

**MCA 2-3-212.** Minutes of meetings. Minutes must include without limitation: (a) the date, time, and place of the meeting; (b) a list of the individual members of the public body, agency, or organization who were in attendance; (c) the substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided; and (d) at the request of any member, a record of votes by individual members for any votes taken.

## **APPROVED MINUTES**

The Libby City Council held regular meeting #1694 on Monday, February 2, 2026, in the Council Chamber at Libby City Hall.

### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Taylor.

Present were Mayor Taylor, Councilors Brooke Bolin, Gail Burger, Brian Crompton, Ethan Kolp, Erica Schaefer, Administrator Sam Sikes, Clerk/Treasurer Leann Monigold, and (via Zoom) City Attorney Dean Chisholm. Councilor Zimmerman was not in attendance.

### **Announcements:**

Mayor Taylor announced the City of Libby was awarded a plaque from the General of the Montana National Guard on January 27 for the City's assistance with their water treatment system and resources during problems at the Deer Lodge State Prison. The plaque will be on display at City Hall.

Councilor Burger announced Planning and Zoning will meet on Monday, February 23 at 6:00 pm, and the Wildlife Management Committee will meet on Monday, February 16 at 2:00 pm.

Councilor Kolp announced the Cemetery and Parks Committee will meet Friday at 3:30 pm at City Hall.

### **Department Head Reports:**

Administrator: Administrator Sikes reported the sewer Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) startup meeting was held and the first bi-weekly meeting went well. City Engineer Andy is locating rental flow meters to gather actual data on flow volumes through specific pipes, approximately three months of rental at a cost of a few thousand dollars – knowledge gained will be well worth it for future planning. The NRDP grant extension is still pending before going out to bid on the spoils pile parking lot at the biathlon ski course. NRDP provided a \$275,000 grant for engineering and construction; phase one is complete and remaining funds will go to bid. If bids come in under budget the project will be awarded; if over, council can consider adding funds from the Community Development Fund. Phase two of Spruce Street is complete except for a lengthy list of discrepancies. Mayor Taylor, Streets Supervisor Williams, and Administrator Sikes reviewed the site, and former City Engineer Mike Fraser compiled a list sent to the contractor. Fines are being

imposed for delays to make the city whole. An application was received for the newly created Deputy City Administrator position and the Mayor will schedule interviews.

For the lower reservoir, de-watering is ongoing while engineers finalize the coffer dam design. The coffer dam will raise water depth on one side of the reservoir by a couple feet to allow the system to operate as designed. De-watering is revealing additional issues including gapping, all part of disaster recovery costs. Core samples will be taken and RFQs will go out in the next couple of weeks. Cabinet Heights Road is being monitored for damage from sediment hauling traffic. Shaughnessy Hill Road, owned by the county, is also a concern with spring breakup approaching. A meeting was held with Jerry Ray and ER Assist – since the county owns the road the city cannot take responsibility, but photos and samples are being taken before and after operations to include in disaster recovery costs.

The biggest hurdle is disaster funding. The emergency declaration signed by President Trump brought in federal partners including Army Corps of Engineers and Montana DES. The city is now awaiting a Presidential Disaster Response Declaration. If signed, all current work and wall repair or replacement will be reimbursed. If not, other avenues are being pursued including Montana DES multi-million dollar emergency funds (meeting scheduled for the following morning) and a USDA Rural Development program offering a \$600,000 grant and a \$2 million loan, 75% of which would be granted outright with no repayment deadline or penalties on the remaining loan portion. The city is pursuing all three avenues simultaneously so that if the disaster declaration is later signed, the city will simply be repaid and the loan process unwound. A Special Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday at 6:30 pm to discuss these options.

**Streets Supervisor:** Streets Supervisor Williams reported on January activities. Cemetery had one cremain and two full burials. Fence repairs were made at Fireman's Park and the city water department shop on Cedar Street due to windstorm damage. Jetting and camera work continued on City Service Road for future water main extension. Six mornings of early call-in for de-icing and four days of water shutoffs. Ice and snow were cleared from upper Flower Creek Dam decking to maintain safe access for monitoring. One hydrant on Second and Nevada was repaired after being hit by a vehicle. Radar speed signs were installed on Louisiana and Education Way. Water service line was replaced at 1019 Nevada from the main to curb stop (city responsibility). Water line was also replaced on the backside of Western News building from curb stop to structure (property owner's responsibility). Concrete prep and slab work were completed at the city street shop for generator installation and at the splash pad near the ice slicer storage building. Stop meter list is being updated as meters reach end of lifespan. A 10-inch water main repair was completed on Sixth Street with a thumb-sized hole in the main. There were numerous late-night and early morning callouts to get water back online through the sedimentation basin. Cold temps caused intake screens to freeze over requiring clearing, and pumping lines also froze. Water plant operators, street staff, and Noble Excavation crew have been working through those challenges together. Sediment hauling from the lower reservoir and city pit

started January 19 and is expected to wrap up mid-week, pending the recent rain event re-saturating the ground.

