

**MINUTES
CITY OF LAUREL
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 03, 2026**

A Council Workshop was held in Council Chambers and called to order by Mayor Dave Waggoner at 6:31 p.m. on February 3, 2026.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

☒ Tom Canape	☒ Sara Naylor
☒ Brent Edgmond	☒ Jessica Banks
☒ Casey Wheeler	☒ Irv Wilke
☒ Richard Klose	☒ Jodi Mackay

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brittney Harakal, Administrative Assistant
Kurt Markegard, CAO
Michele Braukmann, Civil Attorney
Kelly Strecker, Clerk/Treasurer
JW Hopper, Fire Chief

Public Input:

Mayor Waggoner announced the Closed Executive Session regarding litigation would be removed from the agenda. With no objection from the Council, the agenda was amended to move Other Items before Public Input.

Prior to public input, City Administrator Kurt Markegard informed the Council that the Montana Board of Investments had recently purchased property near Laurel and indicated its intent to pursue annexation into the City. He acknowledged the community's concerns regarding the proposed Montana State Forensic Hospital and explained that staff had limited information at this time because no formal application had been submitted. Mr. Markegard introduced Forrest Sanderson, the City's recently contracted planner, to explain the City's land use review process.

Mr. Sanderson advised that no application for annexation or development had been submitted to the City. He explained that if an application is received, the proposal must proceed through the City's established review process, beginning with a Growth Policy amendment, followed by Planning Board review and recommendation, consideration of annexation by the City Council, and, if applicable, zoning review. He emphasized that each step requires public participation and that the Council's responsibility is to evaluate any application in accordance with the Montana Constitution, Montana law, and the Laurel Municipal Code.

Mr. Sanderson stated the City is committed to conducting an open, fair, and transparent process and encouraged residents to remain engaged, rely on factual information, and participate throughout the public review process should an application be submitted. He advised that copies

of the City's Growth Policy maps were made available for public review and stated future meetings would be publicly noticed as the process moves forward.

The City Attorney proceeded to read into the record written correspondence received regarding the proposed Montana State Forensic Hospital. See Attached Correspondence.

Council Member Mackay stated she appreciated the public's engagement and the written correspondence received regarding the proposed Montana State Forensic Hospital. She also welcomed Forrest Sanderson as the City's contract planner and expressed confidence that he would provide transparency throughout the planning process. Council Member Mackay stated that many of the community's concerns centered on how the City became involved in the process. She questioned Mayor Waggoner regarding his direction to City Administrator Kurt Markegard to send correspondence to the State concerning the proposed project. Mayor Waggoner confirmed he directed Mr. Markegard to send the letters.

Council Member Mackay asked City Attorney Michele Braukmann whether she had reviewed the correspondence before it was sent. Ms. Braukmann stated she had not. Council Member Mackay also inquired about the status of public records requests related to the project.

City Administrator Kurt Markegard explained that City staff had been working to compile responsive records and had coordinated with the City's information technology provider to conduct email searches using terms provided by the City Attorney. He stated he had printed and organized his responsive records and made them available for release once the search process was completed. Mr. Markegard also described efforts he had made to meet with members of the public and answer questions regarding the proposed project.

City Clerk/Treasurer Kelly Strecker confirmed that the request to the City's information technology provider had been submitted, but as of the beginning of the meeting, a response had not yet been received.

City Attorney Michele Braukmann explained that Montana law does not establish a specific deadline for responding to public records requests, although legal guidance generally considers five business days to be a reasonable timeframe. She acknowledged that the City was beyond that timeframe on several requests and stated that responding to public records requests is a responsibility she routinely performs for the City.

During discussion regarding public records requests, comments were made regarding the City Attorney's resignation, which prompted discussion concerning transparency, public trust, and leadership. Members of the public also commented on the exchange and expressed concerns regarding trust and confidence in City leadership.

Council Member Naylor read a prepared statement emphasizing the importance of ethical governance, transparency, accountability, and maintaining the public's trust. She asked Mayor Waggoner what steps the City intended to take to improve transparency moving forward.

Mayor Waggoner responded that no formal application had been submitted to the City and that the City would follow the required public process should an annexation application be received.

City Administrator Kurt Markegard provided a detailed overview of the City's involvement with the State regarding the proposed Montana State Forensic Hospital. He described initial contacts from the Montana Board of Investments, participation in site tours, subsequent requests for information regarding infrastructure and annexation procedures, and correspondence sent to the State regarding the City's annexation process and legal requirements. Mr. Markegard stated that his intent throughout the process had been to ensure the State followed Montana law, including the City's required public review, Growth Policy amendment, annexation, and zoning processes. He reiterated that no annexation application had been submitted to the City and emphasized his commitment to transparency, public involvement, and providing the Council with the information necessary to make informed decisions if an application is received.

Council Member Klose stated that the lack of information being provided by the State had created confusion within the community and strained relationships among elected officials, City staff, and residents. He encouraged the State to meet directly with the Laurel community to answer questions and provide additional information regarding the proposed project.

Council Member Canape referenced previous Council discussions involving state legislators regarding the proposed facility and encouraged residents to allow the Council to complete its review process if an application is submitted. He stated the Council's responsibility is to represent the community and evaluate any proposal through the established public process.

Mayor Waggoner then opened the floor for public comment.

Shawna Hopper, 504 Roundhouse Drive, Laurel, expressed concerns regarding the lack of communication and transparency surrounding the proposed Montana State Forensic Hospital. She stated the community should have been informed when the State began considering locations in the Laurel area, regardless of whether the property was within the city limits. Ms. Hopper questioned the delay in responding to public records requests and suggested regular communication from the City could have reduced public frustration. She also expressed concerns regarding public safety, emergency services, impacts on children, and the possibility of future state facilities locating in the area. She encouraged the City to carefully review applicable laws and protect the community's interests.

Renee Roth, 1649 U.S. Highway 212 South, Laurel, thanked the Council for their service and stated she was speaking as a private citizen. Ms. Roth expressed concern regarding the proximity of the proposed facility to local schools and the lack of communication with the school district. She stated elected officials and the community should have been informed earlier in the process and encouraged City leadership to acknowledge mistakes and improve transparency moving forward.

Brian Lubinsky, Laurel, stated City leadership should have been more forthcoming with the community regarding the proposed project. He encouraged City officials to acknowledge any mistakes, communicate openly with residents, and work collaboratively with the community moving forward.

Amber Zahn, 1224 West 4th Street, Laurel, stated the proposed facility would directly impact her family and property. She asked what options the City and residents have to oppose the project if the community does not support it and encouraged City officials to continue operating in an open and transparent manner.

Elizabeth Gilg, 1200 Cedar Crest Circle, Laurel, questioned the City's handling of public records requests and asked when the request to the City's information technology provider had been submitted. She also expressed concerns regarding comments made during the meeting and stated she believed information requested by the public should have been distributed more efficiently.

Steve Krum, 249 24th Avenue West, Laurel, stated he believed the State should not determine the future of the community without local support. He encouraged the Council to rely on the City's ordinances, resolutions, and state law to protect property owners and formally oppose annexation of the proposed project.

Monna Rae Adickes, 102 8th Avenue Unit B, Laurel, asked the Council to explain the next steps if an annexation application is submitted and requested Council Members share their positions regarding the proposed project. She stated the uncertainty surrounding the proposal has created significant anxiety within the community.

Ms. Hopper asked what actions the City could take if the Council denied annexation and whether the State could still obtain City services. City Administrator Kurt Markegard explained the City's Annexation Policy (Resolution R08-22) generally prohibits extending new City services outside the city limits and stated only the City Council has the authority to approve such services. He advised he could not predict how the State would proceed if annexation were denied. Additional discussion occurred regarding previous correspondence between the City and the State concerning the proposed project.

Pauline Hammer, 1111 Yellowstone Avenue, Laurel, stated she shared many of the concerns expressed by previous speakers regarding the proposed facility. She thanked the City Attorney for reading the written correspondence into the record and expressed appreciation for the respectful discussion during the meeting. Ms. Hammer also expressed concern regarding interactions between the Mayor and the City Attorney and stated it affected her confidence in the City's leadership.

General Items

Executive Review

- 1. Finance:** Resolution - A Resolution Of The City Council Of The City Of Laurel, Montana Amending Resolution No. 25-75 And Affirming Continuation Of Services Under The Managed Service Agreement For Renamed Systems Technology Consultants.

The Clerk-Treasurer presented a resolution amending Resolution No. 25-75 to reflect the name change of Morrison-Maierle Systems to Systems Technology Consultants. She explained that the managed service agreement itself remained unchanged and that the resolution simply updated the contractor's legal name.

2. Finance: Resolution - A Resolution Of The City Council Approving A Transportation Coordination Plan For The City Of Laurel Transit.

The Clerk-Treasurer presented a resolution approving the updated Transportation Coordination Plan for Laurel Transit. She explained that the plan is required for the City to remain eligible for transit grant funding and reflects updates including the correct partner organization, Allies in Aging, replacing an outdated reference, and the addition of the City's new transit bus obtained through grant funding. The updated plan ensures continued operation and funding of the Laurel transit system.

Council Issues

3. Discussion - BNSF Communications Tower

The Public Works Director explained that BNSF had provided the City with a courtesy notice that it intends to construct a communications tower, approximately 120 feet in height, within the railroad yard. Because the project falls under federal jurisdiction, no City approval is required. The item was placed on the agenda to ensure Council members were aware of the project.

Council Member Mackay asked whether the new tower would replace the existing communications tower located nearby. The Public Works Director stated that he was unsure but reiterated that the notification was informational only.

4. Closed Executive Session – Litigation

Item was removed from the agenda by Mayor Dave Waggoner.

Other Items

Attendance at Upcoming Council Meeting

Announcements

Council Member Mackay reminded everyone that the next Public Works Committee meeting would be held on Monday, February 9, one week earlier than usual due to the Presidents' Day holiday. The meeting would begin at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Council Member Canape announced that the Tree Board/Park Board meeting would be held on February 5 at 5:30 p.m. at the American Legion Hall in Riverside Park, and noted that board members had been notified.

Council Member Klose invited any interested Council Members or members of the public to attend the Tree Board/Park Board meeting to view the work that had been completed at the American Legion building.

The council workshop adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brittney Harakal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brittney" written in a more compact, looped style and the last name "Harakal" written in a more extended, flowing style.

Brittney Harakal
Administrative Assistant

NOTE: This meeting is open to the public. This meeting is for information and discussion of the Council for the listed workshop agenda items.

Print Name	Address
Brian Lbinski	320 7th Ave
Jesse Zann	1224 W 4th St
Bryan Lottet	1224 W 4th St
Shawn Hoyer	304 Lindbergh

February 3, 2026

Mayor Waggoner, CAO Kurt Markegard, Attorney Braukman, City Council, Kelly Strecker and Brittany Harkel,

For two weeks we have been emailing to get documents released, with only one small email back offering up ONLY emails from Kurt Markegard to the BOI. The importance of preserving communication is utterly important. Please be advised that as of this request and many before this, deletion or editing of comments and messages would be spoliation of communication protected by MCA 2-2-1003.

Here is my public, in person, hand given request to release all communications, including any combination of emails, text messages and phone logs between Dave Waggoner, Kurt Markegard, the BOI, Dan Villa, Charlie Bereton, MT DPHHS and Miller Trois, LLC (aka Norman Miller) from 5/1/2025 to present.

Also requesting all text messages, emails and social media posts between Mayor Waggoner and CAO Markegard regarding the Forensic Mental Health Facility from 6/1/2025 to present. I am also requesting all phone logs and text messages between Mayor Waggoner and CAO Markegard from 6/20/2025 to 2/1/2026.

