

Prairie County Board of Commissioners Meeting

July 30th, 2025

*Prairie County Court House Commissioners Room
217 West Park St Terry, MT 59349*

www.prairiecounty.org

Prairie County Board of Commissioners Todd Devlin, Christine Keltner and Dennis Teske met in regular session at 9:00 a.m. In attendance Administrative Assistant Harry McNall.

9:00 a.m. Pledge of allegiance and call to order. Public Comment.

Andrea Bybee worked at the roping club during Terry Yippy and was paid personally, she didn't take the ambulance or equipment, it was on her personal time. The Commissioners believe that for liability purposes, the check goes to county and the county will pay her for her time.

Dan Pike showed the commissioners proposed wind turbine sites, based on maps provided by NextEra. This map shows turbines locations and sharp tail grouse dancing grounds. He believes that wind turbines and grouse are not compatible. The state cannot do anything to protect them, Dan wants to work with NextEra but has gotten nothing back from them. Ranchers are a positive influence on grouse habitat.

Clinton Grue: the Montana Fish, Wildlife Parks has a plan to trap sharp tail grouse to move them to Western Montana. Sheila Dixon and Reese Pirtz commented on this project as well. Reese explained that this is not a good program. Clint explained that the population in the proposed wind project has the one of the highest sharp tail grouse population in the state.

Clint Grue has a question about the effect of non-participating landowners with the road policy. County road going through private land.

Dan Pike relating to the road haul agreement increased traffic will deplete grouse populations.

Miles City BLM office for public comment Eric Lapisto calling in regards to last year's meeting concerning Wind Turbines. They are calling to inform the commission that they received a application concerning a transmission line from NextEra, Glendive Wind LLC. Its currently waiting review, spans 152 miles, just wanting to share information. Commissioners are asking for a hard copy of the application. They will let the commissioners know when they get the process started. A memo in July stated that a review of all applications concerning solar and turbines be reviewed by the high level of government agency first, and that is where it currently stands. Ross Feehan said he would get the commissioners a copy of the application.

Mary Elizabeth Grue; was there input from the property owners about the road policy? Will there be an opportunity to provide input? After a Glendive meeting Ross Feehan explained that 200-400 vehicles per day over a two-year period on their road, she explained that it open range area, there are real concerns about their livestock production and farm operations.

Shane Eaton: he thanked Dan Pike for bringing the map he provided to the commissioners, that shows wildlife concentrations in the proposed wind turbine area. Look at road approaches from NextEra, it is a concern about approaches and the increase in time required to keep it going during operation. It would be a large increase in cost, and he suggests that they rework policy, and put in a sliding scale for approaches concerning the cost of each approach.

Mary Elizabeth Grue; Concerns about the rise in crime rate during the project, Custer County had a increase in crime during their projects.

Reene Pirtz; This is an agricultural community, people come here because of the view of the sky etc. This is an industry that will hurt her business, agriculture and tourism. We don't need this project, we need to stand up for our citizens, can we count on our representatives? Can we forget the money? Stand up for the future, children and our way of life?

9:45 a.m. Road Supervisor Todd Henry and Ross Feehan with NextEra to discuss road permits. We have submitted road permits to the county, they will submit all separately. The county gave a draft of the county's road use agreement to review as the county continues to develop the road use agreement. Ross explained that the cost to keep up these roads, NextEra takes on the extra costs associated with this project on roads. The roads have to be kept before, during and after construction. Ross explained the road agreement needs to include their responsibilities, cost etc, and have a working relationship with the county road department.

The question "Would NextEra continue the project if the Federal Subsidies were gone? Ross Feehan "Yes"". The question was ask again and Ross Feehan's response "Yes Absolutely continue the project, we are committed to this project!".

Shane Eaton; Ownership will change over time of the project. What happens with massive reconstruction due to natural causes for future events? What about a bond in order to keep up the roads in the future.

Chele Harrington how many new approaches are put in place each year? Todd Henry maybe 1 or 2 per year. These approaches could affect someone's water supply or rights to that water supply. Do we need supplies or hydrologists to make sure they work? Another concern or question, what requirements are there for new or used culverts to be replaced? Will these approaches be considered "Start of construction?" Ross Feehan "I believe so".

Commissioner Devlin "why put in approach before the development of the plan?" Ross Feehan just the beginning of the project.

Dan Pike, in the past there have been interactions with NextEra biologists that deny information that's presented to them. Dan will provide the information to Ross Feehan with NextEra. Ross said he will review the information but makes no commitment to what will happen with that information.

