

Missoula Board of County Commissioners

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES COVER SHEET



THURSDAY, AUGUST 06, 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 Strohmaier

Staff Present:

Cheryl Hartman, Commissioners' Office
Vincent Pavlish, County Attorneys' Office
Chris Lounsbury, Missoula County Chief Administrative Officer
Samuel Scott, Clerk and Recorder's Office
Annie Cathey, Commissioners' Office
Christina Dewar, Commissioners' Office
Patricia Spotted Wolf, Commissioners' Office
Melissa Fisher, Commissioners' Office
Jason Mitchell, Public Works
Sarah Bell, Elections Office
Carey Powers, Communications
Tenzin Lhaze, Communications
Mattie Scott, Commissioners' Office
Chet Crowser, Lands and Communities
Allison Franz, Communications
Anne Hughes, Missoula County Chief Operating Officer

1. **CALL TO ORDER** *[Time stamp – 0:00]*
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** *[Time stamp – 0:02]*
3. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** *[Time stamp – 0:28]*

Yéttxʷa qe es yammilš

I stítúlix^ws Séliš u Qlispé
sqlqélix^w.

Today, we are gathered together in
the homelands of the Salish and
Kalispel people.

Qe es putestm tu sqlix^wt nkwu?uúlmis
u smíni?is.

We respect their tribal ways and
their stories.

Qe es lemtm tu x^wl x^wlčmu?usšis
u x^wl sqlqelix^w yetłx^wa.

We are thankful for their ancestors
and for the people today.

Yetłx^wa qe esya? u qe es čtim ýe
stúlix^w x^wl ci putis čneñnes.

Today we are all caring for this land
for those yet coming.

4. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS [Time stamp – 045]

- a. Closed Captioning

5. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA [Time stamp –0:45]

6. CURRENT CLAIMS LIST [Time stamp – 01:56]

Claims received as of July 23, 2026 to July 29, 2026 by the Commissioners' Office total
\$2,547,746.69.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS [Time stamp – 2:12]

None

8. HEARINGS

- a. Request board review the updated resolution and close public comment period for
the feral horses [Time stamp – 02:27]

Chris Lounsbury, Missoula County Chief Administrative Officer

[Item continued to commissioners' August 25 administrative meeting]

- b. Sorrel Springs Water District [Time stamp – 33:52]

Samuel Scott, Clerk and Recorder's Office

Commissioner Vero made the motion that the Missoula Board of County Commissioners
approve the resolution for the County of Missoula hereby call for an election on the
question of incorporating the Sorrel Springs Water District to be held at the general
election on November 3rd, 2026.

Commissioner Strohmaier seconded.

[Motion Passed 3-0.]

[Resolution 2026-101. Book: 1132 Page: 175]

- c. Fire Season 2026 Stage II Restrictions Emergency Proclamation [Time stamp –
45:04]

Commissioner Strohmaier made the motion that the Missoula Board of County
Commissioners approve and adopt Resolution 2026-102 for the 2026 Stage II Fire
Season Emergency Proclamation.

Commissioner Vero seconded.

[Motion Passed 3-0.]

[Resolution 2026-102. Book: 1132 Page: 176]

9. OTHER BUSINESS

[None]

10. ADJOURN

Chair Slotnick – Called the meeting to adjourn at 2:48 p.m.

BCC Public Meeting August 06, 2026 – Transcription

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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

Pledge Today we are gathered together in the homelands of the Salish and Kalispell people.

0:28

We respect their tribal ways and their stories.

0:30

We are thankful for their ancestors and for their and for the people today.

0:35

Today we are caring for this land, for those yet coming.

0:39

Do we have any public announcements?

0:42

Yes, I'll do the closed captioning announcement.

0:44

Hello, everyone.

0:45

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

0:55

Try again.

0:56

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

1:03

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

1:09

The chair will open discussion for a public comment after each staff presentation.

1:14

Please respectfully keep your comments to 3 minutes.

1:17

If you're using Microsoft Teams, we ask the user raise hand feature.

1:22

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

1:28

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

1:32

Then once called upon, please push *6 to unmute.

1:35

If you have any questions during the meeting, please come and find me.

1:38

Thank you.

1:39

Thanks Joe.

1:41

Do we have any public comment on items not on the agenda?

1:44

Anybody can speak on anything they like for three minutes online or in the room.

1:55

OK, seeing none.

1:56

Our current claims list claims received as of July 23rd, 2026 to July 29, 2026 by the Commissioner's Office total \$2,547,746.69.

2:12

We have no administrative consent agenda today, so we are going to jump right into hearings which we have three, the first on the Horse in Miller Creek issue and Chris Lansbury will present.