The lack of transparency and communication is frustrating and unacceptable. It continues to raise questions and distrust between our city government and the citizens of Laurel. Please do right by the citizens of Laurel and release this information.

Again, be advised that as of this request and many before this, deletion or editing of comments and messages would be spoliation of communication protected by MCA 2-2-1003.

Sincerely,


Shawna Hopper

text
In addition emails between Kurt Markegard,
Mayor Waggoner & Loves truck stop
project manager and staff from 1/1/25 - 2/1/26
(80)

February 3, 2026

I stand before you as a citizen of Laurel, lifelong resident, local business owner, property owner and community advocate. I speak solely for myself, representing my beliefs and what I feel is in the best interests of the city of Laurel, its citizens and my business.

First, I would like to say thank you all for your service and reiterate that NO one's family, spouses, children etc should be the target for negative comments or retaliation. I do not wish any harm or malice on anyone's families and believe most of our town is respectful as well. I would also hope my voice and comments would not have impact on my family personally or professionally.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge the Mayor, Kurt and those on council that have supported my business and community events. However, this has made me not want to do business in this community or live here.

A few of my concerns and issues are:

- Lack of communication and transparency between Mayor Waggoner and CAO Markegard with City Council of Laurel and the residents of Laurel
 - On Friday November 28th Both Cheryl Hill and I text Mayor Waggoner asking about the FMF and his response was he knew nothing about it; but clearly there was ongoing communication-
 - My Question to you is if he knows NOTHING, then who is running our city?
 - Are deals being made without council approval and knowledge

It sure feels like we are being offered up on a silver platter or did we get things for our community for having this here.

- Safety children, community and first responders
 - What kind of training will the state provide the City of Laurel Emergency Services
 - Will they pay for a full-time fire department, so that the people risking their lives actually get paid;
 - What will ensure that our town will not go without the services the residents pay for
 - MCA 50-6-101
 - Legislative purpose talks about focus on public welfare stakes for EMS
 - Emergency Services should be analyzed in relation to the system strain
 - Montana Environmental Policy Act
 - Has this review been completed a few things to require
 - MEPA review commonly includes government services (police, fire, EMS)
 - MCA 75-1-201
 - Demand the the MEPA includes
 - Increased 911 calls and EMS runs
 - Staffing and response time impacts
 - Law enforcement call volume and transportation
 - (MCA 46-14-202)
 - What costs are on local taxpayers
 - Mitigation measures
 - Funding, Staffing, on site medical and security
 - ARM 37-106-1831
 - Specialty mental health facility emergency services
 - Ensure that EMS and higher levels of care are available to patients AND Maintain an agreement with an outside source for EMS to ensure such services are immediately available
 - Is this our EMS?
 - Will this leave our community unattended

Although I do not know these answers or what all these statutes refer to completely and you likely won't either is the direct problem, NO communication, NO transparency, NO information.

Finally, WHAT ELSE are they planning to do with the extra 104 acres?

- My understanding is they are looking for a new spot for the Montana Women's Prison
- Warm Springs
- Half way houses etc

This is my plea for communication.

Sincerely,

Shawna Hopper

I would like to thank you all for your service. I am speaking on behalf of myself, a life long resident of Laurel and the surrounding area, a local business owner and community advocate.

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Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1A
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 2:43 PM
To: Brittney Harakal
Cc: Civil Attorney
Subject: FW: Proposed Mental Health Facility and City Council Considerations
Attachments: Mental Health Facility Concerns (1).docx



Sara B. Naylor

Council Member - City of Laurel - Ward 1

✦ 406.798.9499
✦ Ward1a@laurel.mt.gov

From: Tricia Tatman <ptatman27@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 2:13 PM
To: Ward 1B <ward1b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2B <ward2b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2A <ward2a@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>; citymayor@laurel.mt
Subject: Proposed Mental Health Facility and City Council Considerations

Please see the attached letter concerning the proposed Mental Health Facility

Sincerely,
Patricia Tatman
Yellowstone County resident of the Laurel Community

February 3rd, 2026

To: Laurel City Council Members and Mayor

From: Patricia Tatman

Subject: Proposed Mental Health Facility in or near Laurel, MT

Dear Valued City Council Members and Mayor Waggoner,

As I assume much of your correspondence is these days, I am writing to address the proposed Mental Health Facility in the area. While I am a county resident, and none of you directly represent me, it is the county residents that will likely feel the brunt of the decisions that are on your shoulders. I appreciate the time it will take you to review this letter, as well as the correspondence of others.

In short, my household is opposed to the proposed Mental Health Facility being at either identified location in Laurel (the property of Hwy 10 that has a buy/sell agreement, and the State -owned property off of Buffalo Trail and Laurel Airport Rd). We do recognize and appreciate that there is an extreme need in Montana for more access to mental health facilities, the problems with existing forensic mental health facilities, and the shortage of space in both our county jails and our State penitentiaries. That said a band-aide solution to a large problem generally leads to larger problems, instead of solving the recognized problem. I will bring up the ones that are on my mind and hope you will consider them when making your decisions.

#1. This has been shrouded in secrecy from the very beginning. While I am not naïve enough to believe that all decisions are made fully in the public light, this decision has huge implications for the community and public support should have been considered and gauged before any employee or elected official ever entered into discussion or agreements on this topic. Moving forward at all at this point will leave a huge distrust with the community consisting of your constituents and your county neighbors.

2. The Hwy 10 location is just so close to town. This has been a main talking point among community members. I realize the State's desire for cost savings based on existing water and sewer, the location to the West End interchange and its benefits for getting both users

of the facility, and employees of the facility to and from there. However, conveniences and cost savings are not the only factors that should be considered. The proximity to an elementary school, the interstate and highway in general, established homes, and businesses should all be considered security risks. Considerable consideration should also be given to reduction in property values, the overall strange aesthetic of putting a facility of this kind near a golf course and school and what this means as Laurel's growth continues to be planned for.

3. The Laurel Airport Location- I realize this is state owned land and while I don't know all that would go into putting the proposed facility here, I am sure it would be less restrictive than having to be annexed by the city. My understanding of the situation was that this was deemed less feasible due to available water and sewer, and the extreme cost that would be needed to develop those utilities. The city should NEVER be responsible for upgrading these utilities solely for a State facility that will provide no tax revenue. Additionally, other considerations should be discussed. This is right next to an increasingly busy airport, which seems to also be a security risk. Laurel Airport is in no condition to facilitate more traffic. This highway is quite narrow and has wrecks on a regular basis that would be exacerbated by both the building of and running of this facility. It is my view as well that it would be in incredibly poor taste to put this facility right next to our city cemetery and our increasingly used State Veteran's Cemetery. While a school is a bit further away than the Hwy 10 location, it is essentially a straight shot right to our high school, our health clinic and a nursing home.

4. If this facility is built at either location it will be the first thing visitors see when coming from either the west or the north. What will that do to the health of our community. Even the fact that our school mascot is the Laurel Locomotives, often shortened to Locos, seems that this facility will do nothing but bring a certain negative perception to our town.

5. This is just Phase 1 of a project. This is probably my area of greatest concern. What will come of subsequent phases. It is known we have a severe shortage of mental health facilities both forensic and otherwise. Will this grow to include more patients/prisoners? We know we lack county jail space. Is this a plan for getting more? We know we have a shortage of incarceration space in our State run prisons. Are these sites being looked at to help solve those problems? To my knowledge these questions haven't been answered or even addressed, and they certainly haven't been addressed with any kind of legally binding assurances of what will or won't happen in the future. Will patients ever be released into

the community? Will this bring in other state or privately run group homes or prerelease centers? What will be the city council's stance on them? Where will those be located? What will the security concerns be for those?

In closing, I want to fully disclose that I have previously worked in a group home facility and that I also live on Laurel Airport Rd. I come viewing this situation both with the recognition of the extreme need we have in this state, but with also the deeply held belief that these are both wrong locations for any such proposed facility or this type of development. Not from a "not in my backyard" mentality, but because they are categorically the wrong kind of locations for such facilities for so many serious reasons.

Thank you for your time and service and I wish you great calm and wisdom as you make further decisions!

Patricia Tatman

Yellowstone County based Laurel Resident

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1B
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 3:18 PM
To: Brittney Harakal
Cc: Civil Attorney; Kurt Markegard
Subject: Fw: Annexation of property for Forensic Mental Hospital

From: Gloria Allwin <gallwin@msn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 3:10 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: Annexation of property for Forensic Mental Hospital

To the Laurel City Council Members:

While we are not Laurel City residents, we are long term Laurel residents living just outside the city. We live at 185 Golf Course Rd, bordering the property being discussed about the Forensic Criminal Mental Hospital.

We appreciate your willingness to serve our community. We respectfully ask that you do not approve the annexation of the property into the city. The city has talked about growth and wanting to improve the city, however we do not see putting a facility like this being an improvement and not paying taxes to the county or the city. The idea it is so close to our K-2 elementary school is very concerning for our children's safety. This property could be used for taxable homes and with that, the city could grow helping with the tax base and supporting our schools, streets, water system, etc. With this type of facility being so close in the city limits, it will impede proper growth for the city and most likely cause the homes in the area to devalue as well.

The lack of Transparency by the city officials has been very concerning. Even though we don't have a vote in the city, the annexation of this "prison" does affect us as does your votes. Please do not vote for the annexation of this property.

Thank you.
Gloria and Dennis Allwin

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1B
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 12:20 PM
To: Civil Attorney
Cc: Kurt Markegard
Subject: Fw: Frustrations and Disappointment

From: SHAWNA@CARLTONDEPOT.COM <SHAWNA@CARLTONDEPOT.COM>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 4:50 AM
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: Fw: Frustrations and Disappointment

From: SHAWNA@CARLTONDEPOT.COM <SHAWNA@CARLTONDEPOT.COM>
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 4:06 PM
To: ward1a@laurelmt.gov <ward1a@laurelmt.gov>; ward1b@laurelmt.gov <ward1b@laurelmt.gov>; ward2a@laurelmt.gov <ward2a@laurelmt.gov>; ward2b@laurelmt.gov <ward2b@laurelmt.gov>; ward3a@laurelmt.gov <ward3a@laurelmt.gov>; ward3b@laurelmt.gov <ward3b@laurelmt.gov>; ward4a@laurelmt.gov <ward4a@laurelmt.gov>; ward4b@laurelmt.gov <ward4b@laurelmt.gov>
Subject: Frustrations and Disappointment

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for your time and dedication to our community. We all have lives, businesses, jobs, families, groups, and organizations, so the time we all put forth for our community is admirable. I know you are unable to respond but please take our emails, conversations and facts into considers when making this massive decision that will forever impact our community.

I would like to state I am not against this facility or any other facility helping those with severe or mild mental illness, special needs and addiction. These are very real lives for more people than we know, and all these people deserve help. However, I am against the current proposed location for many reasons.

But Today I am writing to you all, about my heart. My family ancestors settled here in 1883 and have been here ever since. I have lived in Laurel for 49 years, raised children here, this is MY HOME, this is MY COMMUNITY. I also opened my business to give this community something it so desperately needed; more places to eat. In addition, I have spent the last 3 years trying to BETTER our community. Joining forces on the Splash Park, working with the Laurel Community Foundation on creating a family friendly space for live music and fellowship at Rock the Block Events. I have had numerous fundraisers for the Laurel Softball Complex, Chamber of Commerce, Laurel Fire Association, as well as all the Laurel City Emergency Services that are so underfunded. Lastly, my non-profit the WHITE BUFFALO FOUNDATION has held numerous events to raise funds for an addition to one of the parks for physically and mentally disabled individuals; including those with all sorts of special needs.

