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Property appraisal: then and now

By Harold Blattie, MACo Executive Director

The Montana Association of Counties has completed 100 years of serving its member counties. As we look back to the issues facing counties in 1909, we find some things have changed, or no longer exist, while others actually have changed very little.

On Jan. 19, 1909, 28 county commissioners, representing 15 counties, met in the commissioners room in the Lewis and Clark County building. At that meeting, each county was allocated one vote and upon motion unanimously approved the commissioners resolved to "organize themselves into a permanent organization to be called the Montana Association of County Commissioners (MACC). It was not until 1971 that MACC amended its charter to become the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) and approved hiring the first executive director.

Back to the Jan. 19, 1909, meeting. On the same date, the State Association of Assessors also met in Helena in the same building, but conveniently in another room. The event that triggered these meetings was a bill introduced by Rep. John Hunter from Custer County. Under the bill, the board of county commissioners would become the property assessors and would for the first time receive a salary. Rep. Hunter was summoned from the Capitol to the commissioner's meeting to "appear and fully explain" his bill. He did so at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and explained his bill would "much more than save their salaries, besides making the office more respectable by placing it on a higher plane." After listening to Rep. Hunter's explanation, the commissioners took no action. Following the meeting with Rep. Hunter, a group from the assessors appeared in the hall and invited the com-

missioners to meet with them in a joint session. That meeting lasted for the balance of the afternoon and carried on into the following day where they met in joint session until 3:30 p.m. that day. In the end, neither group took any action and "left it to the Legislature."

I think it is significant that here we are more than 100 years later and one of the most vexing issues we still face is property appraisal for taxation purposes. Property appraisal has changed significantly over the years with the greatest change taking place in the early 1990's when the county elected office of county assessor was eliminated in nearly every county because the state Department of Revenue (DOR) had assumed the actual appraisal functions to provide a basis of equitable state-wide assessment of property.

Last year, DOR finished its six-year reappraisal and the Legislature passed HB 645, which attempted to mitigate the effects of reappraisal on a statewide basis. For the most part, the bill accomplished this for residential and business properties; but there are significant numbers of properties that did not "fit the mold," commonly referred to as "outliers." For many of those properties, the values increased dramatically, triggering the filing of AB-26's and property tax protests in many counties.

The department has also completed a reappraisal of agricultural property for the first time in more than 40 years. The new appraisal relied heavily upon soil types to determine productive capability of the land which, when factored with increased rates that were used for grazing values per AUM (assets under management), price per ton of hay and price per bushel of wheat, re-





MACo News

MACo Employee Profile

Spouse's name:

Brandon

Years at MACo:

Started in January 2007

Occupation:

MACo Health Care Trust Enrollment and Eligibility Specialist

Profession before MACo:

Administrative assistant for the Montana School Board Association

Education:

Working on a business management degree at UM-Helena

Hardest thing you've ever done:

Moved to Montana...but it turned out to be the best thing I've ever done.

Three people (alive/deceased) you'd invite to dinner:

Leonardo DaVinci, Oprah, George Carlin

Dream job or hobby:

Own and run greenhouse

Something we'd be surprised to learn about you:

I ride dirt bikes in the summer with my spouse and friends

Most adventurous thing you've done:

Hiked to the top of a mountain in the Elkhorns to climb a frozen waterfall

Favorite way to relax:

Exercise

Most proud of:

My beautiful family and home; I'm truly blessed

Daily reading material:

Browsing the Web

Favorite meal:

Artichokes and fettuccine alfredo

Pet peeve:

People who ride their brakes or don't go the speed limit

Motto:

What doesn't kill me makes me stronger

Last book read:

No time for books, I have an infant at home!

