

MACo DISTRICTS 1, 2 & 3 MEETING
Powder River County
Broadus, Montana
June 7, 2007

District 3 Chairman Don Rieger of Fallon County called the meeting to order on the above date at the Community Center in Broadus. He introduced Ray Traub, chairman of the Powder River County Commission who welcomed the group to Broadus. Don then introduced the MACo staff Harold Blattie and Sheryl Wood along with John Prinkki, President of MACo. Don led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

15 of 17 counties represented. A sign-up sheet is attached to these minutes.

Minutes:

Minutes of the August 29, 2006 minutes were reviewed. Corrections were noted; Dan Watson of Rosebud County was present at the meeting and Seth Broesder with Congressman Rehberg's office. Motion was made by Gary Macdonald to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion was seconded by Troy Blunt and passed.

Lisa Kimmet, MACR:

Lisa Kimmet, Prairie County Clerk and Recorder and MACR President spoke about her goal of improving communications with other associations; legislative issues and major disappointment in not being able to roll back the early voting deadline. She thanked County Commissioners and Sheryl Wood of MACo for their efforts and reported on some of the legislative successes. She said the number of election bills is an indication that elections are really under scrutiny. Lisa encouraged the continued cooperation between the commissioners and the Clerk and Recorders Association.

Interoperability Montana Project:

Edward Sypinski, Associate Director, Local Government Center, MSU explained that the purpose of project is to provide wireless communication across the state for emergency service providers.

Scott Bradford, Public Safety Services Bureau talked about the 9-1-1 and E-9-1-1 services and had E-9-1-1 status report. He explained funding, new legislation which provided additional funds and how it will be distributed. He encouraged counties to contact Becky Berger of the Public Safety Services Bureau for program information.

Chief Alan Michaels of Glendive spoke about the Eastern Tier Interoperability Consortium, He said it started with a Homeland Security grant to upgrade equipment and eventually developed into the consortium as it is today. Three sites with buildings have been purchased. Those sites will be revamped with new equipment and eventually will have a generator, backup, a/c, heaters and a system that works when there is no electricity. Once operating, the system will be turned over to the counties.

Todd Devlin questioned why the system wasn't set up using cell towers since there is the ability to block off a portion for emergency services. Scott Bradford responded to the question explaining that cell phones do not have the distance that radio signals provide and that current emergency systems operate on VHF frequencies. It would require a tremendous amount of cell towers to provide coverage.

MACo Budget:

Harold Blattie, MACo Executive Director presented the FY 2008 projected budget proposal established by the Board of Directors. He explained that the budget includes his recommendations for staff compensation which is market-based and merit-based. He said it is extremely difficult to compete with private business as is evident by the recent resignation of Patty Grosfield who resigned to accept a much higher paid position. He said the board would like a 25% reserve. The final budget will be adopted by the board at their June 27th meeting.

Harold said that the board also recommended changes in the dues structure in order to generate more revenue. He presented the information which was also available as a hand-out, showing that dues will increase by the COLA for the FY 08 Budget year.

Dan Watson explained that the board made all the cuts they thought they could without cutting service, but found it necessary to increase the dues. Following a question about any increase in the associate and affiliate dues, Harold said they are working on that.

Legislative Report:

Harold Blattie, Director and Sheryl Wood, Associate Director went through the list of MACo requested bills, briefly explaining the purpose or effect of the bill and the final status. Harold pointed out that there were about 2500 bill draft requests, 1526 bills introduced and 521 that became laws. Following are additional comments on legislative process and specific bills:

- Funding for detention costs failed primarily because we were unable to provide good data on what those costs are.
- Stream Access: MACo's only involvement was with regard to right-of-way, but there will continue to be problems until a resolution is provided, possibly by the courts.
- Non-wood bats issue: Todd Devlin explained that there is financial issue as well as safety issue.
- Several fire related bills were passed with regard to fire districts, fire companies. Commissioners can now impose restriction in addition to burning restrictions.
- Counties may need to be preparing their own gravel permit applications to submit to DEQ under mining laws.
- Audit of entities under \$500,000 no longer required. Harold is working with Dept. of Administration on this as there needs to be some accountability for public funds. Norm Klein is retiring and there is no one with experience to replace him
- Tax Increment Financing – administration wanted limit on size of district. Bill failed. Fallon County is currently in litigation.
- Additional compensation for elected officials – issue is becoming problematic and needs to be gotten rid of. MACo will work with the CCO on the issue.
- Identity Theft – a bill passed out of the Senate and allowed a 2 year extension. The bill died in Appropriations. However, we will need to work on developing a Model Plan to protect social security numbers.