Ross Feehan NextEra we have studied sage grouse in many areas concerning wind turbines. There are long term studies of the effects of sage grouse.

10:30 a.m. Discussions on current road department work, bridge report and new hire performance. The state is pushing the counties to take over approaches from state roads, and MACo is working on this issue with the state.

10:50 a.m. Commissioner Devlin read the minutes from the July 23rd, 2025, commissioners meeting.

10:59 a.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to accept the minutes from the July 23rd, 2025, commissioners meeting as corrected, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

11:00 a.m. Note the Bureau of Land Management did receive their certified letters, the commissioners received confirmation in the mail.

11:01 a.m. Clerk & Recorder Shari Robertson provided the commissioners with Payroll to review and sign.

Prairie County Voucher # 1 \$8,976.92

Prairie County Voucher # 1009 \$33,762.62

Prairie County Voucher # 1008 \$18,057.52

Prairie County Voucher # 1007 \$19,625.39

Prairie County Voucher # 1006 \$2,609.00

Prairie County Voucher # 1005 \$66,748.15

Commissioners reviewed and signed claims.

FY25 Claims

Prairie County Voucher # 1160 \$974.00

Prairie County Voucher # 1159 \$16,498.03

FY26 Claims

Prairie County Voucher # 1012 \$6,150.90

Prairie County Voucher # 1013 \$411.82

Voided Check Report Check 48835 Date was in wrong fiscal year.

Journal Adjustment #541

11:30 a.m. Clerk & Recorder Shari Robertson discussed budget amendment: road department amendment, 2190 property casualty liability amendment (take funds out of Oil & Gas). 2390 drug forfeiture fund amendment.

12:00 p.m. Lunch Break

1:00 p.m. Sheila Dixon spoke to the commissioners about Fish, Wildlife & Parks correspondence. Will the commissioners write a letter of support for FWP to build river access with a campsite near Terry Montana? Shane Eaton said that we should look at the existing sites such as Powder River or Fallon fishing site, nothing north of the river. Frank Eaton and Sons could be affected by placing a recreational site near their property or Dennis Teskes property. Putting in overnight camping takes away from local small businesses that already support that activity.

Todd Tibbitts; planting trees etc, to enhance our current sites. Education of water activities and changes in river conditions would help with search and rescue issues, and safety should be included in our recommendations letter.

Arron Martinson; write a letter of recommendation across the Milwaukee bridge as a recreational area.

Sheriff Kieffer says it would be good to have another boat ramp, and the powder river would be an ideal site.

1:30 p.m. Commissioners reviewed and read resolution 26-1 salaries.

1:45 p.m. Commissioner Keltner made a motion to accept Resolution 26-1, "Salaries" seconded by Commissioner Teske, "all in favor" motion passed.

2:00 p.m. Road Supervisor Todd Henry, provided the commissioners with NextEra's draft of a road haul agreement, and approach agreements.

3:00 p.m. Public Comment

Arron Martinson Ross Feehan mentioned working with county to reroute traffic, they can't reroute residents from cattle. Who will they reroute? NextEra or Public?

Shane Eaton on Milwaukee Bridge is there any updates, could you look into original engineering documents? He would also like to know what is going on with lawsuits, what the \$60,000 is for listed in previous minutes.

Commissioners: it is for the legal costs for the upcoming trial of the murder in Fallon Montana.

Sheila Dixon: Thanks the Land Planning Board for their hard work.

Todd Tibbitts do all 56 counties use Montana Association of Counties MACo for insurance, legal etc.

Commissioners: The larger counties self-insure, most others are through MACo.

Todd Tibbitts: what is with the executive meetings? How they worked and are minutes taken.

Yes, minutes are taken.

Scott Eaton: He read the executive order by president trump earlier this year Executive Order # 14315.

Shane Eaton: What is a county easement on a road or can a transmission line go on it. There could be issues with large loads, road easements, bridge weight limits, etc.

3:44 p.m. Lon Raukauf with the land planning board. Lon presented the commissioners with the board bi-laws draft to review. The land planning board will have the final draft for the Growth Policy to give to commissioners on August 6th, and the commission will post the draft on the county website. There will be a meeting on August 20th, 2025, to follow up with the commissioners.

4:00 p.m. Budget Discussion for County Fire with Dwight Tague and Clerk & Recorder Shari Robertson.

4:25 p.m. Commissioner Teske made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Devlin, "all in favor" motion passed.


Signed this 6th day of August 2025



Todd Devlin, Commissioner Chair

ATTEST: 

Shari Robertson, Clerk & Recorder


Deputy Clerk & Recorder
Asia Walters