



City of Libby Libby Montana

www.cityoflibby.com

PO Box 1428
952 E. Spruce Street
Libby MT, 59923
(406) 293-2731
Fax (406) 293-4090

Zoning Commission Agenda

Monday, October 26, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Review and approve minutes from May, July and September
3. Letter of Support for CDBG Grant to upgrade Lift Station at 1st & Montana
4. Letter to Council recommending pursuit of funding to create a Transportation Plan
5. Review Residential B and create opportunities to allow higher density development
6. General Comments from Commission
7. Public Comment
8. Adjournment

To access this meeting electronically with Zoom:

Dial: 253-215-8782

Meeting ID: 4042719951

Password: 151041

Posted: 10/22/26

UNAPPROVED MINUTES – MAY 11, 2026

The Zoning Commission held a meeting on Monday, May 11, 2026, at Libby City Hall. The meeting had been rescheduled from its regular date.

Call to Order

Kristin Smith opened the meeting, noting Roberta McCanse had not yet arrived. Present were Gail Burger, Jennifer Nelson, and Jaden Ueland. Roberta McCanse joined after the meeting was underway. Tina Oliphant, representing the applicant for the Ohno property, was also present, along with members of the public attending remotely.

Approve Minutes for Meeting Dated March 22, 2026

Jennifer Nelson requested a correction to the draft minutes, noting the “Conclusion/Next Steps” section stated the commission had agreed to rezone Parcel A-1 to commercial, when in fact no vote was taken on that point and it remained an open question for further discussion. The commission agreed to revise that language to reflect that the matter was discussed rather than decided.

Gail Burger **MADE A MOTION** to approve the March 22, 2026 minutes as amended. Jaden Ueland **SECONDED**.

All voted FOR.

MOTION PASSED.

Discussion – Ohno Property (formerly Asa Wood) Rezoning

The commission continued discussion carried over from March regarding a rezoning application for the Ohno property. Tina Oliphant advised the commission that, after hearing the discussion of what the “residential business” designation would allow, the applicant is withdrawing the original application and will submit a new one. The new application will request that all of Parcel A-1 (4.45 acres, currently split between 2.23 acres of Residential-A and the remainder Highway Commercial) be rezoned entirely to Highway Commercial. Parcel B (4.28 acres) will not be included in the new request while the applicant determines the most appropriate zoning for it.

Jennifer Nelson asked for background on why Parcel A-1 currently carries split zoning. Kristin Smith explained that a 2024 boundary line adjustment reconfigured the lots but, because the resulting lots still conformed to zoning requirements, did not trigger a separate zoning review, leaving the parcel split between Residential-A and Highway Commercial.

Jennifer Nelson noted that portions of Parcel A-1 lie substantially within the floodplain and stated the commission should consider environmental impact and public health and safety as part of its review, even though floodplain conveyance requirements are separately enforced at the time of building permitting. Kristin Smith asked that the new application include an overlay of the floodplain boundary for the commission’s reference.

The commission discussed whether an assisted living facility would be an allowed use under Highway Commercial zoning, noting such a use includes a commercial services component and would likely be permitted. Jennifer Nelson reported she had contacted a representative of Emmanuel Lutheran Home, who confirmed strong interest in developing an assisted living facility on this property given the site’s location and Libby’s growing senior population, but indicated the asking price for the property is currently a barrier. The commission discussed the community’s need for additional senior housing options and its potential to indirectly ease general housing availability in Libby. The commission also briefly discussed the community’s long-standing need for a citywide transportation plan, noting such a plan would require grant funding and a city match. No action was taken on either topic.

Because the applicant is withdrawing the current application and will resubmit, the commission took no formal action and closed discussion of this item.

Update - Industrial Zoning Changes

Kristin Smith reported she has not yet forwarded the proposed industrial zoning changes to City Council, pending finalization of a map distinguishing light and heavy industrial areas. The proposed change would downzone several small residential lots in the Thomas Avenue and First Street area, currently zoned industrial, to residential for public health and safety reasons, since owners of those lots would otherwise be unable to rebuild homes damaged there. Jaden Ueland reported having personally notified the affected property owners, with one exception who could not be reached, and that the owners were supportive of the change.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Kristin Smith closed the meeting. No formal motion to adjourn was made. She noted the commission's next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 22, 2026.

