

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL

March 24, 2026

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 6:38 p.m. on March 23, 2026.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:	Thomas Canape	Sara Naylor
	Brent Edmond	Irv Wilke

Richard Klose

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:	Jodi Mackay	Jessica Banks
	Casey Wheeler	

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:	Michele, Braukmann, Civil City Attorney (via Phone)
	Britney Harakal, Administrative Assistant
	Kelly Strecker, Clerk/Treasurer
	Kelly Gulasow, Accounts Payable
	Dan Villa, BOI (via Phone)

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

MINUTES: None.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Beartooth RC&D Correspondence - March 2026.
- Allies in Aging Correspondence
- Letter of Representation - Laurel Public Schools
- Public Comments Received

COUNCIL DISCLOSURE OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS: None.

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

CONSENT ITEMS:

- Claims entered through March 20, 2026.
A complete listing of the claims and their amounts is on file in the Clerk/Treasurer's Office.
- Approval of Payroll Register for PPE 3/15/2026 totaling \$261,578.90.
- Revised Council Workshop Minutes of January 6, 2026.
- Revised Council Workshop Minutes of January 20, 2026.

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. There was no public comment or Council discussion. A roll call vote was taken on the motion. All five Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

CEREMONIAL CALENDAR: None.

REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

- Budget/Finance Committee Minutes of March 10, 2026.
- Laurel Urban Renewal Agency Minutes of March 9, 2026.
- Public Works Committee Minutes of March 16, 2026.
- Tree/Park Board Minutes 3.5.2026.

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AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (THREE-MINUTE LIMIT):

Juanita Bear, 1113 W. 4th St., Laurel, thanked the Mayor, City employees, Council Members, and the public for their service. She requested disclosure of any ex parte communications related to the emergency moratorium, stating that some council members appeared to have information prior to the vote that others did not.

Elizabeth Gilg, 1200 Cedar Crest Circle, encouraged the City to develop and implement a capital improvements plan regardless of the outcome of the moratorium vote. She stated that infrastructure studies should be completed regardless of the moratorium. She also asked whether Council Member Wheeler should have disclosed a potential conflict of interest related to his father's position as Public Works Director and requested that the matter be reviewed.

Kris Vogele, 306 E. 4th St., Laurel, referenced recent council training regarding statutory duties and emphasized the Council's responsibility to protect the City's fiscal interests and public safety. He expressed concern that, following the defeat of the moratorium, no alternative plan was in place to address infrastructure and growth. He urged the Council to take formal action directing the development of a master plan. Mr. Foley distributed letters to Council Members, stated that certified copies would be mailed to absent members, and advised that the letters requested action by both the City and the State, noting a 10-day response period.

Jeremy Lavold, 1035 9th Avenue, asked whether the City Council could send a letter requesting removal of Laurel from consideration for the proposed project. He stated his belief that community sentiment opposed the project and encouraged the Council to formally communicate that position to the Montana Board of Investments.

Dan Villa, Executive Director of the Montana Board of Investments, participated remotely and provided a project update. He stated that due diligence on the Laurel site was continuing and that Laurel had been selected as the preferred alternative. He announced that a public listening session would be held on April 22 at 10:00 a.m. as part of the public participation process. He also reported that a governmental use designation request had been submitted, noted the statutory timeline for a public hearing if one is held, and advised that project materials were available on the State's project website. He further stated that invitations had been extended to Council leadership to tour the Grasslands Treatment Center and the Galen Forensic Hospital.

Shad Waddell, 1241 Elkhorn Drive, yielded his three minutes of public comment to Kris Vogele.

Speaking with the additional time, Kris Vogele stated that community members had previously asked the Council to evaluate the City's readiness for the proposed project. He referenced the update provided by the Montana Board of Investments regarding the project's progression and expressed concern that the Council had not approved the emergency moratorium, stating that the City had lost an opportunity to assess infrastructure and preparedness before the project moved forward. He also expressed concern regarding the City's ability to oppose annexation once the formal process begins.

During the comment, the Mayor reminded the speaker to maintain order and stated that the public comment period would be closed if disruptions continued.

Mona Rae Attics, 102 8th Avenue, Unit B, asked where the April 22 public listening session announced by the Montana Board of Investments would be held, expressing the opinion that the meeting should be conducted in a venue large enough to accommodate the public, such as the school auditorium.

The Mayor responded that the question should be directed to the Montana Board of Investments and called for comments related to City business before continuing with the meeting.

Amber Zahn, 1224 W. 4th St., expressed concerns regarding the proposed facility's proximity to her residence and neighborhood children. She urged the Council to carefully review its legal authority and responsibilities and to take action to protect the community.

