

**BIG SKY RESORT AREA DISTRICT  
11 LONE PEAK DRIVE NO. 204  
BIG SKY, MONTANA**

**MINUTES OF THE BSRAD/JOINT COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING  
MAY 14, 2025, 10:00 A.M.**

**MEMBERS:**

Kevin Germain	Big Sky Resort Area District Board Member
Sarah Blechta	Big Sky Resort Area District Board Member
Grace Young	Big Sky Resort Area District Board Member
Michelle Kendziorski	Big Sky Resort Area District Board Member
John Zirkle	Big Sky Resort Area District Board Member
Jennifer Boyer	Gallatin County Commissioner
Zach Brown	Gallatin County Commissioner
Scott MacFarlane	Gallatin County Commissioner
Bill Todd	Madison County Commissioner
Duke Gilman	Madison County Commissioner
Ron Nye	Madison County Commissioner

Minutes prepared by Bethany Young of Minutes Solutions Inc. from a recording

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

There being a quorum present, and adequate and proper notice of the meeting having been given, the meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Madeleine Feher**, CEO of the Big Sky Community Organization, thanked the Commissioners, Board members, and community for their support of the recently passed groundbreaking bond initiatives.

**Dustin Tetrault**, Chief of the Big Sky Fire Department, thanked attendees for supporting the establishment of a Rural Improvement District. Groundbreaking for the Spanish Peaks Fire Station will be held on June 5, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. This is the first time in Montana that a Rural Improvement District is being used to fund construction of a fire station and will serve as a model for other fire departments throughout the state.

**3. OLD BUSINESS**

**3.1 FY26 Budget Process Overview**

**3.1.1 Big Sky Resort Area District (BSRAD)**

Danny Bierschwale, Executive Director of BSRAD, provided an overview of the BSRAD budget process based on the previous year's collection of the 4% tax on luxury goods and services. The FY26 operating budget will be approved in advance of the July 1, 2025, start of the fiscal year. The FY26 impact area budget will be created and approved in August 2025. He explained that the grant cycle has been shifted to the fall, enabling the creation of an accurate budget based on real dollar amounts versus forecasts.

### **3.1.2 Gallatin County**

Scott MacFarlane explained that, while budget decisions are made leading up to June, the budget is a moving target until the Department of Revenue information is made available in August. He stated that other than a proposed 3% raise for employees, the FY26 budget finalized in August 2025 would be a status quo budget.

### **3.1.3 Madison County**

Ron Nye stated that budget hearings would begin on May 21, 2025, but that the budget would not be finalized until the taxable value revenue figures are obtained from the state in August 2025. He noted that, despite the rural nature of Madison County, its taxable values continue to rise because of Big Sky.

The floor was opened for public comments and the following questions were asked and answered :

- Are you able to start quantifying the impacts of the new tax bill, with 25% of property being newly taxable?
- It would be useful to have more conversations around the homestead exemption when evaluating the new formula for taxable values.

## **3.2 Big Sky Local Governance Study**

Dylan Pipinich, Land Planner with the WGM Group, provided a project update. He highlighted the successful community engagement activities and presented an overview of the factors considered in the existing conditions report that is available on the Big Sky Governance Study website. He explained that the WGM Group paused their creation of scenarios due to the May 2025 elections and legislative bills affecting taxes, so the fiscal analysis for each scenario would be based on the most accurate information. The three scenarios for consideration will be presented in a comprehensive manner in July 2025 at the third public meeting.

## **3.3 US 191/MT 64 Corridor Study Update**

Brandon Jones, Butte District Preconstruction Engineer, provided an overview of the ongoing Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) projects in the Big Sky area that resulted from the 2020 US 191/MT 64 Corridor Study. He noted that the Big Sky North roadway deterioration and guardrail embankment erosion will be addressed in FY26. He shared the signage sequence for the planned US 191 turnouts through Gallatin Canyon to encourage the intended use by slower traffic to allow faster traffic to pass and to disallow recreational parking. He presented the three alignment options for the Lava Lake bridge replacement. He explained that Phase Two of the intersection control evaluation of the US 191/MT 64 intersection will be completed in June 2025 and shared the conceptual layout of a roundabout at the intersection.

The floor was opened for public comments and questions. Brandon Jones addressed the following questions and comments:

- Will lanes be added approaching the US 191/MT 64 intersection roundabout?
- Will the roundabout be designed with a lower curb on the interior circle in consideration of large truck and trailer traffic?

- Are there any safety considerations for the proposed Gallatin Canyon passing lanes to ensure there will not be head-on collision concerns as traffic merges into one lane?
- Would it be possible to add an MDT camera to the US 191/MT 64 junction?
- The US 191/MT 64 intersection is the second most important issue to Big Sky, after workforce housing. The help of Gallatin County and Madison County will be needed to address the issue.
- There is a need for a smart canyon project where technology is used to help make informed choices in traveling down the canyon. Cameras, traffic counters, and a website communicating travel times and issues would be helpful.
- Is there a timeline for the Lava Lake project regardless of the selected alternative?

