

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL

December 23, 2024

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Laurel, Montana, was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Mayor Dave Waggoner at 6:30 p.m. on December 23, 2024.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:	Thomas Canape	Heidi Sparks
	Michelle Mize	Jessica Banks
	Casey Wheeler	Irv Wilke
	Richard Klose	Jodi Mackay

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:	Kurt Markegard, Interim CAO
	Britney Harakal, Administrative Assistant

Mayor Waggoner led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

MINUTES:

Motion by Council Member Wilke to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 10, 2024, as presented, seconded by Council Member Sparks. With no objection, the minutes of the regular meeting of December 10, 2024, as presented, were approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

Motion by Council Member Sparks to approve the minutes of the special meeting of December 17, 2024, as presented, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the minutes of the special meeting of December 17, 2024, as presented, were approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

COUNCIL DISCLOSURE OF EX-PARTE COMMUNICATIONS: None.

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

CONSENT ITEMS:

- **Claims entered through December 20, 2024.**
A complete listing of the claims and their amounts is on file in the Clerk/Treasurer's Office.
- **Clerk/Treasurer Financial Statements for the month of November 2024.**
- **Approval of Payroll Register for PPE 11/24/2024 totaling \$237,386.34.**
- **Approval of Payroll Register for PPE 12/8/2024 totaling \$299,645.93.**
- **Council Workshop Minutes of December 17, 2024.**

The Mayor asked if there was any separation of consent items. There was none.

Motion by Council Member Klose to approve the consent items as presented, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the Consent Agenda of December 23, 2024, as presented, were approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

CEREMONIAL CALENDAR: None.

REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

- Budget/Finance Committee Minutes December 10, 2024.
- Public Works Committee Minutes of November 18, 2024

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Council Minutes of December 23, 2024

- Public Works Committee Minutes of December 16, 2024.
- Park Board Minutes of December 5, 2024.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (THREE-MINUTE LIMIT): None.

SCHEDULED MATTERS:

- **Appointment of Daniel Klein to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028.**

Motion by Council Member Canape to approve the Mayor's appointment of Daniel Klein to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Cami Story to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028.**

Motion by Council Member Banks to approve the Mayor's appointment of Cami Story to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Dianne Lehm to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency - Advisory for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028.**

Motion by Council Member Mize to approve the Mayor's appointment of Dianne Lehm to the Laurel Urban Renewal Agency – Advisory for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Richard Klose to Park Board for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028.**

Motion by Council Member Mackay to approve the Mayor's appointment of Richard Klose to Park Board for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Tom Canape to the Park Board for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028.**

Motion by Council Member Sparks to approve the Mayor's appointment of Tom Canape to the Park Board for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Phyllis Bromgard to the Park Board for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028.**

Motion by Council Member Wheeler to approve the Mayor's appointment of Phyllis Bromgard to the Park Board for a four-year term ending December 31, 2028, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Casey Wheeler to the Board of Health for a three-year term ending December 31, 2027.**

Motion by Council Member Wilke to approve the Mayor's appointment of Casey Wheeler to the Board of Health for a three-year term ending December 31, 2027, seconded by Council Member Spark. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Irv Wilke to the Police Commission for the remainder of a three-year term ending April 30, 2025.**

Motion by Council Member Canape to approve the Mayor's appointment of Irv Wilke to the Police Commission for the remainder of a three-year term ending April 30, 2025, seconded by Council Member Sparks. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Appointment of Dan Gatley to the Police Commission for the remainder of a three-year term ending April 30, 2026.**

Mr. Gatley introduced himself to the Council.

Motion by Council Member Banks to approve the Mayor's appointment of Dan Gatley to the Police Commission for the remainder of a three-year term ending April 30, 2026, seconded by Council Member Wilke. With no objection, the appointment, as presented, was approved. There was no public comment or Council discussion.

- **Resolution No. R24-99: A Resolution Of The City Council Authorizing The City Of Laurel And The Laurel Urban Renewal Agency (LURA) To Negotiate A Contract With Triple Tree Engineering To Act As The Engineer For The TIF District.**

Motion by Council Member Sparks to approve Resolution No. R24-99, seconded by Council Member Mize. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All eight Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 8-0.

