

Town of Ennis Commission Meeting
Friday, January 23, 2026
5:00 PM Ennis Town Hall
328 W. Main Street, Ennis, Mt

1. The meeting opened at 5:00 PM.
2. Roll call of the council found John Way, Nikki Hankins, and Mitch Abernethy present. Commissioner Cory Hardy was absent.
3. Mayor Roberts led the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Budget Report: Mayor Roberts introduced budget reports as an ongoing item for Council review to monitor the Town's financial status. Commissioner Abernethy requested a comparison of expenditures from January 2026 to those from January 2025. Commissioner Hankins inquired about the payment made to the County regarding the Sheriff's Office assuming law enforcement responsibilities. Mayor Roberts stated that the payment was issued in December.
5. Public comment on non-agenda items: Karen Ketchu addressed the Council regarding concerns with the Town's meeting recordings, noting that the recordings and recording process are not user-friendly and that audio quality makes it difficult to hear speakers. She expressed uncertainty as to whether the issue is related to the microphones, Wi-Fi, or the recording software currently in use by the Town. Karen also thanked Brennah Bench for her assistance with navigating the Black Mountain system.
6. Scheduled Matters
 - a. Wellhouse Project Bid Award: The initial bid awarded by the Town was canceled due to the contractor's inability to secure a required performance bond. The Town subsequently reopened the bidding process and received five rebids for the wellhouse project. Colette Anderson of Great West was present and explained that the original contractor (4050) was unable to obtain a performance and payment bond, necessitating the rebid process. The five base bids received were higher than the original bid previously awarded. Colette stated that she provided a letter of recommendation to the Council recommending Karnath Contracting for the wellhouse project, as Great West believes the company is capable of successfully completing the project. Karnath Contracting indicated an anticipated start date of mid-March. Mayor Roberts noted that Karnath Contracting is based in Cardwell. Commissioner Way made a motion to award the wellhouse project bid to Karnath Contracting. Commissioner Abernethy seconded the motion. Upon a call to vote, all Commissioners present voted in favor. Motion carried unanimously (M/S/C). Mayor Roberts also reported that the Town received correspondence regarding misreported ARPA funds. The U.S. Treasury has requested repayment of \$175,068.14 from the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. Mayor Roberts noted that the Town of Big Sandy is in a similar situation and that the Montana League of Cities and Towns is actively working on the issue to prevent the loss of these funds.
 - b. Ennis Schools Long Range planning: Karen Hedglin, Senior Program Manager with McKinstry, addressed the Council regarding long-range planning efforts for the Ennis School District and the ongoing maintenance of school facilities. Ms. Hedglin reported that the recent roof replacement project was completed on time and under budget. As a result, the remaining funds are available to begin updates to mechanical equipment at the schools that have reached the end of

their service life or have failed. Ms. Hedglin explained that the long-range planning process considers both projected town growth and the evolving needs of the community. She expressed interest in establishing an ongoing working relationship with the Town to support and improve local school facilities. Ms. Hedglin also announced a public meeting scheduled for February 3, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the school cafeteria and encouraged Council members and community members to attend. The meeting will focus on discussing the future needs of education in the Ennis area. Additionally, Ms. Hedglin briefly reviewed the population study used in the planning process, which tracks annual birth rates and projected kindergarten enrollment. She noted that the Town of Ennis is experiencing an estimated steady growth rate of approximately 2% within the school district. This figure does not include homeschooled students, student transfers, or fluctuations due to families moving into or out of the district.

- c. Resolution 624-2026 Madison Co. Planning Interlocal Agreement: Mayor Roberts explained that Madison County is offering to provide planning services for the Town, including updates to subdivision and zoning regulations. The Town's current planner would need to be provided with a 30-day notice to discontinue services. Madison County has three licensed planners available to serve as needed. Mayor Roberts noted that the Towns of Twin Bridges and Virginia City review their regulations every six months. Commissioner Way asked whether the County is also assisting the Town of Sheridan. Mayor Roberts responded that Madison County serves as Sheridan's on-call planner and is currently assisting with the development of zoning forms. Carla Smith asked whether this agreement would fully replace the Town's current planner and who would be responsible for associated fees. Mayor Roberts stated that the agreement would replace the current planner and that property owners involved in planning applications would continue to be responsible for applicable fees. Commissioner Hankins made a motion to approve Resolution 624-2026. Commissioner Way seconded the motion. Upon a call to vote, all Commissioners present voted in favor. Motion carried unanimously (M/S/C).
- d. Resolution 623-2026 Information Technology Services: Mayor Roberts informed the Council that many municipalities and private organizations utilize third-party providers for information technology services, which allows for 24/7 technical support. Commissioner Abernethy noted that using a third-party provider eliminates potential conflicts of interest and expressed concern that there may have been limited oversight regarding the costs of the Town's current IT programs. Commissioner Way inquired about the alarms and sensors used for the Town's wells and wellhouses. Mayor Roberts explained that those systems have dedicated support, but that DIS Technology would be available to assist with any additional IT needs of the Town. Following further discussion, the Council expressed support for selecting DIS Technology as the Town's third-party IT service provider. Myron Wallmow asked whether equipment replacement would result in additional costs to the Town. Mayor Roberts stated that equipment replacement would be a separate expense; however, DIS Technology would handle the installation. Karen Ketchu, representing the Library, shared that her experience working with DIS Technology has been positive. The Council reviewed the current IT budget and compared it to the quotes provided to the Town. Mayor Roberts noted that the Town Attorney prepared Resolution 623-2026. Commissioner Hankins made a motion to approve Resolution

