

Stevensville Special Town Council Meeting Minutes

for THURSDAY, JUNE 04, 2026, 6:30 PM 206 Buck Street, Town Hall

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Crews called the meeting to order. Councilmembers Bailey, Ross, Wandler 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: last week the meeting was not televised on YouTube did not work. There are people that have asked me to repeat what I said last week. I want to again today. It is my understanding that the town has spread their money out to multiple banks it is my understanding that it is one bank. First Security Bank, I believe that it is about three and a half million dollars. I did look up regulations and banks can only guarantee up to \$250,000 with the FDIC, I mean even towns. I would like to know who authorized this move from all of the banks into one, number one. And I was told that it was a great move because we now get \$900,000 a year in interest and this bank is giving us a pledge to cover anything over the \$250,000 the FDIC guarantees. Is this pledge in writing, is this pledge legal, what if the bank fails and then they are broke and would not be able to cover the pledge and it would be worthless. I know at the April 9th meeting Marilyn Wolff brought this subject up again number one, who authorized this, number two how have we allowed all of our money in one bank with a pledge that if something goes wrong, our almost three and a half million dollars will be covered. I believe that a move like this should have come to the council as it is the council that makes the rules and regulations for the town. It is also my understanding that the finance officer is related either by fiancé or married to one of the board members at First Security Bank that what be a defiant conflict of interest and I think that it is something that should legally be looked into if that is truly what is happening and I would like some answers, I know mayor you said last week that I would have answers at the next town council meeting I think that this is of the utmost importance, this is the towns money, thank you.

Mayor Crews: Gina are you prepared to answer this tonight or do you want to wait until the 11th.

Gina Crowe: we will wait until next week.

Mayor Crews: okay, and for transparency I and councilmember Smith met with Gina at the bank to discuss these issues, some of these issues and we will have a formal

report at the next town council meeting, and I think that it should address all of the concerns.

Marilyn Wolff: I am worried, as Sue has already spoken, if it is one bank account did the town council approve the bank account when it was opened. Does the town have a legal contract in place for millions of taxpayer money. the town wants a good rate of interest that is true, we all do, but not at the risk of bank failure and economic downturns like in 2008 when 28 banks closed, the old saying goes, don't put all of your eggs in one basket.

4. New Business

Mayor Crews: Chief Motley has asked me to ask the council to suspend council rules and move item d. to the front.

Councilmember Smith: I move to suspend town council rules and move item d above item a.

Wandler: 2nd

Mayor Crews: motion and a 2nd. Any further comments from the council? Public comment? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Bailey: aye.

Councilmember Ross: aye.

Councilmember Wandler: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Crews: thank you.

d. Discussion/Decision: Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Application

Mayor Crews: introduced new business item d. Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Application.

Chief Motley: you have in your packet, what this is an annual grant reimbursement from the DNRC. Every year they apply for a grant from the federal government and DNRC gets for the state. They ask us to select all of the items for wildland fire fighting that we need to purchase for the upcoming fire season. We do that and we are kind of in the rears for the town, we buy city equipment, we apply for the grant and when the grant is funded we reimburse for what we said we wanted to purchase when we applied for the grant. We buy it, we submit our receipts and they reimburse

us for the grant that we said we were going to do. For 2025/2026 we applied for \$2,020.00 worth of equipment, typically we receive in the neighborhood of \$1,500-\$2,000 on any given cycle depending on how the money is dispersed between the departments. It is a 90/10 match grant. We said that we wanted to buy \$2,020 in fact we did not, we bought \$1,560 worth of equipment that we budgeted and then we will receive a check for 90% of that and should see it sometime in August. So, moving forward we had to say and turn in a draft of what we are going to buy, and we did and that number was a little over \$5,000. I am not going to hold my breath that we are going to get \$5,000 worth of stuff reimbursed we will probably again get in that \$2,000 market. We will not purchase \$5,000 worth of product we will be back in that \$2,000 range and that is about what they reimburse for. My theory is lets ask for \$5,000 and maybe they will come back and see that we need to up that. There are thirteen agencies in the county that have the opportunity to participate in this grant and that is what we are doing, I have in my budget, \$2,000-\$2,500 for wildland equipment and fire suppression that we will spend and this year we will get the 90% reimbursement for last year. That is what we are looking to do and the mayor thought that we should bring it in front of the council and that is what we are doing.