It saddens me, breaks my heart, and makes me ill to see something like the Montana State Forensic Hospital being so close to our recently updated elementary school, softball complexes, residents and the community we claim we love.

This is my plea to vote NO to the annexation of the proposed Forensic Mental Hospital/Facility in its proposed location.

Sincerely,
Shawna Hopper
Concerned Citizen, Lifelong Resident, Business Owner
406.794.7222

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 4A
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 4:07 PM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: FW: Concerns

From: SHAWNA@CARLTONDEPOT.COM <SHAWNA@CARLTONDEPOT.COM>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 6:09 AM
To: Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 1B <ward1b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4B <ward4b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3B <ward3b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3A <ward3a@laurel.mt.gov>; ward2b@laurelmt.gov; Ward 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Concerns

Good Morning Council,

As you are well aware, I oppose the Montana State Forensic Hospital/Prison at the proposed location in Laurel, for many reasons.

The city of Laurel struggles with finances; we have fundraisers for an ambulance, the City of Laurel's ambulance, protective vests for the police force, bunker gear, new safety equipment and PPE for the Fire Department. Why? Because the city does not have the funds. This property could have provided commercial and residential income for the city but know it will not bring income and will become a financial burden in one way or another.

Another great option would have been a new Emergency Services Facility as the current facility is in shambles, leaking roofs causing the potential for electrical issues, the heat and air duct is constantly going out, there are many safety issues in the dispatch and police area (which I will not speak publicly about as I do not want to endanger them in any way). Red Lodge Fire was just awarded 2 million dollars from the state for a new station as bunker gear should not be in the same bays as the trucks for exhaust and potential risks for cancer; guess where Laurel's gear is, yep in the same bay. The list could go on.

We operate on a very minimally paid fire department, who risk their lives, sacrifice time away from family on holidays for our community and its citizens. This stipend paid department covers one of the largest areas in the state will now have to have special training and additional risks on calls that will likely occur at the facility. When there are calls at this facility, it will pull from all Emergency Services, leaving the residents and community with less resources. This will directly impact our community.

The safety of our community, emergency services, and our children should be on the front of everyone's mind. At the school board meeting (please watch the video play to get exact quotes and names of individuals) a few comments struck a chord with me. Board Member, Kayla Gray made a comment in regards to her student teaching time; "children would be scared to go to the bathroom alone; this will add another level of fear, resulting in less productivity in the classroom", one of the student board appointee made a comment about the youth softball training facility directly bordering the proposed location; stating the safety of all Laurel students should be of utmost importance. Two ladies during public

comment stated a few facts about escapees from warm springs over the last several years. However, Amber Zahn's comments stuck with me the most; she stated, "it doesn't matter how frequent the escapes are it just takes ONE, one escapee to hurt one of our children or citizens."

During the September 30th, "Candidate Meet and Greet" meeting at the Front Porch with the Small Business Alliance Group, questions were asked of Mayor Waggoner about the proposed Facility. Mayor Waggoner stated the state of Montana had asked what the city of Laurel would do to bring the facility to Laurel, and he said absolutely NOTHING, the city will not give them anything. Well, it appears from the communication released by the State of Montana on August 22, 2025. The Mayor and CAO had been offering advice and working with them anyways; even if it was just a location, they were encouraging them to look in our community. As a business owner, my main question was about how this would affect the business community in Laurel, i.e.. pulling jobs from local businesses that already struggle to find help. He acknowledged this as a real risk that could directly affect my business. Why would it be good for the community to take away jobs from one place to add to another? Is the state hospital more important to the city than mine? As of now the fear has grown, as it is not just losing employees but customers as well. People will sell and although someone else may move in, I now have to figure out how capture them as a new customer; less people eat out in fear their property values will decrease. We have a desolate main street already, and this will continue to discourage people from coming to our community. Laurel will continue to struggle instead of encouraging real businesses to come to Laurel that would bring real money to the community and city.

I could go on but Ill save the rest for next week as this is truly exhausting, physically, mentally and emotionally as this affects me to my core. This affects me personally on so many levels as our property the borders this facility, my business will be affected and my husband and son's safety as well as many other first responders I care about will be directly impacted.

Please oppose this location and stand up for OUR community.

Thank you for your time,
Shawna Hopper
Concerned Citizen and Business Owner

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1B
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 8:53 PM
To: Civil Attorney
Cc: Brittney Harakal; Kurt Markegard
Subject: Fw: Forensic Mental Health Facility
Attachments: GovLetter_BOI.pdf

From: Laura Kirschenmann <laurakirschenmann@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 6:15 PM
To: citymayor@laurelmt.gov <citymayor@laurelmt.gov>; michele@meridianlawmt.com <michele@meridianlawmt.com>; Kurt Markegard <kmarkegard@laurel.mt.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>
Subject: Forensic Mental Health Facility

Good evening,

I am writing to you all to express my opposition to the currently proposed location for the forensic mental health facility. My family lives at 939 W 4th St. I have lived in Laurel for roughly 13 years, however my husband and his family have been in Laurel and heavily involved in the community for decades. I love Laurel and am grateful to be raising my son in this town. It is hard to find a gem to call home that we have here, with that small town vibe where you really feel safe and surrounded by a supportive community. I am deeply concerned with what the consequences may be by bringing this facility to Laurel. First and foremost, the currently proposed location is far too close to Laurel Elementary School. My next largest concern is the strain this would put on our emergency services. I am sure you all are aware of our thinly stretched volunteer ambulance and fire departments. I have heard countless calls on the scanner where our ambulance was either already out on a call, or no one was available to answer the call. This type of facility will undoubtedly have plenty of instances where calls will be placed needing the assistance of emergency personnel. I fear bringing this type of facility that will need support from our strained emergency services could endanger the citizens of Laurel at their most desperate times of need. Without having a 24/7 fully staffed fire and ambulance department, I feel this is putting all the citizens of Laurel at great risk. I beg you all to please do everything within your power to keep this facility out of Laurel.

Governor Gianforte was clear in his letter dated 9/10/2025, that due to the impact this facility will have on whichever community it is built in, it is imperative that there be public **participation and engagement**. I kindly ask that the public is included/invited into the decision making and discussions, as much as possibly allowed, of this project before moving forward as our Governor strongly encouraged.

Over the course of the last few months, this project has gained the attention of many in the public, both because of the great need for the proposed facility and because its location impacts their communities. In proceeding with this project, public participation should play a critical role as it moves forward. Engaging the public and stakeholders will ensure that these decisions are made in the open, allowing Montanans to have a voice in how their hard-earned tax dollars are spent.

As the Board moves expeditiously to resume implementation of House Bill 5, I encourage BOI to work closely with DPHHS during the development of the behavioral health facility plan to specify services to be provided at the facility and ensure that the public has an opportunity to be heard. While the building is to be constructed by BOI, it is important that DPHHS work closely alongside the Board so that the facility meets the behavioral health needs of Montanans. To ensure that all interested communities have the opportunity to provide feedback, I also encourage the Board to work with DPHHS to consider additional locations beyond the previously reviewed sites.

I appreciate each and every one of you and the hard work you put in every day for our community. I would be happy to speak further with anyone if you so wish.

Take care,

Laura Kirschenmann
281-813-9679

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

September 10, 2025

Montana Board of Investments
PO Box 200126
Helena, MT 59620-0126

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Investments,

Thank you for the brief pause you have placed on developing and constructing the behavioral health facility contemplated by House Bill 5, which the Legislature passed and I signed into law. At the most recent meeting of the Board of Investments (BOI), the Board requested written guidance from my office about how to best proceed with implementing House Bill 5 so that we can continue addressing the behavioral health challenges across our state.

As you know, House Bill 5 provided \$26.5 million to BOI to prepare and build a behavioral health facility in Eastern Montana in coordination with the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) as an investment for the State. Under the law, the Legislature directed BOI and DPHHS to prepare a plan for facility type and location subject to approval by the Director of the Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning.

Over the course of the last few months, this project has gained the attention of many in the public, both because of the great need for the proposed facility and because its location impacts their communities. In proceeding with this project, public participation should play a critical role as it moves forward. Engaging the public and stakeholders will ensure that these decisions are made in the open, allowing Montanans to have a voice in how their hard-earned tax dollars are spent.

As the Board moves expeditiously to resume implementation of House Bill 5, I encourage BOI to work closely with DPHHS during the development of the behavioral health facility plan to specify services to be provided at the facility and ensure that the public has an opportunity to be heard. While the building is to be constructed by BOI, it is important that DPHHS work closely alongside the Board so that the facility meets the behavioral health needs of Montanans. To ensure that all interested communities have the opportunity to provide feedback, I also encourage the Board to work with DPHHS to consider additional locations beyond the previously reviewed sites.

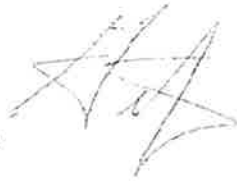
This project is of great importance to the State of Montana, as DPHHS must continue to build out capacity to take care of Montanans in need of behavioral health services. I share the goals of

Board of Investments
September 10, 2025
Page 2

the Legislature to complete this project quickly while also ensuring transparency, fairness, and public involvement.

Thank you to each member of the Board for their work on this important project. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,

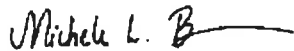


Greg Gianforte
Governor

Brittney Harakal

From: Civil Attorney
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 12:56 PM
To: Brittney Harakal; Kurt Markegard; City Mayor
Subject: Fw:

Best Regards,



Michele L. Braukmann
Civil City Attorney
City of Laurel
Cell Phone: [406.671.4333](tel:406.671.4333)
civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov

From: Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 7:41:12 AM
To: Brittney Harakal <bharakal@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: FW:

Text messages I received Wednesday, January 28, 2026 and my response to them.



Sara B. Naylor

Council Member City of Laurel Ward 1

✦ 406 598 9499

✦ Ward1a@laurel.mt.gov

From: Sara Naylor <sarabnaylor@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 7:40 AM
To: Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject:

7:38



+1 (860) 771-3511

Text Message • RCS
Wednesday 4:51 PM

Hi Sara! Quick question for you.

I live in Laurel, wondering how you feel about being removed from all city accounts, with the CAO now handling oversight. Before I make a big deal out of the tail end of last night's meeting for people, I figured I'd reach out to you directly and get your take.

Wednesday 7:35 PM

Good evening, thank you for reaching out. I'm a relatively new city council member as I just came on board this month. I'm not entirely sure how these matters are typically handled within the city from a policy standpoint. I would encourage you to reach out to the mayor or city clerk treasurer with regard to any questions or clarification on this matter. Again, thank you and I hope you have a good evening.

Read Yesterday

If we did not



Text Message • RCS





Sara B. Naylor

Chief of Staff - Billings Fire Department
Assistant Fire Marshal - Laurel Fire Rescue

- ✦ 406.508.9400
- ✦ saranaylor@billingsmt.com
- ✦ naylor@billingsmt.gov
- ✦ sbnaylor@billingsmt.gov

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:12 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Concerns regarding the Proposed Forensic Mental Health Facility Location in Laurel

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Bethany Haan <bethany_haan@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2026 11:34 AM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Concerns regarding the Proposed Forensic Mental Health Facility Location in Laurel

Dear Mayor Waggoner,

I am writing to you as a deeply concerned resident of Laurel and an active member of our community regarding the recent site selection for the new state behavioral health facility. While I recognize and support the commitment to addressing Montana's critical need for mental health infrastructure, I am writing to formally express my opposition to the specific location currently under consideration.