Favorite movie:

"Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou"



Alyce Bailey

Commissioner Profile

Spouse's name:

Roger

Years in public service:

20 years

Occupation:

Ranch wife

Profession before public service:

Raising kids and participating in several community organizations

Education:

Bachelors in business from Montana State University

Hardest thing you've ever done:

Tell my then-17-year-old son that his 18-year-old cousin and best friend had died after transplant surgeries

Three people (alive/deceased) you'd invite to dinner:

My dad, my paternal grandmother and Kathy MacCarty, a family friend who homesteaded in the area

Dream job or hobby:

Working with a landscaper or in a greenhouse

What people would be surprised to learn about you:

I still wear my Bobcat sweatshirt for Cats/Griz games and I have season tickets for the Griz

Most adventurous thing you've done:

Ran for county commissioner (most intense educational endeavor, too)

Favorite way to relax:

Gardening

Most proud of:

My three kids: Ty, Jessica and Taw

Daily reading material:

Daily devotional, newspaper, e-mail

Favorite meal:

Spaghetti with homemade tomato sauce

Pet peeve:

People who don't take responsibility for their actions

Motto:

Take time to listen

Last book read:

Memories from the Mountains, by C.B. Rich

Favorite movie:

"Gone with the Wind"



Connie Eissinger

More than 40 counties have received most of their HB 645 funds

House Bill 645 provided \$10 million dollars in infrastructure grants to counties and to cities and towns. Of the 56 counties, 45 have submitted their budget and implementation schedule so that a contract can be prepared; 43 have received 90 percent of their grant funds amounting to \$6,700,061.76.

Five counties have submitted a closeout report and been sent the final 10 percent of their grant. These final disbursements equal \$96,302.55. Meanwhile, 44 local governments have requested a change in their grant

scope of work and 21 have completed projects and submitted a final closeout report.

The state Department of Commerce has disbursed \$14,476,564.64 for infrastructure projects throughout Montana. The balance of local government grant funds not yet under contract is \$5,523,435.36. Grant contracts are in place for the 145 eligible local governments.

All local government grant funds must be expended by Sept. 30. Unexpended funds must revert to the state and be deposited in the state general fund.



MACo/County News

2010 promises to be even bigger for Interoperability Montana efforts

By Ian Marquand, Interoperability Montana public affairs & outreach consultant

For Interoperability Montana (IM), 2009 can be described in one word: more. As in, more communications sites up and running, more under construction, and more people using the system.

For county leaders and public safety service providers, there's also more information available about IM, with still more on the way. Much of it has been distributed in printed form, but all of it is (or soon will be) available on the IM Web site at <http://interop.mt.gov>, namely:

- A report on IM's "buildout" during 2009. Through November, this already had been a banner year for construction. Then, a number of mild December days allowed contractors to get even more work done.
- A report on IM's outreach efforts in the summer and fall. The report contains more than a dozen pages of comments heard during more than 40 meetings around the state and provides insight to local perceptions of the project, as well as valuable suggestions for a new sustainability plan.
- A "white paper" created specifically for Montana fire services, with information about IM's role in fire communications. The report also illustrates how two rural fire departments have successfully used Lewis & Clark County's interoperable system. It also includes an interview with Phoenix Fire Department officials about their department's transition to interoperable radio technology after initial skepticism.

More valuable information is on its way in 2010. This month, IM will make available a 30-minute video that tells the organization's story and features local government officials from various parts of Montana.

2010 also will bring a detailed analysis of specific operational costs associated with the IM system. This will address the question asked most often during the 2009 outreach meetings: "How much will all this cost?"

Kyle Hilmer, Montana Information Technology Services Division, and Garrett Fawaz, Montana Department of Corrections, will develop the financial model. It will include the costs of maintaining IM's backbone network, as well as its internal administrative operations.

Hilmer and Fawaz hope to have some preliminary information available in January.

For more information, visit <http://interop.mt.gov>.

Property appraisal still an issue

Continued from front page

sulted in some significant changes to assessed values. Some types of property went up in certain locations and others went down in other locations, causing confusion and often a general lack of understanding.

Unlike the county commissioners of 1909, the Montana Association of Counties of today has taken an active role in working with the legislature, DOR and other stakeholder groups in an attempt to find workable solutions; solutions that are equitable to both the taxpayers and to the local taxing jurisdictions that rely heavily upon property taxes to fund essential services.