Councilmember Bailey: so, what happens when you spend \$2,500 this year and they come back and say that they are going to give you a full \$5,000.

Chief Motley: they will reimburse for 90% of what we have spent.

Councilmember Ross: I am going to reclude myself from any discussion or decision due to conflict of interest, DNRC is in connection with us.

Mayor Crews: thank you.

Robert Underwood: this has been going on for a lot of years, we have not received the money that we are supposedly getting, the last time that we got money was in October of 2021.

Chief Motley: you should have gotten a check last year, I am not sure where you guys are donating it back to or how it is getting tallied in, we have been participating for 10 years and every year we have received money back.

Councilmember Bailey: just to clarify, you guys have no evidence that we have received any reimbursements since 2021.

Robert Underwood: I checked the system before we came in and it all goes through our receipts.

Gina Crowe: unless it was put under a different account, I will look for it.

Councilmember Bailey: is there a time limit to submit this application.

Chief Motley: it has already been submitted. It is an application and there are only certain categories that we can apply for by June 1.

Councilmember Bailey: then what is the purpose of the council approving this application if it already submitted.

Mayor Crews: the application cannot be officially submitted until I sign it, and I can't sign it until you all approve it, and you are saying that this has already been submitted?

Chief Motley: so, the deadline is June 1, we submitted a copy of what we are going to submit once you sign it, we talked to the DNRC office, and they said we can let you go until like the 20th and then we are done. That was fine and we hope to get a signature on it tonight.

Councilmember Wandler: you say you have not seen a record in finance since 2021 and we have got one every year, maybe we should pull of the checks not just last years.

Chief Motley: we will pull the receipts.

Councilmember Bailey: my question would be can this application be tabled until next Thursdays meeting so that we can produce those receipts or is it a timeline issue.

Chief Motley: they said by the 20th.

Councilmember Wandler: there are two separate items, this application.

Chief Motley: no not really what we have to have is the mayors signature on the bottom of the page saying that we are going to pay the 10% match, those monies I expend are in our budget when it is approved.

Councilmember Wandler: I think that it is important to get the application in as soon as possible.

Mayor Crews: public comment?

Councilmember Smith: I move that we accept the Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Application.

Councilmember Wandler: 2nd.

Mayor Crews: motion and a 2nd. further council discussion. Jenelle, please take the vote.

Councilmember Wandler: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Councilmember Bailey: no.

Councilmember Ross: abstain.

Mayor Crews: there is a tie, I will break the tie. Aye.

Councilmember Wandler: can we have a report on all of the money that we should have had since 2021.

Mayor Crews: if you want to request that, please submit that to the finance officer.

a. Discussion/Decision: Re-Appointment of Judge Maureen M. O'Connor

Mayor Crews: introduced new business item a. Re-Appointment of Judge Maureen M. O'Connor.

Judge Maureen O'Connor: I am the city court judge and have been for the past 10 years. My appointment is up as of June 10th, and the mayor and I have had a discussion about whether or not the town would like to reappoint me if there are any questions for me about my time before the 10 years. I am an attorney and I am licensed in the state of Montana, and I have extensive practice in areas of the law before becoming a judge.

Mayor Crews: one of my first duties as the mayor in 2016 was we were in the process to hire a judge, and we had six applicants and we chose to appoint her. I believe that she is one of the longest serving judges in a long time for Stevensville. I asked the judge if she would like to be reappointed and she said that she would.

Councilmember Smith: do you happen to serve as a town judge for any other communities.

Maureen O'Connor: no.

Mayor Crews: any public comment?

Councilmember Ross: I move that we approve the re-appointment of Judge Maureen O'Connor.

Councilmember Smith: 2nd.

Mayor Crews: motion and a 2nd. further discussion from the council. Jenelle take the vote.

Councilmember Bailey: aye.

Councilmember Ross: aye.

Councilmember Wandler: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Mayor Crews: motion carries, what time are we swearing you in?

