

# **Stevensville Town Council Meeting Minutes**

# for THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2025, 6:30 PM 206 Buck Street, Town Hall

### CONDENSED MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Michalson called the meeting to order, Councilmembers Barker, Brown, Bragg and Smith were all present.

- 2. Pledge of Allegiance
- 3. Public Comments (Public comment from citizens on items that are not on the agenda)

Sue Devlin: two comments to make, reading Roberts Rules of Order and the Town Council Rules, before an employee can ask a question that employee has to ask permission from the mayor instead of just jumping in and answering. This has been happening for a long time. Councilmembers ask the question of something, and Jenelle, Gina or Robert just answer. According to the rules a councilmember should call for a point of order at that time, which is not happening, the mayor also has the right to call for a point of order. Talking, some councilmembers and employees are talking at the same time and can be distracting and confusing. During this time, Bob you just sit there and let it run amuck. I am also concerned about the person that is running, Jim Crews who is a candidate for mayor and has been trespassed from city hall and no reason was given. It is an election interference; he can't access any city records or sit and listen to town hall meetings. Thank you.

Sharron Gee: to the mayor and the councilmembers, I have an issue that Jim Crews has been banned from town hall, he is not allowed to come in and ask questions. (quoted from the Bitterroot Star opinion section, Letter from Jim Crews). Jim is running for mayor and should be allowed to attend meetings as a town citizen and as a mayoral candidate.

Jeannie McKinnley: my question is can we ask questions and can you answer us back. My other concern is the same thing, reading the Star a couple of hours ago and Jim letter, I am also concerned when I heard about the trespass thing, could this happen to me, was it about the attitude thing, is it because he was not polite, what is it. What I see happening is a lot of these particular things or issues that are going on now that I stood so firmly behind our current mayor when we were fighting against the last mayor and now I see these changes that are happening now, and you are doing the same thing that we were fighting so hard against and trying to keep our rules and regulations intact. Why are we not aware of so many things that are

going on. I am not alone, what we have going on now is that we have no one standing up for the town.

Sean Doyle, President of Stevensville Civic Club: thank you for letting us take over the park and the town, thank you Chief Motley and his team, Chief Boe and his officers he helped us transport over \$20,000 in cash over to the bank. Of course, Steve Lassiter and his team and giving us the park in beautiful condition for the weekend. It was great and wonderful and raised enough money to fund our other activities for a full year. Thank you.

Councilmember Smith: for the next few minutes I am going to step out of the role of councilmember and act as a citizen. I have been asked by Mr. Crews because he cannot be here due to the trespassing. He has asked me to read a letter, and I agreed to. (the letters have been attached to the minutes of this meeting for review). That is his two letter, I too have to stand in opposition when I found out of this trespass Mr. Mayor, and I only found out about it a week ago, because Jim wanted to keep it quiet and work it out himself. Mr. Mayor how the two ladies mentioned it is against his constitutional rights, and I am going to call on you right now to cancel that trespass, Mr. Mayor bring down this wall.

# 4. Approval of Minutes

a. Town Council Meeting Minutes 07/10/2025

Mayor Michalson: introduced town council meeting minutes 07/10/2025

Councilmember Bragg: I move to approve town council meeting minutes 07/10/2025.

Councilmember Barker: 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Michalson: motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Discussion on the minutes. Public comments? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Bragg: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Michalson: passes 4-0

b. Budget Workshop Minutes 08/07/2025

Mayor Michalson: introduced budget workshop meeting minutes 08/07/2025

Councilmember Barker: I make a motion to approve budget workshop meeting minutes 08/07/2025

Councilmember Smith: 2nd.

Mayor Michalson: motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Discussion from the council? Public comment? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Bragg: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Michalson: passes 4-0

# 5. Approval of Bi-Weekly Claims

a. Claims #19872-19890

Mayor Michalson: introduced bi-weekly claims #19872-#19890

Councilmember Smith: I move to approve claims #19872-#19890.