Unless we find alternative means to fund local services, whoever is in my position in 2109 can just use much of this article for the January 2110 MACo News because I am sure those who follow us 100 years from now will still be grappling with property appraisal.

MACo's main number is 449-4360

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MACo News

HCT wellness program lets members help themselves

By Owen Voigt, MACo Health Care Trust Administrator

Growing up on a small sheep and cattle ranch in North Dakota was not conducive to preventive health care and we sure did not have a wellness program. To point out how far we were from even thinking about wellness, my older brother, Arni, and I would engage in activities that would make one question not only how I ever got a college degree but how we made it through childhood.

Our family was a hunting family, we would hunt using rocks and sticks on up to as big of a gun as we could handle. Mom and Dad taught us about weapons, safety and their proper use, but as ranching goes, they could not watch us all the time.

Arni and I each had 25-pound recurve bows and arrows equipped with field tips. One of our favorite things to do was see who could shoot an arrow straight up. The other thing we did was shoot them up until they went out of sight. The winner was the one whose arrow landed closest to him on the gravitational return. To say this was not preventive care is the master of understatement.

Our second archery game was standing in an open area about 100 yards apart and seeing who could, with our bow, strike the others arrow while in flight. Of course, that required shooting the arrows at each other. As you can tell, not a lot of forethought went into this game, either. Surprisingly, we never actually shot ourselves or each other. Come to think of it, our rattlesnake hunting methods left a little to be desired from a wellness perspective, too, but I will leave that for another story.

The Health Care Trust, on the other hand, has arguably the best wellness programs of any plan in Montana. All HCT plans have the following wellness benefits:

- Outpatient well-child care allows for up to 10 exams

through 36 months of age and one exam per benefit period between 3 and 7 years of age

- \$300 allowance for preventive care for all participants 8 years of age or older
- CDC recommended immunizations free when provided by a county health department
- Flu vaccinations free when provided by a county health department
- Annual pap test, one per benefit period — lab work paid at 100 percent
- Annual mammogram benefit of up to \$250 per benefit period
- Colon cancer prevention for members age 50 and over, including fecal occult blood test, sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy benefits
- \$250 allowance for diabetic education

Also, the HCT has a formal wellness plan where every adult member has the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive wellness review. To date the following counties have participated: Big Horn, Granite, Valley, McCone, Garfield, Glacier, Teton, Park and Carbon.

I have learned a blood draw by a nurse to check your cholesterol is quite a lot better than your brother shooting arrows at you. From Alyce, Laurie, Pam and myself here at HCT, happy New Year!



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MACo News

Risk Management Loss Control Conference offers something for everyone

Reserve deputy training standards, stretching programs and road slide obstacles are just some of many topics to be covered at MACo's Risk Management Loss Control Conference in Missoula.

The three-day event, set for Jan. 20-22 at the Hilton Garden Inn, will feature programs and sessions tailored to safety, roads and law enforcement personnel.

Registration is available on the MACo Web site. A draft agenda has been posted, too, as well as a detailed description of this exciting event.

For more information, contact Emelia McEwen at emcewen@mtcounties.org; for registration info, contact Karen Houston at khouston@mtcounties.org. They also may be reached at 449-4360.

2010 MACo Risk Management Loss Control Conference Draft Agenda Hilton Garden Inn, Jan. 20-22, Missoula

Wednesday, Jan. 20

8-8:15 am General Session Opening/Welcome
 8:15-9:30 am How to Do a Safety Program
 9:30-10 am Break
 10-11 am Coordination of Nursing Case Manager with Vocational Rehabilitation and Early Return to Work Program
 11 am-Noon Implementing a Stretching Program
 Noon Awards Luncheon-Unforgettable Claims
 1-2:30 pm Ergonomics and Why It's Important to the Employer
 2:30-3 pm Break
 3-4 pm How to Make Safety Fun

Thursday, Jan. 21—Road Track

8-9:30 am AASHTO Geometric Design
 9:30-10 am Break
 10-10:30 am Roadway Prism
 10:30-11 am Roadside Obstacles
 11 am-Noon Clear Zones
 Noon Lunch
 1-2 pm Recent Lawsuits
 2-3 pm Common Sense Safety

Thursday, Jan. 21—Road Track, cont.