Maureen O'Connor: next Tuesday how about 9:30am.

b. Discussion/Decision: Resolution No. 510A a Resolution Setting a Fee for the Stevensville City Court Judge

Mayor Crews: introduced new business item b. : Resolution No. 510A a Resolution Setting a Fee for the Stevensville City Court Judge.

Councilmember Bailey: the only comment I have is in the resolution it states June 3rd.

Mayor Crews: public comment.

Councilmember Bailey: I will make a motion that we approve Resolution No. 510A a Resolution Setting a Fee for the Stevensville City Court Judge.

Councilmember Smith: 2nd.

Mayor Crews: motion and a 2nd. further discussion from the council? Jenelle, please take the vote.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Councilmember Ross: aye.

Councilmember Bailey: aye.

Councilmember Wandler: aye.

Mayor Crews: motion carries 4-0

c. Discussion/Decision: Resolution No. 588 a Resolution Approving and Adopting the Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority (MMIA) Employee Benefits Program Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Mayor Crews: introduced new business item c. Resolution No. 588 a Resolution Approving and Adopting the Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority (MMIA) Employee Benefits Program Fiscal Year 2026-2027. You have in your package the employee benefits plan, MMIA is our insurance company. This year the premium has gone up, and it is \$926.00 the candidate selects the Madison Plan, typically the Madison Plan is what everyone budgeted for, it is covered at 100% and the dental and vision plan is at 50% and if the employee wants group life they pay for that.

Councilmember Bailey: is the request that we are approving the Madison Plan tonight?

Mayor Crews: the Madison Plan we agreed to fund it 100%, all four of these plans are available but we are just paying for the Madison Plan.

Councilmember Bailey: the resolution states the MMIA employee benefits plan exhibit A, but it does not say or highlighted the Madison Plan.

Mayor Crews: the town receives a form (went through additional information provided by the finance officer) the finance officer is the contact person. read through the MMIA benefits provided by them to the town of Stevensville. This plan is put together and approved in the budgeting cycle. So, council does not always know what they are paying for, it is pretty standard practice in the governmental industry. I inquired MMIA about this information that I received. This is from Chris B. at MMIA, Councilmember Bailey was CC'd on this I always make sure that the council president is informed. (mayor read through the emails from MMIA) you all know me and I am a proceduralist and I want council to be aware of everything, and this is why this is here tonight, when you see it in the budget then it will already have been approved. I can say that we cannot cancel this plan at this point because it has been established and offered to employees by previous administrations and that any reduction in the plan would have to be properly noticed and it takes about a year. You can't cut it tonight; you can look at it at a later date and make decisions. What I have gleaned in my study there about 80% of the towns do about 80% of the benefits package, and many of them do 100%. This year you know exactly what is coming in front of you. This started when someone asked me about the cash in lieu of, Robert that started in 2021.

Robert Underwood: about 2021.

Mayor Crews: 2021, it has been approved in the past by Robert Underwood, Pam Sosa, Gina Crowe x3. This has been carried forward it has always been in the budget, but it may have not been understood by councils previously, when we go

through the budget you will see a spot, employer contribution it is the benefits package, there is another section that shows social security and stuff.

Councilmember Ross: so, my understanding is that we can't say no to this it is in itself, we can't change it. What is the point of our decision.

Mayor Crews: we can't engage as a town without your permission; you are going to get two times to approve this one time is during the budget process and as it is brought forward here. In 2012 resolution 296 the town adopted MMIA as our benefits provider and then a couple of days later in resolution 297 the town agreed to pay \$450.00 per month per employee. That is fourteen years of growth, you know every time you renew your car insurance it goes up just like in the health care industry. The problem is that we have hired people with the expectation that they would get this package, my understanding after talking to the town attorney we have hired these people with the expectation of this package and it would not be fare to them to cut them at this point, if council chooses to reduce it to 80% next year then that would give plenty of time to notice the employees.

Councilmember Ross: so, you are saying that this decision will affect next year.

Mayor Crews: this decision is for the remainder of 2026 and half of 2027.

Councilmember Ross: but we cannot change that. what are we voting on?

Mayor Crews: you are voting on the package as it exists.

Councilmember Ross: doesn't it already exists, haven't we already.