- **Resolution No. R24-100: Resolution Of The City Council To Approve The Proposed Increase In The Rates And Charges For The Users Of The Municipal Water And Sanitary Sewer Rates And Charges To Become Effective On January 10, 2025.**

Motion by Council Member Klose to approve Resolution No. R24-100, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All eight Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 8-0.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA: None.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS (ONE-MINUTE LIMIT): None.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

Council wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Council reminded everyone that December is a five-Tuesday month. The next meeting will be in January.

MAYOR UPDATES:

UNSCHEDULED MATTERS:

- **Beartooth RC&D Discussion**

Council President Sparks introduced Beartooth RC&D to the Council.

Joel Bertolino, Nan Knight, Gaurav Thakur, and Myrna Lastusky reviewed the attached handouts.

It was questioned do businesses pay for these services. It was clarified no businesses do not pay for any services. The fees that the City contributes towards is the local match for grant funding. Each application requires approximately 100 hours' worth of work.

It was noted that on the handouts, it stated that the funds for the West Laurel Interchange expansion were returned. It was questioned why those funds were returned. It was clarified that those funds were to assist in planning development around the new interchange. However, at that time, there was no water or sewer out there, nor were there any businesses interested in building in the area and still located within the County.

It was questioned happen if the City of Laurel does not agree to this MOU. It was clarified that that every little bit helps in being able to assist in economic development. If Laurel does not approve this MOU, then Laurel will not be a priority area for Beartooth RC&D.

It was noted that the four people standing before Council tonight are the entire staff of Beartooth RC&D. They serve a five-county area. When applying for various grants, the City will need to refer to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or CEDS document.

It was questioned how many businesses within the City of Laurel city limits receive assistance. Please see the attached handout.

It was questioned if people looking to bring business into the area are brought into Laurel to see potential locations. It was clarified that recently they did bring a potential client through the area. They decided to purchase a property between Laurel and Billings; however, they will be employing approximately 100 people who have the potential to live and do business in the City of Laurel.

It was noted that Beartooth RC&D has not found an open door in Laurel in the past, but they would like to start doing more in Laurel.

It was questioned if they could help bring business into the new interchange. With a truck stop going in soon, it will help the City grow westward.

Council asked what the logistics are to move this forward. Given that this MOU was voted down at the last City Council meeting, there are two ways in which it can be reconsidered. First being, a motion to reconsider is made from the prevailing side. That motion must pass by a super majority. Then Council may vote on the item again. The second is to have a substantial change made to the MOU and bring it back as a new item.

It was questioned if this was budgeted for. It was clarified that it had been budgeted for.

Motion by Council Member Klose to reconsider Resolution No. R24-96, seconded by Council Member Mize. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All eight Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 8-0.

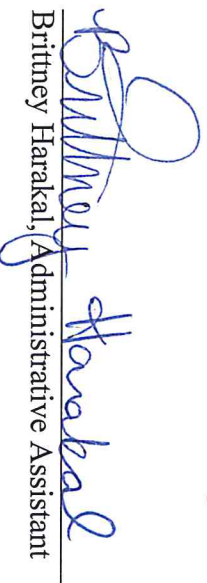
Motion by Council Member Sparks to approve Resolution No. R24-96, seconded by Council Member Mackay. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All eight Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 8-0.

The Council thanked Beartooth RC&D for the presentation tonight; it was very informational. Council Member Klose noted that he voted against this MOU originally due to a lack of information.

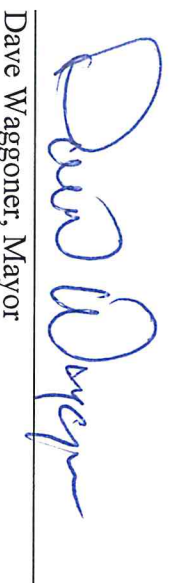
ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Council Member Mackay to adjourn the Council meeting, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All eight Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 8-0.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.


Britney Harakal, Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Mayor and passed by the City Council of the City of Laurel, Montana, this 14th day of January 2024.


Dave Waggoner, Mayor

Attest:

Kelly Streckler, Clerk/Treasurer



Beartooth RC&D
City of Laurel Activities 2020-2024

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Opportunities:

\$2.42 million available for RLF lending up to \$400,000 per loan. Beartooth can partner with local banks as money down or finance fully with bank denial.