3-3:30 pm Break
 3:30-5 pm Sign Reflectivity and Signing Basics

Thursday, Jan. 21—Law Enforcement Track

8-9:30 am Nature and Scope of Law Enforcement Liability Today
 9:30-10 am Break
 10-10:30 am Nature and Scope, cont.
 10:30-11 am Threshold Incident Tracking
 11-Noon Threshold Incident Tracking, cont.
 Noon Lunch
 1-2 pm Threshold Incident Tracking, cont.
 2-3 pm Threshold Incident Tracking, cont.
 3-3:30 pm Break
 3:30-5 pm Standardize Training for Reserves

Friday, Jan. 22

8-10 am Discrimination and Other Employment Issues
 10-10:15 am Break
 10:15-Noon Discrimination and Other Employment Issues, cont.

Risk Management training covers personnel, audit control, road liability

By Fred Hansen, PE, Loss Control Specialist

Personnel training has been completed in six of our member counties and covered such topics as "7 Reasons for Just Cause and Discrimination/Harassment." The sessions were well attended and the reviews were excellent.

We look forward to extending the program to other members, too.

The internal audit control training program, taught by Rick Reisig, was offered in six regional sessions. Numerous counties attended and received information they used immediately upon their return home. It has been suggested an audit control boilerplate be developed to guide counties in creating a internal audit control policy. We will present a guide boilerplate in the future.

Jack Knorr, MACo's road liability trainer, has visited 44 member counties with his road tailgate training program and has taught about 600 employees. He'll also introduce our new road liability training at the Risk Management Loss Control Conference this month, too.

If your county has liability training requests or suggestions, contact Fred Hansen, loss control specialist at 449-4370 or fhansen@mtcounties.org.

MACo
Risk Management and Training
Emelia McEwen
 Senior Loss Control Specialist
Fred Hansen, PE
 Loss Control Specialist
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County News

Disability Rights Montana to survey county facilities for access

By Beth Brenneman, Disability Rights Montana staff attorney

Disability Rights Montana is conducting a state-wide project to determine the accessibility of county services for Montanans with disabilities. The purpose of the project is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to all county programs and services. Both state and federal law require counties to provide services and programs in a non-discriminatory manner.

Disability Rights Montana, formerly the Montana Advocacy Program, is a non-profit law firm based in Helena. It is a part of a nationwide protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities established by federal law in 1973. The organization advocates for the human, legal and civil rights of Montanans with disabilities.

The organization has programs which include investigation of abuse and neglect of people with disabilities in institutional and community settings, advocacy for people with disabilities in seeking gainful employment, and challenging discrimination against people with disabilities in all settings. As a part of its federal enabling statutes, all protection and advocacy systems have been granted federal authority to have access to records and facilities including jails, that provide services to people with disabilities including mental illness and cognitive impairments.

Given the many important services that counties provide in Montana, ensuring those county services are accessible to people with disabilities is at the top of Disability

Rights Montana's list of priorities. The organization initiated the current phase of its statewide project to determine the level of progress counties have made to improve accessibility since its first courthouse surveys in 2000.

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as well as the Montana Human Rights Act prohibit governmental entities from discriminating against individuals with disabilities when providing services or programs. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides similar prohibitions for entities that receive federal funds. When Disability Rights Montana conducts its surveys, it reviews architectural issues in buildings where county services are provided as well as governmental policies of providing assistive technologies or devices, such as assistive listening systems, Braille materials and telecommunication devices.

For its surveys of buildings where county services are provided, Disability Rights Montana uses the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) which were developed by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, effective Sept. 21, 2004. These guidelines can be found at www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/final.cfm. After each survey, staff provides its findings to county officials along with the references to the ADAAG for reference.