Councilmember Barker: 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Michalson: motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Discussion from the council?

Councilmember Smith: Mr. Lassiter what is a grizzly bar?

Stephen Lassiter, Public Works Supervisor: it catches the rocks and makes topsoil. We got some expanded metal and welded it to the top and now it can make fine dirt.

Mayor Michalson: public comment? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Bragg: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Michalson: passes 4-0

Mayor Michalson: with councils approval I would like to move New Business item a, right up before the public hearings so that she does not have to sit through all of that.

a. Discussion/Decision: Approval of Prosecuting Attorney Contract

Mayor Michalson: introduced new business item a, Approval of Prosecuting Attorney Contract.

Councilmember Barker: I would like to suspend town council rules to move new business item a, Approval of Prosecuting Attorney Contract above public hearings.

Councilmember Smith: 2nd.

Mayor Michalson: motion and a  $2^{nd}$  to move the item up above. Discussion from the council? Public comment? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Bragg: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Michalson: thank you, now we move on to that business. As you all know we put out an RFP for that and there a few changes that have been highlighted

Councilmember Smith: I move that this council approve Prosecuting Attorney Contract.

Councilmember Bragg: 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Michalson: motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Discussion from the council?

Councilmember Smith: this completely passed by the town attorney?

Mayor Michalson: yes. Public Comments?

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Melissa Bailey: I am looking at 120 of your packet about expenses, I want to suggest that you put some language in there that we have the right to review who she contracts with as a paralegal, we are responsible to pay them. And the same thing under item 6, which is a substitute, I think that we should also have the right to review who that substitute is, we are responsible for paying them. I did want to ask about \$45.00 of travel time, would that include the travel time to Stevensville?

Mayor Michalson: that was the rate of the previous prosecuting attorney.

Melissa Bailey: I did look up current rates, travel rates per mile instead of per hour, they recommend 70 miles per hour, so I want to suggest that instead of a \$45.00 per hour for a travel rate.

Councilmember Barker: can you say that again please, just the travel part because you said 70 miles per hour.

Melissa Bailey: .70 cents per mile, that was on the Montana Counties website under reimbursement.

Mayor Michalson: any other comments from the public.

Kiki Smethers: I am happy to respond to that if you like, for the travel rate per hour versus milage I am happy to do either. As far as a fill-in attorney, I have spoken to the deputy county attorney, Amanda Smith, she has about three and half years of experience more than I do and would be happy to fill in for me. I have also spoken to a paralegal at the attorneys office, Kristin Doudey, she works for the county and is mainly a paralegal for felonies and I trust her.

Mayor Michalson: is there any questions that the council would like to ask.

Councilmember Smith: so, you just said that you are okay with taking .70 cents a mile instead of \$45.00.

Kiki Smethers: it is up to you guys it does not really matter to me.

Mayor Michalson: you will be coming from Hamilton?

Kiki Smethers: I live in Corvallis, most days I will be coming from Hamilton.

Mayor Michalson: I think the prosecuting attorney for that was about 50 miles at roughly \$35.00. With councils permission.

Gina Crowe: I think that \$45.00 included the time for her, when she was driving she was working.

Melissa Bailey: I gave you the information on the paralegal and the substitute and you are responsible for paying them.

Mayor Michalson: any other comments from the public. Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: no.

Councilmember Bragg: aye.

Councilmember Smith: no.

Mayor Michalson: it is 2-2 and I will break the tie and vote aye.

# 6. Public Hearings

a. Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Mayor Michalson: introduced public hearing budget amendments for FY 24-25. This is a public hearing anyone from the public that would like to comment, please do at this time. Seeing none.

b. Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Mayor Michalson: introduced public hearing preliminary budget.

Councilmember Brown: I object, to the public hearing preliminary budget, the packet clearly states it is for 24/25, and the budget included in the packet was for 25/26. So, the 25/26 budget cannot be discussed which will make new business item c in violation of MCA 7-6-4021 and 7-1-4127 if it is discussed it makes this an illegal meeting.