2:26

Good afternoon.

2:27

Thank you, Commissioners.

2:27

For the record, my name is Chris Lansbury.

2:29

I am the Chief Administrative Officer for Missoula County.

2:32

So Commissioners today, as you know, you opened a public comment period back in June and we're here to update you on changes to the resolution based on that public comment and provide an opportunity for folks to comment on the draft final resolution.

2:45

Then once we've received public comment today, that may result in some small minor administrative changes and then we'd look for you to adopt the resolution in the future.

2:54

So just a quick update on where we are.

2:56

Like I mentioned, you open public comment in June of 2026.

2:59

Today we have the draft resolution before you today's August 6th.

3:04

We'll take public comment today and then we're looking for final adoption of the resolution on August 25th.

3:11

So just a quick summary of the public comment that informed the updates to the resolution here.

3:16

We received about 305 contributions and comments through the Missoula County Voice page as well as numerous emails into the Commissioner's Office and some phone calls.

3:25

We took that public comment.

3:27

They largely look at coexisting with the horses as opposed to removal.

3:32

We saw a request for signage as a standout theme as well As for the horses to be treated as deer, which is not unfortunately an option because deer are under state ownership and that is not the case for the horses in this particular case.

3:46

As well as requests for the county to manage the herd through population management, making sure we addressed disease and human animal conflict, and then a request for the horses to be classified under the federal statute, the Wild Horse and Burrows Act.

3:59

Unfortunately, we aren't able to do that.

4:01

That act requires that these lands, the horses be on federal lands.

4:05

And as we know, these horses are actually on private property in Missoula County, not on public lands.

4:11

The other piece that we had several requests for was outreach to the Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and we'll talk a little bit about how those changes were impacted by the public comment next on the resolution, so updates from the draft resolution, we added a section specifically on signage and public safety that allows the county to place signs along the roadway related to the horse's potential.

6:11

Hello.

6:17

Yeah, I think they're having technical difficulties.

7:06

I'm not sure where that happened, Commissioner, So I may just run back through the presentation really quickly if that's acceptable to the Commission folks.

7:19

No problem.

7:22

Just get the PowerPoint up here really quickly.

7:25

So Commissioners, due to the technical difficulty, I'll just run back through the presentation really quickly.

7:29

So just first piece here is where we are in the process.

7:32

So you opened your public comment period in June.

7:36

We are here today on the 6th to look at the updated resolution that was based on the public or comment received to date.

7:42

We will close public comment at the end of today's meeting, make any minor adjustments that we need to make to the resolution and then look for your adoption later this month on August 25th.

7:52

So just to summarize some of the public comment that we got to date and you can see the numbers up here related to the specific comments and sections of comments that we got.

8:01

But in particular, folks were looking specifically for coexistence with the horses, not full removal request pretty significantly for signage around the roadways and not petting or feeding the horses, as well as requests for the county or state agency to take ownership of the horses and treat them similar to the way other wild animals are treated.

8:21

In this particular case, of course, they are livestock and not under those statutes that relate to a wildlife under the Department of Natural Resources or Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

8:31

As well as request for us to make sure that we reached out to the Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribe and a request for us to treat these like wild horses or get them registered under the Wild Horses and Burrows Act.

8:44

So based off that public comment, we made what changes we could to the resolution.

8:49

We added a section specifically calling for county signage in the area related to horses on the roadway, recommending folks not approach or feed the horses.

8:59

We added sections around population management in conjunction with the Department of Livestock to be able to do some fertility control, specifically around the horses that enter into the urban area.

9:10

We made sure that we clarified the language on the difference between a stray and abandoned horses to make sure to line with the Montana Code Annotated, as well as clarifying the requirements around the federal Wild Horses and Burrows Act, which specifically call for the animals to be on public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management at the federal level.

9:30

And of course, in this case, these animals are actually on private property.

9:33

They're not on federal lands.

9:35

There are not private or not public lands, large public lands in that area.

9:40

We did reach out to the Salish and Kalispell Culture Committee and received information from them from that at this point that it's inconclusive as to whether there's a connection for the tribes to the horses.

9:51

And at this time they were not.

9:53

We're not interested in kind of pursuing whether that existed.

9:57

And then there were several requests specifically for the commissioners to enact ordinances around no petting and no feeding.

10:04

Unfortunately, counties are arms of state government and we are limited in the ordinances we can pass specifically to what the state allows.

10:10

And this is not an authority that is currently given to county.

10:13

So we are not able to enact an ordinance specifically around the horses.

10:19

So just as a reminder on what next steps are, we'll take public comments today, answer questions that the Commission might have, look to make minor modifications to the resolution that might be needed based on the further public comment received today, and then look for your adoption on August 25th.