Mayor Crews: the deadline is tomorrow; our internal deadline is tomorrow the actual MMIA deadline is the 15th.

Gina Crowe: it is called open enrolment and every insurance has this, because the rate has changed and I have to do payroll I have to have all of the employees in and have time to update the system and make sure that they capture the right amount, we collect all of the insurance premiums a month prior, July is captured in June and that is why the deadline is June 5th.

Councilmember Bailey: I think that the expectation is that we honor the Madison Plan, and if we want to change this in the future we need to get approval by written notice, and if that is something that we want to do we can, but right now we need to respect our employees.

Mayor Crews: that is the way that I understand it, and part of this process will be to modify our personnel policy and put our benefit plan in the manual. This plan changes every year.

Gina Crowe: what I wanted to say is that this is the plan that they are offering this year, you will be getting this from now on in front of you, if we get it in May we will bring it to a meeting, I did not know that this had to come to you. I spoke with the mayor, and we will do a deep dive into the finances to get an idea for next year.

Councilmember Bailey: what is adequate notice for employees.

Mayor Crews: we will have to start talking about this now. This affects people tremendously many people base their careers on benefits, most people don't know this until Gina told me this yesterday, vacation for governmental employees is dictated by state law, is state law it tells you how many days you are supposed to get per year. Our Personnel policy is based on that; I did not realize that but now I do. I am starting to study the law as to what we are required and not required to do in regard to contributions for employee health plans it is kind of complicated. We do need to consult with our town attorney on this, she is very adamant about being careful on what we do, if we start cutting benefits now we could open ourselves up to some issues.

Councilmember Bailey: if we were to approve this for how it stands with the Madison Plan tonight would we set up a COW meeting to go through that.

Mayor Crews: I think that is something that council could request.

Councilmember Bailey: unrelated to the plan itself there was nowhere that says the Madison Plan, the attachments include all of the plans available, but nothing attached that identifies that we are selecting the Madison Plan tonight.

Mayor Crews: we can modify this resolution on the spot to do that.

Councilmember Bailey: I would love that.

Mayor Crews: we can add a statement in there.

Councilmember Bailey: now therefore it be resolved that the town of Stevensville hereby adopts the employee benefit program exhibit A, Madison Plan and the town of Stevensville benefit selection.

Mayor Crews: reword that section now therefore it be resolved that the town of Stevensville hereby adopts the employee benefit program exhibit A, Madison Plan and the town of Stevensville benefits.

Councilmember Ross: do we need to include that we are paying 100% of that.

Councilmember Bailey: I think that is nice.

Mayor Crews: you need to remember that resolutions are a decision by the council and this is a policy for the town of Stevensville and the town employees will enforce that .

Jenelle Berthoud: can I add after exhibit A, the Madison Plan at 100% coverage.

Mayor Crews: that would be great.

Robert Underwood: what about the dental and vision.

Mayor Crews: that is interesting because the dental and vision plan are very insignificant costs in this plan, vision plan is \$8.60 and dental plan is 433.00 and right now the town only pays 50% of that.

Councilmember Bailey: in my opinion I think that we should maintain whatever our current elections are, 100% of the Madison Plan and 50% of the dental and the vision.

Jenelle Berthoud: to add in after the Madison Plan at 100% coverage, also to include dental and vision at 50% coverage.

Mayor Crews: coverage or match, what would you all prefer?

Councilmember Bailey: match.

Mayor Crews: match.

Councilmember Bailey: is there any other things that need to be in here, life insurance?

Councilmember Ross: those are not covered.

Mayor Crews: those are optional to the employee. Any further council comment or discussion?

Robert Underwood: are you going to add the cash in lieu of.

Mayor Crews: if the employee does not enroll in our plan the cash in in lieu of will be paid out at \$660.00 per month. Any of our employees that want to know what our benefits are can have it right here in this resolution and this will be included in our personnel policy. Public comment?

PUBLIC COMMENT

Marilyn Wolff: I am curious about how many employees have dual coverage, do you know, that might go in this in lieu of.

Mayor Crews: there are three.

Marilyn Wolff: typically, are they doing that.