UNAPPROVED MINUTES – JULY 13, 2026

The Zoning Commission held a meeting on Monday, July 13, 2026, at Libby City Hall.

Call to Order

Kristin Smith called the meeting to order, noting a full board was in attendance. Present were Gail Burger, Jennifer Nelson, Roberta McCanse, Jaden Ueland, and Mark Andreasen. Kristin Smith was also present, along with Tina Oliphant, representing applicant Ohno LLC, and several members of the public.

Discussion – Ono LLC Rezone Request, Parcel A-1 (Certificate of Survey 501RB)

This item continued discussion from a previous meeting on Ohno LLC's request to rezone a 2.23-acre portion of Parcel A-1 from Residential-A to Highway Commercial. The remainder of Parcel A-1 already carries a Residential Business designation approved previously. The commission had received written comments in advance from Jennifer Nelson, Mark Andreasen, and resident Peggy Williams.

Jennifer Nelson reiterated traffic safety concerns raised at the prior meeting, noting the new connection between Nevada Street and Highway 2 is untested and that the area already experiences congestion at the Sixth Street Bridge, a narrow county bridge with poor sightlines, as well as at a nearby four-way stop, bus stop, post office drive-through, and the Highway 37/California Avenue intersection.

Roberta McCanse agreed traffic was a valid concern and asked about the alternative Mark Andreasen had proposed. Gail Burger noted the new segment of Nevada Street is already under construction regardless of the zoning outcome and stated she continued to favor making the remaining portion of the parcel consistently Highway Commercial. Mark Andreasen explained his proposal to use Flower Creek as a natural boundary, keeping the west side Highway Commercial and using the east side as Residential Business, consistent with the commission's original intent to provide a buffer between highway commercial and residential uses. Jaden Ueland stated that zoning would not change the amount of traffic generated and supported moving forward with the full Highway Commercial designation to allow for development.

Kristin Smith noted that while a new connector road could help distribute traffic away from Sixth Street, her main concern is that many uses permitted under Highway Commercial, such as drive-throughs, are not well suited to this location, and that the city currently lacks a zoning district tailored to a property with this mix of characteristics. She referenced a hybrid zoning code she had drafted previously for similar situations. Tina Oliphant, representing the applicant, explained the request is intended to resolve a zoning gap that could otherwise leave a single building split across two zoning designations, and noted Highway Commercial is currently the only classification that would allow the higher-density and assisted living housing the community has identified as a need.

Kristin Smith responded that zoning grants permitted uses as a matter of right with no guarantee as to what will actually be built, and reiterated that a custom zoning district could better balance the property's opportunities and constraints. Roberta McCanse asked about the process for establishing a new zoning district, and Mark Andreasen noted the commission's recommendations go to council, which can refer matters back to the commission for further work.

Public Comment

Peggy Williams asked the commission to consider creating a new zoning district tailored to this property's unique characteristics rather than fitting it into an existing classification, and submitted written comments for the record.

A resident near Sixth and Idaho described existing traffic congestion at that intersection and expressed concern the proposed rezoning would substantially worsen it.

Mark Desh, a nearby Nevada Street property owner, described daily observations of traffic on Nevada Street, including frequent failure of drivers to stop at the existing stop sign, and expressed concern about the effect of additional traffic.

Further Discussion

Gail Burger raised concerns about off-street parking requirements and on-street parking safety for pedestrians. Sam Sikes confirmed the new segment of Nevada Street will have a 64-foot right-of-way, with 5-foot sidewalks, 7-foot boulevards, and approximately 28 feet of driving surface. Kristin Smith noted many municipalities are reducing parking requirements for affordability and land-use reasons.