10:38

Thanks, Chris.

10:39

So if people want to take a look at the updated resolution, how best to do that?

10:46

Yeah.

10:46

So commissioners, it's up on the Missoula County Voice page as well as it was attached to the agenda of today's meeting as part of the packet.

10:52

Great.

10:58

Do you think we should read it out loud or do you feel like leaving it best or do people want to look at it?

11:08

Yeah, it's, it's been up on the on the website for a little bit here.

11:10

But I mean, I certainly can pull out sections if you'd like me to read it.

11:13

It's several pages long.

11:15

So OK, let's why don't we jump right to public comment and anybody can speak to this for three minutes.

11:26

And Dave is going to manage the shot clock.

11:29

And so I just want to ask the come on up and hit the green light and then say your name.

11:34

And really, if you can watch the clock because it's super awkward to ask you to stop.

11:39

So we really want you to see where you are and and that's, and that way we can make space for everyone who wants to talk.

11:47

Thank you.

11:52

I am here.

11:53

Oh, sorry.

11:54

My name is Jenny Johnson.

11:55

Thank you, Jenny.

11:56

I'm here representing the currently forming Miller Creek Course Alliance, heretofore the alliance.

12:03

The purpose of the Alliance is to provide community education and awareness, promote public safety, conduct herd research and collaborate with local officials to assist in the management of the free roaming horses in our community.

12:17

We first held our public meeting June 30th, 2026 at the Public Library.

12:22

Approximately 40 people attended and broke into aforementioned working groups, population management, health research, fundraising, Traffic Safety, signage, response team education.

12:35

Since that time we have appointed interim officers for president, Vice President, Co secretaries and Treasurer.

12:42

We have filed articles of incorporation and are now A501C3 nonprofit organization.

12:49

We are currently working on our interim bylaws which are a prerequisite for filing IRS Form 10301023 Easy.

12:59

The bylaws are drafted and we plan to have them pre reviewed to ensure a compliance with Montana Code titled 35 Chapter 2 Nonprofit Corporations.

13:10

We expect to have a number a member vote on the officers and bylaws by September 15th.

13:17

Members of the committees are already identifying steps necessary and groups agencies with prior experience in addressing the challenges of living with free roaming horses in the populated areas.

13:30

We'd plan to come here to request a 90 day extension before finalization and adoption of the resolution released July 7th, 2026.

13:38

The extended time frame would would afford the Alliance, local residents and stakeholders an opportunity to draft a much needed, comprehensive and effective community based management plan that serves the best interests of both the community and the horses.

13:54

However, we are pleasantly surprised by the new version of the resolution being presented today.

13:59

The new Public Rd.

14:00

safety measures, fertility control, and in particular, the Coordination with Civic and nonprofit entities sections have made our proposed extension request mute.

14:11

In the spirit of the new version, which we support, we would like to propose a collaboration among the Missoula County, the City of Missoula, and the Alliance to enable respectful coexistence between the people and the horses that live among us.

14:26

The city must be included because we will need city and county ordinances to enforce desired behavior among people if possible.

14:36

Initially, we would like to form a group to develop a management plan that considers the horse population and health, signage, education, conflict resolution, emergency response and funding strategies.

14:47

We further propose that this initial group develop a draft of this plan over the next 90 days.

14:53

Thanks, Jenny.

14:53

You nailed it at 3 minutes.

14:55

Well done.

14:56

Well done.

15:00

Hey, come on up.

15:17

Only excuse me.

15:21

Oh, OK.

15:22

Should I start off no boring.

15:27

So I will question very quickly.

15:30

I don't know if it's my place.

15:32

The the problem, I don't think Missoula problem is wild horses.

15:37

There's about 11:50 of them in the area per Miller Creek.

15:41

In the last 40 years there was only two or three reporting incidents.

15:46

Anyway, so here we are.

15:48

By the way, people love horses, kids, tourists, maybe could be a tourist destination for Missoula.

15:55

So I've questioned about the resolution, which is the first page, the summary resolution of the board establishing a process for private land owners to capture abandoned horses on their property, request department, livestock inspection, etcetera.

16:15

So you are if, and tell me if I'm mistaken, you are given the right to private land owners.

16:21

I don't think it's the people who have the small houses, perhaps the ranches down in the valley to capture horses.

16:29

Can they capture wildlife?

16:30

Deer, they are more of a problem.

16:32

Can they capture raccoon or whatever, rats, mice.

16:37

What is the the logic behind this allowing the private owners who capture horse how like in a rodeo like a cowboy movie?

16:48

Anyway, if you could answer my question there, Thank you.

16:52

Thank you.