Mild weather allowed sweeping for sediment and windstorm debris earlier than normal without needing water. Pothole patching has been ongoing as asphalt shows its age and stop sign panels are being replaced due to fading. City mechanic is doing an outstanding job keeping equipment safe and operational. A stop sign at Fifth and Dakota was damaged in an auto accident the previous Saturday, replaced with a damage report turned over to Libby Police Department.

**Police:** Chief Ercanbrack commended the Street Department for their hard work. January had 285 cases compared to 194 in January of the previous year, including 2 assaults, 6 disturbances, 5 threatening calls, 3 thefts, 1 mental health call, 22 public assists, 7 juvenile problems, 8 walkthroughs, 4 city ordinances, 24 suspicious people or vehicles, 9 crashes, 5 DUIs or drug cases, 145 traffic stops, and 51 additional agency assists. Notably, over 40% of contacts with the public are self-initiated by officers rather than calls for service, demonstrating proactive community policing.

New radar speed signs on Louisiana and Education Way are generating significant data. In one week, 6,000 vehicles traveled northbound on Louisiana toward the hospital; over 40,000 in just under three weeks. On Education Way, 5,285 cars traveled toward the elementary school in one week. This data will be used with the Street Department to pursue funding for road repairs and improvements. Chief Ercanbrack met with Senator Sheehy and his team regarding a grant for patrol cars and a camera system. The camera system alone is a \$70,000 grant and up to six patrol cars could potentially be replaced. The request window closes the first week of March. The DUI task force was also re-established through proper state channels, allowing access to additional equipment funding and grant money for DUI emphasis shifts.

**Clerk/Treasurer:** Clerk/Treasurer Leann Monigold reported she just returned from vacation and has been catching up. Tracking of all hours, equipment, and expenses related to the flood disaster is ongoing and being submitted to ER Assist for FEMA documentation. All W-2s were issued last month and submitted electronically to the Social Security Administration and the State of Montana. All 1099s were filed electronically. All 941 quarterly payroll tax returns are submitted along with workers' compensation and unemployment filings. Year-end has been a very busy time.

### **Committee Reports:**

Mayor Taylor noted no committees met in January as committee assignments were just re-designated at the last council meeting. Committee reports are expected at the next council meeting.

### **Public Comment Non-Agenda:**

Vince Backen commented regarding the formation of a local ethics committee pursuant to Montana Code, explaining Council has the authority to establish such a committee by resolution. Requesting the matter be placed on a future agenda for discussion and encouraged Council to consider taking action themselves rather than sending the issue to a public vote.

DC Orr member of the Local Government Study Commission requested council make a motion to allow the commission to give committee reports so council is informed of their work, and noted the Commission has a meeting Wednesday at 10:00 am to address allegations made by the county attorney.

Loretta Jones expressed concern about the turkey population on Louisiana Avenue, stating she has counted hundreds of turkeys going by her home and asked council for solutions. Mayor Taylor directed her to the Wildlife Management Committee meeting on Monday, February 16 at 2:00 pm.

### **New Business:**

#### **LOR Foundation Presentation:**

Tabitha Viergutz, LOR Foundation Community Officer, gave a presentation about the LOR Foundation for the benefit of new council members. LOR is a private family foundation funded by a single benefactor, Amy Wiese and Ed Carmelo, and does not receive government grants or conduct fundraising. LOR has worked in Montana since 2014 and opened in Libby in 2022. LOR has designated Libby as their Montana site through June 2028. Ms. Viergutz is a Libby local hired to listen to the community, identify priorities, and find ways to support them. To date, 307 approved projects and sponsorships totaling \$2,464,858 have been funded in Libby. This year's community grant budget is \$1,000,000. LOR has also leveraged 28 additional outside funding opportunities bringing in \$765,328. Grant sizes range from \$50 to \$30,000, with most projects completing within one year and no long-term reporting requirements beyond a final report. LOR funds eight elements: health, housing, transportation, water, engagement, environment, economy, and education. All funding must be community-driven and locally originated. Applicants do not need to be a nonprofit as LOR works with local nonprofits as fiscal sponsors. LOR also provides grant writing assistance, letters of support, community connections, monthly funding opportunity lists tailored to rural communities, and community event sponsorships. LOR prioritizes spending grant funds locally.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Approve appointments to the Libby Shade Tree Committee (Tree Board):**