My concerns are centered on the facility's proximity to established residential neighborhoods and educational institutions. My family resides off Laurel Golf Course Road, placing this planned site a mere 1.6 miles from our front door. Even more concerning is the fact that this facility—intended to house individuals requiring forensic mental health assessments, fitness-to-stand-trial evaluations, and those found guilty but mentally ill—would be located just one mile from Laurel Elementary School.

As a mother of four, with two children currently attending that elementary school, the safety and security of our students and neighborhoods are my highest priorities. Placing a high-security forensic population in such close proximity to school-aged children and densely populated residential areas presents risks that I believe have not been fully mitigated or addressed in the current planning phase.

I understand that the state is fulfilling a vital mandate to improve our mental health system. However, for a project of this sensitivity, the choice of location is as important as the services provided. I respectfully ask that you exercise your oversight to pause this selection and re-evaluate alternative sites that do not infringe upon the immediate safety zones of our schools and local families.

Our community is supportive of progress, but we ask that this progress does not come at the expense of the peace of mind and safety of Laurel's residents. Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your consideration of this urgent matter.

Respectfully,

Bethany Haan
Laurel, Montana

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1B
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 12:20 PM
To: Civil Attorney
Cc: Kurt Markegard
Subject: Fw: mental hospital letter attached
Attachments: mental health facility - jan 2026.pdf

From: Don Smarsh <don@dynamicpromoproducts.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 7:38 AM
To: citymayor@laure.mt.gov <citymayor@laure.mt.gov>; Ward 1B <ward1b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2B <ward2b@laurel.mt.gov>; Laurel Chamber <laurelchamber@laurelmontana.org>; Kurt Markegard <kmarkegard@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: mental hospital letter attached

Thank you for your time.

Please review us on Google <https://g.page/r/CaSBBzGGWI45EB0/review>

Don Smarsh

Phone: 406-628-4718 Toll Free: 800-628-7795 Cell: 406-208-5358



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206 1st Ave, Laurel, Montana 59044

Hours: 8:30am - 5:30pm, Monday-Friday

Mailing: PO Box 249, Laurel, Montana 59044

ridgmountain.com

Brittney Harakal



Attachments:

City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:17 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: mental hospital letter attached
mental health facility - jan 2026.pdf

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Don Smarsh <don@dynamicpromoproducts.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 7:44 AM
To: The Front Porch <thefrontporchmt@gmail.com>; City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; Laurel Chamber <laurelchamber@laurelmontana.org>
Subject: mental hospital letter attached

Thank you for your time.

Please review us on Google <https://g.page/r/CaSBBzGGWI45EB0/review>

Don Smarsh

Phone: 406-628-4718 Toll Free: 800-628-7795 Cell: 406-208-5358



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Mailing: PO Box 249, Laurel, Montana 59044

ridgmountain.com

January 29, 2026

To: Laurel Mayor and City Council

From: Don Smarsh

Re: State Mental Health Facility

My wife and I live at 1940 Ranch Trail Road in Yellowstone County just outside of Laurel. We have operated a business in downtown Laurel for 33 years. We have been fortunate to raise our kids here in Laurel and have always felt like Laurel is a relatively safe community to do so.

I am not against a much needed State Mental Hospital. I am against the location chosen for the new facility. There has been a lot of valid concerns brought up like; it will be too close to schools and residential housing, property values, no tax benefits to Laurel and the stigma it brings for future growth.

Some of my concerns are with the current Mental Hospital in Warm Springs. The hospital has been under scrutiny for patient deaths and assaults. This has led to safety concerns for both the staff and community. They have struggled with staffing the facility which leads to insufficient patient care and safety concerns. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services took away their certification in 2023 due to the facility's failure to meet basic health and safety requirements. The loss of federal funding has put a strain on how the hospital is staffed and operated. There is 60-70 consistently on the waiting list for a bed which puts a strain on the local detention facilities until room becomes available.

The Mental Hospital in Warm Springs has been so insufficiently managed by the state that I am concerned about it being the same situation here in Laurel. I am concerned that our local law enforcement and fire department aren't equipped or staffed for this type of facility. I am concerned that staffing the facility may be difficult. The Yellowstone County Jail advertises on the local radio to find qualified employees. It takes a lot of employees to run a mental hospital and even though we are the most populated county in Montana those will be tough positions to fill and turnover is high. I think this could put more financial strain on the city of Laurel and Yellowstone county in the future.

Concerned citizen.

Don Smarsh

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:10 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Concerns Regarding Proposed State Mental Hospital

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: April Rosekelly <april_rosekelly@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 21, 2026 9:01 AM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed State Mental Hospital

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing as a Laurel resident to formally express my opposition to the proposed location of the new state mental health facility within city limits, particularly given its proximity to Laurel Elementary School and established residential neighborhoods.

While I fully support the need for accessible mental health services in Montana, I strongly believe this specific site is not an appropriate or responsible placement. Locating a large state-run facility within walking distance of an elementary school raises serious safety, planning, and long-term community impact concerns that deserve deeper consideration.

In addition, the proposed site removes approximately 115 acres from the local tax base due to its tax-exempt status. This directly impacts city services and school funding while placing additional strain on local infrastructure—without corresponding financial benefit to the community. The potential negative effects on nearby property values and key community assets, including the golf course that brings significant revenue into Laurel, should not be dismissed.

Residents deserve transparency, meaningful public input, and thoughtful planning—especially for a project of this scale and permanence. I urge the Council to pause,

reconsider this location, and explore alternative sites outside of residential neighborhoods and school zones that would better serve both the facility's mission and the long-term wellbeing of Laurel.

Thank you for your time and for considering the voices of the community you represent.

Sincerely,

April Myers

Laurel, Montana

Sent from my iPhone

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:13 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Formal Request for Community Safety Review – Proposed Psychiatric Facility Location

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Amber Zahn <blondie_locks09@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, January 23, 2026 1:41 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: Kyle Smith <kyle.smith@hepi.com>; My E-mail <blondie_locks09@yahoo.com>
Subject: Formal Request for Community Safety Review – Proposed Psychiatric Facility Location

Dear City of Laurel Officials,

I am writing as a parent and homeowner regarding the proposed forensic psychiatric facility adjacent to our residential neighborhood and within close proximity to an elementary school.

Our community supports access to mental health treatment. However, the proposed location raises serious unresolved concerns related to public safety, emergency response preparedness, long-term oversight, and zoning suitability — particularly given the state's recent history of documented safety failures at Montana State Hospital.

We are formally requesting:

- An independent, publicly released community safety and risk assessment
- Clear disclosure of security, staffing, and emergency response protocols
- A public forum allowing residents, school representatives, and first responders to ask questions on the record
- Consideration of alternative locations that do not place children and residential neighborhoods at heightened risk

Proceeding without transparency and documented safety analysis would be deeply concerning.

We respectfully request a written response.

Sincerely,
Amber Zahn

Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:13 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Adjacent Property Impacts and Mitigation – Laurel Forensic Facility

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Amber Zahn <blondie_locks09@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, January 23, 2026 10:59 PM
To: charles.brereton@mt.gov
Cc: citycouncil@laurel.mt.gov; commissioners@yellowstonecountymt.gov; City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; My E-mail <blondie_locks09@yahoo.com>
Subject: Adjacent Property Impacts and Mitigation – Laurel Forensic Facility

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a property owner whose land directly shares a boundary with the proposed forensic psychiatric facility near Laurel, Montana. I am writing to formally request detailed information and written clarification regarding anticipated impacts to my property and potential mitigation measures.

Because my property is immediately adjacent to the proposed site, I will be uniquely affected by decisions related to facility design, security features, access routes, lighting, and future expansion. These impacts differ materially from those experienced by the broader community and raise legitimate concerns regarding property value, use, and long-term marketability.

Specifically, I respectfully request written responses to the following:

1. Security and Design

- The planned type, height, and visibility of perimeter fencing.
- Whether any anti-climb, razor wire, or hardened security features are proposed.
- The placement, intensity, and shielding of exterior lighting and surveillance systems.

2. Setbacks and Buffers

- The planned setback distance from my shared property line.
- Whether the state is willing to implement permanent buffer measures, including berms, landscaping, tree lines, or no-build easements along the shared boundary.

3. Access and Operations

- The location of access roads, staff entrances, and patient transport routes.
- Expected traffic volume and any anticipated use of sirens or emergency transport protocols.
- Hours of operation most likely to affect adjacent landowners.

4. Zoning and Future Expansion

- The zoning designation governing the site.
- Whether current approvals allow for future expansion, additional beds, or enhanced security features without further public process.

5. Property Value Impacts and Mitigation

- Whether the state has conducted or plans to conduct a property value impact or diminution study for adjacent landowners.
- Whether mitigation measures or compensation are available for directly affected properties, including landscaping, easements, or other forms of relief.

I appreciate the importance of expanding forensic mental health services in Montana. At the same time, I believe it is reasonable and necessary for the state to address the disproportionate impacts borne by adjacent property owners through transparency, mitigation, and good-faith engagement.

I respectfully request that responses be provided in writing and included in the official project record.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Amber Zahn

Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:16 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: A Mothers View

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Ariel Ronan <ariellynnronan@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 8:39 AM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: A Mothers View

Hi Mayor,

Ariel Ronan here - Resident at 614 E 1st ST

I know you likely won't reply, and that's ok. I would just like to send you a piece I wrote this morning. I hope that it might provide some insight into how it feels to be a mother to small children in the city of Laurel at this present time.

" Sitting in the drop off line at Laurel Elementary, waiting for my own 8 year old to exit my car. I'm watching other small children hop out of cars with backpacks half zipped and hair still messy, and I can't stop wondering: what's this view going to be like if there's a forensic mental health facility just on the other side of those trees?

This is where we wave goodbye to our smallest school goers. Where we tell them to be brave, to be kind, to have a good day. It's where we trust that this space is safe, familiar, and meant for growing. And yet my eyes keep drifting past the playground, past the fence line, imagining something entirely different looming there... something heavy, something that doesn't belong in the quiet rhythm of a school morning.

I'm trying to be present in this moment, to soak in the normalcy of it all, but it's hard not to feel a knot in my chest. It's hard not to think about what it means to change the landscape around our kids. Not just physically, but emotionally. This isn't about fear-mongering or ignoring the need for mental health care. But the reality is; this facility isn't about community mental health access. It's about criminals. Mentally unstable criminals.

It's about the dissonance of placing something so complex, so serious, next to a place that's supposed to feel light and safe.

As my child exits the car and I pull away, I keep thinking: our kids deserve spaces that let them be kids.
It's unsettling to wonder how much that view, and that feeling, might change

Build the facility, Montana; on another piece of land, much further away from our school. “

Thank you for your dedication to this town,



ARIEL RONAN

📞 701-334-2779

✉ ariellynnronan@gmail.com

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1A
Sent: Sunday, February 1, 2026 2:05 PM
To: Brittney Harakal
Cc: Civil Attorney
Subject: FW: Forensic Mental Correctional Facility



Sara B. Naylor

Council Member, City of Laurel, Ward 1

✦ 410.588.9499

✦ Ward1@laurel.mt.gov

From: Monna Rae Adickes <monnarae@cbthebrokers.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 31, 2026 10:57 PM
To: Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Forensic Mental Correctional Facility

Dear Laurel City Council Members,

What tangible benefit does this proposed mental health correctional facility bring to the City of Laurel?

