

**Glacier County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday, June 9, 2022**  
**Regular Meeting (GoToMeeting)**  
**Cut Bank, MT**

The Glacier County Board of Commissioners met at a regularly scheduled meeting at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, June 9, 2022. Commissioners Mary Jo Bremner and John B. Overcast were present. Commissioner Michael J. DesRosier was absent and Clerk & Recorder Mandi Bird Kennerly taking minutes.

**Present at the meeting:** Kim Winchell, City of Cut Bank Mayor; Melissa Laverdure, Glacier County Health Director; Marlene Luedtke, Public; Carol Larson, Public; Laurie Elhard, Public; Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Executive Director; Scott Heisel, Press

**Present via GoToMeeting:** (1) Caller; Craig Erickson; Linda; Linda Luther; Sanford Stone; Sean McGuire; TM

**A. Roll Call**

Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Overcast motions to accept the agenda with changes; Commissioner Bremner seconds the motion; motion carried.

**C. Review/Sign: Payroll/Claims**

**Dated for June 9, 2022**

**CLAIMS APPROVED FOR PAYMENT**

<i>FUND</i>	<i>ACCOUNT</i>	<i>AMOUNT</i>
1000	General Fund	\$ 74,725.27
2110	Road Fund	\$ 4,744.45
2140	Weed Control	\$ 2,109.50
2180	County District Court	\$ 2,325.27
2220	Library	\$ 1,119.18
2230	Ambulance	\$ 481.97
2300	Public Safety (Law)	\$ 3,864.42
2850	911 Emergency (Sheriff)	\$ 41.91
2960	Health Grants - Emergency Prep	\$ 1,062.53
2968	Chronic Disease Prevention Grant	\$ 90.68
7302	West End Cemetery	\$ 414.25
	<b>TOTAL CLAIMS</b>	<b>\$ 90,979.43</b>
	<b>PAYROLL</b>	<b>\$ 206,005.35</b>
	<b>TOTAL PAYROLL &amp; CLAIMS</b>	<b>\$ 296,984.78</b>

**ADDITION TO AGENDA:**

**Discussion/Approval: Health Department Immunization Action Plan (IAP) Grant – Glacier County Commissioners**

Melissa Laverdure, Glacier County Health Director, presents the renewal of the Immunization Action Plan (IAP) Grant to the commissioners for approval. It is a contract with the State of Montana to give immunizations to children for preventable diseases where the Glacier County Health Department is reimbursed quarterly. There are no changes to the master contract which was first issued on July 1, 2019 and runs through June 30, 2026. This is the yearly renewal of the task order with the effective date July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

**Commissioner Overcast motions to approve the Task Order Number 23-07-4-31-118-0 Immunization Program from 7/1/2022 through 6/30/2023; Commissioner Bremner seconds the motion; motion carried.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**D. Discussion/Approval: Sweetgrass Development 2022 Dues (\$2,000.00) – Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Corporation/Glacier County Commissioners**

Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Executive Director, presents the participation costs for Sweetgrass Development. Sweetgrass Development was created in 2004 by the state as a certified regional development corporation covering five counties. They receive funding from the State of Montana based on the populations of those five counties: Glacier, Cascade, Toole, Teton, Pondera. They also receive funding for the Blackfeet Reservation and recently expanded to include the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe as well. Sweetgrass Development receives about \$62,000.00 from the State of Montana.

Sweetgrass Development was created from the North Central Montana Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D). The United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) at that time was cancelling the program. RC&D looked at what they were doing and decided the resource and contribution was great, but there needed to be an economic development arm which is how certified regional development corporations were created at the state level.

Sarah Converse states that economic development districts on the federal level have been around for a very long time. Sweetgrass Development receives approximately \$70,000.00 per year from them. The state funds are a \$1 for \$1 match, while the federal funds vary between a 70% to 30% match and an 80% to 20% match. The state funds received can be used for Sweetgrass Development's portion of the federal match required for the federal funding.

Sarah Converse states that Sweetgrass Development has been around for nearly 20 years and the county dues have always been \$2,000.00 without being increased. Sarah continues her presentation and talks about how Sweetgrass Development is expanding its membership to include members beyond the board to create a larger entity that will benefit the communities involved. There is additional discussion on Sweetgrass Development's grant cycle, the time and effort required for each project, and how each project brings unique challenges.

**Commissioner Overcast motions to approve the FY2022-2023 \$2,000.00 annual dues for Sweetgrass Development; Commissioner Bremner seconds the motion; motion carried.**

**E. Discussion/Approval: Babb Solar Panel Consortium – Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Corporation**

Commissioner Bremner expresses her concerns about paperwork that was received regarding the Babb Solar Panel Consortium. She states that the paperwork listed amounts of money that were not previously discussed in the commissioner meeting held on April 14, 2022 and notes a \$270,000.00 amount mentioned that concerns her. She wants to make sure Glacier County is not liable for any money other than what it is able to contribute.

Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Executive Director, states that what they sent in was a letter of intent, not a commitment to anything. It was an overview of the project which included an estimation of the cost of the project with no committed funds other than what the Bonneville [Environmental] Foundation committed. The letter described possible revenue sources. The process starts with the letter of intent and then an application is asked for afterwards if approved. An application has not been submitted yet. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Energy Pilot Program (REPP) has given the project the ability to submit an application.