Steve Krumb, 249 24th Ave. W. encouraged Council leadership to decline invitations to tour state facilities and urged the Council to represent the views of Laurel residents regarding the proposed project.

Cheryl Hill, 815 5th Ave., expressed disappointment with the process leading to the proposed project, stating that community members had not been adequately engaged by state officials. She urged the

Council to oppose annexation and stated that the community deserved greater transparency and involvement.

Shelly White, 512 Wyoming Ave., commented on prior public meetings regarding the proposed project and expressed the opinion that future public meetings should be held in an appropriate public venue.

Larry McPhail, 315 Durland Ave., expressed opposition to the proposed project and stated his opinion that it should be considered a correctional facility. He questioned the Council's decision not to adopt the emergency moratorium and urged Council Members to represent the interests of the community.

Ellie Marshall, 1518 W. 9th St., confirmed that the City Attorney was participating remotely. She stated that, as a nearby property owner, she had filed a formal written protest regarding the proposed annexation and zoning process. She referenced Montana Code Annotated provisions regarding written protests to zoning amendments and stated that she intended to submit protest materials to the City.

The City Attorney, participating remotely, confirmed her attendance and stated she was available to provide legal guidance to the Council as appropriate.

Byrne Manley, 1018 7th Ave., expressed concerns that the proposed project should be considered a correctional facility and referenced state law regarding the location of correctional facilities in relation to schools. He stated his belief that the proposed location did not comply with those requirements.

Steve Krumb returned to the podium and questioned the timing of the Montana Board of Investments' participation in the meeting and whether advance notice had been provided to Council Members. The Mayor responded that the speaker had contacted the City by email and was participating as part of the public process.

Jacob Schreiner, a Yellowstone County resident, addressed the Council. Following a period of silence during his allotted time, he stated that the silence surrounding the issue needed to end.

Jennifer Lorenz, 916 5th Ave., read portions of a formal notice previously distributed to the Council alleging statutory, procedural, and constitutional violations related to the proposed forensic psychiatric facility and requesting corrective action by the State and the City. She also referenced the City's organizational chart and urged the Council to represent the interests of Laurel residents regarding the proposed project.

Shad Wadell, 1241 Elkhorn Dr., expressed his opposition to the proposed forensic psychiatric facility, stating his belief that it would negatively affect the community, property values, and future growth. He urged the Council to oppose the project.

Jacqueline Holmes, 306 Woodland Dr., stated that she recently moved to Laurel and expressed concern regarding local politics and the proposed project.

Gloria Alwin, 185 Golf Course Rd., expressed disappointment with the City's handling of the proposed project and urged the Mayor to rescind the application. She also asked Council Members who voted against the emergency moratorium to explain their reasoning.

Amber Zahn, 1224 W. 4th St., spoke a second time after receiving additional speaking time from another attendee. She apologized for the tone of her earlier remarks and reiterated her opposition to the proposed facility. She questioned claims that the project would benefit the community through job creation, expressed concerns about its impact on community growth, and stated her belief that the proposed location was inappropriate.

Julie Johnson, 1201 W. 4th St., encouraged the Council and community to work together in opposition to the proposed project. She expressed concern about the project's impact on the community and local schools.

The City Attorney, participating remotely, apologized for not attending in person due to a family emergency. She provided an update on pending public records requests, explaining that broad requests involving zoning, annexation, and land use records required significant staff time to review for responsiveness, privileged communications, and confidential information. She stated that the City was working to produce responsive records and anticipated providing a response the following week.

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The City Attorney also clarified that the Council's previous motion to waive public records request fees remained in effect. She explained that a point of order raised at a subsequent meeting did not invalidate the motion and that any change would require formal reconsideration by the Council.

Elizabeth Gilg, 1200 Cedar Crest Circle, asked whether the Council's previous vote on the emergency annexation moratorium could be reconsidered.

The City Attorney responded that reconsideration was permitted if brought forward by a Council Member.

Ms. Gilg asked how citizens could request reconsideration. The City Attorney suggested that residents submit a written request to the Council explaining why reconsideration was being requested.

Ms. Gilg also asked whether Council Members were required to explain the reasons for their votes on Council actions.

The City Attorney responded that Council Members are not required to disclose or explain the reasons for their votes.

Kris Vogele, 306 E. 4th St., Laurel, addressed the City Attorney regarding pending public records requests. He acknowledged that the requests were extensive and stated that the requesting parties were willing to work with the City to prioritize records needed in the short term. He noted that additional records could be addressed later if litigation occurred.