16:53

So, so we're typically we're not supposed to go back and forth here.

16:57

We'll just do 3 minute comments.

16:59

But I feel like Michelle's question is probably held by others as well.

17:03

So I'll do my best at answering this and Chris can fill in as I get this wrong.

17:07

My understanding is if there are feral horses on your private land, you can today without our resolution capture them.

17:16

That is in accordance with state law that that that exists today.

17:20

There, there's no change.

17:22

So Sir, that could happen today regardless of our resolution because feral horses are not at the West and FWP, they're not wildlife.

17:32

So hopefully then Chris, please, if I fill it in where I where I didn't complete.

17:36

No commissioner, that's exactly correct.

17:38

And again, private property owners when when horses come onto their land, do have rights under Montana law to be able to address that issue of them coming onto their private property.

17:48

Similar to the resolution.

17:49

They're required to work with the Department of Livestock to make sure that they're not branded and don't belong to someone prior to that.

17:54

And then at that point, they can work with Department of Livestock on the removal.

17:58

Thank you.

17:59

OK, next, please.

18:01

Come on up, David.

18:06

Do I have to hit a green button?

18:09

OK, David Aronofsky, I'm here as just as a private citizen, a retired UM law faculty member who has been researching the laws, regulations and policies involving Ferrell.

18:22

Abandoned, wild, regardless of whether it's wild under federal law or otherwise.

18:28

Horses all over the country.

18:30

And I think I've got a pretty good grasp of what we have to work with here.

18:35

I pointed out at the last meeting and on Voices, Montana has a statutory mess that the county can do nothing about.

18:42

But this is a wonderful, good faith, comprehensive effort to address what the county can do, in my opinion.

18:50

And I only have a couple of suggestions that don't necessarily go to the content of the ordinance, but rather process.

18:59

First of all, these horses belong, as I think the ordinance acknowledges, to the state, particularly the livestock department, because 100% of the Miller Creek horses, unless some branded version has snuck through there is estray the way I read the estray statutes.

19:20

So, OK, nothing wrong with that.

19:23

The department has made clear it wants the counties to deal with these feral horse issues in the first instance.

19:29

So I suggest that the county and the state negotiate an interagency agreement that encompasses this ordinance with any suggested changes that the state might suggest.

19:41

You've got a statute that encourages interagency agreements.

19:45

I, I did dozens of them when I was AUM general counsel.

19:48

So I think we all know there it's out there and you might be pleasantly surprised at the support you're going to get in this ordinance from the state, along with some pretty good suggestions.

19:59

The second a suggestion I have involves behavior of people towards the horses.

20:05

Currituck County, North Carolina has a great ordinance that protects the horses from people and people from the ordinances.

20:13

I provided the site and voices and I would encourage the county to read it because if anything, it would be an additional section to this proposed ordinance that that lays out within the authority that the county has what people can and can't do regarding the horses.

20:31

There have been some recent incidents of hazing, harassing, inappropriate feeding of the horses by people that threaten the lives of kids.

20:41

So there's some things that I think on the safety side, Currituck County ordinance can can provide some guidance with and I'm pretty sure you all have the authority to do it, especially if livestock department signs off on it.

20:55

You might also want to look at the Chincoteague, VA ponies at the Chesapeake Bay.

21:02

They're world famous and they're also protected in terms of behavior.

21:06

Thank you.

21:08

Thank you.

21:11

Anybody else come on up.

21:19

Maybe we should just leave the button on so you don't.

21:21

Oh, just there you go.

21:23

Just go for it.

21:23

OK.

21:24

Well, my question, I just have a quick question.

21:26

That's my name is Peter White, and I'm a Miller Creek resident.

21:31

But with regard to the private land owners and their capture, are they allowed to bait the horses?

21:38

It doesn't say.

21:41

And is there is the goal to remove the entire herd?

21:47

So again, we're, I, I guess I'm going to try and answer these questions because I imagine others have them, but really we're going to try and just do comment.

21:55

The goal here is not to remove the entire herd.

21:57

Read the resolution.

21:59

The goal doesn't the, the resolution doesn't say anything about removing any, any single horse, more or less the entire herd.

22:05

So I, I feel like you're making a leap there.

22:07

The law as it is now is if the horses are on your land, you can capture them.

22:14

I'm going to defer to Vinny about baiting because I have no idea.

22:19

Vinny's an attorney.

22:34

Yes, Sir.

22:38

Please do.

22:42

Hi.

22:42

My name is Raylynn Roadhouse, and I live in Miller Creek.

22:46

And I absolutely love the horses.

22:48

They're gentle.

22:49

They're really sweet.

22:51

And they.

22:51

Yeah, they leave manure in my yard.