What do the Laurel property owners receive in exchange for the inevitable decline in real estate values? Has the State committed to rebuilding *all* of Laurel's city streets? Upgrading our water and sewer plants? Purchasing a new ambulance for our community?

We do not want this facility in its proposed location. It is too close to our elementary school.

We have been told this project means "jobs and growth." Please—laugh out loud.

Employees of this facility will not buy homes in Laurel. They will commute from neighboring communities. Meanwhile, our residents will shoulder the risk.

Why the secrecy? According to Kurt's letter, Mayor Wagoneer was involved early in this plan. The City Attorney was later informed and warned Council members to remain silent. That should concern every resident.

This feels disturbingly familiar, just like how the NWE gas plant was ramrodded through with little regard for citizen concerns.

We urge you to vote NO to the annexation of the approximately 114 acres owned by Miller Trois LLC / Norman Miller. Vote NO to the zoning change that would allow a forensic mental correctional facility to be built on the Miller property north of Old Highway 10.

Laurel residents acknowledge that Eastern Montana needs a facility to care for the mentally ill. However, we strongly oppose placing it less than 500 yards from Laurel (West) Elementary School.

Please move this project back to the state-owned land, north of town as originally selected. By doing so you will provide the City of Laurel with more growth opportunities and provide a level of safety to the heart of our residential neighborhoods and schools.

For the sake of our children please Vote NO to annexation and the proposed zoning change.

Respectfully,
Monna Rae Adickes
102 8th Ave # B
Laurel MT 59044



MONNA RAE ADICKES
Real Estate Broker

☎ 406-860-4284
✉ monnaae@cbthebrokers.com
📍 3135 Meadow View Drive
Billings, MT 59102
🌐 www.mra406.com

 **COLDWELL BANKER** THE BROKERS

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:18 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Letter of opposition to proposed state hospital

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: colleen maurer <colmaurer@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 11:54 AM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; michele@meridianlawmt.com; Kurt Markegard <kmarkegard@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3A <ward3a@laurel.mt.gov>; city.planner@laurel.mt.gov; Lee.Deming@legmt.gov; Vince.Ricci@legmt.gov; governor@mt.gov
Subject: Letter of opposition to proposed state hospital

Colleen Maurer
1416 W Maryland Lane
Laurel, MT 59044
colmaurer@gmail.com
406-530-4166

January 30, 2026

Dear City of Laurel and State of Montana Representatives,

I am writing as a concerned resident of Laurel to formally express my strong opposition to the proposed construction of a state mental hospital intended to house the worst violent offenders. While I understand the importance of providing mental health services and rehabilitation, the placement of such a facility in the proposed location for individuals with a history of severe violence presents significant risks and concerns for our city, its residents and our outlying county residents.

Placing this facility on the proposed property will be the biggest detriment to the City of Laurel. The 114-acre parcel in question will not provide any tax benefit to our city and will kill the potential of any future commercial or residential development- these businesses and residences would generate tax income that would pay for water, roads, emergency services, and schools. The State of Montana will not pay any taxes on this property, therefore leaving the city's current residences and business owners to foot the bill. If you are a current resident of Laurel, you already know that these services need tax dollars for ongoing improvement.

The primary responsibility of local and state government is to protect the safety and well-being of its citizens. The proximity of this facility to Laurel Elementary School is troubling. Establishing a facility for violent offenders—regardless of mental health status—poses a direct threat to public safety. The potential for escape, inadequate security measures, and unintended interactions with the community cannot be underestimated. Our residents, businesses, and schools could be put at risk should any security breaches occur.

The presence of such a hospital is likely to have a detrimental effect on property values in the surrounding area, discourage new investment, and create a lasting stigma for our community. Families may feel less inclined to settle here, and current residents may consider relocating, undermining the fabric of our neighborhoods and the economic vitality of our city.

I, along with many community members, feel that there has not been adequate transparency from state and local officials regarding the selection of the proposed site. Decisions of this magnitude must involve open dialogue with affected communities, thorough impact assessments, and consideration of alternative locations better suited for such specialized facilities. Our Mayor and CAO have been in discussion with the State long before letting the city council or the city's residents know of their two-person plan. It's quite back-handed and has created serious mistrust in the two individuals involved. What gives two people the authority to go behind the backs of a whole community and force this through in such a hush-hush manner?

I urge the city and state government to reconsider this proposal and instead explore locations that are more remote and specifically designed for the secure treatment of high-risk individuals. Additionally, investment in community-based mental health services and preventive programs can yield positive outcomes without placing undue burden on our neighborhoods.

In closing, I respectfully request that you take these concerns seriously and prioritize the safety, well-being, and future of Laurel. Looking at the overall picture.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Colleen Maurer

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:12 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Forensic Mental Healthcare Project

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Laura Nelson <lauranelson4444@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2026 1:33 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Forensic Mental Healthcare Project

Good afternoon, Mayor,

Allow me to introduce myself to you. My name is Laura Nelson and I have been in the healthcare development industry for more than 30 years. I am a Montana native born and raised.

My specialty has been in rural America. I'm writing to you to give you some positive feedback that I hope you will consider. My corporation PPI has been acquiring funding for building new and renovating old healthcare facilities and working with States, Senators and Congressmen from all over the US. I do live in Billings. However, I come to you as my Son and his Wife live in Laurel along with many friends.

When building a hospital, clinic, nursing home, jail, whatever project you have and the State is involved, please maximize your potential by building out in a large area, a vacant field, between Billings and Laurel off of the highway and having the State pay for infrastructure, etc... Always build with the future in mind. This way you can grow, expand or add on services that may be needed in the future for these patients, etc...

The land in my projects has always been donated. I have worked with major donors all over the US as well. Once the land is agreed upon, then you will invite blueprints, architectural drawings.

You may or may not welcome this information. However, building in any neighborhoods or next to schools does not allow you to expand, grow to maximize your future funding potential. For example, the Red Lodge Hospital was first built up against a mountain with neighbors all around. There was nowhere to make improvements, so you probably noticed that they and the Columbus Hospital are now built on the outside of these towns. So vital.

I am currently caring for an elderly parent but am available for questions if you would like to visit. I have assisted the Columbus Hospital, Big Timber, and the like, but am currently slowing down to assist with family affairs.

I wish you nothing but the best and do thank you for stepping up to tackle this project. It is needed for Yellowstone Country's ability overall to stay in front of the population's increase in crime. I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Laura Nelson

--

Laura Nelson
P.O. Box 1854
Billings, MT 59103
(406)670-0339 Mobile
(Leave a message or feel free to text)

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:16 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Proposed Laurel Forensic Mental Hospital

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Kristi Hansen <kristi606@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 11:25 AM
To: governor@mt.gov
Cc: vince.ricci@legmt.gov; lee.deming@legmt.gov; City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.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>; Laurel City Planner <cityplanner@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Proposed Laurel Forensic Mental Hospital

Greetings from Laurel,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to reconsider the proposed location of the Forensic Mental Hospital in Laurel and to relocate it to a more appropriate site. Laurel is a small, close-knit community that takes great pride in being a safe, family-oriented town with strong local values, growing businesses, and a positive future ahead.

The placement of a forensic mental health facility in our community raises serious concerns regarding public safety, long-term economic impact, property values, and the overall well-being of residents. These concerns extend to the surrounding subdivisions, nearby neighborhoods, and the elementary school—all of which would become immediate neighbors to the proposed facility.

How can this possibly be considered an acceptable option? I ask you to reflect on whether you would be comfortable with this in your own backyard or near your children, and if not, to consider why that answer matters for the families of Laurel.

Laurel has worked hard to build momentum for growth and development, and this decision has the potential to halt that progress, deter new investment, and undermine years of effort by local families, business owners, and community leaders.

We fully recognize the importance of mental health services and the critical role they play in our state. However, we strongly believe that this type of facility should be placed in a location that is better suited from both an infrastructure and community-impact perspective—one that ensures patient care, staff safety, and public confidence without placing an undue burden on a small town like ours.

Laurel residents deserve a voice in decisions that will permanently shape the future of our community. We are not asking that these services be eliminated—only that they be thoughtfully and strategically located in a place that better aligns with public safety, community development, and long-term planning goals for Montana.

I respectfully ask that you reconsider this decision and explore alternative locations that will serve both the needs of the state and the well-being of local communities.

Respectfully,

Kristi Hansen

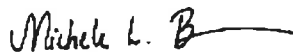
Laurel, Montana

Brittney Harakal

From: Civil Attorney
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 2:08 AM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: FW: Community Impact and Professional Concern Regarding Proposed Forensic Mental Health Facility

Please include in the public record to be read at the next meeting. Thanks!

Best Regards,



Michele L. Braukmann
Civil City Attorney
City of Laurel
Cell Phone: 406.671.4333
civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This transmission may contain information which is privileged, confidential, and protected by the attorney-client or attorney work product privileges. If you are not the addressee, or you are not authorized to disclose the contents herein, please note that any disclosure, copying, distribution, or use of the contents of this message is prohibited. If you have received this transmission in error, please destroy it and notify me immediately.

From: Civil Attorney
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 2:07 AM
To: 'Katlyn Gotschall' <katlyngotschall@gmail.com>; City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; Kurt Markegard <kmarkegard@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: 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 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4B <ward4b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3B <ward3b@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: RE: Community Impact and Professional Concern Regarding Proposed Forensic Mental Health Facility

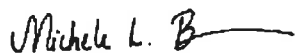
Dear Ms. Gotschall:

I want to first state, as an attorney, that deals with many issues that are both legal and otherwise in nature, including many that involve mental health issues, I thank you for your perspective and consideration on this issue. As the City Attorney for the City of Laurel, I don't ordinarily individually respond to these matters, because it's just not productive, nor is it often legal. So, I don't want you to take my lack of response on this to be a lack of understanding about the importance of what you are conveying. I also hope that you don't find any lack of CC response to be the same. I have advised CC that they simply cannot respond on these matters, right now, based upon the legal stage of things, and they simply need to hear your comment and process it, as they determine appropriate, and at the necessary time that a formal annexation/zoning matter is in front of them.

But, your words struck me deeply tonight, and I want you to know that. It was a long and hard meeting tonight, and it was hard for both constituents, our public, and our City Staff. But, it was incredibly important, because this is exactly how City governance is intended to work.

Thank you for your public feedback, and it will be read into the record the next meeting. Please know that you can appear at any upcoming meetings and speak in person. I personally appreciate you. I appreciate your Clinical Work. I appreciate the work that your Husband provides to our Volunteer Fire Department. I hope that you know that you are seen, we hear you, and I have full faith and confidence that our City Council, who are wise and informed individuals, will evaluate all matters that are presented to them in an informed manner with the full record that is presented to them.

Best Regards,



Michele L. Braukmann
Civil City Attorney
City of Laurel
Cell Phone: 406.671.4333
civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov

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From: Katlyn Gotschall <katlyngotschall@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 9:50 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; Kurt Markegard <kmarkegard@laurel.mt.gov>; Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: 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 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4B <ward4b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3B <ward3b@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Community Impact and Professional Concern Regarding Proposed Forensic Mental Health Facility

Dear Mayor and Members of the Laurel City Council,

My name is Katlyn Gotschall, and I am a resident of Laurel, Montana.

I am writing this letter following the City Council meeting held this evening (1-27-2026) to formally share my concerns, perspective, and professional opinion regarding the proposed annexation of a forensic mental health facility into the City of Laurel.

When I met my husband, I knew Laurel would become our forever home. We have built our life here with intention and commitment, purchasing our home, raising our child, establishing our careers, and investing deeply in this community and its people.

I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. While this facility is sometimes framed as an opportunity for mental health employment, the reality is that forensic state facilities primarily employ psychiatrists, psychologists, correctional staff, and nursing professionals. Roles for counselors are limited and highly custodial in nature, and they are rarely filled by local outpatient clinicians. This facility would not meaningfully strengthen Laurel's mental health workforce, increase access to care, or support community based therapy services.

My clinical work centers around trauma, safety, and trust. What I have observed through this process is

that the City has unintentionally activated a collective trauma response within the community. Fight, flight, freeze, and fawn are predictable reactions when people feel unsafe or excluded from decision making. Laurel is responding with fight.

When questions are asked with urgency and emotion, it is not hostility. It is fear. Fear emerges when trust has been disrupted. Many residents feel blindsided and unheard. Rather than prioritizing sustainable growth such as affordable housing for healthcare professionals, investment in local services, and workforce retention, the City is considering annexing a state run forensic facility that offers little direct benefit to Laurel while introducing long term risk.

Once annexed, the City of Laurel would assume ongoing responsibility for municipal services tied to this facility. This includes emergency response, fire protection, medical coordination, infrastructure support, and mutual aid response. These responsibilities carry staffing, training, liability, and financial implications that remain even if state priorities or funding structures change.

Community members are not passive observers or social media acquaintances. We are residents who have entrusted our elected officials with transparency, accountability, and honest communication. When information is shared unevenly or appears selectively endorsed through informal platforms, it further erodes trust and deepens community concern.

As the spouse of a volunteer firefighter, my concerns deepen further. My home is structured around other people's worst days. I fear that our already stretched first responders may be expected to manage incidents involving a forensic population without specialized, ongoing, and fully funded training. Forensic psychiatric response differs significantly from standard crisis intervention. Without guaranteed preparation and resources, local responders are placed at risk alongside the community they serve.

I also feel anxiety knowing my husband may be asked to give more time, energy, and emotional labor to support a decision that does not clearly support him or his fellow responders in return. I feel shock that those entrusted with safeguarding this community would consider introducing a high acuity facility without a clearly defined and publicly presented plan for emergency readiness, responder protection, and long term sustainability.

Montana already faces critical shortages in healthcare and emergency personnel. Adding a high demand facility without parallel investment in workforce retention increases burnout risk, turnover, and strain on systems that are already operating at capacity.

As a mother, I am left asking how we teach our children to trust leadership when transparency feels absent. The individuals housed in a forensic mental health prison are not there voluntarily, nor are they stabilized for community integration. As a parent, I cannot support a decision that compromises my child's sense of safety.

For clarity:

A forensic mental health hospital is a secure psychiatric facility that evaluates and treats individuals involved in the criminal justice system, often those deemed incompetent to stand trial or not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect. These facilities operate with correctional level security and house individuals who have committed serious offenses.

Trust is built through consistency, transparency, and mutual respect.

Safety is the reasonable assurance that individuals and communities are protected from harm and that adequate systems are in place to respond effectively when risk arises.

Communication is the clear, timely, and honest exchange of information that allows informed decision making.

To date, there has been no publicly presented community benefit agreement outlining guaranteed funding, staffing ratios, emergency response support, infrastructure investment, or long term oversight mechanisms that would directly benefit Laurel residents.

You have already heard concerns regarding the lack of economic benefit, tax revenue, or expanded services this facility would bring. Other communities have expressed willingness to accept this facility where infrastructure and resources may better support it. This proposal is not comparable to the Billings Clinic Psychiatric Center, which stabilizes individuals in crisis. It is not Warm Springs. It is not Passages. This is a prison for mentally ill offenders.

Opposition to this annexation is not opposition to mental health treatment. It is opposition to placing a secure forensic facility in a community without demonstrated benefit, adequate preparation, or transparent collaboration.

Tonight, you have heard from many voices. This letter adds the perspective of a mental health professional, a first responder's spouse, a mother, and a committed community member.

I respectfully urge you not to annex this facility into Laurel.

Sincerely,
Katlyn Gotschall, MS, LCPC
Resident of Laurel, Montana
406-697-9487

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:15 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Community Impact and Professional Concern Regarding Proposed Forensic Mental Health Facility

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Katlyn Gotschall <katlyngotschall@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 9:50 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; Kurt Markegard <kmarkegard@laurel.mt.gov>; Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: 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 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4B <ward4b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3B <ward3b@laurel.mt.gov>
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When questions are asked with urgency and emotion, it is not hostility. It is fear. Fear emerges when trust has been disrupted. Many residents feel blindsided and unheard. Rather than prioritizing sustainable growth such as affordable housing for healthcare professionals, investment in local services, and workforce retention, the City is considering annexing a state run forensic facility that offers little direct benefit to Laurel while introducing long term risk.

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I respectfully urge you not to annex this facility into Laurel.

Sincerely,
Katlyn Gotschall, MS, LCPC
Resident of Laurel, Montana
406-697-9487

Brittney Harakal



Attachments:

City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:18 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Letter of Gratitude from NAMI Montana
Matt Kuntz Letter to Laurel City Council 30JAN26.pdf

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Matt Kuntz <matt@namimt.org>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 12:37 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.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>
Subject: Letter of Gratitude from NAMI Montana

Dear Laurel City Council,
Please accept the attached letter of appreciation from NAMI Montana for your support for the new forensic mental health facility. Hopefully, it provides some helpful information about the genesis of this effort at the Legislature and how some of the challenges of Yellowstone County were tied to it from the beginning.

NAMI Montana has also been involved with the creation of the Galen facility in 2015. Hopefully some of the things that we've learned over the last ten years with that facility will be helpful as well.

Thank you,
Matt

--
Matt Kuntz JD, MHA
Executive Director
NAMI Montana

NAMI Montana has a resource guide on our website for every county in Montana. Please let us know if anything needs to be updated for your county. <https://namimt.org/montana-county-mental-health-resource-guides/>

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 4A
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 3:40 PM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: FW: Letter of Gratitude from NAMI Montana
Attachments: Matt Kuntz Letter to Laurel City Council 30JAN26.pdf

From: Matt Kuntz <matt@namimt.org>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 12:37 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.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>
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Matt

--
Matt Kuntz JD, MHA
Executive Director
NAMI Montana

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Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1B
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 12:44 PM
To: Civil Attorney
Cc: Kurt Markegard; Brittney Harakal
Subject: Fw: Letter of Gratitude from NAMI Montana
Attachments: Matt Kuntz Letter to Laurel City Council 30JAN26.pdf

From: Matt Kuntz <matt@namimt.org>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 12:36 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.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>
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Thank you,
Matt

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Matt Kuntz JD, MHA
Executive Director
NAMI Montana

NAMI Montana has a resource guide on our website for every county in Montana. Please let us know if anything needs to be updated for your county. <https://namimt.org/montana-county-mental-health-resource-guides/>

NAMI Montana

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Laurel City Council
115 West 1st Street
Laurel, MT 59044

January 30, 2026

Subject: New Forensic Mental Health Facility

Dear Laurel City Council,

NAMI Montana works to improve the lives of Montanans with mental health conditions and their families through support, education, and advocacy. On behalf of NAMI Montana, I want to thank you for your support in building a forensic facility in your community.

As part of our work for Montana families, NAMI Montana tries to improve the interface between mental health conditions and the criminal justice system. It is hard, slow work with progress measured over the course of years.

In 2015, we supported building the forensic facility in Galen. This was in response to the state locking offenders with severe mental health conditions in solitary confinement in Montana State Prison because they couldn't manage their medication needs and the behaviors related to their untreated mental health conditions. It was horrible for everyone involved. There was also a massive lawsuit with the ACLU and Disability Rights Montana. The forensic facility at Galen that came out of that nightmare has been a success for the State of Montana, people served by Galen, and the community that supports it.

NAMI Montana and our allies in the Legislature worked to improve the laws around mental health and the criminal justice system in the last decade. I think we have made some slow progress in that, but Montana's population of people needing forensic mental health services continues to grow. Ten years ago, the issue of a dangerous lack of forensic capacity showed up in the Montana State Prison. This time the issue is starkest in county jails across Montana.

The reality of the dangerous lack of forensic capacity in Montana came to a head for us and members of the Montana Legislature during the hearing on Representative James Reavis's bill to make it possible for mental health evaluations to be offered in jails and prisons. This bill was well thought out, but desperate move to try to do something to address the massive backlog of people in jail in need of psychological evaluations. The testimony from

NAMI Montana
P.O. Box 1021
Helena, MT 59624

jail staff, law enforcement, and county attorneys was incredibly powerful. The message was that Montana's county jails were overwhelmed with people with complex mental health needs who are waiting for some kind of forensic services.

The testimony was excruciating. Jail staff desperately trying to serve prisoners that were well outside their facility's ability to safely serve. County Attorney searching for answers to move cases forward that were bogged down with either evaluations or treatment requirements to ensure they met their burden for "Fitness to Proceed." Everyone knowing that it is just a matter of time before the state and the counties are hit with a massive lawsuit.

No testimony was more powerful than those given by people in the legal system in Yellowstone County. Based upon the magnitude of the issue in Yellowstone County alone, it was clear that the State of Montana needed a new forensic facility. It was also clear that it needed to be able to easily serve Yellowstone County and the counties in Eastern Montana.

While there were a few turns or two in the hallways of the Capital, that was the genesis of the bill that passed the Legislature. NAMI Montana is grateful to the City of Laurel for hosting this facility that is critical to Montana and specifically Yellowstone County.

While I understand that there are always concerns about the placement of public health and justice facilities, NAMI Montana expects that this facility will operate similarly to the successful forensic unit at Galen. The 32-bed patient population will be a relatively small facility, in a well-designed building, with good staffing ratios. Most of the patient stays will be a relatively short duration - for either psychological evaluations or restoration of competency. Patients in need of long-term stays will eventually be transitioned to the group homes on the Montana State Hospital campus in Warm Springs.

As described by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, most of the jobs in this facility will be for nursing staff and psychiatric assistants. These positions will offer great opportunities for the citizens of Laurel and also help bring in additional healthcare practitioners to Laurel who begin by working at the facility and then later transition to healthcare roles in the community.

NAMI Montana
P.O. Box 1021
Helena, MT 59624

Thank you for supporting this facility that is so essential for Montana families that have been impacted by mental health conditions and the criminal justice system. We really appreciate any help you can provide in moving it forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Kuntz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matt" and last name "Kuntz" clearly distinguishable.

Matthew Kuntz JD, MHA
Executive Director

NAMI Montana
matt@namimt.org
(406) 443-7871

NAMI Montana
P.O. Box 1021
Helena, MT 59624

1/29/2026

RE: Formal Opposition to Annexation and Development of the Forensic Mental Health Facility

To the Members of the Laurel City Council,

I am writing to you today not just as a neighbor to the proposed site, but as a taxpayer who is deeply concerned by the lack of transparency and the disregard for public safety inherent in the State's plan to build a 32-bed Forensic Mental Health Facility in our backyard.

I urge this Council to formally oppose the placement of this facility and to commit to denying any future petition for annexation of the land in question.

Opposition is based on three undeniable facts:

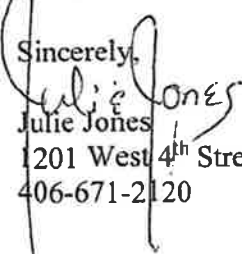
1. The Violation of the "Safe Zone" for our Children The proposed site is 451 yards from West Elementary School. This is not a standard medical clinic; it is a forensic facility housing individuals involved in the criminal justice system. The Laurel School District has already issued a public statement opposing this location. I ask you: if the school district responsible for our children's safety says this is a bad idea, why would the City Council even consider facilitating it?

2. Administrative Overreach and Lack of Transparency It is alarming that while the Council was reportedly kept in the dark, the City Planning Director and Mayor were actively courting this project. In a November letter, the Planning Director admitted the City had no suitable land, yet he personally steered the State toward this specific plot because the infrastructure was "remarkably successful" for their needs. This project was fast-tracked behind closed doors, bypassing the public's right to be heard before a buy-sell agreement was ever signed.

3. The Council Holds the Power of Annexation the State of Montana cannot operate this facility without the City of Laurel's water and sewer. Per MCA 7-2-44 and Resolution R08-22, the City Council has the ultimate authority to grant or deny annexation. The State may own the land, but they do not own our community's future. You are the final line of defense for the residents of Laurel.

Annexing this land would be a choice to prioritize state infrastructure convenience over the expressed safety concerns of the Laurel Schools and the residents you represent.

I respectfully request that the Council adds a formal discussion of this facility to the next agenda and goes on the record in support of our schools and neighborhoods by opposing this location.

Sincerely,

Julie Jones
1201 West 4th Street
406-671-2120

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:18 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Urgent Safety Concerns Regarding Proposed Mental Health Facility Near West Elementary

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Jeanette Miner <minerfamilynov10@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 9:25 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Urgent Safety Concerns Regarding Proposed Mental Health Facility Near West Elementary

Dear Mayor and Members of the Laurel City Council, My name is Jeanette Miner, and I am a resident of Laurel, Montana and a parent of three children currently enrolled in the Laurel School District, including one child attending West Elementary. I am writing to formally and strongly express my opposition to the proposed mental health hospital being built near West Elementary and surrounding residential neighborhoods. The placement of a secured mental health facility near a school where young children attend daily is a serious safety concern. Schools should be areas of protection, stability, and peace not locations where families are left worrying about potential risks or emergency situations outside their children's classrooms. This decision directly affects the safety of students, school staff, and the entire Laurel community. Parents should not have to question whether their children are safe at school due to the location of a nearby institutional facility. We already ask our children to live with lockdown drills and constant safety awareness. Adding this facility only increases fear, anxiety, and risk. Those who approve this project must understand the responsibility that comes with such a decision. If incidents occur that impact our schools, neighborhoods, or community, the accountability lies with those who chose to move forward despite clear public concern. Families should not be placed in a position where they feel forced to sell their homes in order to protect their children. We should not have to leave the community we love because of a decision that prioritizes facility placement over resident safety. This hospital, in this location, will not bring peace or security to our neighborhoods. Instead, it will create long term concern, increased emergency response activity, and lasting worry for parents and residents. While mental health services are important, their placement must be appropriate and must not compromise school safety or community well being. I respectfully and earnestly pray that you reconsider this decision. Please protect the residents of Laurel. Please protect our children. Our schools should remain places of learning, not areas of fear or uncertainty.

I strongly urge the City Council to pause and reevaluate the location of this facility and to place the safety of our children and families first!!!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeanette Miner

Laurel, Montana

3:53

100



+1 (406) 403-2725

Great Falls, MT



Transcript

Uh, this message is for Brent. Um, city council award number 2 councilman. Um, College concerning the state forensics hospital, et cetera, mental hospital that is coming to coming to Laurel, possibly coming to Laurel. I guess my only comment is, is if it does get to a scenario where the city council has an opportunity to vote upon whether or not, For example, a key thing is the annex, you know, the property into the into the city itself. Um, would really, as a councilman, um, I'm just kind of a reminder, I assume that you probably, you know, are in touch with all of your constituents, the people that voted you in, um, that you recontact them and get a good cross section of what they, what they believe, just kind of like when you're out campaigning, asking for their, asking for their support. Uh, now it's asking for their true honest opinion, and, you know, voting on this that decision. Thank



Calls



Contacts



Keypad



3:54



1 of 1



100



coun

+1 (406) 403-2725

Great Falls, MT



Uh, this message is for Brent. Um, councilman. Um, College concerning the state forensics hospital, et cetera, mental hospital that is coming to coming to Laurel, possibly coming to Laurel. I guess my only comment is, is if it does get to a scenario where the city council has an opportunity to vote upon whether or not, For example, a key thing is the annex, you know, the property into the into the city itself. Um, would really, as a councilman, um, I'm just kind of a reminder, I assume that you probably, you know, are in touch with all of your constituents, the people that voted you in, um, that you recontact them and get a good cross section of what they, what they believe, just kind of like when you're out campaigning, asking for their, asking for their support. Uh, now it's asking for their true honest opinion, and, you know, voting, voting that direction. Thank you very much and have a great day. Bye.



Call



Contacts



Keypad



Brittney Harakal

From: Laurel MT <laurel-mt@municodeweb.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 9:26 AM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: Matt & Elizabeth Gilg

Submitted on Tuesday, February 3, 2026 - 9:26am

Submitted by anonymous user: 65.124.101.42

Submitted values are:

Name Matt & Elizabeth Gilg

Address 1200 Cedar Crest Circle

Public Comment The state's decision to place a 32-bed forensic mental health facility 459 yards from West Elementary raises serious concerns that this council needs to address. Safety. West Elementary experienced a student safety incident this year driven in part by funding and resource gaps. The school has taken this seriously and is working to improve—but those improvements require resources Laurel simply doesn't have. The Laurel School Board opposes this facility. Adding a forensic facility housing justice-involved individuals within 459 yards compounds risk at a school actively working to close safety gaps. Extraction without compensation. This facility follows a pattern this community knows well. NorthWestern Energy built a methane plant here without proper zoning approval—asking forgiveness rather than permission—while providing \$1.9M in tax revenue that does little to offset the impacts on our infrastructure and services. CHS Refinery has repeatedly protested their taxes, costing Laurel Public Schools as much as \$13 million over four years while schools borrowed against escrowed funds just to operate. Now the state places a forensic facility just outside city limits—zero tax revenue to Laurel, all of the risk. Transparency. Miller Trois LLC, connected to Billings attorney Malcolm Goodrich, has held the selected 114-acre property since 2008. Laurel officials said no suitable city land existed, yet the state selected this specific parcel outside city limits. Local officials learned of the plans from media, not the state. Our newly appointed CAO Kurt Markegard was Planning Director during the NorthWestern zoning controversy—the same pattern of opacity is repeating. If Mr. Markegard has nothing to hide, voluntary release of his past 7 years of tax documentation and business interests would go a long way toward rebuilding public trust. Liability. The state is aware of our school's safety challenges, aware of the facility's proximity, and aware of community opposition. Should any incident occur, this documented awareness establishes foreseeable risk. This council has a responsibility to Laurel's residents and our children. I urge you to formally oppose this facility location and demand full transparency from the state regarding the property selection process.

Email gilgm12@gmail.com

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://cityoflaurelmontana.com/node/16092/submission/3255>

Brittney Harakal

From: Ward 1B
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 12:13 PM
To: Brittney Harakal
Cc: Civil Attorney; Kurt Markegard
Subject: Fw: Vote NO on Annexation - Forensic Mental Health Facility

From: Matt <gilgm12@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 11:16 AM
To: Ward 1B <ward1b@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Vote NO on Annexation - Forensic Mental Health Facility

Dear Tom Canape,

I am a resident of Laurel at 1200 Cedar Crest Circle, and I am writing to urge you to vote NO on the proposed annexation for the forensic mental health facility.

This 32-bed facility would house justice-system involved individuals just 459 yards from West Elementary School. Our community deserves transparency about how this location was selected and what security measures will protect our children and neighborhoods.

Key concerns:

- No tax revenue to Laurel despite increased burden on emergency services
- Proximity to schools and residential areas
- Lack of public input in the decision-making process
- Inadequate information about security and safety protocols

The state cannot proceed without City Council approval of annexation. I urge you to vote NO and demand full transparency from city leadership about this process.

Sincerely,
Matt Gilg
1200 Cedar Crest Circle

--

Matt Gilg
mattgilg.dev
Cell: 860.771.3511

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:12 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Psychiatric prison

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Amber Zahn <blondie_locks09@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 21, 2026 11:37 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Re: Psychiatric prison

Hello sir, I write to you with a heavy heart but as a supporter of you. I live quite literally next door to the site in Laurel, Mt of the psychiatric prison. I have to tell you, there has been literally zero transparency about this. So many people have been blind sided by this facility and what it really is. And now it's being built quite literally in my backyard where I raise my babies. This is absolutely terrifying. It's completely taking away any sense of security we have worked so hard to build. Now there is a plan to house criminally insane people where I raise my kids. Sir, it is literally in my back yard. It's less than five blocks away from where they go to school. Everything we have worked so hard to secure for them is being ripped away. Please sir, see it from my prospective, a terrified mother who has done everything to ensure the safety of my children, who has done everything to raise them in a safe home, this is not ok. Please do not let them build this facility here.

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

On Wed, Jan 21, 2026 at 1:42 PM, Amber Zahn
<blondie_locks09@yahoo.com> wrote:

The property circled in blue is where we live. What would you do if it were you? How would you feel? We have two small children here. Their school is approximately four blocks away. This is absolutely terrifying.

1:35 [S] [d] [●] [▶] [.]

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on) fencing surroundin
intain safety for the co



On Wed, Jan 21, 2026 at 1:31 PM, Amber Zahn
<blondie_locks09@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Mayor,

My name is Amber Zahn.

This is the view from my living room. The living room in the house where I raise my kids. Approximately four blocks east of here is their elementary school. Their dad was raised here. His mother was raised here. But the view that I show you in these pictures is a farmers field. The same farmers field in process of a buy/sell agreement for a psychiatric prison. I do not oppose the prison, what I oppose is the location. Developing a prison here will drive down our property values. Our neighbor's property values. Even with all of the security, it puts our family at risk. It puts the kids in the school at risk. It puts Laurel at risk. We don't even have the infrastructure to sustain such a facility. We don't have the emergency services. This was a poorly thought out plan only reaching for gain at the cost of the residents. We cannot afford to lose the value we have in our home, both monetary and memory.







Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:14 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Laurel Facility Plan Follow Up

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2026 8:16 AM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Re: Laurel Facility Plan Follow Up

Good morning,

I am writing again to follow up on my previous email regarding the proposed facility in Laurel. To date, I have not received a response, which is deeply concerning given the scale and impact of this project and the level of opposition and confusion within our community. I am concerned and bothered that I have yet to hear back from any part of the state government involved in this matter.

As I outlined previously, after speaking with Lee Deming, Vince Ricci, and our County Commissioners, it appears that no local representatives were consulted or gave approval for this plan. What role did you and Kurt Markeegard play in bringing this to Laurel? You have been effusive, at best, when it comes to answering this question, and as your constituent, it is deeply troubling.

There are also serious concerns about the proposed site itself. The location is in a residential area, adjacent to a school, youth softball fields, a golf course, and a public library. It is also within a mile of the CHS refinery. Given current land values, this raises legitimate questions about whether the state may be overpaying for property that appears poorly suited for this purpose.

In addition, I am requesting clarification regarding the site's proximity to nearby oil refineries or related industrial facilities. Specifically, I would appreciate information on:

- Whether the proximity to schools, an oil refinery, and public facilities was considered during site selection.
- Why did you not loop Rep. Deming and Sen. Ricci into the decision-making process on this plan? Why not listen to our County Commissioners?
- Do you have an evacuation plan in place if something were to happen at the refinery? How will you safely remove 32 criminally insane people from the facility without posing a danger to the community? Have you even spoken to CHS about this?

- Have you been in contact with our school board or superintendent about the placement so close to the school? If not, why? Wouldn't protecting our children be the primary question to be asked here?
- Whether any environmental, air quality, or health impact assessments have been conducted in relation to this site. Have you studied water tables? Have you reviewed safety concerns related to the proximity of the refinery? Have you done traffic studies?
- Have you done tax studies? Exactly how many dollars will this pull from our already struggling schools? What will happen to the real estate values in the area?
- Have you done economic studies? What will this do to expansion in our city? We are limited geographically on where we, as a town, can expand- residentially or commercially. Have you researched whether this will impact future expansion?

Most troubling is the apparent breakdown of the local governmental process. The majority of residents oppose this plan, and our city does not have the tax base to absorb the infrastructure demands this facility would create. Backdoor deals have been made without consulting the Laurel community. We deserve answers.

I am again requesting clarification on your role in this decision, how Laurel was selected over other willing communities, and—most importantly—how the voices of residents and elected officials are intended to be heard. The continued lack of response only reinforces the perception that this process has excluded the community most directly affected.

I respectfully request a response addressing these concerns.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Samantha Mayes

On Fri, Jan 23, 2026 at 9:45 AM Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com> wrote:

Mayor Waggoner,

I am writing to follow up on my previous correspondence regarding the proposed state facility in Laurel. I have not yet received a response, and given the magnitude of this proposal and the level of public concern, I feel it is important to seek clarity directly from you as our city's chief elected official.

As I previously outlined, discussions with Lee Deming, Vince Ricci, and our County Commissioners indicate that this plan moved forward without consultation or approval from local representatives. City Council members have stated publicly that they were not briefed, that no formal discussion occurred, and that the infrastructure impacts on Laurel were not adequately studied. This is particularly troubling given that other communities—Hardin, Miles City, and Columbus—have offered land and services for this facility.

I am also requesting clarification on your personal support for this project. Publicly, the majority of Laurel residents and our elected representatives have expressed opposition (including Rep. Deming),

citing infrastructure limitations, tax base concerns, and the proposed site's proximity to a school, youth sports facilities, a golf course, and a public library. Given these concerns, I would like to understand what factors led you to support this plan and how you believe it serves the best interests of Laurel. Do you support this plan? What was your role in this project? Has your office completed traffic studies? Environmental impact surveys? Neighborhood compatibility studies? What research was done to choose this spot, when in Laurel, right now, there are plenty of other plots of land available for sale that would be much more suitable?

Additionally, I am concerned by your activity on social media, specifically your "likes" on Facebook comments that are critical of residents and local officials who oppose this project. These actions give the impression that public concern is being dismissed rather than engaged with, and that opposition is being characterized negatively rather than treated as a legitimate part of civic discourse. I would appreciate clarification on how you view the role of public input in this process.

At this point, there is a strong perception among residents that decisions are being made without transparency and without respect for the local governmental structure. As mayor, your role in ensuring open communication and accountability is critical.

I respectfully request a response addressing your support for this plan, the process by which Laurel was selected, and how residents' voices will be meaningfully considered moving forward.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Brittney Harakal

From: Civil Attorney
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 4:50 PM
To: Kurt Markegard; Kelly Strecker; Brittney Harakal; City Mayor
Subject: FW: Public Records Request



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From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 4:19 PM
To: Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov>; Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Re: Public Records Request

Good afternoon-

Since the CAO is out sick I want to reiterate the importance of preserving communications. In addition, I wanted to clarify the request.

All email, and texts between any of the combination Dave Waggoner, the BOI, Dan Villa, Charlie Bererton, and Kurt Markegard. From 5/1/25-present

All social media posts, messages and texts between Dave Waggoner and Kurt Markegard regarding the mental health facility from 6/1/25-present

I would also like to request phone call logs and text messages between Dave Waggoner and Kurt Markegard between 6/25/25 and 1/27/25. If you could please

Please be advised that as of this request, deletion or editing of comments and messages would be spoliation of communication protected by MCA 2-2-1003.

On Thu, Jan 29, 2026 at 11:02 AM Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

Good morning,

I have passed your information along.



Kelly Strecker

Clerk/Treasurer

City of Laurel, Montana

(406) 628-7431 extension 5100

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 6:39 AM

To: Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov>

Subject: Re: Public Records Request

Good Morning!

I would like this to be added to the public records request- any social media messages or comments in connection with the facility proposal post by Dave Waggoner and Kurt Markegard or between Dave

Waggoner and Kurt Markegard. Please be advised that as of this request, deletion or editing of comments and messages would be spoliation of communication protected by MCA 2-2-1003.

Thank you,

Samantha

Please confirm receipt of this email.

On Wed, Jan 28, 2026 at 12:07 PM Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

Good afternoon,

I will pass this information along.



Kelly Strecker

Clerk/Treasurer

City of Laurel, Montana

(406) 628-7431 extension 5100

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 10:36 AM

To: Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov>

Subject: Re: Public Records Request

Good Morning!

I would like to amend that public records request. I would like to remove the requests for the emails, as I believe those have already been made public. I would also like to request phone call logs and text messages between Dave Waggoner and Kurt Markegard between 6/25/25 and 1/27/25. If you could please pass this on to the appropriate personnel I would appreciate it.

On Tue, Jan 27, 2026 at 10:07 AM Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

Hello,

I do not have access to get you the information you have requested. I have forwarded your request to the appropriate personnel. I hope you hear something soon.



Kelly Strecker

Clerk/Treasurer

City of Laurel, Montana

(406) 628-7431 extension 5100

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 9:42 AM

To: Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov>

Subject: Re: Public Records Request

Good Morning- not to bother you again but with the time crunch of the speed of all of this, do you have a time frame on when that record request will be reviewed? The state generally gives a response within 2 business days.

On Mon, Jan 26, 2026 at 8:37 AM Kelly Strecker <kstrecker@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

Good morning,

I have forwarded your message to the appropriate personal.

Thanks



Kelly Strecker

Clerk/Treasurer

City of Laurel, Montana

(406) 628-7431 extension 5100

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, January 26, 2026 8:26 AM

To: City Clerk <cityclerk@laurel.mt.gov>; Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>

Subject: Re: Public Records Request

Good Morning!

I would like to confirm receipt of this public records request.

Thank you!

Samantha Mayes

On Fri, Jan 23, 2026 at 1:43 PM Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com> wrote:

I am writing in accordance with MCA 2-2-1003 to request all copies of any emails and communications between Mayor Dave Waggoner, City Administrator Kurt Markegard, the city council, or Michelle Baukman regarding the planning and proposal of the new mental health inpatient facility in Laurel. Including proposals, emails, discussions with the state, and memos.

Thank you,

Samantha Mayes

Laurel Resident

Brittney Harakal



City Mayor
Monday, February 2, 2026 1:13 PM
Brittney Harakal
FW: Laurel Facility Plan Follow Up

Dave Waggoner
Mayor
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-8456 extension 5501

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 23, 2026 1:46 PM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Re: Laurel Facility Plan Follow Up

Thank you for the statement. However, it failed to answer any of my questions. I am requesting clarification on your personal support for this project. Publicly, the majority of Laurel residents and our elected representatives have expressed opposition (including Rep. Deming), citing infrastructure limitations, tax base concerns, and the proposed site's proximity to a school, youth sports facilities, a golf course, and a public library. Given these concerns, I would like to understand what factors led you to support this plan and how you believe it serves the best interests of Laurel. Do you support this plan? **What was your involvement in this decision?** What was your role in this project? Has your office completed traffic studies? Environmental impact surveys? Neighborhood compatibility studies? What research was done to choose this spot, when in Laurel, right now, there are plenty of other plots of land available for sale that would be much more suitable?

Additionally, I am concerned by your activity on social media, specifically your "likes" on Facebook comments that are critical of residents and local officials who oppose this project. These actions give the impression that public concern is being dismissed rather than engaged with, and that opposition is being characterized negatively rather than treated as a legitimate part of civic discourse. **I would appreciate clarification on how you view the role of public input in this process.**

At this point, there is a strong perception among residents that decisions are being made without transparency and without respect for the local governmental structure. As mayor, your role in ensuring open communication and accountability is critical.

I respectfully request a response addressing your support for this plan, the process by which Laurel was selected, and how residents' voices will be meaningfully considered moving forward.

On Fri, Jan 23, 2026 at 9:48 AM City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

A statement is being prepared

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 23, 2026 9:45:27 AM
To: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Laurel Facility Plan Follow Up

Mayor Waggoner,

I am writing to follow up on my previous correspondence regarding the proposed state facility in Laurel. I have not yet received a response, and given the magnitude of this proposal and the level of public concern, I feel it is important to seek clarity directly from you as our city's chief elected official.

As I previously outlined, discussions with Lee Deming, Vince Ricci, and our County Commissioners indicate that this plan moved forward without consultation or approval from local representatives. City Council members have stated publicly that they were not briefed, that no formal discussion occurred, and that the infrastructure impacts on Laurel were not adequately studied. This is particularly troubling given that other communities—Hardin, Miles City, and Columbus—have offered land and services for this facility.

I am also requesting clarification on your personal support for this project. Publicly, the majority of Laurel residents and our elected representatives have expressed opposition (including Rep. Deming), citing infrastructure limitations, tax base concerns, and the proposed site's proximity to a school, youth sports facilities, a golf course, and a public library. Given these concerns, I would like to understand what factors led you to support this plan and how you believe it serves the best interests of Laurel. Do you support this plan? What was your role in this project? Has your office completed traffic studies? Environmental impact surveys? Neighborhood compatibility studies? What research was done to choose this spot, when in Laurel, right now, there are plenty of other plots of land available for sale that would be much more suitable?

Additionally, I am concerned by your activity on social media, specifically your "likes" on Facebook comments that are critical of residents and local officials who oppose this project. These actions give the impression that public concern is being dismissed rather than engaged with, and that opposition is being characterized negatively rather than treated as a legitimate part of civic discourse. I would appreciate clarification on how you view the role of public input in this process.

At this point, there is a strong perception among residents that decisions are being made without transparency and without respect for the local governmental structure. As mayor, your role in ensuring open communication and accountability is critical.

I respectfully request a response addressing your support for this plan, the process by which Laurel was selected, and how residents' voices will be meaningfully considered moving forward.

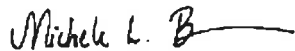
Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Brittney Harakal

From: Civil Attorney
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 2:13 AM
To: Brittney Harakal
Subject: FW: City administrator emails

Best Regards,



Michele L. Braukmann
Civil City Attorney
City of Laurel
Cell Phone: 406.671.4333
civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov

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From: Ward 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 5:42 PM
To: Civil Attorney <civilattorney@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: FW: City administrator emails

I just received this (as did other council members). I can't quite follow what she means so I'm not sure how this would be disclosed.

From: Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 3:16 PM
To: Ward 2B <ward2b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 4A <ward4a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 1A <ward1a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 1B <ward1b@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 2A <ward2a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3A <ward3a@laurel.mt.gov>; Ward 3B <ward3b@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: City administrator emails

On Tue, Jan 27, 2026 at 3:15 PM Samantha Mayes <brown.samantham@gmail.com> wrote:

Good afternoon-

I thought you all might find this public record email helpful in understanding what happened with the land proposal. Here you gave the city administrator, on behalf of land, offering up the woods land to the state. Despite claiming to the press that he had no idea why the state was looking at Laurel during the December 4th meeting.

Tuesday, Chief Administrative Officer Kurt Markegard said the city learned of the decision only after the public announcement was made.

"The state did not send me information on it. I had to go seek it once it went to the press," Markegard said during the meeting.