The City Attorney responded that the greatest burden resulted from requests covering all zoning, annexation, land use, and subdivision matters over the previous five years, rather than records specific to the proposed forensic psychiatric facility. She stated that narrowing the requests to matters directly related to the proposed facility would allow the City to respond more quickly. She offered to meet with the requestors and City staff to discuss narrowing the scope of the requests while maintaining transparency in the process.

Mr. Vogele stated that the broader requests were intended to evaluate the City's preparedness for future growth and annexation, but agreed that those records were not immediately necessary. He reiterated his willingness to work with the City to prioritize the production of records.

The City Attorney stated that City staff were managing a significant workload in addition to responding to public records requests. She also commented on the increased public participation at Council meetings, expressing appreciation for community engagement and encouraging residents to remain involved in local government.

Mr. Vogele acknowledged the workload on City staff and reiterated his belief that an annexation moratorium would have provided additional time for planning before annexation requests were processed. He expressed hope that the City would continue developing a comprehensive infrastructure or master plan.

The City Attorney acknowledged Mr. Vogele's concerns and stated that she understood his position. She also stated that her legal advice differed from the course of action currently being pursued by the City.

Elizabeth Gilg, 1200 Cedar Crest Circle, commented that the broader public records requests were intended not only to obtain information regarding the proposed forensic psychiatric facility but also to support requests for investigation into actions taken by City officials. She stated that, if no independent investigation occurred, the requested records would be used to review those matters.

The City Attorney responded to comments regarding potential investigations of the Mayor, stating that matters related to a mayoral recall were outside the scope of her role. She stated that her responsibility was to assist the City in meeting its legal obligations, including responding to public records requests, and reaffirmed her commitment to transparency and compliance with applicable law.

Jeremy Lavold, 1035 9th Ave., asked the City Attorney to explain, in general terms, the procedural significance of the update provided earlier by the Executive Director of the Montana Board of Investments and whether adoption of a moratorium would have affected that process.

Council Minutes of March 24, 2026

The City Attorney responded that she could not speak on behalf of the State but stated that she had concerns regarding the State's handling of the process. She indicated that she had communicated those concerns to state representatives, including questions regarding the use of City Council Chambers for a state public hearing and the timing and manner of communications. She stated her opinion that aspects of the process lacked sufficient transparency and raised legal and ethical concerns.

Kris Vogele, 306 E. 4th St., commented that the Montana Board of Investments had been permitted to participate remotely during public comment and requested that members of the public be afforded the same opportunity to provide remote public comment at future Council meetings. He also referenced the City's previous use of social media for public communication.

The City Attorney declined further comment.

SCHEDULED MATTERS: None.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA: None.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS (ONE-MINUTE LIMIT):

A member of the public announced that more than 500 signatures had been collected in support of a mayoral recall petition from registered City of Laurel voters and noted that additional signatures from county residents had also been collected.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

An announcement was made that the Emergency Services Committee recently met to discuss how future city growth may affect the provision of emergency services. Current challenges facing emergency service departments were discussed, and additional discussion is planned for the committee's next meeting.

A reminder was given that the following Tuesday is the fifth Tuesday of the month; therefore, no regular City Council meeting will be held that week.

MAYOR UPDATES: None.

UNSCHEDULED MATTERS: None.

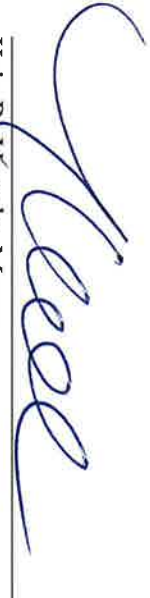
ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Council Member Klose 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 five Council Members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 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 July, 2026.


Kris R. Vogele, Mayor

Attest:


Kelly Streckel, Clerk/Treasurer



Print Name	Address
Jacob Schreiner	201 1 st Ave
Neta Base	1113 W. 4 th St.
David Base	1113 W 4 th St.
Clayton Hill	109 W 1 st Street
Shad Waddell	1241 Elk Horn Drive
Julie Jones	1201 West 4 th Street.

Print Name	Address
Embell	1518 W 9th
CRAIG WITTEN	4th S 1st
Jeremy Lavelle	1035 9th Ave
Miles & Vicki Walton	419 8th Ave
Shelley White	512 Wyoming Ave Laurel MT
Star Kaufman	7118.6 th St Laurel, MT
Sheri Phillips	1043 Montana Ave h-r-1
Cal Renner	606 10th Ave
Steve & Bernice Allumie	185 Golf Course Rd.