There is additional discussion on the REPP application process. Sarah Converse would like to get the Babb Solar Panel Consortium put on the agenda again in a future commissioner meeting to go through the application process in further detail. Sarah continues to say that Glacier County is not obligated to anything other than being a part of the consortium at this time.

**F. Discussion/Approval: Follow-up Allocation of Glacier County ARPA Minimum Allocation Grant Funds – Kim Winchell, City of Cut Bank Mayor**

Kim Winchell, City of Cut Bank Mayor, reads a statement she prepared for this portion of the commissioner meeting:

“I’m here before you this morning to urge you to make a decision to vote on using the over \$1 million Minimum Allocation Grant Fund dollars that only you guys can make happen. I understand that there were other requests for some of the dollars and some discussion about putting it out as a vote or a popularity contest in the community.

Our project is ready to go. DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) has approved the plans and the specifications. We already opened bids in late May. DN Tanks was the low bidder at \$2,749,000.00 and change. We have a complete budget which includes a pending award, the \$2 million dollar ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Competitive Grant that was done from the city directly. We did not go through the county on that, that was all on our own. So this confirms that our project is an eligible use of ARPA funding.

The site work will begin this fall and the construction is slated to begin next spring. Our project is needed to protect the health and the safety of Cut Bank’s 3,000 residents. The

county agreeing to allow this money that's sitting out there to funnel through is going to benefit every single one of those folks with their rate bill.

The construction work on the tank is going to ensure that we have adequate water storage to meet demands and enhance fire protection for the community. So your support will benefit each of Cut Bank's 1,200 households and businesses by helping keep the user rates as low as possible. Glacier County's allocation of \$1 million dollars, and there is still \$47,000.00 out there that is available [remaining if the \$1 million is awarded to the City's project], will reduce the rate increase needed to finance this project from \$7.30 more per month, to \$3 a month. The entire monies are sponsored to be offered, you guys can help us do less than \$3 a month. The average monthly residential water rate in Cut Bank is \$48.11, combined with wastewater it is \$108 per month, whether or not you turn your water on.

Our engineering firm has taken their time to talk with Mr. Kittson also addressing some of the questions that, typically Mary Jo, you have brought up, last time I was here. They also went up the ladder to ask if the state would even release the funds to Glacier County. So there was a good discussion about this, since the City is agreeing to take responsibility for the reporting requirements, should the funds be released to the City to manage. The City is willing to take on all of the work, this will cost us where it shouldn't, but we are willing to take this on to help all of the families in Cut Bank. All we need you to do is vote on using this money for this project.

Regardless of the hesitation of whether the state will release it [the funds]. That could happen. Just let the process move forward. You've got some amazing people that are really willing to understand where the county is at, willing to do everything necessary. The state seems very agreeable to helping make this happen. There is no guarantee that any of the other applicants will meet compliance, or that the state will release the funds for any other projects. I don't know what is happening on that end, but we are doing all we can. So in supporting our project you will be helping every resident of Cut Bank. We're hoping to be able to move forward with the vote on that sometime very soon."

The commissioners and Kim Winchell discuss the ARPA Competitive Grant application and the other potential projects. Kim Winchell states that if the grant is shared with other potential projects and those projects are not eligible to receive the grant funds, then the amount which was applied for by those other projects will not be able to be redistributed towards the City of Cut Bank's project and they will essentially lose that amount of funding.

Commissioner Bremner would like to talk with C.F.O. Chancy Kittson and Glacier County Attorney Terryl Matt to discuss the situation further. A follow up discussion was tabled until the June 14, 2022 commissioner meeting. A decision will be made by June 20, 2022. No decision on the matter was reached during this commissioner meeting.

**Commissioner Overcast motions to table the discussion until the commissioner meeting on June 14, 2022 in Browning where C.F.O. Chancy Kittson can give an update and adds the item to the June 20, 2022 agenda for a final decision; Commissioner Bremner seconds the motion; motion carried.**

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**G. Public Comment**

Carol Larson, Public, asks what the Babb Solar Rural Energy Pilot Program (REPP) Project is. Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Executive Director, explains the pilot project and the letter of intent that was sent in with Glacier County in order to help Babb with electricity issues.

Sanford Stone, Public, thanks the commissioners for their support on the Babb Solar Project and the Renewable Energy Consortium. He recommends that the county apply for some of the minimum allocation funds to at least fund culverts, stormwater, and environmental health. Would also like to recommend getting help with the sanitation for areas around Duck Lake and Lower Saint Mary's Lake since they are both great assets to Glacier County and the Blackfeet Tribe. He states further that these issues could probably be fixed using some of the funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money.

Carol Larson, Public, commends Clerk & Recorder Mandi Bird Kennerly for the great job she did for the Primary Election held on June 7, 2022.

Scot Heisel introduces himself as the new regional publisher for the Pioneer Press.

**H. Next Meeting – Tuesday, June 14, 2022 – Browning**

Commissioner Overcast motions to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Bremner seconds the motion; meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.