22:53

They eat my flowers.

22:55

But it is such a treat to have them.

22:57

And I thank you all for not removing them all and working with us on it because they're they're a gift to Miller Creek.

23:06

Start crying.

23:08

Thank you, Katie.

23:20

Afternoon.

23:21

Do I have to click a button?

23:22

No, I think we're we're just leaving it on just to make it a little frictionless.

23:26

OK.

23:27

I'm Diane Gray.

23:28

I live at Upper Miller Creek as well.

23:32

Thank you for your efforts to protect the Miller Creek free roaming horses as coexisting with the horses is my reason for attending today.

23:42

I'm not sure how many revisions to the resolution there have been, but the last is an improvement to the two other that I am aware of.

23:51

I still feel this latest version seems to address the problems that land owners must be having the most of Miller Creek.

23:59

It would be nice to make public the documented complaints, problems there have been and what they are so that our comments on the resolution effectively address the relative issues.

24:13

Human error speeding seems to be the cause of the one accident that I'm aware of with the horses.

24:20

I'm so glad the latest version does address St.

24:23

signage.

24:24

But what about whom to call 24/7 if there's an accident with the horse for emergency vet care and possibly euthanasia, which was needed in that particular accident?

24:38

I have a few comments regarding Section 9 on the approved disposition methods.

24:46

Why does the landowner get to have the choice of the disposition method?

24:53

Why so much power given to them and not the official designated by the county or the sheriff?

24:59

Or at least having one person or more than one person.

25:02

Rather, in this decision process #2 there seems to be only four approved methods.

25:10

What if more options become available?

25:13

Is there a way to word it that more future options can be considered by, I don't know, maybe a board or you fill in the blank #3 #4 which I shall read is a transfer of the horse to the Department of Land Stock at the owner's request for disposition under the authority of the Department of Landstock.

25:39

Including sale #4 doesn't address what types of sale can this resolution state?

25:47

Not sold for slaughter or at least as a very last resort.

25:54

As far as the committee who was working on the written resolution, I believe there should have been a resident of the Miller Creek area, a spokesperson for the horses, and someone knowledgeable like an E Queen veterinarian.

26:09

Since the community is trying to organize and address managed care and education of the public with different focus groups and horses needs and the I feel this committee needs to have access to information.

26:22

I think we we just hit our zero.

26:24

So thanks.

26:25

Thanks a lot.

26:26

Sorry you you did you did great.

26:27

Thank you very much.

26:34

Anybody's welcome.

26:35

Hi, my name's Tammy.

26:50

So right into the microphone if you can.

26:52

Hi, my name is Tammy Stott, and I just wanted to address what baiting is.

26:56

Baiting is actually feeding the horses to encourage them to come onto your property, which is something that we want to avoid if we're going to keep them wild and coexisting with them.

27:08

So I would advise not to bait them.

27:12

So because you just, they're still wild and they're unpredictable and you just don't know what they're going to do.

27:18

Even though we love them, we shouldn't do that if we're going to try to coexist with them.

27:23

That's all I have to say.

27:24

Thank you.

27:29

Anybody else like to speak to our new updated resolution?

27:37

Anybody online like to speak to this?

27:44

We're setting a state record for brevity on feral horse meetings.

27:52

All right.

27:52

That's wonderful.

27:53

Oh.

27:53

Oh, I'm sorry.

27:54

OK, I take it back.

27:56

Thank you, Kimberly, please you have 3 minutes.

28:06

Whoop.

28:07

Oh, hello.

28:09

Hello.

28:10

My name is Kimberly Frank and I am the Executive Director of the Science and Conservation Center in Billings, Mt and we produce the immunocontraception for wild horses known as Zonistat H or PZP immunocontraception.

28:29

We actually had Chuck Casper from the MPG Ranch be trained by us when they were contracepting the horses on their property.

28:39

So I just wanted to let you know that we are a resource not only for contraception, but also for, we know so many people that are going through this also, whether it be BLM land, National Park Service, state lands, we work with groups with the Salt River wild horses and also the Virginia Range.

29:09

And both of those ranges are kind of in the same situation that you are.

29:15

And, and I didn't see in this resolution who is the, the actual entity that is kind of the, I guess the manager of the horses, like the Department of AG, Would it be the Montana Department of Agriculture?

29:32

If, if somebody wanted to do a project, who would they have the MOU with?

29:39

Who would give somebody permission to like do contraception or you know, any, any other kind of project, I guess with horses anyway, if you wanted any introductions with people from other communities, I'd be happy to do an introduction.

30:00

I want to say also that this is absolutely amazing.

30:05

I've been doing this for 30 years and this community being so proactive in coming up with this resolution.