Jennifer Nelson raised environmental and flooding concerns, describing a history of flooding from Flower Creek, concerns about the accuracy of current floodplain mapping, and the effect additional impervious surface could have on downstream flooding. Kristin Smith and Mark Andreasen noted that floodplain-specific building requirements, including elevating structures above base flood elevation, are addressed separately at the time of building permitting.

Roberta McCanse asked for confirmation that uses not specifically prohibited in a zoning district are otherwise allowed, which Kristin Smith confirmed. The commission also noted that the property's access has changed since the original 2024 rezoning discussion, as the state has since granted direct access to Highway 2 that was not part of the original plan.

Motion

Gail Burger **MADE A MOTION** to approve Ohno LLC's request to rezone the requested portion of Parcel A-1 from Residential-A to Highway Commercial. Jaden Ueland **SECONDED**.

Note: the recording of the roll call vote was unclear as to which members voted which way. Kristin Smith announced a final tally of two votes in favor and four votes opposed.

The motion FAILED, 2 to 4.

Kristin Smith stated the effect of the vote is a recommendation to City Council not to approve the requested rezoning. The commission agreed that Jennifer Nelson's written analysis, Peggy Williams' comments, Mark Andreasen's comments, and these minutes would serve as the supporting record forwarded to council, rather than drafting additional narrative.

Other Business

Sam Sikes advised that a notice discrepancy with state statute requires the previously recommended Residential Business rezoning for the other portion of the property to be re-advertised and a new public hearing held. Both items are scheduled to go before City Council on August 3, 2026.

Adjournment

Kristin Smith closed the meeting. No formal motion to adjourn was made. The commission's next regular meeting is scheduled for August 24, 2026.

UNAPPROVED MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

The Zoning Commission held a meeting on Monday, September 28, 2026, at Libby City Hall.

Call to Order

Kristin Smith called the meeting to order. Present were Gail Burger, Jennifer Nelson, Roberta McCanse, and Mark Andreasen. Jaden Ueland was not in attendance. Dan, representing Eagle Signs, attended as a member of the public.

Note: the commission has not met since July 13, 2026. Minutes from that meeting, along with any from a June meeting, remain outstanding and were not addressed at this meeting.

Update – Ohno LLC / Ace of Wood Rezoning Outcome

Kristin Smith reported City Council declined the commission's recommendation against rezoning the Ono LLC (Ace of Wood) property and instead approved the requested Highway Commercial zoning. Kristin Smith also announced she has accepted a position as senior planner with Lincoln County.

Discussion – Future Work Plan

The commission reviewed outstanding priorities to take up at future meetings. Kristin Smith reported the language for the proposed industrial district rezoning has been finalized, but an updated zoning map from city administration is still needed before specific parcels currently zoned industrial, but more appropriately residential, can be addressed. The commission also discussed revisiting the Residential-B district to allow higher-density, more vertical housing options, noting that under current zoning, higher-density multi-unit housing such as Green Meadow Manor would not be permitted outside the Highway Commercial district.

The commission discussed the need to address data centers and cell towers in the zoning code, noting cell tower restrictions currently apply only to the downtown and highway commercial districts and are not explicitly addressed elsewhere. Jennifer Nelson noted a cell tower project is already underway within city limits and that Lincoln County is also working on related guidelines. The commission agreed these two items, along with the Residential-B update, should be prioritized as more straightforward starting points before tackling sign code work.

Discussion – Sign Ordinance

The commission discussed the city's lack of a comprehensive sign ordinance. Gail Burger raised concerns about political campaign signs remaining posted well past the three-day removal requirement in the city's ordinance, noting the downtown business district section addressing campaign signage is currently reserved and has no language in place. Jennifer Nelson noted the existing ordinance language does not distinguish between private and public property. The commission agreed to add campaign sign requirements to the downtown business district section.

The commission discussed enforcement generally, noting several ordinance provisions exist without consistent enforcement. Kristin Smith reviewed the penalty structure under Title 17 of city code, which classifies violations as a misdemeanor subject to a \$300 fine for a first infraction and \$500 for each repeat infraction, and noted the city may want to revisit this structure, which was last updated in 2016.

