

Prairie County Board of Commissioners Meeting

September 17th, 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. Administrative Assistant Harry McNall was on Vacation, Audio is still recorded for this meeting and minutes taken.

9:00 a.m. Pledge of Allegiance and Call to order. Public Comment.

Reene Pirtz: Question about permitting on road approaches. Would like clarification they appear to be improper permit application or request. They appear to be inappropriate, both private, state, and BLM land. These applications don't seem to consider protecting species, cattle etc. Road permitting is important, and they are submitting false permits, and we are being taken advantage of.

Shane Eaton: Went to the planning board meeting the other day. Back in December of 2023, we need to fire up the planning board. He explained his understanding of why the planning board was working on the growth policy, including outside advice. He thought type two zoning would be done at the same time, now the growth policy is done. It appears nothing is happening. Dawson and McCone have provided good directions from the commission.

Arron Martinson: If approaches are put in, I have always thought that the county puts in approaches, not the applicant. So, will the county be responsible for putting these in?

Commissioner Teske: Explained the current process for approaches being put in. He also explained that landowners can put them in with permission and supervision from the county road department.

Arron Martinson: Is the cost for this process enough to cover multiple trips for inspection?

Commissioner Teske: Explained in further details about concerns over this process. He is in favor of permits instead of agreements with NextEra. He explained what he understands people want and his thoughts on how to get there.

Lisa Everett: The survey keeps getting referenced, and it doesn't really represent the majority, because only a small percentage was returned.

Shane Eaton: Commissioner Devlin you were in DC last week, were you able to resolve any issues with the BLM, while you had your meeting with the US Department of Interior? We would appreciate a recap of your trip. Thank you.

Commissioner Teske: The survey if it wasn't important to someone, they threw it away, but if it was important they filled it out and returned it. Those are the important ones, those are the ones we need to consider.

Mary Kountz: When were the scoping letters sent out? I don't live in Prairie County but I own property. Reene Pirtz explained the process since she was involved in the scoping letter.

9:30 a.m. Review of approach applications and decision. Commissioner Teske looked at each one of the roads and impacted areas for each of the applications. There was discussion about property owners needing to give permission, and that these are not approaches but rather encroachments. The commissioners also discussed next steps, sending the check back to NextEra with an explanation.

Commissioner Teske says they are asking for something that this application is not. They are asking for an approach not an encroachment. There were many public comments during this discussion about not approving and why.

Commissioner Devlin: We cannot give permission to go onto private property.

The Commission signed and denied all applications from Glendive Wind LLC as submitted.

10:00 a.m. Road Department, Road Supervisor Todd Henry and crew are out of town doing training.

Commissioner Devlin briefly described his discussions with the Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Interior.

County Attorney Dan Rice joined the meeting to discuss with commissioners the approach applications from NextEra. He explained that they are not asking to go outside of the right of way and doesn't impact private property. He agreed that what they submitted is very confusing. Dan had reached out to NextEra's lawyer for clarification but had only sent it to Administrative Assistant Harry McNall, who was on vacation. There was back and forth discussion about the application. Dan expressed that they should not have disapproved the applications, and should have allowed supplemental documentation to support the application instead of returning the money and having them resubmit the applications.

11:30 a.m. County Treasurer Garrett Lapp updated the commissioners on investments and property tax update.

Commissioner Teske made a motion to accept the investment report, seconded by Commissioner Keltner, "all in favor" motion passed.

Commissioner signed the agreement for the maintenance agreement for Montana Interactive for the Itax portal.

Garrett Lapp explained to the commissioners his recent conversations with DOR, and what effects taxes will have on primary and secondary homes.

12:00 p.m. Lunch Break

1:00 p.m. Rolane Christopherson with the Library. Informed the commission that they had met with the state library, that there are some options that can be done with the building, curbs, etc. The biggest concern is making the building handicap accessible. She explained many of the aspects of the library that could be improved or refinished. This was concerning the money donated by the Charlie and Ruth Franks Memorial.