Print Name

Address

Dan Vilk

Print Name	Address
Steve Kraum	249 24 th Ave W.
Chris Legele	306 E 4 th St
Amber Kahn	1224 W 4 th St
Lenny McNeil	315 Overland
Jacquelyn Holmes	306 Woodland Ave
Byrne Manley	1018 7 th Ave
Jennifer Manley	916 5 th Ave

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 4A
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 6:53 AM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: FW: Zero commitment

From: Matt <gilgm12@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2026 8:56 PM
To: Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 1B <ward1b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2A <ward2a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2B <ward2b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3A <ward3a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3B <ward3b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4B <ward4b@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Zero commitment

Is what three of you decided to show tonight.

I will make sure your constituents are aware of that in future elections and engagements.

Thank you to those in council who actually care to improve the city, it's safety, and it's development. And shame on the three of you who decided to make this partisan, and decided that flapping in the wind for the sake of contractors is better than having a plan.

Laurel is in massive trouble because of its tendency and refusal to commit to effective planning - It is beyond unfortunate that this decision tonight happened the way that it did.

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Matt Gilg

mattgilg.dev
Cell: 860.771.3511

March 11,2026

Mr. Mayor, Members of the Laurel City Council, and other interested parties,

Although I regret it now, on Tuesday afternoon I sent an email to Ms. Hopper concerning the veracity of her public testimony to our Children and Families Interim committee. I was then very surprised to watch her repeat the same assertions to the Laurel City Council later that day. For the City Council, she referenced a January 19th KTVQ news story as evidence that Director Villa was not being upfront with all of you. Until that moment, I had been very critical of similar assertions by her and others with the same concern, but something in Ms. Hopper's sincerity and manner of delivery convinced me that I must be missing something. Her testimony moved me to watch the news report she made reference to. Last night I brought the KTVQ news story filed on the January 19th up on my computer and watched it. It was immediately clear to me why Ms. Hopper and perhaps many of you believed her assertions the Director had misled you.

First, the facts about the document cited on the 19th by KTVQ news staff are these: The five pages shown briefly on the broadcast that night was a part of a much longer power point document prepared for a December 16th and 17th Section B, Interim Budget Committee (IBC) held at the Capitol in Helena in 2025. The timing of this presentation is very important. December 16, 2025.

It is also very important that the full line that led to the speculative inferences by KTVQ news staff that night is this: "BOI exploring potential sites and nearing contingent buy-sell agreement following consultation with OBPP and DPHHS". If you stop the video in exactly the right place, you can clearly read the full statement quoted above. The news staff went on to creatively high light in yellow: "contingent buy sell agreement following consultation..." and further went on to assert: "DPHHS shared BOI is nearing a contingent buy-sell agreement, something the State promised to share with Laurel officials but allegedly didn't." **Therein lies the problem...**

Director Villa told you on December 9, 2025 that "When and if, the BOI enters into a contingent buy-sell agreement with a property owner, the City Council will hear about it first..."

So I'll recap for you, those few seconds of video and the voice-over by KTVQ staff. The document cited in the report was discussed at a public meeting a little over a month before this story ran. That PowerPoint line, in lay man's terms says: The BOI is still out looking at sites and could be close to an agreement on a contingent buy-sell agreement soon. "Nearing an agreement" is not the same as "having an agreement". Think about that in terms of this analogy... Let's say you promised your mother-in-law that you would call her as soon as her daughter gave birth to your baby. Let's say about a month before the blessed event, you messaged some of the rest of your family that your wife was nearing the birth of your child. By sending this message did you break the promise you made to your wife's mother? I don't think you would agree that it did. Why? Because, quite simply, the child hasn't been born yet... And when the birth happens, you can keep your promise to your mother-in-law, by calling with the particular characteristics of her new grandchild, including its name, its gender, weight, length, and time of birth...

Once again I'll note: Director Villa told you on December 9, 2025 that "When and if, the BOI enters into a contingent buy-sell agreement with a property owner, the City Council will hear about it first..."

I would assert to you that when the State did enter into a contingent buy-sell agreement with a property owner, it certainly was not in December when the cited document entered the public record. And as we now know, the final signature on the agreement was obtained just a couple of business days before Director Villa took his first

opportunity to report that fact to you at your January 20th public meeting. No press organization had any advance knowledge that there was a signed buy-sell agreement before you, the collective members of the Laurel City Council did. In fact, the press learned of it at your January 20th meeting and most outlets reported it the next day. The Director told you that you would hear about it first from him, and you did.