Mayor Taylor explained per city ordinance 12-44-040, the Shade Tree Committee consists of five members, three must be city residents and two may be Lincoln County residents outside city limits. Councilor Kolp has offered to serve as committee chair. Tree applicants were present to introduce themselves; one applicant, Anne Weber, was unable to attend but her written application was available for council review.

Jennifer Nelson, a Libby native with a career in forestry, has volunteered with the tree board for several years. Worked with former Mayor Williams on grants to replace trees, organized pruning days with the Street crew, and noted the Tree Board's critical role in replanting following the 1997 microburst.

Jeremy Rank, a forester with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at the Fisher River/Kootenai River office, has lived in the Libby area since 1995. A former certified arborist and offered his forestry expertise to the committee.

David Kopilow with DNRC, Libby Unit, is a Fire Adapted Community Coordinator with ten years of experience as a wildland firefighter. Noted tree health is a major component of wildfire preparedness and a key reason for his interest in the Tree Board.

Councilor Burger **MADE A MOTION** to approve the appointments of the Libby Shade Tree Committee for David, Jeremy, Anne, Jennifer and Ethan, Councilor Schaefer **SECONDED**.

Public Comment: None.

Councilors Bolin, Burger, Crompton, Kolp, and Schaefer voted **FOR**.

**MOTION PASSED.**

**Approve Libby Police Department to apply for a Montana Tourism Grant for a new patrol vehicle:**

Chief Ercanbrack explained the Montana Emergency Tourism Assistance Program (METAP) is a \$50,000 grant funded by tourism dollars with leftover 2025 funds reopened for application. The normal patrol car cost is \$75,000 so the remaining \$25,000 would come from the City's Capital Improvement Plan, Administrator Sikes confirmed the police CIP is designated for patrol car replacement.

Councilor Bolin **MADE A MOTION** to approve the Libby Police Department to apply for the METAP, Councilor Kolp **SECONDED**.

Public Comment: None.

Councilors Bolin, Burger, Crompton, Kolp, and Schaefer voted **FOR**.

**Approve Libby Police Department to request funds from the County for the Opioid Settlement Fund to purchase a Spectrometer:**

Chief Ercanbrack explained opioid settlement funds from successful prosecution of opioid cases are distributed through regional and county tiers. Would like to request county-level funds for an Apex AR-7 spectrometer, which fires a laser to identify the exact chemical composition of a substance. Current practice requires officers to open drug containers and apply chemicals directly, exposing them to dangerous substances including fentanyl. The spectrometer can scan through plastic bags without opening them, keeping officers safer while providing faster and more precise identification. It also helps the crime lab narrow down testing of unknown substances and can detect explosive materials allowing officers to assess bomb threats in the field without waiting up to five hours for a bomb squad. The cost is approximately \$33,000.

Councilor Burger **MADE A MOTION** to approve the Libby Police Department to request funds from the county for the LPI opioid settlement fund to purchase a spectrometer, Councilor Crompton **SECONDED**.

Public Comment: None.

Councilors Bolin, Burger, Crompton, Kolp, and Schaefer voted **FOR**.

**MOTION PASSED.**

**Approve all claims received to date:**

Councilor Burger **MADE A MOTION** to approve all claims received to date, Councilor Bolin **SECONDED**.

**Public Comment:** None

Councilors Bolin, Burger, Crompton, Kolp, and Schaefer voted **FOR**.

**MOTION PASSED.**

**General Comments from Council:**

Councilor Kolp reported attending the Chamber of Commerce banquet last Friday at the Memorial Center, noting the heat was working and it was a very nice event.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Councilor Kolp **MADE A MOTION** to adjourn, Councilor Burger **SECONDED**.

Councilors Bolin, Burger, Crompton, Kolp, and Schaefer voted FOR.

**MOTION PASSED.**

Mayor Taylor adjourned the meeting at 7:54 pm.

\_\_\_\_\_

Mayor Hugh Taylor

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk/Treasurer Leann Monigold