Jenelle Berthoud: that is a clerical error, if I remember correctly the loading of the packet last Thursday I was having some problems with Municode website, a couple things I had to go back in and fix because it was reading the same line, so that is a clerical error only it does not represent that they are reviewing 24/25 budget. 25/26 budget was included under that agenda item.

Mayor Michalson: thank you.

Councilmember Smith: we have another problem, is that this budget has to be in the newspaper for two weeks and it was not.

Jenelle Berthoud: it did run for two weeks, and I have the email from the Bitterroot Star to show that.

Councilmember Smith: we have looked, and it is not in this weeks or the last week, it was not in the Star.

Mayor Michalson: with councils permission can we take a five-minute recess for Jenelle to find that email.

#### 5-Minute Recess

Mayor Michalson: we will reconvene the meeting and Jenelle does have confirmation that the Bitterroot Star had received her request and that they had put it in the paper, as we cannot see that they were not printed in the paper, that is at not fault of Jenelle's it was an oversight of the paper, and the public does have a right to know. And I will leave that to the council, but I will ask that Jenelle gets to read MCA code.

Jenelle Berthoud: do I have permission? MCA code 7-1-4127 (read the publication notice code). It was posted out front, on the website and in the newspaper.

Councilmember Smith: so, it did not get posted in three places.

Mayor Michalson: how would the council like to proceed? Would the council like us to put this back in the paper and then bring it back.

Councilmember Smith: that would be the correct thing to do.

Councilmember Bragg: my concern is that we have a large number of deadlines that we are supposed to be meeting by getting this done and also has to do with state deadlines not just the towns deadlines. I worry that the state would be upset with us not getting our budget done on time.

Mayor Michalson: that is correct, the issue that I have is that we have some serious deadlines at the wastewater treatment plant that is in the budget. It has to do with the wastewater end of things to get the computer back up and running. Public works is babysitting the computer now to keep it going. We could look at coming back to a special meeting to do that.

Councilmember Bragg: if we bring it back as a special meeting we would need two more weeks.

Mayor Michalson: not for a special meeting to do things like an emergency. Steve would you like to speak to that.

Stephen Lassiter: the computer down there is going down three to four times a day. They guy that looked at the system two months ago said that it is old, outdated. The deadline for this is not set, it is if it were to crash, I don't know what I would do.

John Doud: Bitterroot Star, it may have been in the 20th paper.

Councilmember Bragg: Gina, I know that there are deadlines do you know specific when those are and if we were to make it with the two-week extension.

Gina Crowe: that is going to be up to our auditor, and they are actually auditing 24/25. Let me address the wastewater system, it is not that we can just go get a computer, it has specific specs. We take that to our IT department. We have been working on this and this is a dire need.

Councilmember Brown: I just want to remind the council that the budget is our responsibility and can be held liable for that budget and it only takes one person to challenge this meeting in a court of law.

Councilmember Smith: I am inclined to a special meeting to do this; we can postpone this to get the peoples right to know and it will be okay.

Mayor Michalson: if the budget is not passed, correct Robert, we will have to do a budget amendment on that if they, since we are still working on a budget that is not approved.

Robert Underwood: no, since it is in the budget we are okay, if it doesn't pass then we would issues. The budget doesn't get turned in until October, but it does take a little bit of time to prepare to send it out.

Councilmember Brown: we can also have a special meeting for the budget.

Mayor Michalson: yes we can, but it still has to be in the paper.

Councilmember Brown: 6 days apart.

Mayor Michalson: if it is the councils wishes we can make a motion to table the budget which would be item number c.

c. Discussion/Decision: Resolution No. 574 a Resolution for Adopting a Budget and Adopting Wages and Salaries for the Town of Stevensville, Montana FY 25/26

Councilmember Brown: I make a motion to table Resolution No. 574 a Resolution for Adopting a Budget and Adopting Wages and Salaries for the Town of Stevensville, Montana FY 25/26.

