

## **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HILL COUNTY WATER DISTRICT**

The regular meeting was held on April 1, 2026, at the Hill County Water District's office in Hingham, Montana.

Board members present: Lowell Strissel, Dan Hybner, Jason Myers, Kevin Springer, Tina Wood, Rob Moog, and Larry Fossen via phone. Absent: Shane Borlaug.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** None

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chairman Lowell Strissel. Also present was Manager Chad Hedges, and Secretary Genevieve Hanson.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** President Strissel asked for corrections or additions to the minutes of March 4, 2026, regular Board meeting previously received by all Board Members. On motion by Tina Wood, seconded by Jason Myers, the Board approved the minutes of March 4, 2026, regular Board meeting as presented.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. **Water Loss Report** – The monthly report was prepared by Mr. Hedges and provided to the Board for review. North Kremlin, South Kremlin, and North Rudyard routes had considerable loss.
- b. **Water Conference Attendance in Billings** – Mr. Hedges attended the Water Conference in Billings on March 23<sup>rd</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup>. He was able to talk to folks about available SRF (State Revolving Funds) for upcoming necessary projects such as replacing the Inverness tank, and initial hook up to North Central when that time comes. Mr. Hedges also acquired additional information to prepare for the required PFAS testing which is scheduled for next month. All in all, the conference was well attended and had great information and continued education to share.
- c. **Inverness Tank** – Mr. Hedges informed the Board that he was in touch with Bear Paw Development Corporation. They suggested combining the Inverness tank replacement project with North Central hook up as one project instead of two, to possibly secure some additional funding. In the meantime, Mr. Hedges has an engineer lined up and will get soil samples scheduled. Soil sample results could determine a lot of the cost of the tank replacement due to footer depth required to support the new tank.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. **Water Level Raising at the River** – Snowpack remains at surprisingly adequate levels, thus the water levels will begin to rise in the coming weeks.
- b. **North Kremlin Leak** – A leak was found on William’s line North of Kremlin on April 1st. It was discovered through a process of changing the master meter, then through process of elimination by turning off certain lines to determine which line was still losing water. North Kremlin customers drove the line with a side-by-side and discovered a soggy/saturated spot. From there, the leak was located, dug up, and repaired the same day by R&R Trucking. It’s no April fool’s joke that the 10-year ongoing water loss may have come to an end.
- c. **Rate Changes** – As part of the 5-year rate increase, which began in 2024- fixed, variable, and bulk water rates will be increasing and a hearing has been set to discuss these changes on May 13, 2026, at 7:30pm. A rate schedule, as well as comparison rates, will be provided at the hearing and posted in local post offices thereafter.
- d. **Clarifying HCWD Rules & Regulations with MRWS, Bobbi Shular-** The Board decided it would be beneficial to have Bobbi Shular with Montana Rural Water Systems attend an in-person meeting with Mr. Hedges, Ms. Hanson and a couple of Board members. The meeting purpose is to clarify the Rules & Regulations- specifically reconnect fees- while they are already being amended to include rate changes. Ms. Hanson will contact Ms. Shular to line up a date for this meeting.
- e. **Employee Report**
  - i. **Neptune Training** – Ms. Hanson attended a refresher training with Neptune via MS Teams meeting. The training had some helpful aspects, tips and reports to run- though further training would be beneficial.
  - ii. **Black Mountain Software Training in April** – Go-Live date with Black Mountain Accounting and Payroll was April 1st. Ms. Hanson has received a schedule and will have several training sessions per week throughout the month of April. Quick Books Online (QBO) will eventually be phased out.
  - iii. **Website Domaine** – The Website is back up and running. The domain account with GoDaddy was updated with current contact information as well as billing information to avoid future crashes due to domain expiration from non-payment.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT:**

- a. **Independence Bank Accounts** – Ms. Hanson informed the Board that there are very few, if any, auto payments being withdrawn from the Independence Banks accounts thus those funds can be moved/accounts closed. It was decided that funds in the Independence savings account be moved to a CDAR, and the checking account be closed and moved to the current checking account with 1<sup>st</sup> Bank in Chester.
  
- f. **Elections Update** – Shane Borlaug was inadvertently left out of Board Elections. Since the elections were cancelled by the Hill County Clerk & Recorder, it was decided that Mr. Borlaug would serve another four-year term, ending in 2030. He will be up for reelection at that time.

**OTHER NEW BUSINESS:** During the software implementation and switch from QBO to Black Mountain Accounting and Payroll, it was discovered that comp time cannot be accumulated by employees of a Non-profit Organization. Hill County Water District is a Non-Profit Organization, thus employees of the District cannot accumulate comp time for any overtime hours worked and those overtime hours must be paid out at a rate of one and one half times their hourly pay. Discussion was had that the managerial role be salaried, overtime-exempt.

**DELINQUENCES:** The Board reviewed current delinquencies. Ms. Hanson and Mr. Hedges updated the Board that portal payments seem to work well for several of the District customers. There are very few delinquencies.

**BILLS:** The Board reviewed the list of monthly bills. On motion by Jason Myers, seconded by Kevin Springer, the Board approved all such bills for payment.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Robb Moog motioned and Tina Wood seconded for meeting adjournment at 8:10 PM.

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Genevieve Hanson, Board Secretary

**Next Regular Meeting-** Wednesday, May 13th, 2026, at 7:30p.m. at the District's office at 104 Second Street, Hingham, Montana.