Mayor Crews: typically, if you are married and you can be put on your spouse's insurance plan and you can prove that you are covered you do that with the finance officer and you can draw the \$660.00. it actually saves the town about \$300.00 per month per employee. Not all towns and cities offer that, but that has been an accepted plan here and we have to carry through with that until council decides what they want to do. Further public comment?

Councilmember Ross: I move that we approve Resolution No. 588 a Resolution Approving and Adopting the Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority (MMIA) Employee Benefits Program Fiscal Year 2026-2027 with changes annotated.

Councilmember Bailey: 2nd.

Mayor Crews: motion and a 2nd. any further discussion, Jenelle, would you please call for the vote.

Councilmember Ross: aye.

Councilmember Wandler: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Councilmember Bailey: aye.

Mayor Crews: thank you carries 4-0. This is an important step in my opinion and brings this decision back to the council instead of one individual, that also this approved the form that the employees need to fill out and has been approved by the town attorney.

e. Discussion/Decision: Unmetered Water & Interlocal Agreement Between Outback Firefighting & the Town of Stevensville

Mayor Crews: introduced new business item e. Unmetered Water & Interlocal Agreement Between Outback Firefighting & the Town of Stevensville.

Councilmember Ross: I am going to recuse myself do to existing contracts with my place of work.

Mayor Crews: thank you, for the public to know, if a council person has a conflict of interest they have to declare that as soon as possible so that they will not be involved in the decision-making process whatsoever. This is a form and agreement that we have had in the past and this is an agreement that has to be signed by the mayor and that is why it is brought before the council. In the future I think what we are going to do is bring a resolution to allow a routine agreement like this to be addressed by the mayor and reported to the council.

Jenelle Berthoud: that will take place at your next town council meeting.

Mayor Crews: so, any questions on this agreement, it is \$100.00 per year to use the fire hydrant and Jenelle what is the cost for 48,000 gallons of water?

Jenelle Berthoud: \$650.00.

Mayor Crews: what they do is get the key here go out the hydrant and fill up, and we bill on a monthly basis?

Jenelle Berthoud: as they are working down from their 48,000 and when they get to the 3,000-mark Andrena contacts that company and lets them know and usually right over the phone buy their next \$650.00.

Mayor Crews: that is why you see those tanker trucks pull out at the corner of 3rd Street and Buck, they do have to meet certain requirements, back flow prevention and all that sort of stuff.

Councilmember Bailey: just to clarify they are billed for the water that they are taking and pay a \$100.00 annual fee.

Mayor Crews: that is correct. Any public comment?

Councilmember Bailey: I make a motion to approve Unmetered Water & Interlocal Agreement Between Outback Firefighting & the Town of Stevensville

Councilmember Wandler: 2nd.

Mayor Crews: motion and a 2nd. I like this six-step process that we have, works really well.

Councilmember Bailey: aye.

Councilmember Smith: aye.

Councilmember Ross: abstain.

Councilmember Wandler: aye.

Mayor Crews: passes 3-0.

Councilmember Smith: I need to excuse myself.

Mayor Crews: if weather permits I will be in Glacier this weekend, Ms. Bailey will be available.

Councilmember Bailey: I will be out of town starting Saturday night.

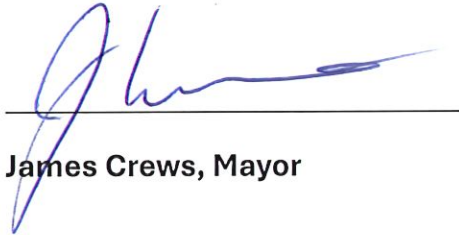
Mayor Crews: I will be back by then. Lets call a short recess until Councilmember Smith comes back. With councilmember Smith gone, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

5. Adjournment

Councilmember Wandler: make a motion to adjourn.

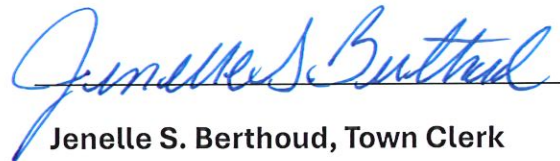
Councilmember Ross: 2nd.

APPROVE:



James Crews, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jenelle S. Berthoud, Town Clerk