



Now is The Time to Get Involved!

WRITTEN BY
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A new year is beginning and it's a great time to get involved and learn how your local government works for you. Learn how your tax dollars are being allocated and the thinking behind these allocations.

My initial experience with our local government was a Cascade County Special Commission Meeting held on Friday March 31, 2023. A friend of mine had mentioned this meeting to me and thought I might be interested. We usually got together every month and somehow the topic of politics always came up. I was becoming intrigued with the politics in Cascade County. Therefore, I decided to attend this meeting. The meeting was held at Expo Park and there was a large crowd of people in attendance. The meeting topic was 'Election Process', a presentation by newly elected Clerk & Recorder Sandra Merchant. I have to say I was truly disturbed by some of the Public Comments made and the unprofessional behavior exhibited by some of the attendees. After careful consideration I felt compelled to Email a letter to the 3 Cascade County Commissioners to share my concerns with the disrespect I witnessed. This experience motivated me to get involved and educate myself. I encourage my family, friends and neighbors to also get involved. I realize everyone has a busy schedule so whatever amount of time you can dedicate to observing how your local government operates will be beneficial and eye opening. I expect to see professionalism, civility and transparency at meetings. If that is not what I am experiencing I know I have the option to use my polite voice and document with an Email to share my concerns and dissatisfaction. Remaining silent will not achieve an acceptable outcome.

To get involved, there are several opportunities to attend a variety of meetings and participate and educate yourself on the decisions being made here in Cascade County.

A few of these opportunities are listed below.

1. **Our State Legislators** meet in Helena in odd years. Educate yourself on who

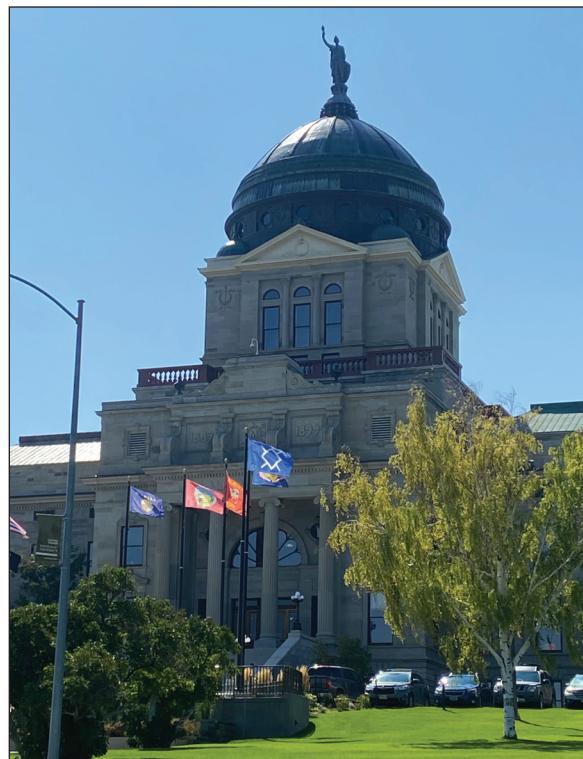


photo by Ginny Rogliano

your legislators are in the House and the Senate. The 2025 Montana 69th Legislature Session has started and it will be interesting to hear about the issues and what bills will be introduced and passed. Residents of Cascade County should contact their legislators either by telephone or Email and share their thoughts and input. Communicating with our state legislators provides them the knowledge of how we would like to be represented. You can find your legislator and the session calendar at www.leg.mt.gov. General questions can be addressed by calling 406-444-3064.

2. **The Cascade County Commission** has three elected Commissioners. The current Cascade County Commissioners are Commissioner Jim Larson, Joe Briggs and Eric Hinebauch. This Commission meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 9:30am. A Work Session is always held the Wednesday prior at 2 pm. Individuals can attend in person at 325 2nd Avenue North, Room 111 in Great Falls or access the meetings via Zoom. You can access the Cascade County website at cascadecountymt.gov. The agendas and minutes are available if you scroll to the

bottom of the page and click on **Agendas & Minutes**. That information will provide the topics that will be discussed at the meeting. There is always an opportunity for **Public Comment** at the end of each meeting.

3. **The Great Falls City Commission**

includes elected Mayor Cory Reeves and Commissioners Joe McKenney, Rick Tryon, Shannon Wilson and Susan Wolff. The City Commission meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. A Work Session at 5:30pm is held before the scheduled meeting. These meetings are held at the Commission Chambers, 2 Park Drive South, Gibson Room in Great Falls. These meetings can also be watched via Live Streaming Spectrum TV Channel 190. Recordings of any previous meetings are posted on the meetings page. There is an opportunity for **Public Comment** at the meeting or it can also be provided in writing by mail to: City Clerk, PO Box 5021, Great Falls, MT 59403 or by Email to: commission@greatfallsmt.net. You can access the Great Falls City website at greatfallsmt.net.

4. **Great Falls Public Schools Board Meetings**

meets the 2nd and 4th Monday at 5:30pm in the Aspen Room at the District Offices Building located at 1100 4th Street North in Great Falls. Educating our children is of utmost importance. The agendas are available on the website which can be accessed at gfps.k12.mt.us or info@gfps.k12.mt.us.

5. **Great Falls Public Library** Board of Trustees meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at 4:30pm at the Library. The Library is located at 301 2nd Avenue North in Great Falls. Information can be found by accessing the website at greatfallslibrary.org.

In closing, becoming involved with your local government provides an opportunity to educate yourself and use your voice. Situations will not change or improve without the public's input. Everyone is invited to come and participate. It's very rewarding. Now is a great time to get involved. Let's all work together Cascade County. I'll look forward to seeing you at a meeting very soon!

Cascade County Reference Information

Cascade County Commission: commission@cascadecountymt.gov
 325 2nd Avenue North
 Great Falls, Montana 59401
 Regular meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month 9:30am

Great Falls City Commission: commission@greatfallsmt.net
 2 Park Drive South
 Great Falls, Montana 59401
 Regular meetings on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month 7:00pm

Town of Belt: bch@3rivers.net or 406-277-3621
 Belt Town Hall
 70 Caster Street
 Belt, Montana 59412
 Town Council meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month 7:00pm

Town of Neihart: hjenloe@3rivers.net or 406-236-5505
 Community/Senior Center
 200 Main Street
 Neihart, Montana 59465
 Town Council meets the 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday of the month 7:00pm

Town of Cascade: 406-468-2808
 Wedsworth Hall
 9 Front Street North
 Cascade, Montana 59421
 Town Council meets the 2nd Thursday of the month 6:00pm

Montana State House and Senate Legislators: www.leg.mt.gov or leave a message for a Legislator at 406-444-4800