- **RMAP (Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program):** Can offer 2% below primary up to 10-year terms. Loan amounts up to \$62,500 (equipment, working capital, etc.) for businesses with less than 10 employees.
- **IRP (Intermediary Relending Program):** Standard terms up to 20 years on real estate, 5-7 years on working capital and equipment. Loan amounts up to \$400,000. Open to businesses with 50 or less employees.

In the last 3 years, Beartooth has had 7 RLF loans with City of Laurel for \$499,594 with a total investment of \$1,806,175.

- O'Toole
- Iron Titan CrossFit – paid off in June 2024
- Amusement Park Drive-in- Paid off in Aug 2023
- Paragon
- Black Sands
- Montana Bin Busters
- MicroBooks – paid off in Dec 2023

These Businesses have been assisted with Financial Technical Assistance (TA) over the past 3 years:

- A Haus of Realty – REAP grant application
- Darrell Dyer – Housing Developer; working capital and state programs
- Elizabeth Terrel – Art Gallery
- Jens Selvig – Land for rock mining – looking at funding and regulations
- Mindi's Burgers – business counseling
- Molly & Friends – RLF and Brownfields
- Potential buyer for Hair on Main – potential RLF
- Potential buyer for Mountain Mud – business counseling and potential RLF
- The Yogurt Shop – business counseling, potential RLF

Other Technical Assistance Provided to Small Businesses since 2020:

- 406 Bovine: This business owner was located in Laurel and developed software to use facial recognition for cattle. Beartooth assisted the business in finding a patent attorney for them to discuss their product with and identifying strategies to raise private funding.
- Yellowstone Valley Farms: Reuben Stahl has a greenhouse and raises fresh basil and sells it through Sysco. Beartooth FADC worked with Montana Manufacturing Extension to connect him with the MSU Senior Engineers for a capstone project, helping him design and build a piece of equipment to clean his growing channels. Beartooth FADC also worked with the Montana

- Department of Ag and a film crew to film his operation and business for a success story about Montana Agriculture; the video will be utilized by Reuben to promote his business as well.
- F Bar 3 Vineyard: Beartooth FADC assisted the business in researching funding opportunities.
 - Laurel Rod & Gun Club: Beartooth staff assisted the group in applying for grants that would provide funding to develop their new location.
 - Rodi Farm: Beartooth FADC assisted the business in applying for USDA VAPG, Montana Department of Ag Growth Through Ag Grant, and Rural Food Systems Initiatives Grants.
 - Beartooth partnered with Big Sky Economic Development to provide a “Wealth Management for Business Owners” workshop in Nov. 2024.

Community Development Assistance Provided:

- Laurel Urban Renewal Authority (LURA)
- Laurel Activities Recreational Complex (LARC)
- \$21,000 BSTF Sports Facilities Feasibility Study
- 2021 \$25,000 Big Sky Trust Fund grant to explore options for infrastructure expansion at West Laurel interchange. This included crafting template letters of support and reaching out to Laurel businesses and local and state representatives to request their support for the project. The City chose not to move forward with this project, so the funds were returned.
- Presented S2A modular housing program to City Planner as a possible solution to the City’s attainable housing needs.

Brownfields Program Opportunities:

Brownfields are potentially contaminated properties (lead paint, asbestos, petroleum, etc). With remediation, they can be repurposed to go from an eyesore to an asset for a community.

Awarded Fall 2023: \$460,000 Brownfields funding for Phase I ESA and Phase II assessment to help promote economic growth to blighted property.

- Currently considering 2 potential Brownfield sites in the City of Laurel for assessment.
- Nov. 2024: Applied for \$1 million Brownfield RLF that, if awarded, will allow Beartooth to assist property owners with cleanup of contaminated properties.

Other Support Provided and Available for Future Projects:

- May 2024: Provided Letter of Support for EDA Disaster Recovery Supplemental Grant application for water system improvement project.
- Montana State Business Attraction Efforts: Beartooth’s active work with State personnel and communities in our region (plus a Beartooth loan) helped bring Ultimate Defense Technologies to Yellowstone County (in between Billings and Laurel). If the City of Laurel wants to attract business, we are here to help with that.
 - Have submitted Destry’s building to a couple different projects in the past year.
 - Beartooth works with Daniel Klein for potential real estate and business attraction.