For more information, contact Disability Rights Montana's Beth Brenneman, staff attorney, at 449-2344 or bethbrenneman@gmail.com.



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MACo News

Midwinter registration opens Jan. 4

Registration will soon open for the 2010 edition of the annual MACo Midwinter Conference, set for Feb. 22-25 at the Best Western Heritage Inn in Great Falls. The conference will be a great opportunity for county elected officials to learn more about state and local government issues.

A link to register online, as well as a draft agenda, will be posted to the MACo Web site on Jan. 4.

The MACo board of directors is set to meet, as are the trustees of MACo's Health Care Trust, the Joint Powers Insurance Authority (JPIA), and the Joint Powers Authority (JPA). Also, the JPIA/JPA annual member meeting will take place at that time.

For more information, contact MACo's Karen Houston at 449-4360 or khouston@mtcounties.org.

Hank Laws, 1938-2009

Hank Laws, 71, died in Thompson Falls on Dec. 11. He was a former Sanders County commissioner.

A Montana native, Laws was a logger who began his career as a truck driver, then worked in various other jobs in the industry. He retired in 1996. Laws also served on a local school board and was a volunteer firefighter.



Hank Laws

He served as a commissioner in Sanders County from 1997 until 2008.

Earl Daley, 1920-2009

Earl Daley, 89, died in Glasgow on Dec. 18. He was a former Valley County commissioner.

Daley, a Montana native, was a survivor of the Fort Peck Dam slide of 1938. He became a fulltime farmer and rancher when he moved his family from Fort Peck in 1949. Daley also was on the Valley County Council of Aging, and was active in MACo, serving as its president from 1971 to 1972.



Earl Daley

He was a commissioner in Valley County from 1955 until 1984.



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Fall prevention: Snow and ice

Part 1 of 2

Falls due to ice and snow describes winter weather fall exposures that typically occur in parking lots and on sidewalks. There are other similar fall exposures, like from spills or tracked-in water, but we will focus here on outdoor falls only.

Ice and snow related falls could result in a wide-range of injuries from sprains and bruises to closed head injuries. Here, slips are most prevalent and will typically result in musculoskeletal injuries to the wrists, head, neck, back, or buttocks. Winter weather and early darkness may compound risks to sufferers of serious injuries in parking lots who may be unable to get up and self-rescue unless help is near.

Full exposure to the elements makes a parking lot one of a company's more hazardous places. An ice and snow-related fall is typically the result of an individual's at-risk behavior while walking. That is, for whatever reason, an employee is either not focusing on *where* they are walking, are unable to see their pathway, or are taking shortcuts over or through unsafe conditions, like:

- Patches of ice, or black ice.
- Unplowed or unshoveled walks.

- Landscape or lawn areas.
- Poor visibility.
- Freezing rain and standing water.
- Examples of at-risk behaviors that lead to falls on ice and snow include:
 - Shortcuts over or through hazardous conditions, like landscaping, ice, or water.
 - Walking backwards.
 - Not focusing on where you are stepping.
 - Hurrying or running.
 - Carrying an object that obstructs your view of the pathway.
 - Being distracted and not paying attention to your surroundings.
 - Wearing improper footwear for the conditions.
 - Carrying too much making balancing difficult.

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MACo News

Employees injured on job must use FROI to report claims

By Keith Stapley, MACo Claims Administrator

The First Report of Injury (FROI) is the only form recognized by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry's (DLI) Labor Relations Division to report workers' compensation claims.

The FROI is:

- Used by an injured worker to report an injury or occupational disease to his/her employer
- Used by an employer to report an injured worker's injury or occupational disease to the employers insurer/adjuster
- Used by an insurer/adjuster to report claim data to the Department of Labor

Workers have two reporting requirements. The first is to notify your employer of an on-the-job injury within 30 days of its occurrence, while the second is to complete the form as a claim for compensation. The form must be signed and submitted to the employer's insurer or DLI within 12 months of the accident. The form must be submitted for all injuries to protect your right to benefits in the event a seemingly minor injury develops into a more serious condition.

