded to include not just landowners but also volunteers involved in

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land stewardship.

- The group discussed partners and committee members, noting updates (e.g., staff changes at Fish & Wildlife) and potential participants.
- Tim, Noel, Brad and Sarah were identified to serve on the Land Stewardship Award subcommittee to review nominations.

G. Subcommittee Reports/Communications/Questions

1. Staff Communications

i. OLC Web Page and Resource Folder Update

Staff presented the Open Lands Conservation (OLC) board webpage and newly added member resources section, which includes bond materials, applications, bylaws, and process documents. Members discussed accessibility issues, and a condensed PDF version of materials was requested. Several webpage updates were identified, including adding 2025 content, fixing a broken bylaws link, and incorporating Land Stewardship Award information.

Staff reviewed the Open Space Bond process, clarifying that Level 1 is an eligibility review conducted in a non-public setting, while Level 2 involves a public review and scoring process. The role of the Open Space Bond Committee was explained, and Caroline, Noel and Sharon volunteered to serve.

Staff noted a potential expedited bond project that may come before the board in May or June. A joint meeting with the City of Missoula Open Space Advisory Committee was discussed, including opportunities for collaboration and recognition of the 20-year anniversary. Members also suggested developing public-facing tools such as interactive maps or virtual tours of bond-funded projects.

ii. 20th Anniversary Open Space Bond Planning Update

Discussion focused on planning the anniversary recognition for the Open Space Bond program. Staff and members considered whether to emphasize the upcoming 20-year milestone (since the 2006 bond) or the broader 50-year history (dating back to 1980, reaching 50 years in 2030). Members generally favored prioritizing a larger 50-year celebration in 2030, with smaller outreach or educational events in the near term.

The group discussed using the anniversary to improve public understanding of the program's history, including the shift from public land acquisition to conservation easements. Ideas included hosting community events with partner organizations, creating educational materials, and developing interactive maps or signage for project sites.

Potential coordination with the City of Missoula was noted, including a joint meeting and shared celebration planning. Timing considerations included budget, public engagement opportunities, and alignment with future discussions about potential new bond measures.

2. Subcommittee Communications

i. Communications

• Good Neighbor Handbook Updates

Staff provided an update on the Good Neighbor Handbook, noting that Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has completed a full review and is interested in aligning messaging with a future statewide version. FWP may contribute up to \$5,000, which would help cover remaining costs for design and printing. Members supported

consistent messaging and had no concerns about sharing content for broader use.

A local graphic designer has been selected at a significantly lower cost than other bids, and draft content is nearly finalized following multiple rounds of edits. Staff will share the draft with members for feedback. Discussion included adding a quote for the agriculture section and ensuring the handbook resonates with new residents, particularly those unfamiliar with working lands.

The handbook will be formatted similarly to previous editions, with plans to print approximately 5,000 copies and distribute them strategically through realtors, title companies, and targeted outreach rather than broad public distribution. A digital version will also be available on the county website.

ii. Board Chair/Vice-Chair Communications

- **OLC Subcommittee Descriptions and Sign-ups**

Sharon, Bonnie and Sarah are on the Admin Committee.

Tim and Ginny volunteered for the Good Neighbor Handbook Subcommittee.

Staff will check with Helene as to which board she would like to serve on.

- **Chair/Vice-Chair Elections**

Carolyn moved to have Sarah continue as the Chair and Sharon continue as the Vice-Chair. Brad seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

3. General Communications and Questions

i. Round Robin Updates:

- On Sunday, April 19th, at the UM Education Building, there will be a presentation of the wildlife crossings put on by the University of Montana with participation from The Montana Department of Transportation, Wyoming Wildlife Fund, Whisper Means from CSKT, Fish Wildlife and Parks and Yellowstone Yukon.
- Nine Mile Community Center had a wildfire preparedness open house which was a great event.
 - On April 21st there will be a pollinator
 - On April 25th FWP will do an electric fence presentation and help with funding.
 - In June Raptors of the Rockies will do a presentation
- The fire department in Lolo had a pancake breakfast to raise money for the Community Center.
- Lalonde got the fruit trees pruned. The County is putting in a sprinkler system so Farm Connect can do some pilot projects.

H. Future Agenda Items

There were no suggestions

I. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm.