

Missoula Board of County Commissioners

SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES



THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2026 – 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 Josh Slotnick
Commissioner Juanita Vero
Commissioner David Strohmaier

Staff Present:

Cheryl Hartman, Commissioners' Office
Annie Cathey, Commissioners' Office
Melissa Fisher, Commissioners' Office
Patrick Swart, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Chris Lounsbury, Chief Administrative Officer, Missoula County
Patricia Spotted Wolf, Commissioners' Office
Erik Dickson, Public Works
Chet Crowser, Lands and Communities
Tim Worley, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Carey Powers, Communications
Jennie Dixon, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Tenzin Lhaze, Communications
Vincent Pavlish, County Attorneys' Office
Samuel D. Scott, Clerk and Recorder's Office
Izzie Varley, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Karen Hughes, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Anaeshia Rodriguez, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Jill Johnson, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Katy Reeder, Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Matt Heimel, Planning, Development, and Sustainability

1. **CALL TO ORDER** *[Time stamp – 0:02]*
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** *[Time stamp – 0:08]*

3. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT [Time stamp – 0:24]

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

4. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS [Time stamp – 0:31]

- a. Closed Captioning

5. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA [Time stamp – 1:30]

6. CURRENT CLAIMS LIST [Time stamp – 01:43]

Claims received as of May 25, 2026 to June 1, 2026 by the Commissioners' Office total \$2,978,165.27.

7. HEARINGS

a. Final Resolution: Zoning Regulations to Chapter 8 Signs (Billboards)

Jennie Dixon, Planning, Development, and Sustainability [Time stamp – 11:10]

Commissioner Strohmaier made the motion that the Board of County Commissioners to amend the Missoula County Zoning Regulations (Chapter 8, Signs) prohibiting new billboards and conversion of static billboards to digital billboards, along with other non-substantive clarifications and corrections, as shown in Attachment A, based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law and public testimony.

Commissioner Vero seconded.

[Motion Passed 3-0.]

[Resolution 2026-068 Book:1128 Page:396]

8. HEARINGS [Planning and Zoning Commission]

a. Frenchtown Interchange Zoning Initiative [Time stamp – 11:10]

Jennie Dixon, Planning, Development, and Sustainability

Public hearing was opened and public comment was initiated.

[Continued to the Commissioners' Public Meeting on May 28, 2026]

9. OTHER BUSINESS

[None]

10. ADJOURN

Chair Slotnick – Called the meeting to adjourn at 2:58 p.m.

BCC Public Meeting May 12, 2026 – 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.

0:02

For Tuesday, May 12th, would you please join me in the pledge?

0:08

Pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands.

0:15

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

0:24

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

0:31

So do we have any public announcements?

0:37

Just a little closed captioning instructions and friendly reminders for everyone.

0:43

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

0:50

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

0:55

Just a friendly reminder, there'll be multiple chances during the meeting for public comment in person and virtually.

1:01

The Chair will be opening the discussion for public comment after each staff presentation.

1:07

Please respectfully keep your comments to 3 minutes.

1:10

If you're on Microsoft Teams, we ask that you use the Raise Hand feature.

1:14

This is the small hand button at the top of your screen.

1:17

If you're calling in on the phone, you'll need to push *5 to raise your hand.

1:20

Then once called upon, you'll need to push *6 to unmute.

1:24

If anyone has any questions during the meeting, please come and find me.

1:27

Thank you.

1:28

Thanks a lot.

1:30

Do we have any public comment on items not on the agenda in person or online?

1:39

OK, seeing none, we will jump to our current claims list.

1:43

Claims received as of April 23rd, 2026 to May 5th, 2026 by the Commissioner's Office.

1:49

Total 2,000,200 and 11700 and 8200 and 11780 thousand \$0.20 hearing.

1:56

We have two hearings for today.

1:59

The first one is from Jenny Dixon.

2:03

And I'm saying I got to be clear, this is the hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission, which is the three of us and these three folks as well.

2:12

Yes, first one is billboards.

2:15

Oh, I apologize, you guys don't get to plan this one.

2:20

Get on for comment.

2:29

Thank you very, very much.

2:31

For the record, I'm Jenny Dixon with Planning Development Sustainability.

2:35

As you may recall that you had a hearing in March on amendments to the sign regulations.

2:42

Primarily there were some kind of housekeeping changes, but the primary changes were to eliminate new installation of billboards and conversion of existing billboards to digital.

2:55

The resolution of intent was adopted on March 26.

3:00

Legal notice about that resolution of intent to adopt the regulations was published in Missoula on April 11 and 26.

3:11

After that 30 day comment period, which ended on May 11 yesterday, it appears there are no changes necessary to the regulations.

3:21

There have only been three comments that we've received during that.

3:24

All of which were on Missoula County voice in favor of the proposed amendments to the zoning and we recommend adoption of the final resolution of of adoption for this zoning amendment.

3:37

Awesome, thank you.

3:38

Do you have any public comment on this item?

3:46

Any questions from fellow commissioners?

3:49

No Anybody want to do a motion?

3:52

Sure.

3:53

I would be delighted to make the motion.

3:55

I move to adopt A resolution to amend Missoula County Zoning Regulations, Chapter 8 signs prohibiting new billboards and conversion of static billboards to digital billboards, along with other non substantive clarifications and corrections as shown in Attachment A based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law and public testimony.

4:15

Second, any public comment on this?

4:19

OK, all in favor.

4:20

Aye aye.

4:23

Now we will convene as the Planning and Zoning Commission and Jenny will present on the Frenchtown Interchange Zoning Initiative.

4:32

And I want to say one thing just to start.

4:35

We're doing this as a special meeting on Tuesday.

4:37

Typically these happen on Thursday, so they start at 2:00.

4:40

We like to end at 5, though we have gone longer.

4:43

Today is a special meeting.

4:44

We are just doing this for one hour, fully understanding there's a lot to get through.

4:50

We have yet another meeting scheduled.

4:52

What we don't get through today, we will get to at another time.

4:55

What's our date?

4:57

May 28th.

4:58

And is that a Thursday, 2:00?

5:00

So that one, we have two to five in this room.

5:03

In this room.

5:04

Thank you.

5:05

So what we will do after Jenny does her presentation, we will do as we did last time.

5:11

We'll divvy the time up in half, half for the proponents, half the opponents.

5:14

And amongst you all, you decide who you would like to speak and how you want to spend your time.

5:20

OK, thank you.

5:23

I just have a few things to say so that we can get as much public testimony and today as possible.

5:28

I just want to remind you that this is 2 petitions for Part 1 zoning.

5:31

The petition #1 is shown in this slide on the lower 400 acres, light green, yellow and Gray, petition number 20.

5:40

And for that one, we are recommending approval.

5:42

Petition #2 is for the dark green upside down out on the north.

5:47

And we are recommending denial of that.

5:50

We have since the last hearing received 2 emailed public comments and I believe there are 7 comments on Missoula County Voice, some in opposition, some some in favor.

6:05

And with that, I'm I don't have anything else to tell you and happy to take questions at a later time.

6:13

Great.

6:13

So I believe last time the proponents went first.

6:18

So how about the opponents go first?

6:20

We have 50 minutes.

6:21

So that would give you 25 minutes.

6:25

So a little after a little, we'll go to a little after 130.

6:29

Did I get that?

6:30

No, a little after 135.

6:33

I get the math right.

6:34

Jason Engineer 235.

6:38

Thank you.

6:39

Thanks, Mike.

6:41

OK, opponents, you have till 2:35.

6:55

Good afternoon, Mr.

6:56

Chair, Commissioners and planning staff.

6:58

My name is Dan Sampson.

7:00

I am the Construction Development Manager for Town Pump.

7:04

While I understand that we are here technically only to discuss zoning and it is my intention to let our legal counsel mainly address the zoning specific items, I think it was adequately demonstrated at the previous meeting that town pump is the subject matter and the surrounding the zoning request.

7:22

With that said, I wanted to take a second to address a few items that have been brought up throughout this process.

7:28

The 1st is the release and Whitefish.

7:31

The Whitefish release has been brought up at least two, maybe three times in recent statements conversations.

7:38

However, the rumor mill is once again struck in regard to this subject.

7:42

The Whitefish release is not a recent occurrence, but rather a historical one.

7:48

There are two historical releases at this site.

7:51

The 1st and largest occurred in 1989 before Town Pump purchased or owned the property.

7:58

The other occurred in 2003 and was a much smaller incident.

8:02

The larger release, which is the root cause of the Sheen that has been seen on the Whitefish River, happened under the ownership of Roundup Country Store.

8:11

Town Pump purchased this property and took over the cleanup.

8:15

Since then, Town Pump and our environmental consultants, in conjunction with the Montana DEQ, have employed several methods of cleanup and additional measures.

8:29

These include the removal of the contaminated soils, installation of air sparging and soil vapor extraction systems, hydrogen peroxide injection and continued installation of monitoring wells, laser induced fluorescent investigations and LFIGO probe investigations.

8:48

Excuse me, LIFGO probe investigations To monitor the cleanup and employ new technologies as they become available, please feel free to review the Flathead Beacon article titled Under New Cleanup Plan.

9:01

Town Pump actively working to reduce contamination concentrations on the Whitefish River.

9:06

That was written by Tristan Scott and published on January 7th, 2026.

9:11

That will give you all of these facts and and several more.

9:16

Additionally, concerns about traffic have been brought up and we understand that.

9:21

We, we recognize that there are traffic issues out there in Frenchtown.

9:26

While these traffic issues exist today, whether or not Town Pump develops, we are working with our engineering teams and the Montana Department of Transportation to mitigate any impacts generated by traffic entering our facility.

9:41

As a result of those efforts.

9:43

Traffic flows, when we are done, will be improved over today's conditions.

9:47

Will our efforts fix all of the traffic issues that currently exist South of the Interstate and further down the Frontage Rd.

9:54

Probably not.

9:56

But in any way, shape or form, the traffic flow will be improved upon above and beyond what you see today.

10:06

Excuse me, local taxes.

10:09

Local taxes do contribute to the contribute to and facilitate infrastructure improvements.

10:16

While we have been a taxpayer in Frenchtown for 20 plus years, once developed, we will be a large contributor of local taxes which will assist in mitigating the additional issues that were not touched by our project.

10:30

Additionally, this also assists in disrepair of the schools, etcetera that have been mentioned several times during this process.

10:39

Another hot topic item was concerned about water and septic impacts, so we have done our homework on that water availability and neighboring well impact concerns.

10:49

Montana DEQ compliant design and permitting process began in April of 2025.

10:57

Since then, Hydro Solutions has performed and prepared analysis of the system which is evaluated by MDEQ as part of the permitting process.

11:05

Generally speaking, the Missoula Valley aquifer is prolific semi combined alluvial formation with generally high yields, shallow static water levels and good water quality.

11:16

We have drilled 3 monitoring wells and two potable wells on the property to establish water availability and hydrogeologic properties.

11:26

While potable water was recently test pumped for 24 hours at a rate of 60 gallons per minute out of each well, probes were placed in the remaining wells in both the production and the nearby monitoring wells to determine the effect of the wells in the area.

11:44

The production of the wells shows less than two feet of drawdown at 60 gallons per minute for the duration of the 24 hour test.

11:52

Water levels in the monitoring wells dropped by less than .4 feet during the pump test, indicating the effect on neighboring wells and water supply is negligible.

12:04

The well tests were conducted and monitored by a hydrologist employed by Hydro Solutions in Helena, Mt.

12:11

An aquifer testing memo is available should anybody want to see one.

12:17

Once these wells are put to use, a DNRC Form 602 Certificate of Groundwater Completion will be submitted to the DNRC.

12:28

Additionally, water quality impacts due to wastewater discharge has been brought up.

12:33

Engineers and scientists with Casian Associates and Helena have prepared a non Degradation Analysis and Montana DEQ groundwater Discharge Permit application for the proposed wastewater treatment system.

12:48

The application is currently being reviewed by DEQ under permit number MTX 000352.

12:56

The travel Plaza will be connected to an advanced on site wastewater treatment system that has been certified by M Montana DEQ for Level 2 treatment.

13:06

Level 2 treatment systems are required to remove at least 60% of total nitrogen as measured from the raw sewage load to the system discharge a total nitrogen and fluent concentration of 20 grams 24 milligrams or less.

13:22

In comparison, a standard on site wastewater discharge system and the average household discharges an average total nitrogen and fluent concentration of 50 milligrams.

13:34

To ensure compliance with water quality laws and non degradation standards, the DEQ groundwater discharge permit will require monthly and quarterly effluent sampling and reporting.

13:46

If the system is not performing to the required standard, the state will require upgrades to return to compliance.

13:53

When developing the initial groundwater discharge permit, DEQ determines whether the proposed discharge will result in non significant changes in water quality.

14:03

If DEQ determines A discharge will result in significant changes in water, the permit application will be denied until a suitable treatment facility is proposed.

14:14

Groundwater discharge permits are revisited every five years as part of the renewal process.

14:20

If the wastewater discharge has increased or changed in character since the permit issuance, the DEQ will perform a new significance determination as part of the renewal.

14:31

The discharge permit also requires monitoring, reporting, and corrective actions to establish, confirm, and maintain compliance with permit limitations.

14:40

In effect, a groundwater discharge permit can be thought of as assurance from DEQ that the water quality in the area will not be degraded due to the wastewater system.

14:50

Proposed fuel system and potential impacts have also been a concern that has been voiced.

14:58

All underground storage tank systems must be permitted through the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

15:05

Fuel systems today are much different than the systems of yesteryear such as you've seen in Whitefish.

15:11

Fuel systems today are environmentally friendly.

15:15

Fully contained systems that consist of double wall tanks, double wall piping, dispenser sump containment, double wall filled buckets, and tank line and sump monitoring.

15:27

Towel pump utilizes a fully welded NEOPI system.

15:32

The double wall piping is heat welded to the tank and the dispenser sumps.

15:36

Each sump has a liquid sensor installed that monitors for any signs of liquid and if there are signs of liquid present it will cause the Vita Root Fuel Equipment monitoring system to shut the product down until such time that the issue has been resolved.

15:52

It will not allow you to put the line back in service.

15:56

Underground storage tanks are double wall tanks with brine in the interstitial space that is continually monitored for tank, excuse me, tank tightness.

16:05

In addition to the on site fuel monitoring system, Town Pump takes it one step further and double s up and we utilize WRA which monitors all of our UST systems 24/7, 365 days a year.

16:21

WRA performs statistical inventory reconciliation which can detect a leak smaller than 0.1 gallons per hour.

16:30

In addition to electronic monitoring, monthly and annual physical inspections of the systems are completed and logged, and all sumps are hydrostatically tested per DEQ guidelines to ensure the structural integrity for the sumps and piping connections.

16:46

There's been additional concerns raised about the fire system and a fire danger out there.

16:52

Town Pump prides itself in operating safe facilities not only for our customers, but for our employees.

16:59

We meet and exceed industry standards in Fire Protection.

17:03

The Town Pump will have a fully sprinkled building with a full fire alarm system supported by a below ground on site water storage tank that fuels the building sprinkling.

17:16

In addition, all fuel islands are equipped with emergency shut offs and fire extinguishers.

17:21

Town Pump truly does pride itself on being an excellent operator in every aspect of our business.

17:28

Safety, security, environment, customer satisfaction and giving back to our state are at the top of the list in our organization.

17:37

Our charitable foundation donates to many charities and causes around the state including but not limited to food banks, backpacks for kids, first responders such as police, fire and EMTs, schools and education programs including the French Town senior graduation and summer reading programs, scholarships, education assistance programs, Special Olympics, and other community outreach items such as donation to fireworks.

18:06

I did bring some inserts that detail some of our charitable donations.

18:12

Please feel free to take a look at them.

18:14

The point of saying that is that we go the extra mile in each community and in our state.

18:20

We take pride in our state, our communities and our business.

18:24

We truly do strive to be Montana's best and all the business categories in which we operate.

18:33

Thank you.

18:35

Thank you.

18:54

And now it's green.

18:54

I bet you can hear me better.

18:57

Thanks for letting me come up and say a few words.

19:00

I'm a realtor in town.

19:01

And so some of the things that you'll hear me talk about, you can probably expect.

19:06

Every time that I go out and talk with anybody about real estate, they have a few things to say.

19:12

Mostly that their kids and their grandkids can't afford housing.

19:16

They can't afford to live in Montana and they can't afford to buy houses in Montana.

19:20

So I decided to run some comps before I came over and the price of a home in Frenchtown on 2 acres or less, not even the five acres that's proposed, but two acres or less, is \$585,000.

19:38

Most first time homebuyers can't afford \$585,000.

19:43

So that's a piece of the puzzle.

19:46

If we restrict housing for one house for every 5 acres, that's only going to draw the the price of houses further than that, therefore limiting entry level housing for anybody that wants to have any.

20:01

A couple of other things that I think I was in the Marine Corps for a long time.

20:05

So procedure is fairly important.

20:07

And maybe I'm looking at it incorrectly because I'm not an attorney, but you tell me what you think.

20:13

This isn't really a question of whether zoning is appropriate.

20:17

It's a question of whether zoning, of whether this zoning application is being used properly, transparently and in the best interest of all property owners, not just a select few.

20:28

This application raises serious procedural concerns.

20:32

The applicants chose a Part 1, Part 1 zoning process which requires only 60% approval.

20:39

However, they incorporated elements typical of a Part 2 zoning framework which require unanimous consent.

20:46

This isn't a major, this isn't a minor technicality.

20:49

It's a fundamental contradiction.

20:52

You can't selectively combine the ease of one process with the restrictions of another because that undermines both the integrity of the process and the rights of affected land owners.

21:05

I've already gone over the housing impact.

21:08

This it it's basically in effect anti housing policy.

21:13

It eliminates entry level housing, raises land costs for those trying to buy a first home or anyone who can't afford the already staggering home prices, and and disproportionately impacts younger families and working class residents trying to enter the market.

21:30

Everything that Missoula County and Missoula City has talked about for the last 5-10 years about affordable housing is basically thrown in the garbage with this particular this this particular idea of this this zoning, at least in the scope that it's being requested.

21:52

Tax burden was already talked about.

21:54

By excluding commercial and industrial uses, this proposal removes the very tax base that offsets residential burden.

22:03

Commercial uses like the proposed gas station pay significantly higher property taxes.

22:08

If you eliminate those uses, the burden doesn't disappear, it just shifts.

22:13

It shifts directly onto homeowners.

22:16

If you remove the industry, homeowners pay more.

22:23

These parcels are located directly along the highway corridor.

22:26

And when I say these parcels, I mean the ones that are most affected, the largest parcels, the parcel that Town Pump is going to build a gas station on, these are right next to the highway corridor.

22:37

That's, that's, that's where they're at.

22:39

The recognized principle of land valuation, highest and best use clearly supports commercial or mixed-use development in such locations.

22:48

This proposal artificially suppresses that potential, resulting in a measurable and significant loss in property value for affected land owners.

22:57

Those most affected were the ones or are the ones who do not agree with this proposal.

23:03

It should also be stated that somebody asked last time we were here whether or not all of the property owners were communicated with about this particular proposal and the answer is no, they weren't.

23:15

They either weren't, they weren't communicated with directly, or they certainly weren't asked for their opinion simply because they knew what the answer would be.

23:24

The answer would be no.

23:27

Most of the people that signed this petition have smaller parcels.

23:31

They won't be affected one way or the other because they're already developed 5 acre parcels or smaller.

23:38

This zoning effects.

23:40

This zoning effort appears to be reactive, not comprehensive.

23:46

Zoning decisions should always be comprehensive and not reactionary.

23:51

It's being advanced primarily to stop a single lawful development.

23:55

Zoning should never be used as a tool to target an individual project or property owner.

24:02

This isn't planning, it's selective restriction.

24:06

Many signatures were obtained under the representation that this action would simply stop a gas station.

24:17

There is substantial reason to believe that the full consequences, density limits, loss of commercial rights, long term tax implications were not clearly disclosed or discussed with the property owners that signed the petitions.

24:32

That raises serious concerns about whether this reflects truly informed consent.

24:39

Notably, as I said, the largest and most impacted land owners were not meaningfully engaged in this process.

24:46

Instead, support was granted was gathered from smaller parcels that will experience minimal impact.

24:52

As I mentioned, that's the opposite of equitable planning.

24:59

Zoning is one of the most powerful tools that you have.

25:03

It should be used to create balance, forward-looking communities, not settle disputes, suppress property rights or shift economic burdens.

25:12

This proposal as presented raises serious concerns in process impact and intent, so I respectfully urge you to deny this application in its current form.

25:23

I wanted to mention one other piece of the puzzle again about process.

25:29

It was also asked last time we were here whether or not this zoning application was exclusively to try and stop town pumps development and the answer was no, that the community wants it regardless if it stops the gas station or not.

25:45

Interestingly enough, they're Flyers that they handed out say, Frenchtown Disaster and have a picture of the site plan of the actual gas station that they handed out for the people to sign the proposal to get the signatures that they required.

26:03

So it seems to me that they absolutely were talking about one Group 1 development and trying to hinder one thing from happening, not that they want it for the whole.

26:16

So that's all I got.

26:18

Thank you, Thank you.

26:31

So you got about 7 minutes.

26:32

Yeah, thank you.

26:33

Take that long.

26:34

Thank you Chair and commissioners.

26:35

My name is Joey Stazak.

26:37

I'm a senior traffic engineer for Sanbel.

26:39

I want to take a minute just to dive into the weeds a little bit of the traffic and safety aspects.

26:43

I know touch a little bit more on what Dan mentioned high level, but wanted to just provide some reassurances of what goes into our analysis and and what's provided.

26:55

So we've been working on the town pump project for about the last year with the Montana Department of Transportation through several meetings to look at what are the specific influence areas we should evaluate.

27:06

Every study that we provide in that the state requires evaluates safety implications of anything on the existing network over the past five years.

27:15

So we've evaluated all the crashes that have occurred in this area.

27:20

We've we've summarized with trends that we could see out there.

27:23

And and I don't think to anybody surprise it's, it's kind of the rural to urban interface of higher speeds on a frontage Rd.

27:30

We've got super elevated curves, weather to to condition.

27:36

So again over the past year we've we've re evaluated several times looking at different approach locations.

27:42

Moving forward with what the Montana Department of Transportation will like to see if bringing all of the the approaches and influences together to see if we can solve not only mitigate future needs for the town pump and mitigate existing safety issues by doing so bringing everything together.

28:00

We're looking at higher levels of intersection control and that will force speeds to be stopped or slowed down at this intersection and through federal guidelines we can we can show that these mitigation measures will reduce the number of accidents we see out there today with the traditional right angle T-bone crashes that occur with unsignalized, uncontrolled intersections.

28:24

Furthermore, as part of the state over this past year, we've we've updated, we've had new manuals to look at.

28:30

So we've updated our our traffic projections.

28:33

We just updated some traffic counts last week to both capture a normal day as well as a special events day with all the high school school traffic.

28:42

So ensuring that any mitigation options that go forward handle today's traffic.

28:48

It handles future volumes, but also can handle those special events.

28:51

So we're not looking for a one day it works and the next day it doesn't wanting to make sure that any improvements this area have safety implications for the long term.

29:01

A lot of that's governed by federal highways.

29:03

So we look at intersection control evaluation.

29:06

So not just looking at operations, but safety implications, multimodal considerations, environmental maintenance cost, all of those aspects that play a big role in the long term success of a project.

29:19

So just wanted to reassure that's been in the works of the past years.

29:22

We continue to work with the state with any changes of new manuals, new site updates and we will continue to do so to make sure all of those things are resolved.

29:33

Thanks.

29:34

Thank you.

29:42

Thank you.

29:43

Commissioners.

29:43

Jamie Ehrbacher at WGM here representing Dennis Bowman today.

29:48

Unfortunately, Dennis was unable to come but decided after the bill levy for Frenchtown School District failed that he did want to provide some comments.

29:57

His comments are the following.

29:59

I heard the concerns from the people that spoke at Commissioners meeting on April 30th.

30:02

If the zoning is approved, I feel it needs to be adjusted for the area concerned.

30:06

During the meeting I heard people comment on property taxes.

30:09

It was also mentioned at the meetings at the Frenchtown Fire Hall.

30:13

I also heard the school Superintendent speak about safety and the impact he thinks Town Pump Truck Stop would have on the students.

30:18

I decided to investigate the taxes that the school receives and what property contributes with no impact to the school except revenue and the properties that contribute with impacts to the schools just revenue.

30:31

So he took three different categories, agriculture, single family dwellings, and commercial properties.

30:36

He checked 8 agricultural properties and the average tax taxes for those were 214 dollars.

30:43

Eight properties with one dwelling unit.

30:45

The average taxes were \$1300.52.

30:51

8 commercial properties in the area averaged \$5654.91.

30:58

He says he also checked Town Pump at the Y and they currently pay \$37,735.20 in taxes.

31:07

The mobile homes in the area pay an average of \$92.58.

31:12

Looking at the Frenchtown School District website, the school district receives 28.32% of their revenue from property taxes.

31:19

The school district cost per student is \$11,649.

31:23

Calculating the percentage with the cost per student, it comes to \$3298.99.

31:30

As you can see, currently single dwelling units don't contribute enough to the cost per student, even if there is more than one child at the residence.

31:38

That is why the town needs an area for commercial businesses.

31:42

As the county moves forward with zoning it must balance between agriculture, residential and commercial to be able to not increase property taxes on current and future residents.

31:51

The town needs commercial businesses to assist with supporting the tax base.

31:55

It is very difficult decision the commissioners must make and try and balance the current atmosphere of Frenchtown plus the decisions impact plus how the decisions impact the schools and 1st responders revenue.

32:09

I would like the county to check my figures and utilize your own information to make decisions.

32:13

I support any decision the county commissioners make as it is very difficult to balance all concerns the community has.

32:19

If the school currently needs more revenue and taxpayers are not voting for these mill levies, I hate to see the school have to cut expenses that would reduce the quality of education.

32:28

Sincerely Dennis Bowman, thank you.

32:33

Thank you.

32:33

You guys have a couple minutes if you want to use them.

32:46

Good afternoon commissioners.

32:47

Again, my name is Dan Manson.

32:49

I offered some comments at the last meeting.

32:53

I have significantly more than a couple of minutes and so I don't know that it makes a heck of a lot of sense to to dive in today to anything in significant detail.

33:04

But I, I, I think I can address one point.

33:07

There was a letter submitted I believe last night after business hours by council for keeping Frenchtown.

33:17

And I believe that's now included in the record.

33:20

And it touched on and gave opinions regarding the issue of vested development rights and we had significant discussion regarding that issue at the last meeting and we concluded, it was concluded that that is not part of this meeting.

33:41

And so I just I think it's appropriate at this time to acknowledge that the issue of vested development rights and in any opinions stated regarding that in the in the recent submission of keeping Frenchtown should not be part of the record in this proceeding.

34:02

And if you are inclined to address issues of vested development rights, we would respectfully request that we be able to fully make those arguments in the context of this hearing.

34:14

So, so really my ask on that issue is either we're in or we're out totally on that issue at this at this proceeding.

34:23

And I think it was made clear that it was out, but I just wanted to receive those assurances or I will be prepared to speak in detail at the next meeting on on the issue.

34:36

So if I can get some clarification on that point, I would appreciate it.

34:43

Yes, Sir.

34:46

Folks are free to comment on any aspect of even tangential aspects of what is being proposed in Frenchtown.

34:55

So we will not be striking the record of any comments related to vesting thus far, and folks are free to talk about it.

35:04

Whether or not it's fully on point because it is a separate and parallel process to this is a different matter, unless legal counsel has some difference of opinion there.

35:15

So I, I, I think clearly you're out of time today, but if next time I think if you want to address any of that, you certainly are free to do so.

35:25

I appreciate that feedback, Sir.

35:26

I will be prepared for that and and we'll reserve those comments.

35:31

Thank you.

35:32

Thanks.

35:32

And before the proponents, I just want to say one thing on that.

35:35

The question before us today is these these two zoning, these two pieces of zoning, that's it.

35:40

We're not making any decisions about anything else.

35:44

Thank you.

35:44

OK, proponents.

35:59

Good afternoon.

36:00

I'm Debbie Lester.

36:01

I signed the petition on behalf of the Valley of Christ Lutheran Church.

36:07

We run a 5 day a week preschool and for all the reasons stated at the last public meeting, we, we are opposed to having town pump and I don't want to, you know, sandbag it or I mean we're OK with zoning, but it doesn't impact us greatly.

36:27

We're opposed to having town pump in.

36:31

I'm Debbie Lester and I'm also chair of the Frenchtown School board.

36:36

So, you know, there's many reasons why everything that was stated last time, why why we oppose the town pump truck stop again astutely pointed out that the desire for zoning was in part in opposition to building the town pump.

36:56

And the next town pump is only 7 miles up the road.

36:59

So there's it's not like there isn't a town pump present of the attorney for town pump.

37:06

He objected to the methodology for gathering the signatures.

37:11

I think he I don't speak to the fairness or the equity of that signature gathering.

37:16

I make no comment on that, but the attorney did not comment on and many other issues, traffic being one of them.

37:24

I appreciate the information today, but it still does increase the traffic.

37:29

One of our school bus drivers asked the question last time and they're nervous.

37:35

And they said with a contest between a school bus full of kids and a semi truck, who do you think wins?

37:45

Yeah, they're nervous.

37:46

Our school bus drivers are older adults and they're nervous about this.

37:54

They're they're beginning to have comments on the groundwater contamination.

38:00

Appreciate the information today.

38:03

But even Town Pump knows that they're what cleanup feels like.

38:09

I don't need to remind anybody that we have a Superfund site in our backyard.

38:14

Do we really want to risk anything more to Frenchtown?

38:17

We know what a landowner does that when they don't take responsibility of cleanup.

38:22

So we already have that Superfund site.

38:28

You know, there's, there's all of the, the social risks, the sex trafficking, the alcohol, the gambling, the vaping.

38:35

These are all attractive nuisances for high school students.

38:40

Enough said.

38:42

And then there's the 72 truck parking lot there.

38:48

When those trucks, when those parking slots are filled and we've got diesel fumes and those generators running all night long, the sight and the sound of it is mind boggling.

39:06

When Sir Smurfit Stone was in operation, they had a little saying that, you know, when there was an inversion and that dirty diaper smell permeated the valley, They used to say that's the smell of money.

39:20

And I don't know if Town Pump, as good of employer as they might be, if the smell of that diesel and the sound of those engines running isn't the smell of money.

39:32

Now, a lot of talk about housing.

39:35

I love it.

39:36

I love affordable housing.

39:39

And wouldn't it be nice if Town Pump were to leave a legacy in this community and in communities all across the state for affordable housing where they could build cooperative housing, which is very much more affordable.

39:53

And I'm happy to talk to anybody about Co-op housing, but we're not opposed to development in Frenchtown.

40:01

Quickly, I want to talk about the taxes.

40:05

That town pump doesn't help the school out of bed The way school funding is.

40:10

We get more funding with more students.

40:14

We get more funding when we can pass a levy.

40:17

But the amount of property taxes is static.

40:21

So when a new employer comes in or when a whole housing development comes in, it doesn't bring more money into the school.

40:28

It just, it just spreads out that tax to everybody.

40:32

So business, new business that does not help us at all.

40:36

Children in school helps us out.

40:40

So in closing, I, I don't want to leave with a problem without a solution.

40:46

I think affordable housing is something that town pump can leave a legacy in our community and all across the state and and they could call it town French town.

40:59

So thank you, ma'am.

41:02

Just for clarification, are you speaking on behalf of the school board or yourself?

41:07

I'm speaking on behalf of the church in the property sign the petition.

41:12

I'm speaking on behalf of the school board.

41:15

I'm the board chair.

41:17

OK, So you, your, your comments are officially on behalf of the, the school board in Frenchtown, unanimous from the trustees.

41:25

OK.

41:26

Thank you for that clarification.

41:43

Good afternoon.

41:43

Is this you can hear me?

41:46

Yep, it's green.

41:46

Thanks.

41:47

Good afternoon, commissioners.

41:48

My name is Talia Damro.

41:50

I live on Roman Creek Rd.

41:51

in Frenchtown.

41:54

A year ago, this Commission approved an application to build storage units across the street from my home.

42:00

At that hearing, as with these hearings, many residents from Frenchtown submitted comments in opposition of the storage facility and many were also here in person to voice their concerns.

42:12

Unfortunately, at that time, their efforts did not pay off.

42:15

I'm here primarily to highlight a few comments that were made by some of the commissioners, specifically Commissioner Strohmeier and Slotnik during that meeting, and I do intend to be brief.

42:26

Specifically, Commissioner Strohmeier highlighted that if residents of Frenchtown didn't want to see things like storage units, which was that issue in that case, quote, the mechanism to make sure that does not happen is zoning.

42:42

End Quote.

42:43

He noted that for the purposes of the storage unit proposal last May, that ship has sailed for today's purposes, End Quote.

42:51

Later on in the meeting, Commissioner Strohmeier again highlighted that zoning is the tool to determine what uses go where and that unfortunately at the time of the storage unit decision a year ago, we're behind the 8 ball.

43:08

Commissioner Slotnick later went on to say, quote, I totally agree that the real remedy here is zoning and I would encourage you all, no matter what happens here, to reach out to the county and see if we could work with you.

43:20

He went on to say if you really have a specific vision for this area, neighbors, zoning, as Dave said, is the only way to get you there.

43:31

End Quote.

43:33

The residents of Frenchtown heard you last year.

43:36

The residents of Frenchtown do have a vision for what our home should look like, and we're doing exactly as you suggested and attempting to accomplish that through zoning.

43:46

This time the ship has not sailed and we are not behind the 8 ball.

43:51

As 2/3 of you said last year, zoning is the mechanism to stop unwanted commercial developments and ensure that Frenchtown fits the vision of its residents.

44:02

I understand that it is being recommended that you approve the zoning application and your own words state that this is the preferred mechanism to reach the outcome that French Town residents are hoping and asking for.

44:14

I implore you to please not let this community down.

44:17

Thank you.

44:19

Thank you.

44:42

Is there a button that I or OK?

44:46

My name is Bill and I live in Frenchtown.

44:49

I want to thank the commissioners for allowing me to speak at this meeting.

44:53

I want to start off by reading the official mission statement of the Missoula Board of County Commissioners and I quote, provide quality public service to protect and enhance the well-being of the people, communities and environment of of Missoula County.

45:11

End Quote.

45:12

In practice, the Commissioners make decisions on zoning, developmental proposals, infrastructure budgets and ordinances while representing the interest of the county residents.

45:25

Let's explore some strong evidence based arguments against the proposed Town Pump truck stop in rural Frenchtown.

45:33

These arguments form the basis for support of the zoning proposal brought on by the county residents.

45:41

The discussion can be broken down into five basic topics, including but not limited to serious risks to the aquifer and groundwater, Traffic Safety and congestion near schools, erosion of the rural character and quality of life in Frenchtown, potential increases in crimes, social issues and public safety, and questionable economic benefit and need for this facility.

46:10

Truck stops involve large volumes of fuel storage, vehicle maintenance, idling trucks, potential spills, and road run off from oils, heavy metal, the icing, chemicals, and wastewater, posing a high contamination risk to the groundwater.

46:25

The shallow groundwater in the area is already noted to be highly susceptible.

46:30

Truck stops and transportation corridors are documented sources of groundwater pollution, with impacts extending 10s of meters from roads and facilities.

46:40

Contamination could irreversibly harm private wells drinking water in the local ecosystem.

46:46

Prevention is far better and cheaper than clean up after a spill contamination.

46:52

The Frenchtown Interchange Rd.

46:54

system is already dangerous and adding a large truck stop with 72 overnight tractor trailer spaces would increase heavy truck traffic turning, turning movements and congestion right near the high school and middle school as well as two as well as a preschool and two churches.

47:11

School buses, student commuters, and a popular walking and biking path used by children would also face heightened risk for traffic mishaps.

47:21

There are also resident reports of existing backups over the overpass during peak hours.

47:27

This large scale development could amplify traffic impact significantly.

47:33

We would be prioritizing corporate profit over child safety in a rural community with limited emergency response cap capacity.

47:42

It is my understanding that the traffic studies which have been performed to date, we're not based on the now large scale truck stop with overnight parking.

47:52

Trenchtown is a small residential rural residential community prized for its tranquility, open landscapes and family friendly environment.

48:00

A large scale truck stop with overnight parking, liquor store and casino would introduce noise from idling trucks, 24/7 light pollution, visual blight from large signs and lighting, increased litter, odors and air pollution from diesel, diesel exhaust, and a disruption to nearby homes and to nearby homes and the general agricultural residential field.

48:25

It will harm property values and the lifestyle that the residents that the residents chose.

48:31

Truck stops with liquor, gambling and transient populations are often linked to higher incidence of trafficking, drug activity, loitering, and property crime.

48:40

Proximity to schools, churches, and family areas amplify these worries along with strains on local law enforcement, fire and EMS services.

48:51

Frenchtown is already near other truck stops.

48:53

It's literally a 5 minute drive to the next town pump truck stop which is located in a way more in a way more industrial non residential area away from a residential homes and schools.

49:07

Additional capacity may not have a may not serve a genuine need, but could cannibalize local local businesses or create oversupply.

49:17

While it might create some low wage jobs, the downsides far outweigh any benefit for any benefits for residents.

49:25

Economic development should align with community values rather than imposing unwanted industrialization.

49:33

Town pumps, Underground storage tanks are typically buried 2 to 4 feet below ground surface, but the full excavation depth can be much deeper, 12 to 16 feet or more depending on the size of the tank.

49:47

These would be installed where there is already a high water table and would actually be very close to the aquifer.

49:54

Any leak or spill could reach groundwater quickly if containment fails.

49:59

Frenchtown already has a Superfund site where it appears that nothing is happening to mitigate the environmental damage.

50:06

This rural community cannot risk another environmental disaster.

50:12

For the above reasons, we support the push for protective zoning to limit heavy commercial use of this property.

50:19

With regard to the gentleman who last week spoke about his condominiums that he wants to someday switch to professional offices, it is my belief that he can apply for a variance and that Montana law allows him to apply for such variance.

50:37

With regard to the Town Pump representative who mentioned that Town Pump purchased the property from a grocery store chain, one could argue that grocery stores aren't open 24/7, don't have 72 overnight parking spots with idling trucks and obnoxious lighting.

50:54

They don't have a liquor store or casinos, and they certainly don't offer showers and a plethora of toilet facilities.

51:02

Thank you for your consideration of what is a very important issue to the people of Frenchtown.

51:10

Thank you.

51:11

Thanks, Bill.

51:17

Hi there.

51:17

Dave Thompson, for the record.

51:18

But I want to see if Tom Eastwood is on the Zoom or on the Tom, are you out there?