623-2026. Commissioner Way seconded the motion. Upon a call to vote, all Commissioners present voted in favor. Motion carried unanimously (M/S/C). Commissioner Way then made a motion to approve DIS Technology as the Town's third-party IT service provider. Commissioner Hankins seconded the motion. Upon a call to vote, all Commissioners present voted in favor. Motion carried unanimously (M/S/C).

- e. Resolution 619-2026 STIP Resolution: Mayor Roberts explained that she had misunderstood the requirement for adopting a new resolution to transfer accounts from the previous Clerk and Mayor to the current officeholders. Commissioner Abernethy made a motion to approve Resolution 619-2026. Commissioner Way seconded the motion. Called to vote, all commissioners present voted in favor. M/S/C, unanimous vote.
- f. Claims: Mayor Roberts explained that the second meeting of each month will primarily be used to approve claims received after the regularly scheduled meeting. She also informed the Council that a \$2.00 charge on the Town's credit card was flagged as fraudulent and subsequently refunded. Mayor Roberts further noted that a new policy has been implemented requiring all employee purchases of \$999 or more to receive prior approval from the Mayor. Commissioner Hankins made a motion to approve the claims. Commissioner Abernethy seconded the motion. Upon a call to vote, all Commissioners present voted in favor. Motion carried unanimously (M/S/C).
- g. Black Mountain Software BMS Pay: Mayor Roberts explained that the Town's current credit and debit card payment processing is handled through a third-party service and does not post to the Black Mountain system in real time. She further noted that permits, business licenses, and dog licenses are currently paid through [Pay.gov](https://www.pay.gov). Both Brennah Bench and Lisa attended a demonstration of the BMS Customer Portal and reported that the system is significantly more user-friendly. The portal allows customers to view prior bills, enroll in autopay by setting up individual accounts, and utilize a text-to-pay feature. Mayor Roberts recommended discontinuing the BMS Public View, which has not been utilized since 2021. She noted that the Town could manually upload a snapshot of the Town budget and reallocate the associated funds toward implementing BMS Pay. Commissioner Way referenced the BMS Pay proposal and highlighted the system's capability to send text or email notifications to customers regarding water main breaks or boil water advisories, emphasizing the importance of timely communication with residents. Mayor Roberts stated that the transition to BMS Pay would take approximately 60 to 90 days. Commissioner Hankins made a motion authorizing the Mayor to sign a contract agreement for BMS Pay. Commissioner Abernethy seconded the motion. Upon a call to vote, all Commissioners present voted in favor. Motion carried unanimously (M/S/C).
- h. Commission interview committee: Mayor Roberts stated that she would like to establish an interview committee to fill the remaining vacancy on the Council. Commissioners Way and Abernethy volunteered to serve on the committee. The deadline for submitting letters of interest is February 5.

7. Commissioner Comments: Commissioner Way reported no comments. Commissioner Hankins expressed appreciation to the Mayor for her hard work and thanked Brennah Bench for notifying her of the increased water usage. Commissioner Abernethy reported no comments.

8. Mayor Comments: Mayor Roberts reported that she is working with the County Sheriff's Office to gain access to the records management system; however, the necessary passwords

have not yet been provided. She stated that the Council and Town office are making significant progress on several initiatives that will benefit the Town. The shared folders for future agendas will continue to be maintained, and Council members were reminded not to comment on items within those folders. Mayor Roberts also noted that she is exploring options to make the new Public Works office ADA-compliant.


9. **Unscheduled Matters:** Any item(s) not listed for the current meeting with the of such discussion shall be to decide if to schedule the item(s) for discussion/vote on a subsequent agenda.

10. **Adjourn:** Commissioner Way motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hankins seconded the motion. All commissioners voted in favor; the meeting was adjourned at 6:13 PM.

Brennah Bench, Deputy Clerk



Brennah Bench / Clerk



Lisa Roberts, Mayor