30:14

Oh, it's you should all be so proud of yourself, the community, those of you in the county, this resolution, the group that have started, you know, the while the horse Alliance.

30:31

If any of those folks want some pointers or other groups to talk to, we'd love to be a resource.

30:41

Whether there's a contraception project or not, we would definitely like to help you out any way we can.

30:48

And yeah, again, I've been doing this for 30 years and and I'm super excited for what you all have accomplished so far.

30:57

Thank you.

30:58

Thanks, Kimberly.

31:00

And we would be working with the Department of Livestock.

31:03

Oh, OK.

31:03

Thank you.

31:04

Anybody, Beau, please, You got 3 minutes.

31:11

Hi and thank you for the opportunity.

31:13

Beau Larkin here.

31:15

This is a question I understand you may not want to answer it, so you could consider it a request to add information to the resolution here.

31:23

I mostly want to know the geographic extent of this proposed resolution.

31:29

Does it include all feral abandoned estray horses in all of Missoula County or is it just the Miller Creek horses?

31:36

Or what is you particularly have in mind here?

31:39

Thank you very much.

31:41

Thanks, Bo.

31:42

Chris, what do you think?

31:45

Yeah.

31:45

So commissioners, the resolution is not specific to Miller Creek.

31:48

It's a county resolution.

31:50

So it applies to the county of Missoula.

31:51

Thank you.

31:56

OK anyone else online or in the room?

32:03

OK, that's fantastic.

32:04

So what we are going to do just to reiterate is we will take in this comment, incorporate these comments into our resolution and then have a final resolution and then vote on that.

32:16

We have a ballpark.

32:18

August 25th, there you go, nailed it right there.

32:20

August 25th, we will actually vote on this resolution and we will incorporate to the degree we can the comment we heard today and comment that's on voice and via e-mail as well.

32:31

And there we go.

32:37

Kimberly, would you put your contact info in the chat, please?

32:45

Might not be able to.

32:47

Unfortunately commissioner's chat is disabled in the meetings under Montana's process.

32:52

But we we can reach out where we have Kimberly's name and she mentioned her organization so we can reach out.

32:56

Thank you so much, Sir.

32:59

Just a comment for folks.

33:00

I heard a question regarding what number to call.

33:04

What phone number to call in the event of a conflict, an accident with a horse?

33:10

The number to always call for anything that looks not quite right is 911.

33:16

And don't worry about.

33:18

Is this superfluous?

33:19

Is this not an emergency that will get sorted out in the 911 center?

33:24

Don't hesitate to make the call.

33:26

And I would say the same thing for any other aspect of public emergencies.

33:32

So make the call that way.

33:34

We have it documented somewhere.

33:36

And if it turns out it's not something that law enforcement can address at the time, the 911 senator will have an answer for you as far as who to call after the fact.

33:48

Thank you.

33:50

Thanks, Dave.

33:52

OK, we have a our second hearing.

33:54

This is on the Sorrel Springs Water District and Sam Scott from the Clerk and Recorder's office will present.

34:01

Thank you all for coming horse folks.

34:43

Doing their interpreter thing.

34:45

Let's go.

34:47

All right, Thank you, Commissioners.

34:48

This is Sam Scott with the clerk and Treasurer's office.

34:50

And today we have a petition to create the Swirl Springs Water District as a county water and sewer district before you.

34:59

This is the first county water and sewer district that we've processed in quite some time.

35:04

So bear with me as we figure out this new process.

35:08

However, to quote from the petition itself, the under assigned qualified electors of the proposed Sorrel Springs Water District hereby submit this petition to the Missoula County Board of County Commissioners pursuant to the Montana Code Annotated 7-13-2204 requesting the creation of the Sorrel Springs Water District as a county Water and sewer District.

35:29

The Sorrel Springs HOA Homeowners Association has operated a private water system serving its members for a number of years.

35:35

The HO as Water Board has determined that formation of a formal Missoula County Water and Sewer District represents the best long term structure for managing and maintaining the water system serving the Sorrel Springs community in Frenchtown.

35:49

End Quote.

35:52

The petition was submitted in just last month, July of 2026, and the proposed district area is for all of Sorrel Springs subdivision.

36:00

That's 99 parcels.

36:02

And just to give you a little locator, it's just northwest of French Town.

36:07

This entire section right here that was divided as Sorrel Springs.

36:16

The petition includes 43 total signatures.

36:19

Again, there are 99 parcels because it did not include all of the qualified electors signatures within the proposed district.

36:27

It does require an election in route in order to be incorporated as a water and sewer district.

36:34

3 Different Commissioner Commission actions are required to move this forward today, but I believe we have some members of the water board here to speak to the petition itself and some of the background.