51:24

Are you out there Tom Eastwood?

51:27

Yes, I'm here.

51:28

OK.

51:29

Yeah.

51:29

Tom, would you be able to just do time is pretty tight here, but maybe two or three minutes on the French tone traffic study.

51:36

I can, I listened to Joey's comments noted.

51:42

I think that they are working with MDT on looking at all the issues that intersections beyond just intersection operations, safety and finding a analysis in that that MDT is looking for.

51:58

I know the study of the comparable studies looked at differing conditions.

52:07

The study that I prepared looked at the Interstate off ramps as well as the Frontage Rd.

52:12

intersection and the Beckwith intersection in the main part of town.

52:20

As noted with some of the other speakers, there are existing issues, particularly during school periods, most notably in the morning, where traffic backs up nearly in almost both directions during the AM peak period where it blocks access to the Interstate off, on and off ramps.

52:42

And that usually lasts anywhere from, you know, 10 to 15 minutes in the morning, but disrupts operations of all of those intersections.

52:49

And they were found.

52:51

They currently operate at level of service F for some movements.

52:59

So there's some existing issues there.

53:03

But beyond that, I have not had any comment back from MDT for their review on anything as of this date.

53:11

It does sound like they have provided some comment to Sam Bell and are working with them on a updated analysis.

53:20

Beyond that, if there's any questions I could answer on the traffic study, I am available.

53:27

Thank you, Sir.

53:33

Graham, are you going to take us home?

53:35

Yeah.

53:35

What do we have?

53:36

5 minutes.

53:37

6?

53:37

It looks like 6 minutes.

53:38

All right.

53:39

Well, good afternoon, you all.

53:40

Welcome back.

53:40

Nice to see you guys again.

53:42

My name is Graham Coppus.

53:43

My firm Ferguson Coppus represents the applicants here.

53:46

As you guys know, there is a single consideration before you today which is is this application, these zoning applications within the public interest.

53:56

As you know, the the signature processes have BeenVerified by the county and aren't reasonably in dispute.

54:03

So the public interest has been defined a number of ways by Montana's courts, but in in Helena sand and

Gravel, the court said quite pointedly here, quote, regardless of what motivated the petitioners to initiate the Part 1 zoning process, the public interest was served as long as the zone was consistent with the county's growth policy.

54:23

End Quote.

54:24

That's paragraph 24 of that case.

54:28

And here we have notable findings of fact from the the county's recommendations, and those include finding a fact eighty 92110.

54:40

I I think really some really relevant and salient points there.

54:44

The the the staff found that the the proposed zoning framework provide provides A mechanism to better align land use intensity, documented hydrogeologic sensitivity in the area, and reduce the likelihood of incremental degradation of groundwater quality over time.

55:01

The The staff went on to find that the application to currently unzoned land establishes A framework to prevent uncoordinated or high intensity development in wildlife prone areas, allows for future development to be reviewed under standards that address access, defensible space and emergency response consistent with the Wildfire Protection Plan.

55:23

And that the combined effect of existing covenants and proposed zoning strengthens long term protection of rural character compatible land uses and supports recommendation for approval.

55:34

So that those are important in salient points that the staff has raised to you all.

55:39

We also heard from multiple agencies commenting in support.

55:42

You heard from the the whole school board voted unanimously on this today.

55:46

We also heard from the local water quality district, the Frenchtown Rural Fire District, the Missoula Floodplain Administrator, and the Frenchtown School District, as I already mentioned.

55:55

So all of those organizations commented in support because they believe that their mission statements for their groups all are supported by the enactment of this zoning.

56:06

And then I, I also think that what you heard from Talia was really important here, where often it's the case that we're here asking you for some sort of reactive measure, right?

56:15

Where something has happened and we're asking for a response.

56:19

And this zoning process is 1, where we have a catalyst that recognizes or forces people to recognize issues in their community.

56:27

They're happening, right?

56:28

Development is happening.

56:28

It happens really quickly.

56:30

These projects come day after day and this catalyst for this group of people and this community has forced them to reckon with and really go through the process of identifying what they want their community to look like.

56:45

Obviously no process is going to have 100% consensus, You all know that better than than most.

56:50

But getting to where we are today, I, I think it's always important for us to look at.

56:55

We don't want perfection to be the enemy of good.

56:58

And what you have here in front of you is a good proposal that's supported by a super majority of the residents of this community who have all come together to say this is what we want.

57:07

We want a rural residential lifestyle.

57:09

That's why we live here.

57:10

If you want to live in a heavy industrial use area, there are parts of Missoula that offer that, but we don't want that where we live.

57:18

And so respectfully with that, you know, we ask that the, the county approve these applications.

57:25

If you guys have any further questions, we're we're happy to answer them.

57:28

But I think there's a significant record in front of you that this supports the public, the public interest across the vast spectrum of diverse issues that the community cares about.

57:38

So with that, I'll just depart.

57:42

But if you guys have any questions, we're happy to answer them.

57:47

Yes, we have.

57:47

You have one minute, Sir.

57:51

Yeah, on online we have ADF with and we have one minute.

57:57

Hi.

57:57

Good afternoon, Commissioner.

57:58

This is Damian Frisbee, Frenchtown Fire Chief.

58:01

And I just wanted to clarify that we were not for the zoning issue.

58:09

I merely commented about the potential traffic issues and that was the only position that we took was to address the traffic.

58:16

Thank you.

58:17

Thanks for clearing that up, Chief, and thank you all.

58:23

And we will be back.

58:24

Say again that it's May May 28th, 2:00 in this very same space.

58:30

And we'll start at 2:00 and we'll go till 5.

58:32

And thank you all for taking time out of your day to come today.

58:36

And thanks to you guys.