John Prinkki, MACo President thanked Harold and Sheryl for their hard work during the legislative session. He said there will be a webcast on June 28th on the Clean & Renewable Energy Bonds. We also need work on defeat of the "Aviation Modernization and Investment Act" which raises fuel tax from 21c to 49c in addition to a \$25 landing fee.

Sheryl Wood talked about the special session. She said that the lobbying work she and Harold did during the regular session paid off during the special session. They tried to impress upon the legislators that they were there to represent the constituency, not corporate business or special interest groups. She expressed the importance of getting requested information to MACo as accurately and timely as possible. Lisa Kimmet said that in some instances, the request was not made to the proper office. Sheryl said they are working with staff to improve communications. She also said it is important to check their website often.

Rick Strohmeyer, DNRC spoke of legislation passed relating to the DNRC fire program. His handout detailed information on SB 147 giving counties authority to enact and enforce restrictions. SB 51 requires counties to evaluate the wildland fire potential as a part of growth policies. SB 145 revises wildfire protection laws and SB 404 clarifies liability for firefighters. Don McDowell questioned item c. which states that local governmental fire agencies shall pay attorney fees and costs to defend firefighter against criminal prosecution for act or omission during performance of duties during a wildfire. Harold said that the employer is responsible.

Disaster and Emergency Services:

Richland County DES Coordinator Butch Renders presented information on responsibilities and services provided by DES. He reminded the commissioners that the DES Coordinators work for them, not the state. There are resources available through the state to provide assistance to counties.

Comment was made from the audience that there needs to be more involvement of County Commissioners in DES.

Affiliate and Associate MACo Membership:

Sheryl Wood explained that they are working on expanding the affiliate and associate membership both as a fundraising method and also to work with other associations. She said other fundraising includes corporate sponsorship, newsletter advertising, sale of publications, directories, jackets, shirts, vendor sponsored conferences, etc. She asked for help in identifying potential vendors who may be interested in participating in MACo events, etc.

2010 Census:

Sheryl reminded counties that they need to be involved early in the census process. For every person not accounted for, we lose \$165 in federal funds.

More Information from Harold:

Legislative Interim Committees are meeting now. Harold encouraged commissioners to read their newsletter to keep informed and to follow up on the interim studies. He said MACo staff needs help from commissioners to keep up.

Harold recommended commissioners view the Rural Landscape Institute "Path to Eden" DVD of which MACo is a sponsoring partner.

Safety on Container Sites – building codes division is coming out with regulation for container site specifications.

District Court Council has come out with a workload study which indicates a shortage of 8 judges in the state. There will probably be some realignment of judicial districts. NACo has prescription card agreements which counties can enter into to allow constituents to purchase discount drugs. If a county does not want to contract with NACo, MACo has cards available. There is no obligation to provide this however.

Containing Inmate Medical Costs – Correctional Risk Services will review medical claims for inmates and if they find discrepancies, they get a percent of the savings. They also provide a major medical coverage plan for inmates, based on a per inmate per day coverage.

The deferred comp program offered by Nationwide Retirement Solutions - they are looking for a representative for Montana. They may try to get two reps or consideration is being given to having a staff person at the MACo office. Nationwide needs to provide better service.

The Clean Water Act is becoming extremely important. The term “navigable” has been removed from the definition which has a huge impact. Every puddle of water would require a permit. NACo is working hard on this issue.

District Reports:

District 1 reports that they elected Richard Dunbar as Chairman and Dave Reinhardt as vice chairman for a 2-year period.

District 2 reported they discussed redefining PILT, WIR and the NACo organization.

District 3 reported that they discussed working with the Interim Legislative Committees, resource development and putting together a committee to work with the Interim Committees and asking our legislators for help as they represent us.

Nominations for MACo 2nd VP:

Troy Blunt nominated Carl Seilstad of Fergus County. There were no other nominations.

Nominations for Fiscal Officer:

There were no nominations.

Adjournment:

Motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.