I'm sorry for the confusion around this issue. We all guard our integrity fiercely; although sometimes we have to dig through many layers of flotsam to sort the facts out from the myths. It is not always easy. There will be other facets of this facility that we will have honest debates about, but, I hope you agree, the issue of timely notification to the City Council of the executed agreement is no longer one of them.

John Esp

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 2A
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 5:53 PM
To: City Mayor; Brittney Harakal
Cc: Civil Attorney
Subject: FW: Emergency Ordinance



Jessica Banks

Ward 2A City Council Member
Mobile: 406-690-7181
Email: ward2a@laurel.mt.gov
P.O. Box 10
Laurel, MT 59044
[Home Page | Laurel MT \(cityoflaurelmontana.com\)](http://cityoflaurelmontana.com)



From: Laura Kirschenmann <laurakirschenmann@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 10:50 AM
To: Ward 2A <ward2a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2B <ward2b@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Emergency Ordinance

Hello,

I am writing to you as my assigned elected ward officials to urge you to vote in favor of the emergency ordinance that will be discussed tonight and brought before you to vote on this week. I trust that as you, Brent and Jessica, along with the remaining council members review this ordinance, you will find it will serve you well to ensure this protects our city and provides ample time to review our city's current infrastructure state and demands along with all the other concerns that have arisen recently. Passing this ordinance is imperative to ensure the state of Montana and BOI cannot attempt to move forward with annexation. It is extremely frustrating that we have gotten to this point without you all first having the chance to go through a thorough review process and public input. We now have a chance to at least put a layer of protection in so that proper procedure and investigations can take place.

I thank you both kindly for your time and commitment to this matter and for serving your constituents.

Sincerely,

Laura Kirschenmann
939 W 4th St.
Laurel, MT 59044

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1A
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 7:42 AM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: FW: Hi John
Attachments: Matt Gilg - Supplementary 3_10_26.pdf



Sara B. Naylor

Council Member - City of Laurel - Ward 1

✦ 406.598.9499
✦ Ward1a@laurel.mt.gov

From: Matt <gilgm12@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 7:06 PM
To: John.Esp@legmt.gov; Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 1B <ward1b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2A <ward2a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2B <ward2b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3A <ward3a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3B <ward3b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4B <ward4b@laurel.mt.gov>; Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Re: Hi John

Senator Esp,
(and the city of laurel)

Here is a summary of the information I touched on during public comment. It was not an attack of character against Mr Villa (as the senator characterized after my public comment), but an illumination of state misconduct which should be well within your purview (and of direct interest to you) on the corresponding oversight committee. Mr Villa controls his own conduct, not me.

My statement today to DPHHS:

My message today is regarding misconduct and mischaracterization surrounding the Laurel Forensic Mental Health facility, which I believe will impact the future of my daughters here in Montana. (Background: My youngest two little girls (age 4 and 5) attend the nearby _underfunded_ elementary school located about 400 yards away)

I'll start by saying that the Laurel community has had no meaningful

opportunity for public input on the proposed forensic mental health facility. No environmental review was conducted. No community impact assessment was performed. No formal proposal was ever submitted by Laurel – the city was selected after months of private coordination between Villa and city officials, and we were somehow chosen over two counties that submitted comprehensive formal proposals with extensive documented community support. The letter DPHHS received from Laurel by the state was actually solicited by Villa, and we have documentary evidence of that fact. The proposed parcel could generate half a million dollars annually in tax revenue to the city if developed commercially, which would be critical funding for laurel public schools, and maintaining water treatment infrastructure. This facility will pay 0.

Additionally, characterizing a forensic facility using a favorable comparison such as a children's hospital – without disclosing that the facility is designed for 32 inmates with stated planned expansion to 64 – constitutes a material misrepresentation to the public and to this agency. This is not an isolated instance. My statement today is consistent with a broader pattern of misconduct by Villa regarding this project:

Dan Villa made explicit public transparency promises to Laurel City Council on December 9, 2025 (on video), then held a secret meeting at a private construction company (Dick Anderson Construction) 28 days later Dan Villa coordinated privately with Laurel officials for 7 months (July 2025 – January 2026) while two counties followed a formal proposal process – then selected the community that never formally applied Dan Villa solicited the letter used as the basis for Laurel's selection on November 10, 2025 – the same day the formal proposal deadline passed for the two competing counties – offering to "buy the beer" if the letter was sent that afternoon. Given that most of today's conversation has been about the impact of substance use, I'd suggest the committee consider the ethical implications of allowing its representatives to use a substance that kills 170,000 people annually as a bargaining chip in a manner that is solicited, unethical, and undermines standard procedure.