Councilmember Barker: we have not closed the public hearing.

Mayor Michalson: I will close the public hearing and move on down to b.

## 7. New Business

b. Discussion/Decision: Resolution No. 573 a Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Stevensville, Montana Providing for the Amendments of the Budget for the FY 24/25

Mayor Michalson: Resolution No. 573 a Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Stevensville, Montana Providing for the Amendments of the Budget for the FY 24/25

Councilmember Brown: I make a motion to table Resolution No. 573 a Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Stevensville, Montana Providing for the Amendments of the Budget for the FY 24/25.

Councilmember smith: 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Michalson: motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Discussion from the council? Public comment? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Bragg: present.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Michalson: passes 3-0, 1 present.

c. Discussion/Decision: Resolution No. 574 a Resolution for Adopting a Budget and Adopting Wages and Salaries for the Town of Stevensville, Montana FY 25/26

Councilmember Smith: I move to table Resolution No. 574 a Resolution for Adopting a Budget and Adopting Wages and Salaries for the Town of Stevensville, Montana FY 25/26.

Councilmember Brown: 2nd.

Mayor Michalson: motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Discussion from the council? Public comments? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Bragg: present.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Michalson: passes 3-0, 1 present.

8. Board Reports

NONE

9. Town Council Comments

NONE

10. Executive Report

Mayor Michalson: on the 31st of July I put out community surveys. I attended an MMIA meeting. Gina and I had a meeting with Eli and the SCADA system, and we got a letter today and it has to do with DNRC. "Mayor Michalson and the town of Stevensville has to do with the grant termination. \$1,087,173.00, ARPA project. Mayor Michalson on March 27, 2023, the Town of Stevensville and the department of natural resources and conservations executed a grant for the town of Stevensville water leak repairs and system improvements the town of Stevensville was awarded \$1,087,173.00 in ARPA water and sewer grants for publications and are competitive funds. On July 23, 2025, the town of Stevensville submitted its final report to the department. The department approved the final report and completed all reimbursements to the town of Stevensville and both parties agree that all obligations specified in the agreement have been met and acknowledge responsibility to follow federal requirements (unclear audio). This project is closed and if you have any questions please contact me (unclear audio). "I would like to say good job Gina for getting that cleaned up.

11. Adjournment

Councilmember Smith: motion to adjourn.

Councilmember: no 2<sup>nd</sup> was made.

APPROVE:

Bob Michalson, Mayor

ATTEST:

milles Buthel

Senelle S. Berthoud, Town Clerk

10

From: Jim Crews

7-18-25

316 9t St

Stevensville, MT 59870

To:

**Mayor Michalson** 

**Town Council for Stevensville** 

And most importantly the Citizens of the Town of Stevensville

Subject:

Mayor's Misinterpretation of Resolution 543

Mayor Michalson,

During the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Meeting of the Stevensville Town Council, you explained the renting of the Dump Truck to an employee of the Town, Employee Cody Anderson for \$50. As you already named the employee in your executive report, I presume it is OK to use his name in this correspondence.

You and I have had several email conversations, in one of which you indicated the Town Employee was a Citizen of the Town of Stevensville when he is not on the clock.

I could not agree more.

That means that all standard rates and charges apply to the employee as would it to a Citizen of this town.

When Council Member Smith asked about this transaction, you indicated that you would report the item during your executive Report, and you did so. There was however a glaring error or omission made when you read Resolution 543. You read the resolution items and indicated the fees to be charged for usage as follows.

Town Employee w/backhoe \$150/hr.

Truck \$50 per hour.

Town Employee w/dump truck \$150/hr.

Town employee \$40/hr.

Snow Removal (non-compliance) \$50 per snow removal.

The problem is, you altered the second item which should have read "Town Employee w/truck \$50/hr.