EDA CARES Act Grant for \$400,000 funded:

- [Regional Housing Study](#)
- Economic development consultant and Bozeman Trail collaborative work
- Big Sky EDA's Economic Recovery Efforts, which included:
 - Regional Response and Recovery Team
 - Laurel Affordable Housing Project
 - Seeking funding for Laurel Infrastructure Study
 - Community Building Sessions
 - Business 1:1 Check-ins
 - Small Business Training Opportunities

Services that only Beartooth offers in this region:

- Beartooth is a Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC) and an Economic Development District (EDD). These designations afford us access to resources and programs that are not available to others. Through Beartooth's partnership with our Cities and Counties, those resources and benefits are open to those we serve.
- Regional CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. It is required to qualify for Economic Development Administration (EDA) assistance and is a prerequisite for designation as an economic development district (EDD). Cities, Counties, and organization utilize the CEDS to assist in their own strategic planning and to support grant applications.
- Food and Ag Development Center (FADC): Beartooth is 1 of 11 Centers in the State and assists businesses that add value to Montana agricultural commodities.
- Rural Brownfields Program (see above)



Supporting Laurel's Growth

Snapshot 2020 -2024

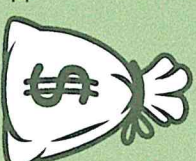
Empowering Businesses, Revitalizing Communities, and Building Partnerships

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Financial Support for Local Businesses Content Highlights:

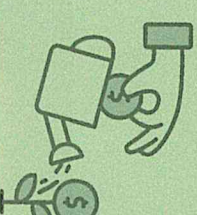
Revolving Loan Fund (RLF):

- \$2.42 million available, loans up to \$400,000
- Beartooth can partner with local banks or provide full financing for eligible businesses
- 7 RLF loans in Laurel (2020-2024): \$499,594 loaned, generating \$1,806,175 total investment
- Businesses: O'Toole, Iron Titan CrossFit, Amusement Park Drive-in, Paragon, Black Sands, Montana Bin Busters, MicroBooks



Additional Loan Programs:

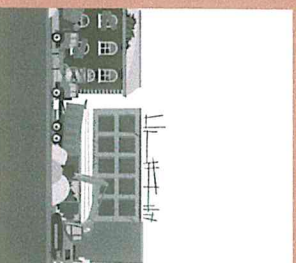
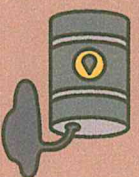
- RMAP: Loans up to \$62,500 at 2% below primary for 10 years
- IRP: Loans up to \$400,000, terms of 20 years for real estate, 5-7 years for working capital



BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM

From Blight to Bright

- 2023: \$460,000 awarded for assessments
- 2024: Applied for \$1M for property cleanup
- 2 Brownfield sites in Laurel under review for redevelopment



BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

Empowering Entrepreneurs

Business Success Stories:

- A Haus of Realty: REAP grant application
- Mindi's Burgers & The Yogurt Shop: Business counseling and funding exploration
- 406 Bovine: Developed cattle facial recognition software; assisted in finding a patent attorney and funding strategies
- Yellowstone Valley Farms: Collaboration with MSU engineers for innovative equipment



Workshop: "Wealth Management for Business Owners" (Nov. 2024)



Building Stronger Communities



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

Transforming Laurel's Landscape

- LURA & LARC: Supported \$21,000 feasibility study for recreational facilities
- West Laurel Infrastructure Expansion: \$25,000 grant returned due to local decision



STRATEGIC PLANNING AND UNIQUE CAPABILITIES

Planning for a Better Future

EDA CARES Act Grant (\$400,000):

- Regional Housing Study
- Laurel Affordable Housing Project
- Community building and business training sessions



Exclusive Services:

- Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC)
- Economic Development District (EDD)
- Food and Ag Development Center (FADC)



2023 ANNUAL IMPACT STATEMENT - REGIONAL

Beartooth RC&D, a key player in regional economic development, collaborated with over 50 federal, state, and local agencies in 2023.

Significant milestones:

- Technical Assistance: 141 clients supported in business, strategic, and financial planning
- Economic Impact: Nearly \$9 million in investments secured, including \$6 million in private funds
- Job Creation: 156 new jobs created and 98 jobs retained regionally

Founded in 1969, Beartooth RC&D serves underserved communities in Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, and Yellowstone Counties, driving economic and community development.

"Join Us in Building a Stronger Laurel!"

A large silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees.

Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.