Dan's pattern continues with yesterday's facility comparison. Likening the forensic facility to a children's hospital comparison is consistent with his approach: characterize the project favorably, minimize concerns, avoid accountability. Notably, the state paid 3x market rate for the selected parcel – a fact that Mr Villa references only to pivot to a per-square-foot price argument – while simultaneously insisting the state will have no use for that property for any other purpose. The community in Laurel deserves answers to these questions, and communities who applied using correct and legal process deserve consideration.

Respectfully,

On Tue, Mar 10, 2026 at 12:07 PM Matt <gilgm12@gmail.com> wrote:

Matt Gilg here,

I'm new to this, and apologize if using the full name of appointed officials isn't standard practice; in my own business (technology) accountability and transparency are first-class.

The police found our 5 year old daughter several blocks away from the elementary this year; the school is overstaffed and underfunded. (CHS regularly protests its taxes, which is a direct hit to public schools) Its gotten so bad, that schools here have needed to cut \$600,000 from the budget and eliminate 14 teachers, as I'm sure you know.

If you have questions or require any corroboration of fact in my public statement, please let me know.

Can you tell me if you approve of the BOI's conduct in selecting Laurel as a site?

Respectfully,

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Matt Gilg

mattgilg.dev

Cell: 860.771.3511

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Matt Gilg

mattgilg.dev

Cell: 860.771.3511

HB5 Forensic Mental Health Facility — Documented Misconduct

Matt Gilg | Laurel, MT | gilgm12@gmail.com | 860-771-3511 | laurelcared.com/communications
March 10, 2026 | Submitted to Committee as written corroboration of public testimony

On naming public officials: The BOI Executive Director is a public official exercising state authority over \$26.5 million in public funds. Every claim in this document is supported by public FOIA records, public meeting video, or published news. Montana Constitution Article II, Section 8 protects the right to petition the government regarding official conduct. Naming the official responsible is not only appropriate - it is necessary for accountability.

Formal Complaints

	Filed With	Against	Status
On file	Yellowstone County Attorney (Scott Twito)	Mayor Waggoner, CAO Markegard	Filed Feb 13, 2026; supplemented Mar 9, 2026
In preparation	COPP (Gallus)	BOI Executive Director Dan Villa	Pending completion of evidentiary record; Laurel FOIA response outstanding

As a native montanan, born and raised in Yellowstone county, it upsets me to see the integrity of our public offices tarnished by conduct that can negatively impact the livelihoods of my neighbors and community members. Neighboring citizens have asked for answers to many questions, including questions regarding conduct of decisionmakers in this case, and left with no answers. As a father of 3, I feel an obligation to stand up and speak in favor of transparency in political avenues especially as they pertain to our youth. Following this page, are the documented evidentiary facts uncovered this far.

Note: Both of Laurel's elected state legislators - Rep. Lee Deming (HD54) and Sen. Vince Ricci - submitted a joint letter into the legislative record on February 17, 2026 stating opposition to the facility location.

Documented Facts

Each Supported by FOIA Record or Public Video

1. Laurel was selected without a formal proposal. Big Horn County and Custer County submitted comprehensive proposals by the November 14, 2025 deadline. Laurel did not. The "Letter from Laurel" on hb5.mt.gov was submitted three days late - and was solicited by the BOI Executive Director himself.

2. The selection letter was obtained under inducement. On November 10, 2025 — the day the deadline passed - the BOI Executive Director texted Laurel's CAO: *"I'll buy the beer if you send it this afternoon?"* That letter substituted for a formal proposal and became the stated basis for Laurel's selection. CAO sent it the following morning.

3. Seven months of private coordination preceded the formal process. BOI records show a "Boi/Laurel Intro Call" on July 14 and discussions of "potential Laurel options" on July 15 — nearly three months before the formal process opened October 6. No comparable coordination with Hardin or Miles City has been documented.

4. Explicit public transparency promises were broken. On December 9, 2025 (on video): *"You will not read about it in a press release before you have been informed directly by me."* On December 30 — 21 days later — a private meeting was requested at Dick Anderson Construction's offices in Billings. The Mayor told media January 19 he "hadn't heard from the state since December 9."

5. The state buy/sell is 3x market rate for 114 acres for a 0.74-acre building. The facility footprint is 0.74 acres. 114 acres were purchased (or seek to be purchased). This parcel, commercially developed, could generate \$500,000+ annually in tax revenue for Laurel's underfunded schools - which cut \$600,000, eliminated 14 positions, and had all four levies defeated. As a state facility, it pays \$0.

6. The facility is 400 yards from an elementary school — the community was never consulted. My daughters (ages 4 and 5) attend West Elementary. The school board formally opposed the facility January 27, 2026. No environmental review, no community impact assessment, and no public input process was conducted before selection.

