

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HILL COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

The regular meeting was held on May 13, 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, Larry Fossen and Shane Borlaug.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: Paul Wolery.

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: Mr. Wolery was present to inquire about an opportunity to connect to the Hill County Water District line. He stated that several years ago, the Lincoln families put down a \$250 deposit for potential future connection. Mr. Wolery was advised that this was likely before all the Board members' time, but it could be researched. The Board also informed Mr. Wolery that the District is at capacity; however, upon connection to North Central, additional connections are absolutely permitted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: President Strissel asked for corrections or additions to the minutes of the April 1, 2026, regular Board meeting previously received by all Board Members. On motion by Tina Wood, seconded by Larry Fossen, the Board approved the minutes of April 1, 2026, regular Board meeting as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING: The Chairman declared the public hearing open to gather public comment on the Ordinance increasing fixed, variable and bulk rates. The Ordinance was reviewed for its first reading and opened to the public for comment. Because the 5-year rate increase plan was adopted in 2024, there was little to discuss regarding the rate increases since they were anticipated. As such, there were no changes to the Ordinance Amending Sections 1.4 and 1.5 increasing fixed, variable and bulk rates.

At this point in the meeting, Secretary Hanson read aloud the changes to Ordinances: 1.1 Connection Permit, 1.2 Connection Permit Request, 1.3 Connection Charges for New Users, 1.8 Charges to Trailer Parks and Campgrounds, 1.12 District to Provide Meters, 1.13 Location of Meters, 1.18 Combined Distribution Systems, 7.1 Service Line Connection, 8.1 Service Line Disconnects, and 9.1 Billing Procedures and Meter Readings. The following discussion prefaced that these changes were simply to clarify, and did not to change the Rules and Regulations, due to misinterpretation issues. A summary of the amendments are as follows:

1.1 Connection Permit – the term “Hook-up” was replaced with “Connection.”

1.2 Connection Permit Request - "Hook-up" was replaced with "Connection."

1.3 Connection Charges for New Users - "Hook-up" was replaced with "Connection". When there are changes in ownership of a business or household, Hill County Water District must be notified of the changes. The \$50 transfer in ownership fee shall be assessed by the District.

1.8 Charges to Trailer Parks and Campgrounds – the term "Trailer Court" was replaced with "Trailer Park". Any Campground or Trailer Park owner is responsible for any and all fees for any Campground or Trailer Park Tenant's water use regardless of the length of stay. *Section 1.8 was changed to give the Owner full financial responsibility instead of the Tenant.*

1.12 District to Provide Meters - "Hook-up" was replaced with "Connection."

1.13 Location of Meters – The water meter must be placed in an area free of health and safety hazards. *Section 1.13 was amended to account for safety. The neglected payment penalty information was removed.*

1.18 Combined Distribution Systems – the Hill County Water District must be notified of any changes in operation, including changes to personnel or customer information. If a water user/consumer intends to make any repairs to their distribution system, the District must oversee those changes. *Section 1.18 was clarified, not changed.*

7.1 Service Line Connection - "Hook-up" was replaced with "Connection."

8.1 Service Line Disconnects – Involuntary disconnects shall be left to the discretion of the individual water Associations. In the event of an involuntary, or voluntary disconnect, the Administrative Party (billing party) will assess a \$325 reconnect fee upon reconnection. *Section 7.1 was clarified, not changed.*

9.1 Billing Procedures and Meter Readings- All accounts are due and payable on the due date which is the 15th of the proceeding month. Any account past due is grounds for disconnection, not just accounts thirty (30) days past due. A finance charge of 2% will be assessed on all balances past due, not just thirty (30) days past due. Meters are read monthly by the District, not by the individual water users. The District then bills the individual Associations accordingly. NEW: The District will make billing services available to individual water Associations if they choose to use that service. Associations will be charged \$4 per water user/consumer per month to offset materials, software and administrative costs.

No changes were made to the ordinances. There was no public comment thus the hearing was closed.

OLD BUSINESS:

- a. **Water Loss Report** – Water loss report was reviewed by the Board. North Joplin has an ongoing leak. Mr. Hedges presented a solution by digging at the “old Fossen shop” to check pressures and narrow down where the leak could be.
- b. **Inverness Tank** – The preliminary drilling 80 feet for soil samples was quoted at \$42,000 by TD&H (report attached) which is nearly double what was initially anticipated. TD&H is one of very few companies within a reasonable radius, equipped to perform this project.
- c. **PFAS Testing** – Sample kits were received and will be taken within the next two weeks.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **Wet Well Cleaning** – Mr. Hedges provided an update on cleaning wet wells.
- b. **North Central Maintenance Agreement** – (Draft Agreement is attached) is an agreement between HCWD and North Central where HCWD employees perform line locates. Mr. Hedges is weighing the pros and cons of accepting the contract. Though no cons have been identified as of yet, this would bring in additional revenue for HCWD in addition to owning a line locater.
- c. **Insurance Renewal** – Mr. Hedges reported to the Board that insurance renewal with Glatfelter is underway. Tina Wood agreed to assist with reviewing the renewal.
- d. **Consumer Confidence Report** – This is complete and has been posted accordingly.
- e. **North Joplin Water Leak** – Addressed above. However, it was at this time the Board was informed that the Hingham Park may have been connected to the town line, not the District line. Essentially, the Town’s water loss was consistent with Hingham Park’s water use. Town Council and HCWD are working to fix the issue.
- f. **River Flows/BOR Report** – Marias River is up to 600cfs. Lots of water is being used as the Inverness tank lost 9ft of water in the past day due to heavy use. Fortunately, reports indicate that the river looks good and snowpack remains at 80% which is just short of average for this time of year.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. **Bills/Financial Reports** - On motion by Shane Borlaug, seconded by Jason Myers, the Board approved the bills for payment and financial reports.
- b. **CDARs**- Chris Matson from 1st Bank in Chester called Tina Wood this week expressing his desire to have more business from HCWD. He offered a 24 month, 3.5% interest rate, with waived penalties for early withdrawal to move more funds into a new CD with 1st Bank. It was an offer the Board could not refuse. Tina Wood motioned to move the latest maturing Independence CDAR to 1st Bank, and Shane Borlaug seconded, the Board approved moving CDAR funds to 1st Bank.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Delinquencies** – Reviewed. No accounts beyond 90 days past due.

ADJOURNMENT: Kevin Springer motioned and Larry Fossen seconded for meeting adjournment at 8:39PM.

Genevieve Hanson, Board Secretary

Next Regular Meeting- Wednesday, June 3rd, 2026, at 7:30p.m. at the District's office at 104 Second Street, Hingham, Montana.