36:47

And then the elections team is may be online as well to provide some insight into how an election would exactly work or Vinny, if they are not available.

36:56

So with that, I'd probably like to turn it over to the petitioners themselves.

36:59

Thank you so much, Sam.

37:00

So please petitioners, and this isn't public comment, so you can talk for as long as you want.

37:13

Oh, no limit.

37:15

You're in trouble.

37:15

No, just kidding.

37:16

Thank you for hearing from us.

37:18

My name is Curtis Spindler.

37:19

I'm a resident of Soil Springs.

37:21

I'm also the Vice president of the HOA board.

37:25

We've been working on this for probably a couple of years.

37:29

We hired Morrison Mayer Lee engineering firm almost two years ago now.

37:34

And in I think it was, we got the report from them in January of 25 and we were a little not shocked.

37:44

But we, our system is 50 years old when when they originally did the development, I think there were 5010 acre lots and now there's 99 lots, most of which have homes on them, most of which are drawing from the same water source that was installed in the 70s in the report.

38:13

And I mean, I can, I've got copies of it if you guys want them.

38:16

I think some people have seen it, but we are way out of compliance with state regulation for our water supply, our water storage.

38:31

A lot of the lines we have, I think 2 fire hydrants in the whole neighborhood running off of our small supply.

38:40

The fire we, we've asked the fire people, you know, what would you recommend?

38:45

And I, I think they're seven or eight more at least fire hydrants in our neighborhood.

38:51

Many of the lines are not big enough to support a fire hydrant, so those would have to be replaced.

39:00

Long story short, we're about \$5 million short.

39:06

We, you know, we looked at an RSID and that probably would not suffice and the homeowners would not be happy with us.

39:19

We're hoping to become a water district, which would make us eligible for grants.

39:23

It would also make us eligible, we border state land eligible to possibly get an easement on state land for a new water tower, keeping the existing one since it's it's still passing inspections.

39:37

It's just about half of the supply that would be required for a neighborhood of our size.

39:43

And we're hoping you guys will help us with this today so we can get started on this process and and get it moved through.

39:51

Thank you.

39:53

Thank you, commissioners.

39:56

One thing I should have added was that and Vinny, please correct me if I misstate anything here.

40:00

If this district is incorporated, it will be managed by a board elected within the district and we will serve essentially as a custodial of their tax.

40:09

We will collect taxes on behalf of the board and distribute it to the board as and they will manage that as they see fit.

40:15

Awesome.

40:17

Anybody else like to speak on this?

40:22

Andy, can we do something for you on this?

40:23

Are you here for on a different issue or?

40:33

My name is Andy Mefford.

40:34

I was here for this issue.

40:35

Mike had asked me to show up as well.

40:38

We've been operating that system as the operator for a number of years and I've been in discussions with them about some pretty significant things that they definitely need.

40:46

And it was one of the tools we discussed in helping them fund projects.

40:51

So it was just looking to maybe explore.

40:54

And I'm pretty unfamiliar with that process as well.

40:57

And I was actually contacted by another water system we operate up Grant Creek just today kind of asking these questions about what is a water and sewer district and how does those functions.

41:06

We operate some water systems that are a water and sewer district, like Shelby is an example.

41:12

It is a water and sewer district.

41:14

And so I'm not exactly sure like most things, there's always pros and cons and I don't understand all the workings of it or the process, but I'm just here to kind of understand how that moves forward.

41:25

All right, thank you.

41:25

Andy.

41:27

Sam, I'm going to put you on the spot.

41:29

Do you feel comfortable describing the kind of nuts and bolts of a sewer and water district?

41:33

And if it's if not, it's fine.

41:36

To be honest, no, not really.

41:39

My understanding is pretty much exactly as the petitioner described.

41:42

It organizes them as an entity that's eligible to receive grant funding to apply for certain things and has the power to then assess through the treasurer's office, through the county tax bills to collect for on behalf of the district.

41:56

And the process for them to come into being would be is exactly this.

42:00

It's a petition submitted to our office signed by at least 10% of qualified electors within the district.

42:07

And if it is signed by any fewer than 100%, but more than 10% of the qualified electors, it goes to an election.

42:14

We have another county water and sewer district that you'll be hearing in a week or so that is signed by 100% of the single landowner within the district.

42:22

So that one we'll be skipping an election on.

42:26

I think that's it.

42:26

And what's the role of the Commission in this?

42:30

It is so specifically today the three actions that we have for you to take that statute outlines are is that we have to determine that the petition complies with the requirements and statute establish the boundaries of the district by determining that everybody within the proposed district does benefit from the system.

42:53

And then third, calling for the election itself.

42:56

OK.