7. CAO made documented false statements to a County Commissioner. On October 8, 2025, Laurel's CAO wrote to Commissioner Morse: *"This is the first response we have received from the state"* and *"the only thing I passed along was that there was land listed for sale."* FOIA records show six prior contacts with BOI dating to July 10 and a comprehensive August 22 site pitch with maps, zoning analysis, and infrastructure data sent "on behalf of the Mayor."

8. Mayor submitted falsified FOIA response after ethics complaint was filed. After the February 13 ethics complaint, the Mayor submitted phone photographs showing "No messages." The CAO's FOIA records contain the actual text content of those conversations - with specific dates, times, and message text - directly contradicting the Mayor's submission.

Full records, FOIA responses, and complaint documents: laurelcared.com/communications

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 4A
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 12:08 PM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: FW: Formal Objection and Demand for Transparency Regarding Proposed Forensic Psychiatric Facility in Laurel

From: Amber Zahn <blondie_locks09@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 11:47 AM
To: dvilla@mt.gov; charles.brereton@mt.gov; governor@mt.gov; kristen.juras@mt.gov; mark.blasdel@mt.gov; anita.milanovich@mt.gov; nicolas.miller@mt.gov
Cc: vince.ricci@legmt.gov; michele@meridianlawmt.com; Cheryl Front Porch Hill <Thefrontporchmt@gmail.com>; elizabeth@laurelcared.com; Ward 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Formal Objection and Demand for Transparency Regarding Proposed Forensic Psychiatric Facility in Laurel

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing as a resident, parent, and bordering property owner to formally object to the proposed forensic psychiatric facility planned in Laurel.

Over the past several months, many residents have attempted to obtain clear and complete information about this project. Instead of transparency, the community has barely been given broad assurances and limited details about the operational realities of the facility being proposed. And not through direct contact, but with the expectation that we are aware of and following every meeting held with ANY references to the proposed facility in our community. That lack of clarity has left many residents feeling that the public is being expected to accept a major state decision without ever being given the full picture. It has created massive amounts of frustration, anger, and loss of trust and confidence. To put it in a way most people would understand, the officials we are supposed to trust and believe are the narcissistic partner trying to make us feel like we are the crazy ones when in reality they are the abusive partner trying to remain in control and belittle us at every turn.

The Montana Constitution guarantees citizens the right to participate in government decisions that affect them and the right to know how those decisions are being made. Those protections exist specifically so communities are not presented with major projects after the most critical decisions have already been made. Yet that is exactly how this process has felt to many residents.

This proposal places a secure forensic psychiatric facility directly within a residential area of our community near homes, families, and a school. Regardless of how the project is described publicly, this facility will house individuals placed there through the criminal justice system under court authority. That reality alone requires a level of transparency and public engagement that has not occurred.

Officials have attempted to reassure residents by referencing statistical safety data. However, statistical risk does not equal zero risk. When a secure forensic facility is placed in the middle of a residential neighborhood, the possibility of incidents—however unlikely—becomes a permanent part of daily life for the families living nearby. Parents raising children in this neighborhood cannot reasonably be expected to ignore that reality.

Equally important are the long-term impacts on the surrounding properties and the broader character of the community. Homes bordering this site will experience the most direct and lasting consequences of this decision. Property values, development potential, neighborhood perception, and long-term community investment are all affected when a secure forensic psychiatric facility is placed directly within a residential area. Stigma and perception surrounding facilities of this nature are well documented across the country and do not simply disappear because officials assert that the statistical risk is low.

There is also a broader planning question that has never been clearly addressed. Facilities of this type are typically sited based on careful consideration of compatibility with surrounding land use, security needs, transportation logistics, and community impact. Across the country, secure forensic facilities are most often located in areas specifically designed to support institutional uses rather than directly within residential neighborhoods.

This raises a simple but critical question that residents have not yet received a clear answer to: what analysis determined that placing a secure forensic psychiatric facility in the middle of a residential community near a school was the most appropriate option?

At this point, many residents have lost confidence that this decision has been made through a fully transparent process. The public should not have to rely on speculation or incomplete information to understand a project that will permanently alter the character of their community.

If the State of Montana intends to proceed with this proposal despite the concerns raised by residents, the public deserves full transparency regarding the decision-making process and the operational scope of the facility.

For that reason, I am requesting that the following documents be made publicly available:

- The complete site selection analysis used to determine that this location was appropriate
- The facility's operational or program plan, including the intended patient population and security classification
- The projected staffing model and staff-to-patient ratios
- Any risk assessments or community impact studies conducted during planning
- Documentation explaining how this facility was determined to be compatible with surrounding residential land use

These are not extraordinary requests. They are the basic documents that allow citizens to understand how major public decisions are made.