### **3.4 Gallatin County Urban Transportation District (GCUTD)**

Jennifer Boyer explained that the GCUTD will soon complete the year-long administrative process to separate from HRDC and have their policies accepted by the Federal Transit Administration. Once approved, the GCUTD will determine how to expand services, geography, and frequency of service.

The floor was opened for public comments and questions. Jennifer Boyer addressed the following question and comment:

- Considering 80% of the Big Sky workforce commutes from the GCUTD, there is a great opportunity for collaboration as workforce housing increases.
- When can residents expect a regular, reliable bus service from the airport to the ski resort?

### **3.5 County Growth Policy Updates**

#### **3.5.1 Gallatin County**

The Gallatin County update was deferred to the Gallatin County Zoning Reform agenda item.

#### **3.5.2 Madison County**

Bill Todd explained that, after a comprehensive review of the 2012 county growth policy and community engagement, the 2025 Madison County Growth Policy Update was adopted on February 25, 2025. He noted that it is not a land-use plan or a regulatory document but can be used for compliance purposes.

## **4. NEW BUSINESS**

### **4.1 May Election Results**

#### **4.1.1 BSRAD & Big Sky School District (BSSD) 72**

Kevin Germain announced the Gallatin County final unofficial results of the May 6, 2025, election. Betsy Biggerstaff and Barbara Rowley were elected as Big Sky School District trustees. The BSSD general fund housing levy passed for teacher workforce housing. Firelight Meadows voted to establish a water and sewer district. The resort tax was renewed with 82%

of the vote. Voters validated Michelle Kendziorski as a BSRAD Board member. The Community Park bond and Cold Smoke housing and infrastructure bonds all passed.

The floor was opened for public comments and questions. Kevin Germain addressed the following question and comment:

- Is the new water and sewer district considering Firelight units to be two- or three-bedroom units?
- The approximately 1,200 votes cast represents 50% of Big Sky voters, more than the average spring election turnout of 30%. This highlights the high level of local community engagement.

#### **4.1.2 Ennis School and Madison County Court House**

Bill Todd reported a 51% voter turnout that was rare for spring elections. He noted that the Ennis school building reserve fund levy, the Ennis schools general fund levy, and the courthouse restoration county bond passed.

#### **4.2 2025 Big Sky Sector and Business Overview**

Jackie Haines highlighted the locally specific data BSRAD is able to obtain through the yearly business registrations. Data was shown on businesses by county and sector as well as tax collections by sector. Employee data included breakdowns by work location, residence location, and whether they were full-time, part-time, or seasonal. She noted that 114 businesses provide access to workforce housing and the number of short-term rentals has increased by 7% to 1,300 units.

The floor was opened for public comments and questions. Jackie Haines answered the following questions:

- Do short-term rentals collect resort tax?
- Do short-term rentals try to protect data by just sending a check or do they have to specify occupancy numbers?
- Why construction of luxury homes greater than 3,000 square feet are not taxed as luxury homes?

#### **4.3 Gallatin County Open Lands Grants Results**

Scott MacFarlane provided background on the Gallatin County open lands program and allocation of 18% of funds to support other eligible projects such as improving public access to open lands. He reported that, in 2025, there were 19 project requests requiring a total of \$1.5 million in funding. After evaluation, 13 projects were selected to be funded with the \$1.1 million available to be granted. The awarded grants will fund river access projects in West Yellowstone, Gallatin River restoration projects, park projects in Bozeman and Belgrade, and others. Each applicant was provided with the opportunity to give three-minute summaries of their project at the April 29, 2025, Gallatin County Commission meeting.

The floor was opened for the public comments and the following question was asked:

- How many acres of large tract land have been set aside?

#### **Gallatin County Zoning Reform**

Zach Brown noted that Big Sky zoning regulations would not be affected by proposed zoning reforms. He stated that the county has 22 independent zoning districts and that 70% of private land in Gallatin County is unzoned. To reduce the confusion to the public and difficulties of planning staff communication and clear expectation setting with developers and constituents, community-listening sessions and a planning workshop were held to develop high-level directions for the planning department. They eliminated the options of no zoning and consolidated county-wide zoning. They focused on the short-term goals of a zoning menu and growth-focused reform. They proposed creating a 23<sup>rd</sup> zoning district to include all unzoned private land. The creation of a menu of zoning options for those wanting to propose new zoning will allow new zoning to be proposed and enacted in a predictable manner. Growth-focused zoning reform will be considered in areas of high growth and development pressure in the valley between Belgrade, Bozeman, and Four Corners. Residents can register to receive updates on zoning reform on the [envisiiongallatin.com](http://envisiiongallatin.com) website.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kevin Germain announced that he and Danny Bierschwale will resume meetings with constituents of Madison and Gallatin counties twice a year between the Joint meetings.

Kevin Germain thanked the Madison and Gallatin County Commissioners for their collaboration with BSRAD, proving they are truly better together.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting closed at 11:45 a.m.

#### **DISCLAIMER**

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

*Grace Young*  
Grace Young (Jul 10, 2025 09:30 MDT)

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Grace Young, Secretary and Treasurer






# 2025.05.14 Minutes

Final Audit Report

2025-07-10

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