But that is not the real problem. The issue at hand is was it not a **Dump Truck** that was rented to haul the gravel.

If that is the case, as a Citizen, that should have been **Employee w/dump truck \$150/hr**. That would be the charge for a private citizen. As you said, the employee would have been a Citizen when off the clock.

You told the Council and the Public that you rented a truck to an employee of the town for \$50. But it seems that the reality is that you rented a Dump Truck to an employee who was at the time acting as a Citizen as he was off the clock, thus the charge should have been at least \$150 for an hour. What was the true time of the rental. I suppose that will be unknown as you say there is not rental agreement. Has that \$50 come in on the claims as income and if so, when was that reported to the council as income?

The rental had to be at least an hour, because it had to be filled with dirt/gravel from some source, dumped or spread, then the truck cleaned and returned to someone who would have checked the truck in. Who was the employee that released the truck and who received the truck after the rental?

Did the employee have permission to drive the truck outside of town limits to get the gravel? How far was that trip? Who supplied the insurance? Is there proof of Insurance on file for audit purposes? Is it a violation of the vehicle licensing to use a government vehicle for personal use?

This might be considered an Ethics Violation or potentially the receipt of a gift greater than \$50. That is why it is so important to have written policies and procedures for the conduct of business regarding the use of the property of the Citizens of this town.

I suspect the town should obtain a legal opinion regarding the legality of Resolution 543, especially as it was used in this case.

Thank you,

Jim Crews

Private American Citizen

### 7-11-25

Subject: Resolutions 543, 544

Mayor Michalson,

I think you have misled the Council and the Public by your claim that you followed those two resolutions to rent a truck to town employee Anderson.

Resolution 543 has to do with the fees the town charges for a citizen to hire a piece of **equipment and an operator** or supply labor to a citizen of the town, and to take action to resolve a snow removal problem.

Resolution 544 has to do with the fees the town charges for excavations.

Neither of these resolutions authorizes the town to rent a truck to an employee or directly to a citizen. It comes as a town product (driver and truck).

The proper way to accomplish this work would have been for Anderson to hire the truck and an employee per Resolution 543 acting as a private citizen at the rate of 150.00/Hour.

The renting of the truck with a town employee would have eliminated any possibility of impropriety.

(As it is I have to ask, have you set a standard to allow anyone to rent the truck.)

Just read them. It is as clear as day.

With all due respect

#### Jim Crews

On Jul 11, 2025, at 6:26 AM, Bob Michalson <mayor@townofstevensville.gov> wrote:

Jim,

I don't believe I did mislead the public or the council. Your comments of someone else other than Mr Anderson driving the truck for Cody is absurd. He is a town employee who rented a piece of equipment that he himself uses at work daily.

With all due respect I disagree. ルメモア せし

Regards

**Bob Michalson** 

Mayor

Bob,

I can see where you could draw that conclusion, but that is not the intent of those resolutions.

The intent is that the town can provide the equipment and operating personnel as a service to the citizens of the town. Read the title of the resolutions.

No where does it imply the town rents equipment. We the town are not U-Haul or Montana Equipment Rentals.

If that is the case, rent me the truck for a day, at \$50 per day.

You cannot treat a Town Employee differently than a Citizen of the town.

Jim Crews

Cody is also a citizen of Stevensville when he's not in the clock. I'm not going to have Steve Lassiter drive a truck to Cody's house to dump gravel while Cody stands by?? Your digging into

this way to deep to justify your reasoning. He didn't get special treatment. I can recall when you

were mayor and Ed Sutherlin used town equipment off the clock for free!!

Regards

**Bob Michalson** 

That last comment was retaliation from the mayor to a private Citizen and it is also untrue.

Jim Crews

From: Jim Crews

8-28-25

316 9th St.

Stevensville, Montana 59870

To:

The Mayor

**The Town Council** 

The Citizens of the Town of Stevensville

**Subject: Conduct during council meetings** 

Un recognized speakers are out of control!