Be thorough in completing all areas except the gray shaded areas. It is important we have your complete information including wage information even if you are not missing time from work.

You must provide your Social Security number (SSN). This is a mandatory requirement permitted under Section 7(a) the Privacy Act of 1974. The SSN is used as a key identifier of the claimant, and is needed because of the number of persons who have similar names and birth dates, and whose identities can only be distinguished by the SSN. Use extra sheets of paper if needed. Type or print with a ballpoint pen. The information must be legible.

To ensure that workers' compensation systems will not be disrupted, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Public Law 104-191, 42 USC 1301, et. seq., permits the disclosure of protected health care information pursuant to the provisions of state laws regarding workers' compensation.

Montana law requires employers to complete this form within six days after notice of every on-the-job accident, injury and/or occupational disease (OD) by a worker. Ensure all areas are completed except the gray shaded areas, which your insurer will complete. It is extremely important we have complete information.

Send the original immediately to your workers' compensation insurer: MACo Claims, P.O. Box 7059, Helena, MT 59604 or via fax at 443-4161 or via e-mail to claims@mtcounties.org. Send this form within the six-day limit even if the worker is not available to sign. It must be submitted even if the employer questions whether or not the reported injury and/or OD are job-related. Additional sheets of paper may be attached, if needed, to fully ex-

plain all conditions concerning the injury and/or OD.

The U.S. Department of Labor and the Occupational Safety & Health Administration requires employers to maintain a record of occupational injuries in the employer's office. Please copy the completed form for your records.

The FROI can be found at maco.cog.mt.us. Every county employee should be provided a copy of this article.

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County News

Don't forget about IRS rules for employee incentives

HB 230 (2009) authorized local governments to provide award incentives for programs designed to improve employee health or enhance employee safety (7-4-501-505, MCA).

If your county paid safety award incentives to your employees in the form of cash or other intangible benefit, that payment is subject to taxation and withholding. If an incentive is paid in the form of personal property, the value is not subject to withholding and taxation.

Below is an excerpt from IRS Publication 15-B, Guide to Fringe Benefits:

Achievement Awards - Exclusion

This exclusion applies to the value of any tangible personal property you give to an employee as an award for either length of service or safety achievement. The exclusion does not apply to awards of cash, cash equivalents, gift certificates, or other intangible property such as vacations, meals, lodging, tickets to theater or sporting events, stocks, bonds, and other securities. The award must meet the requirements for employee achievement awards discussed in chapter 2 of IRS Publication 535, Business Expenses.

IRS announces 2010 standard mileage rates

The IRS issued the 2010 standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business purposes. Starting Jan. 1, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (or vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be 50 cents per mile for business miles driven. The rate is only applicable to the first 1,000 miles in a calendar month and 3 cents less for any additional miles in a calendar month (per Section 2-18-503, MCA). For more information, visit maco.cog.mt.us.



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Around Our Counties

Personnel

GALLATIN COUNTY's solid waste management advisory board reverted to its pre-May makeup of mostly citizens in November when two commissioners completed their temporary terms. The commission filled the two seats — in addition to its permanent, rotating, spot — during the spring following board management and personnel issues that resulted in the firing of two members. One of the seats already had been filled at press time; the Belgrade seat was still open.

GRANITE COUNTY Medical Center hired Dr. Janice Lumnitz in November as its first full-time doctor in five years. Dr. Lumnitz, who moved to the state from South Dakota, earned her doctorate and did her residency in New York. She will work three days a week in Philipsburg, a day in Drummond and take a few emergencies calls throughout the week.

Law Enforcement

BIG HORN COUNTY has deconsolidated its Hardin law enforcement duties; the city will have two years to grow its department, according to an agreement

whose challenge period ended in mid-November. The county has provided law enforcement for the city since 1977, but recent issues regarding payment led both governments to deconsolidate. Hardin officials will next choose a police chief, a process due to start in late December or early January.

