

Commissioners Shield Sheriff Slaughter’s Office by Stalling Cascade Policing Mediation Until After Primary

By Staff Writer

The Town of Cascade’s effort to resolve a deepening law enforcement crisis has hit a political wall after Cascade County Commissioners abruptly postponed a critical mediation session regarding the Sheriff’s Office contract. Originally scheduled for **April 1, 2026**, the meeting was intended to address a dispute that has left the town’s budget and local safety in a state of uncertainty. By pushing the negotiations into the summer months, officials have effectively shielded Sheriff Jesse Slaughter’s office from public scrutiny and potential embarrassment during the heat of his primary campaign.

The conflict began in April 2025, when the town received a proposed contract from the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office demanding a **29% increase** in the cost of law enforcement services. Compounding the fiscal strain, the Sheriff’s proposal included a clause explicitly stating that deputies would no longer enforce local town ordinances. This move would leave Cascade residents paying significantly more for a reduced level of service, stripped of enforcement for local rules regarding traffic, noise, animal control, and parking.

Following a series of failed negotiations and a public Town Hall in May 2025, local leaders sought relief through the legal system. The Town of Cascade officially invoked **House Bill 333**, a 2025 law specifically designed to create a formal mediation process when municipalities

and county law enforcement cannot reach an agreement. The law mandates that both sides negotiate in good faith to protect both the public budget and the integrity of local law enforcement.

However, the good-faith requirement of the law appears to have been sidelined by the Cascade County Commissioners. By delaying the April 1 session, the commission has ensured that the uncomfortable details of the Sheriff’s 29% hike and the refusal to enforce town ordinances will remain behind closed doors until well after the primary election is decided. This delay mirrors the classic “good old boy club” tactics long associated with institutional shielding in Montana politics, prioritizing political survival over the immediate needs of Cascade’s taxpayers.

“The town has made it clear it wants a contract that protects both the budget and the ability to enforce its own rules.”

Until the mediation is rescheduled for the summer, the residents of Cascade are left without a firm contract or a clear answer on who will handle local code violations. While both sides are legally required to eventually negotiate, the postponement ensures that Sheriff Slaughter avoids a public accounting of his leadership and the CCSO’s measurable institutional failures until the ballot boxes are closed. For now, the Town of Cascade remains in a holding pattern, waiting for a seat at the table that was promised by law but delayed by politics. 📌

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

There will be a mediation conference between the Town of Cascade and the Cascade County Commissioners on behalf of the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office’s proposed contract.

In April 2025, the Town of Cascade received a proposed contract with the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office. The Town of Cascade held a Town Hall meeting on May 23, 2025, to understand what our community wants and needs are for law enforcement in the upcoming year. On June 23, 2025, the town met with the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office to discuss the proposed contract. An agreement could not be reached.

The proposed contract requests a 29% cost increase and no enforcement of local ordinances.

The proposed contract has not been agreed upon; therefore, the Town of Cascade requested that the issue go to mediation under House Bill 333.

This non-quorum **public meeting** will be held on April 1, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. It will be held at Wedsworth Hall, 13 Front St. in Cascade.

The public is encouraged to attend and observe the meditation.