Mayor, it is unprofessional behavior to allow members of the staff, or gallery to speak without being recognized.

These are Council Meetings and you are the Chair of the meeting. It is not a staff meeting, or a guest's meeting.

The only people that should speak at a council meeting are those that have been properly recognized by the Chair. If you want to change that process, then the Council must suspend Council Rules to allow unrecognized speakers to speak.

When it is necessary for a member of the staff to speak, they should be recognized by the Chair, then they should take the **podium** so that they can properly address the Mayor in their response. All speakers are required to direct their comments to the Chair, not the council, not the gallery and not to each other. **Refer to Part X of Council Rules**.

### Part I Section 2 of Council Rules

To assure effective participation by all members of the Council and to protect the right of participation by all individuals appearing before the Council, all Council meetings and hearings shall be conducted in general conformance with "Robert's Rules of Order", except as otherwise provided by law.

### Part I Section 5 of the Council Rules

When a Council Meeting is in session, all communication concerning public matters between council, staff and the public shall be openly performed and subject to public inspection and record keeping.

This Author's Opinion-This means that if you have supplemental information regarding an issue before the council, you need to provide a copy for inspection to the council 48 hours before the meeting and the public needs to be able to see that information as well. Failure to disclose supplemental information to the council for decision making purposes and for public review might be a violation of the right to know and the right to participate. So if you present supplemental information that the council or the public has not seen, the issue ought to be tabled to allow time for public noticing and council review prior to making a decision.

## Part IV Section 1 of the Council Rules

All reports, communications, ordinances, resolutions, contract documents, or other matters to be submitted to the Council, shall be submitted by 12 o'clock noon on the Wednesday immediately preceding the Thursday agenda publishing deadline to the Town Clerk. If the agenda item is associated with a public notice, three weeks prior to the proposed meeting time is needed for sufficient publication times in the local newspaper, *Bitterroot Star* 

The Author's Opinion-This does not authorize the routine delay of submitting the claims to the Council for review. Often more than two days are needed to do a proper review and be able to ask questions prior to the council meeting and gather resources. It has become a habit of submitting the claims almost a week after the Agenda has been published and should not be allowed. Late submissions are not the normal method of operation and lead to errors and are a result of "We have to get this done or else!!"

Not only that, but if you have posted an agenda, and there is a change, it needs to be identified as an Amended Agenda and the date it was amended with change indicators to show what was changed.

### Part V Section 4 Motions

After a motion is duly made and seconded by the Council, no person shall address the Council without first securing the permission of the presiding officer.

The Author's Opinion-The Council should not ask questions of the staff, they need to ask the question of the Mayor. He can ask the staff to respond to the mayor, so that council can hear the response. The staff are not to talk to the council unless council suspends council rules to allow that action.

Town of Stevensville Personnel Policy Manual Part 44 E applies to all town elected officers, appointed officers and employees.

Employees who are required to attend and participate during a Council Meeting, Special Council Meeting, Public Hearing or who sit on a Town Board are expected to comply with Council Rules or Board Rules.

During Council Meetings, Special Council Meetings, Public Hearings, Board meetings, all employees are expected to either turn their cell phones off or silence their ringers. If it is necessary to be available on standby, notify the Mayor or Board Chairperson.

Employees who attend and participate during a public meeting are expected to dress professionally, be mindful of their representation of the Town or administration and maintain appropriate decorum throughout the meeting.

One last thing Mr. Mayor. You often yell out at council meetings if someone does not show up, Unexcused Absence or something of that sort.

Mr. Mayor, you are in the executive branch of the government. You have no disciplinary authority over a council member. They are in the legislative branch. It is up to the council to develop their own rules and discipline their own members.

§ 7-5-4103 MCA Council rules and discipline. The council may determine the rules of its proceedings, punish its members for improper conduct, and expel any member for the same by a two-thirds vote of the members elected.

I do not see the word mayor mentioned in the statute.

My opinions,

Jim Crews