ROOSEVELT COUNTY will receive more than \$34,000 in grants, according to Sheriff Freedom Crawford. More than \$27,000 came from a pair of state grants, while the remainder was awarded by the U.S Department of Justice. The money will be used for a variety of purposes, such as in-car recording devices, area youth sports programs and body armor.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY was not responsible for the legal defense of a man who served more than 15 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit, according to a federal appellate court ruling in November. The lawsuit brought by Jimmy Ray Bromgard in 2002 stemmed from his defense by a court-appointed attorney. A lower court ruling from December 2008 acknowledging state district

judges then controlled court-appointed counsel was upheld.

Projects

SANDERS COUNTY residents can again travel across Trout Creek in safety and comfort, thanks to a new concrete bridge. The 95-foot-long span, which opened in November, replaced an old wooden structure that was barely wide enough for two cars to pass each other. Located near Trout Creek School, the project was built with \$500,000 from the county's bridge fund.

MISSOULA COUNTY used a unique surface to pave its newest parking lot in November: grass. The three-quarter-acre space, designed to hold 81 vehicles, is located in the county's development park near the Mount Jumbo West Little League fields. Built with layers of grass, sand-filled plastic mesh, and gravel, the \$250,000 lot has a caveat: it may only be used for 61 days each year.

CHOUTEAU COUNTY's airport at Fort Benton has a new 10-bay hangar to complement its new runway. Anyone will be able to rent space in the hangar, which

was completed in November, to store light aircraft. The project was paid for mostly with money from the airport's gas tax fund; the county provided five percent of the total through matching funds.

GLACIER COUNTY voters will have a chance in June to add \$300,000 to the hospital agency fund after commissioners approved a request in November to put the measure on the primary ballot. Money generated by passage of the mill levy increase will be used by the Northern Rockies Medical Center for maintenance, operations and equipment. The increase amounts to about 15 mills.

Miscellany

POWDER RIVER COUNTY's road department shop was saved from certain destruction in November when the Broadus Volunteer Fire Department put out a blaze that began in a trash bin. While no one was injured, the shop sustained heavy smoke damage and the bathroom will need to be replaced. Amazingly, barrels of oil, acetylene tanks and an assortment of fully-fueled vehicles that were stored inside did not catch fire.



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Announcements & Reminders

2010 Holidays

The following is a list of legal holidays in 2010 and the dates they will be observed by most state employees.

Legal holidays

New Year's Day
 Martin Luther King, Jr., Day
 Lincoln's & Washington's Birthday
 Memorial Day
 Independence Day
 Labor Day
 Columbus Day
 General Election Day
 Veterans' Day
 Thanksgiving Day
 Christmas Day

Observed

Fri., Jan. 1
 Mon., Jan. 18
 Mon., Feb. 15
 Mon., May 31
 Mon., July 5
 Mon., Sept. 6
 Mon., Oct. 11
 Tues., Nov. 2
 Thur., Nov. 11
 Thur., Nov. 25
 Fri., Dec. 24

NOTE: If the holiday occurs on a weekend, the workday closest to the holiday is treated as the holiday for pay and leave purposes. To see the official State of Montana 2010-2012 holiday schedule, please visit our Web site.

Mark Your Calendars

January

1 State/county/MACo offices closed (New Year's Day)
 7-8 Environmental Quality Council*
 13-14 Water Policy Interim Committee*
 14 Energy & Telecommunications Interim Committee*
 18 State/county/MACo offices closed (MLK Jr. Day)
 20-21 Economic Affairs Interim Committee*
 20-22 MACo Risk Management Loss Control Conf., Missoula
 22 State Admin. & Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee*
 25 Children, Families, Health & Human Svcs. Int. Committee*

February

8 Law & Justice Interim Committee*
 15 State/county/MACo offices closed (Lincoln's & Washington's Birthday)
 18-19 Revenue & Transportation Interim Committee*
 22-25 MACo Midwinter Conference, Great Falls

Upcoming Events

May 26-28 NACo WIR Conference, Billings
 Sept. 26-30 MACo 101st Annual Conference, Billings

*All events are held in Helena unless noted.

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