42:56

And then it, but it's ultimately up to the residents in the district if this flies or not.

43:01

Yes.

43:02

OK, thank you, Sam.

43:03

Andy, does that help at all?

43:05

And please do you have any other direct questions?

43:07

Ask away, man.

43:10

OK, thank you, Josh.

43:11

I can add you please.

43:12

Vinny and I, I it's the this kind of district is designed in the code for kind of a bigger problem, but it is this problem is eligible, I think for this.

43:23

And so that's kind of what we're doing is fitting, fitting it into a space of need for the community.

43:29

And like you say, the community will have an opportunity to vote on it.

43:32

They also have an opportunity if they were here to protest and to ask that the boundaries be drawn differently under the set of circumstances that this presents.

43:41

It's it's unlikely that that would happen, but that would be another kind of a power that you would have as you're considering this, just an unlikely one to be thinking about right now.

43:50

And there are an awful lot of sections of the code that help a, an elected sewer district board figure out water and sewer district board figure out what they're supposed to do once they come into being.

44:04

Thank you for that.

44:06

OK, Dave Rawan, do you guys have anything or.

44:08

And we do have a motion up, so sorry to jump in.

44:11

Oh, sorry, man.

44:12

If you don't mind, the last thing I forgot to mention was that this will be included if approved today on the general election ballot in November.

44:21

Yeah.

44:21

Excellent.

44:21

Great.

44:22

So coming soon.

44:24

Thank you, Sam.

44:25

OK, Dave Rawan.

44:35

That's OK.

44:36

I move to approve the resolution confirming that the petition complies with the requirements for a citizen initiated water district, establishing the boundaries of the Sorrel Springs Water District and calling for an election on the question of incorporating the district as presented.

44:49
Second.

44:52
OK.

44:52
Do we have any public comment on this motion?

44:57
OK, All in favor, aye.

45:01
Thanks, Sam.

45:04
Lastly, we have a hearing on our fire season Stage 2 restrictions and an emergency proclamation.

45:11
Yeah, Commissioners, our Director of the Office of Emergency Management, Adrian Beck is otherwise occupied.

45:17
So I'm going to pitch hit for her today during this.

45:19
So Commissioners, we you have before you a request to adopt A resolution enacting Stage 2 fire restrictions.

45:26
As I think everyone's well aware, we've continued to dry out our fuel in the area.

45:32
And so we are at the point now where most of the surrounding forest and surrounding communities are looking at Stage 2 or have adopted Stage 2 restrictions.

45:39
So specifically Stage 2 restrictions restrict things like use of campfires or lit materials, smoking except an enclosed vehicles or buildings or restricted sites, as well as operating internal combustion engines off

designated roads, welding operations, use of explosives also require in to be done only during specific hours and then require a one hour patrol afterwards to make sure that they're not igniting anything.

46:06

And it also prohibits the operating of motorized vehicles off designated roads and trails.

46:11

And then it lays out what the penalties are for that.

46:14

So it is a misdemeanor to violate Stage 2 restrictions once they're in place.

46:18

Our partners, as you can see in the resolution, including the National Forest and state lands, are headed in this direction as well.

46:24

And so the request is for these to go into effect at the same time as those other resolutions, which would be at one minute after midnight on August 7th.

46:31

And what are the hours, the specific hours you mentioned?

46:35

Yeah.

46:35

So generally speaking, Stage 2 restrictions run overnight in this particular case.

46:41

Hang on just a second.

46:42

Let me see if I if we put a restriction on hours here, many, I don't suppose you looked sorry from 1:00 PM to 1:00 AM they're restricted.

46:59

So heat of the afternoon until recovery at the cool hours in the morning.

47:05

Thank you.

47:06

You guys have any questions?

47:15

Have a a proclamation or any public comment?

47:17

Yes, yes.

47:20

Griffin's got a question.

47:21

No.

47:22

OK, I move that we doubt the resolution.

47:25

All right.

47:26

Any public comment?

47:27

OK.

47:27

All in favor.

47:28

Aye, aye.

47:30

Thank you, Commissioners.

47:31

Thanks all.

47:33

Griffin or television reporter, any questions on any of this?

47:36

We're here.

47:38

OK, Sir, I guess that's a no.

47:40

You know, this gentleman seems to be coming forward.

47:46

Jackson, also a resident of Sorrow Springs.

47:50

I want to thank Samuel for his efforts and information, for his ability to kind of guide us through this process.

47:59

That was invaluable.

48:00

Oh, great to hear.

48:01

Yeah.

48:01

Sounds a true asset for sure.

48:03

Thank you, Sir.

48:04

Thank you.

48:04

All right, everyone, have a good day.