If the State continues to move forward without providing the transparency and documentation the public has repeatedly requested, residents will have no choice but to pursue every available avenue to obtain that information. That includes formal public records requests, legislative inquiries, and broader public scrutiny of how this decision was made. The people of this community are paying close attention. We see what is happening, and we will continue asking for answers until the full facts surrounding this project are made public.

Bolder and stronger every day,

Amber R. Zahn

Laurel resident, Laurel and Montana tax payer, registered voter, bordering land owner, MOTHER

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

KRIS R. VOGELE

306 E. 4th Street

Laurel, MT 59044

Phone: 406-697-6215

Email: threepeat43@gmail.com

Date: March 25, 2026

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED (GREEN CARD)

Certified Mail No.: _____

The Honorable Greg Gianforte

Governor of Montana

Office of the Governor

P.O. Box 200801

Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Austin Knudsen

Attorney General, State of Montana

Montana Department of Justice

215 N. Sanders Street

Helena, MT 59620

Charlie Brereton, Director

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)

111 N. Sanders Street

Helena, MT 59601

Dan Villa, Executive Director

Montana Board of Investments

P.O. Box 200126

Helena, MT 59620

Dave Waggoner, Mayor

City of Laurel

115 W. 1st Street

Laurel, MT 59044

Tom Canape, Council President

City of Laurel

115 W. 1st Street

Laurel, MT 59044

Kurt Markegard, Chief Administrative Officer

City of Laurel

115 W. 1st Street

Laurel, MT 59044

Laurel City Council

115 W. 1st Street

Laurel, MT 59044

**RE: FORMAL NOTICE OF LEGAL VIOLATIONS, DEMAND FOR CURE, AND
LITIGATION HOLD**

Proposed Forensic Psychiatric Facility – Laurel, Montana

I. INTRODUCTION

This correspondence constitutes formal legal notice to the State of Montana, including the Office of the Attorney General, the Montana Board of Investments, and the City of Laurel of significant statutory, procedural, and constitutional violations arising from the selection of Laurel, Montana as the proposed site for a state forensic psychiatric facility.

This letter is provided as a final opportunity to cure these violations prior to litigation, including actions under MCA § 27-8-201 and MCA § 27-26-101.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

1. The State issued an RFA for a forensic psychiatric facility.
2. The RFA contained deadlines and mandatory criteria.
3. Other jurisdictions complied.
4. Laurel did not submit a timely or compliant application.
5. A late submission was made by CAO Kurt Markegard with support of Mayor Dave Waggoner.
6. The submission was untimely, incomplete, unauthorized, and outside lawful process.
7. It was made at the encouragement of State officials.
8. The Montana Board of Investments may be involved in financing or structuring.
9. Laurel was nevertheless selected.

III. LEGAL DEFICIENCIES

A. Arbitrary and Capricious Action

MCA § 2-4-704(2)(a)(vi); Montana Wildlife Federation (2012 MT 128); Clark Fork Coalition (2008 MT 407).

B. Ultra Vires Conduct

MCA § 7-3-436; State ex rel. City of Billings; Prindel (2006 MT 62).

C. Open Meeting Violations

Mont. Const. Art. II §§ 8–9; MCA § 2-3-203; MCA § 2-3-103; Great Falls Tribune; Bryan.

D. Land Use Conflicts

MCA §§ 76-1-601, 76-2-101, 76-3-608; Citizens for a Better Flathead; Heffernan.

E. Financing Concerns

Board of Investments exposure due to defective process.

IV. IRREPARABLE HARM

Irreparable harm exists under MCA § 27-26-102 including loss of process rights, safety concerns, fiscal impacts, and constitutional violations.

V. DEMAND FOR IMMEDIATE CURE

Within ten (10) days:

1. Suspend all actions
2. Disclose communications
3. Provide written justification

4. City confirmation of no authorization

5. Nullify or reopen RFA

VI. NOTICE OF INTENT TO INITIATE LITIGATION

TRO (Rule 65), injunction, declaratory judgment, and mandamus will be pursued.

VII. LITIGATION HOLD

All recipients must preserve all records, including electronic communications.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Immediate corrective action is required.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kris R. Voegelé", is written over a horizontal line.

Kris R. Voegelé

PROOF OF SERVICE

I certify that on this ____ day of _____, 2026, I served this Notice via United States Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested upon all listed recipients.

Kris R. Voegelé