

**STILLWATER COUNTY
COMMISSIONER MINUTES**

Notice: *These minutes reflect the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners. The official minutes are on file with the Clerk and Recorder (MCA 7-4-*

**REGULAR MEETING
April 2, 2019**

Present: Commissioners Mark Crago, Chair; Tyrel Hamilton, members;
Heidi Stevens, Admin

Others Present: Mark Schreiner, Road Dept, Nancy Rohde, County Attorney, Dana Weatherford, Weed Dept, Billy Chapman, Wood,, Terry Kellgore, Wood, Sam Albhari, Wood, JJ Hill, Wood, Phillip Cuvarubia, Wood, Ken Taloriza, Caithness Energy, Citizens in attendance, Rich Swartz, Tim Downey, Don Beer, Joe Brewer, David Hixson, Billy Chapman, Jon Chafin, Paul Broyles, Gary Broyles, Keith and Karen Schott, Ray Welch, Mark Shane, Terry Zindler, Shane Harmon, Ervin Hossfeld, Peggy Herzog, Cynde Erfle, Loren Eder, Sterling Ballbach, Michael Swartz, James Clemons, Jay Erfle, Todd Marsh, Arleene Wepler, Courtney Herzog, Lila White, Rick White, Karlee Popp, Barb Kaisin, and Glen Westermelt,

Minutes: Commissioner Hamilton **MOVED** to approve the minutes from 4-2-2019
Commissioner Crago **SECONDED**. Motion passed unanimously.

Claims: 102249-102327 Total \$176,947.41

Commissioner Hamilton **MOVED** to approve the claims as presented. Commissioner Crago **SECONDED**. Motion passed unanimously.

Announcements:

1. We would like to excuse Commissioner Shupak who is on medical leave from back surgery.
2. We would like to thank The Stockman Café and Rapelje for allowing us to have the meeting here and thank you to everyone who has come tonight. It does prove why we are getting out to the communities for these agenda meetings.
3. We have job openings in the county, Victim Witness, Economic Development and Administrative Assistant/Web Master for the Annex. We are also looking to fill some board openings. We have 2 for Tax Appeal Board, 1 City/County Planning, 1 County Planning and 2 for Beartooth Park & Rec.

Consent Agenda: None Heard

File Items: Commissioner Hamilton **MOVED** to File the File Items. Commissioner Crago **SECONDED**. Motion passed unanimously.

1. Treasurer Report – Jan and Feb.
2. Clerk and Recorder Report – March
3. Justice Court Report – March

Regular Business: 1. Beaver Creek Wind

- A. Weed Agreement
- B. Road Agreement

Commissioner Hamilton **MOVED** to postpone signing the Weed and Road Agreement to a later time. Giving us time to go over more details as to what was presented. Commissioner Crago **SECONDED**. Discussion – Commissioner Crago stated the main reason to postpone is that we went back and forth between our legal and Beaver Creek Winds legal. Also, our Road Dept was at a training last week and instead of rushing these documents we need more time to make sure everything is in line. I also feel it would be a good time to just postpone the signing. Any more discussion?

Commissioner Hamilton stated that it would be a good time for Wood Construction and Caithness Energy to introduce themselves. After they introduce themselves, we can do a little discussion with them and if anyone has any questions regarding the windfarm project, we can do that.

Ken Talovich with Caithness Energy explained that they were proposing a wind project and looking to kick off later this year. He indicated that they would be working with GE Wind Turbines. They are a 2.5 Mega Watt size turbine. The access would be coming up through Spring Time road and not on Jones Hill Road.

Billy Chapman introduced himself as the Director of Renewables for Wood and responsible for all of construction.

Phillip Cuvarrubia with Wood and is the Site Manager he will be working on the project fulltime and has been with it since it started.

JJ Hill also with Wood and the Project Manager.

Sam Alhrattari with Wood, he is the site engineer and will be on site and supervisor of all construction and all road maintenance. Billy also stated that we will be hiring and using local recourses from with in Montana. While there is not a lot of that right here in Rapelje we will be reaching out to Billings, Bozeman and other places in Montana. When it is all said and done, we will have on a low end about 300 guys up to around 1200 guys depending on the workers on the job site at one time.

Commissioner Crago asked for further discussion. With none heard Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments: None heard.

Special Discussion- Local Issue Roundtable – While no action will be taken the floor is open for discussion and public comments.