2:00 p.m. Deputy Clerk & Recorder Aria Walters Provided the Commissioners with Claims

Prairie County Voucher # 1031 \$955.15

Prairie County Voucher # 1030 \$2,031.91

Prairie County Voucher # 1029 \$97,591.75

Prairie County Voucher # 1028 \$4,278.04

2:00 p.m. Clerk & Recorder Shari Robertson and Deputy Clerk Aria Walters provided the commissioners with the Big Sheep Mountain Park District Petition, and certified signatures, and other information provided to support the district petition. Provided the commissioners with a spreadsheet, and how they put together the certification of signatures, as well as detailed information on what they did during the process of preparing the certification and verifying all the information submitted. The commissioners are responsible for reviewing all the information that they have put together, and a public hearing and resolution will follow. There was a 76.5% landowner approval from within the district.

Commissioner Teske made a motion to accept the petition for the Big Sheep Mountain Park District, seconded by Commissioner Devlin, "all in favor" motion passed.

Shane Eaton ask for a timeline of what will come next concerning this petition. Had a question, was there a decision on if BLM could be a part of the district?

Commissioner Devlin explained that the County Attorney is currently soliciting opinion Solicitors office of the Department of Interior concerning that question.

Arron Martinson wanted to thank the "Clerk & Records Office" for all the hard work they did, and time they put into completing the task for this petition. Thank you!

3:00 p.m. Public Comment: Clerk & Recorder Shari Robertson read a letter to the editor written by Lance Kalfell.

Norma Peabody: She doesn't agree with the letter from Lance Kalfell. How much of the money will actually come back to the county?

Todd Tibbetts: We need to cherish our road easements, it was hard to get these easements in place. These easements are very hard to get, and they are very important, and may be difficult to in the future.

Shane Eaton: Do you plan on contacting BLM about those road proposals concerning the easements? Made a comment about Sage Grouse Lek's in North Dakota and the low numbers, and it could be the same for Montana.

Commissioner Devlin explained some of the executive orders done by President Trump during his first term, that removed some of the restrictions to encourage alternative energy. One of those orders removed the migratory bird act requirements for wind farms, on public lands.

Todd Tibbetts: Something that needs to be addressed is emergency service response protocols. There are many places that don't have cellular service. Communication for emergency services are very important.

Arron Martinson: Is there something coming up about the road policy. There are a lot of ideas that are floating around in these meetings, and some of them need to be put into the road policy.

Norma Reilly: Not happy with the letter to the editor, she wants her grandchildren to see the way things are now. The beauty will be gone when NextEra comes in.

Michelle Martinson: Two of her grandchildren sent letters to President Trump about how bad it would be to have wind turbines in Prairie County.

Reene Pirtz: made a comment about visitors who come to see the night sky, hunt, etc.

Signed this 8th day of October 2025




Todd Devlin, Commissioner Chair

ATTEST:



Shari Robertson, Clerk & Recorder

by: 
Aria Walters, Deputy Clerk: Recorder

Letter to the editor

ATTN: Residents of Prairie County and the Town of Terry

Strategic development should be the result of a publicly vetted process, rather than two people deciding what county-wide zoning looks like. A quiet majority exists, and that majority has the right to speak up in order to prevent development from being circumvented by personal bias.

In another one or two decades, what will our school look like without additional funding? What will our local healthcare system look like? Will we be able to retain healthcare professionals and keep our clinic open? In twenty years, will we have a vital downtown with small businesses, stores, and restaurants? Can we keep moving ahead without resources other communities have tapped into?

There won't be any other major investors headed our way any time soon with a better plan for contributing to the county's tax base. Tax revenue from wind development could improve our all of the aforementioned facilities, as well as help maintain our roads, the library, and the fairgrounds; infrastructure we all use and cherish that cannot weather economic stagnation.

Currently, Prairie County gleans most of its active funding from agriculture and tourism. Agricultural operations continue to consolidate and downsize. Tourism is growing slowly, but is limited by the need for additional infrastructure and volunteer labor. Neither of these economic sectors will provide the kind of boost Prairie County needs to sustain itself.

Feel free to ask other local entities about their individual improvement plans and the funding they require. I have heard all of the arguments, both misleading and factual, regarding NextEra's windfarm development in Prairie County. Zoning remains a fickle proposition. It is a serious step that should not be determined by 2 out of 3 commissioners, who may not have skin in the game. It is time for the quiet majority to speak up and drown out the "circus" attempting to halt development. This is a watershed moment for the residents of Prairie County. The future will look much different for our children and grandchildren if we let a couple of people silence progress.

Lance Kalfell