The commission discussed other recurring sign issues, including temporary advertising signs placed on public property, the large billboard recently installed at the Town Pump on Highway 2, and existing code provisions addressing electronic message signs, which are prohibited in residential districts and require downward-directional lighting elsewhere. The commission also discussed regulations for mobile and trailer-mounted signs.

Public Comment

Dan, representing Eagle Signs, shared his experience from 47 years in the sign industry and offered to share examples of sign codes from other cities, including size limits on pole signs, provisions for larger wall signage, automatic dimming requirements for electronic message signs, and vision triangle setbacks at intersections. He noted Libby is the first city he has worked in without a sign code and encouraged the commission to pursue one.

Discussion – Transportation Plan

Jennifer Nelson raised the longstanding need for a citywide transportation plan to identify deficiencies and prioritize improvements for all modes of transportation, particularly along Highway 2. The commission agreed to draft a recommendation to City Council to pursue a transportation plan, potentially in partnership with the Montana Department of Transportation, noting the city's planning consultant, WGM, may be able to assist. Mark Andreasen noted available sidewalk grant funding has not previously been pursued by the city.

Other Business

The commission's next regular meeting is scheduled for October 26, 2026.

Adjournment

Kristin Smith closed the meeting. No formal motion to adjourn was made.

CITY OF LIBBY PLANNING BOARD AND ZONING COMMISSION

952 SPRUCE ST. | LIBBY, MT 59923

26 October 2026

Montana Department of Commerce
CDBG – Public Facilities
301 S Park Ave, Helena, MT 59620

RE: Letter of Support – Montana and First Lift Station Replacement Project

Dear Grant Review Committee:

On behalf of the City's Planning and Zoning Commission, I am writing in support of the City of Libby's proposed Montana and First Lift Station replacement project and the City's application for Community Development Block Grant funding.

Reliable public infrastructure is essential to orderly growth, community development, and the continued use of existing residential, commercial, institutional, and public-service areas. The Montana and First Lift Station serves a vital area of Libby including the critical access hospital, Cabinet Peaks Medical Center. It also marks a connection point identified to accommodate future growth in this community where geography constrains growth opportunities.

The city has long documented the deficiencies and safety concerns with the existing lift station. Addressing these conditions is urgent to improve the reliability of the wastewater system while providing infrastructure that is better suited to meet both current and future community needs.

From a planning and development perspective, dependable wastewater infrastructure is an important component of supporting responsible growth. Adequate public utilities help protect existing development, reduce infrastructure-related constraints, reduce impacts to the natural environment and provide greater certainty for future residential, commercial, and institutional development.

The city has already secured **\$625,000 in committed funding through the Montana Coal Endowment Program and Renewable Resource Grant and Loan Program** and is seeking an additional **\$434,000 in CDBG funding** to complete the project funding package. The City's effort to leverage multiple funding sources represents a responsible approach to completing necessary infrastructure improvements while minimizing the financial impact on local sewer customers.

For these reasons, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted on October 26, 2026 to support the City of Libby's Montana and First Lift Station replacement project and respectfully encourages favorable consideration of the City's Community Development Block Grant application.

Best Regards,

Kristin Smith, Chair

CITY OF LIBBY PLANNING BOARD AND ZONING COMMISSION

952 SPRUCE ST. | LIBBY, MT 59923

26 October 2026

Mayor and City Council
City of Libby

RE: Transportation Planning

Dear Mayor and City Council:

The City Planning Board/Zoning Commission has long discussed the need for a municipal transportation plan in order to identify priorities for improvements to our roadway system in and around Libby, including non-motorized facilities, and seek funding for said improvements.

From a planning and development perspective, safe, dependable and multi-modal transportation systems are critical for accommodating a growing population as well as fostering sustainable community and economic development. This community has 2 highways bisecting it. Montana Department of Transportation should be a key partner in assisting the city to envision the future of its transportation system.

We encourage the city to engage with MDT and begin the process of securing funds for the development of a comprehensive transportation plan for the City of Libby and its residents.

Best Regards,

Kristin Smith, Chair