Commissioner Crago asked that everyone please introduce themselves for public record and that all meetings are recorded for minutes. He asked that we discuss whatever came to mind. Whether it be positive, negative or just comments or ideas. This is why we came up here and are glad everyone came and hope to continue to do this in the future. We look forward to the feedback we need to hear so that we can move forward positively. Anybody at this time want to break the ice for the round table?

Jay Erfle – Are you guys planning on using Springtime instead of Jones Hill Road?

Billy – That is correct.

Jay – Where are all of these wind turbines going? Do you have a map of them all?

Ken- Yes, we do have a map of them all and their location. The bulk of the congestion will be on Springtime.

Jay- when you get up to Springtime then where do you go? That is getting into Sweetgrass County. Are they going to maintain their portion?

Ken- Most of the wind turbines will be constructed on private property. We will be headed up Springtime and Jones Hill road area and when we get up there it all spiders out from there. Most of the roads will be on private property.

Jay- Where is the main plant going to be? I am the grandson of one of the land owners and I am wondering how things are going to happen? I would just like some clarification and more information. I am happy to meet after this meeting with just the group that is sitting right there. (Detailed conversation continued between the local residents and the Representative group from Wood Construction and Caithness Energy discussing roads, location, project time lines, work hours and how it may or may not affect the area).

Peggy Herzog – Roads are a major problem. What are you going to do?

Commissioner Crago – What roads specifically?

Peggy – I live on Smith Hill and it gets slick and soft pretty early.

Mark S. – We are trying to get as much gravel on them as soon as we can. The flood damage has and will slow us down. A plan is in place to get from the flood done while still graveling the roads. We are aware of the issue.

Peggy - When are we going to open Big Coulee Road? People are stopping at my house asking why the road is closed and where do they go from there?

Commissioner Crago – The problem we see is that you as locals know the road. You know when and when not to travel it. However, Google tells people to go that way.

Peggy- Maybe you should put up a sign before they get to that point indicating that the road is closed. This will keep people from getting to a point where they are unable to turn around or have no way out.

Commissioner Crago pointed out that this was the perfect suggestion that we need to hear from the people here. He also stated that we will have another public hearing discussing the closed road. When we do, we may come to Rapelje to do it so we can get input from everyone.

Courtney Herzog – I live on the north end of the county and Big Coulee road is not just an issue during the winter. Closing the Coulee Hill road is not the solution. I believe that if I am going to complain I had better come with a solution. I think you should take care of the 3.5-4 mile stretch of road all year long. It would be cheaper to maintain the road and fix it permanently then to have the issues with closing it during the winter. I also feel very strongly about a way to tell people when they get off the interstate that when they get up that far their options are limited. When it is closed off even to the locals it makes it really hard for us to operate our ranch when we own property at the top and bottom. We end up driving 30 miles to go one mile.

Mark Schreiner – We are working and will continue to work with the state regarding signage. However, there are restraints with signage. There are also issues with trucks coming across with heavy loads. We will need weight limit signs and we have to go through the state legally to get the traffic stopped and the proper signage. We are working with the state and within our department and we want your help and input to fix the issue.

Gary Boyles – In the interim and a final decision on what to do with the road we need to stop them before they get to Smith Hill.

Commissioner Crago- I know personally coming from the private industry that doing things through the government is super slow. It is frustrating to all of us. I know Mark Schreiner is also experiencing the slow pace when having to work with the state and getting things approved and going.

Paul Broyles – My comment is that we do business in Stillwater county all year long, and will long term. We can't make this a no truck road. We need to make it a working road.

Mark Schreiner – We have been talking to Yellowstone County to see how they did it on a particular problem they were having. I agree we need signage for local travel only. Possibly a sign for non through truck traffic. We do not want to stop your travel.

Commissioner Crago – A grain truck is a local truck. We just want to keep the commercial trucks off the road and from going through. We will come back and talk Big Coulee road.

Gary Broyles – Don't come back during harvest.

Commissioner Hamilton – You need to remember that the policy we are dealing with is outdated. We are talking with Great West Engineering and want them to come back and do a study. We would like them to go out and give us a non-bias detailed idea of what the roads and culverts across the county look like. What ones need the attention first?

Gary Broyles – Be sure and consider the long-range plan. We used to have little equipment and it fit on the roads. Now we have bigger heavier trucks but the roads are still narrow. We need to get these roads up to where we can use them all year long.

Commissioner Crago – That is exactly why we are having Great West do the non-bias study. A 24-foot road is standard. Do we need to look into having larger roads to accommodate the larger equipment?

Mark Schreiner – We need to also consider and hopefully get information from the study about borrow ditches, culverts, drainage plans, and right away. There is a lot to consider.

Commissioner Crago – We as citizens can help with the encroachments. Every area is guilty. We can help by putting in culverts.

Courtney Herzog – When they do the assessment will they do all the roads or just the main ones? Will there be a plan?

Mark Schreiner – Yes, there will be a plan and yes, they will assess all the roads. They will tell us what roads are used the most. What roads are more seasonal, and if it is a heavy traffic road. It may be a year long process. This is what Great West does all over the state.

Courtney – What about Painted Road?

Mark S. – Yes, that will be a priority.

Courtney – The roads up here are not good; they don't get worked on yet we need them to be able to conduct business. What do we do, discontinue use of our ranch?

Gary – I could pick 7 days where there would be no traffic and pick another 7 days where there are 100 cars across it. When do you do the surveys?

Commissioner Crago – There is 1100 miles of graveled county roads. We are up here and in other areas of the county so we can hear what you would suggest.

Gary – For starters we would like you to maintain the arterial roads along with the main heavier used roads.

Mark S. – That is exactly what we have started.

Commissioner Crago – Lets pick on a road. Beaver Creek road with 8 miles of road in between. We want to work with you on improving this road and all the other roads around.

Courtney – Take Painted Road for instance, it is one of the only decent roads in and out, yet has a hill on one end and 10 miles of gumbo on the other end.

Commissioner Hamilton – My personal hope is that we can all work together. We will work with the road department. We will work with the locals and get your input. But bear with the road department. They are trying to fix the issues with the recent flooding and still maintain and gravel these roads. We can and will give you a tentative time once we get the data from Great West.

David Hixson – I have a concern. Is this study going to be based on volume? We are not the most populated or heaviest traveled part of the county. Does that mean we will be left out of the study?

Commissioner Crago – No, based on volume is not how I understand the study to run. My understanding is that each township and surrounding area will get their own study. They will look at roads, bridges, culverts, borrow pits, drainage, bus routes, and individual road usage.

Rebecca Holland – What is the cost of this assessment and big study?

Commissioner Crago - \$75k, \$65k paid for by a planning grant issued by the state.

Peggy – Is there a plan?

Commissioner Hamilton – Yes there will be a plan and the last time we had a correct or updated study done was back in 2007. We need more current data.

Peggy – Will you use the information that was done in 2007?

Mark S. – Yes, it can and will be integrated. Our goal is to get all the information then the roads up to standard.

Commissioner Hamilton – As much information we can give them ahead of time will be helpful. We need you to tell us what roads are a priority to you.

Mark S.- Keep in mind your high-volume roads will not be compared to other area roads. Each community uses their roads differently.

Cinde Erfle – Can I jump back to the wind farm? How long do you think it will take?

Ken – Our target date is 2020 to be complete and operational.

Commissioner Crago – We have recently formed a Facilities Capital Improvement Plan Committee, FCIP. We meet once a week and discuss these types of issues. This group is made up of county citizens and some past and current county employees. We are meeting and discussing what we are going to do with county offices, and local law enforcement buildings and we will be back up here in July to get input from everyone and let you know what our plan is.

Mike Swartz – I just want to say thanks to Ray White for all he does up here with the plowing. There are also a lot of local farmers that have spent a lot of time and effort plowing up here.

Peggy – Here we are talking about big new buildings for the local government when we have schools busting out at the walls.

Commissioner Hamilton – While we do completely agree it is a problem, we wish there was something we could do. If there was something we could do we would. There is some wind farm money that is being utilized and may be able to help.

Commissioner Crago – With no further questions for us or the Wind Farm project we would like to thank you all for coming. We truly are an open door. We typically leave our Tuesdays from 2-4pm open for working sessions and Thursdays from 10-noon for walk ins. We want you to come to us with issues before they become problems, we can't fix. We thank you for coming and we will for sure let you know well in advance when we are going to come back up here to discuss Big Coulee and the Capital Improvement Plan. Thank you!

Meeting Adjourned: Hearing no further business, Commissioner Crago adjourned the meeting at 7:43PM.