

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PONDERA COUNTY, MONTANA
Held in June 2026**

The Board of Pondera County Commissioners met daily in informal session and in scheduled meetings on June 3, 10, 17, and 24, 2026.

JUNE 3, 2026 REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSION:
CANCELLED DUE TO COMMISSIONERS BEING AT DISTRICT MACO
MEETINGS IN CHESTER, MONTANA

JUNE 4, 2026 COUNTY COMPENSATION BOARD PUBLIC HEARING:
Present: Commissioner Jim Morren, Commissioner Thomas Kuka, Commissioner Zane Drishinski, Clerk & Recorder Kody Farkell, Deputy Clerk & Recorder Tammy Bartsch, County Attorney Shari Lennon, & Compensation Board members Chris Torgerson and Dana Davis, Public - Angela Otero

Commissioner Morren called the hearing to order at 11:00 am.
The notice of the hearing was published in The Pioneer Press in the May 21 and 28, 2026 issues.

Pursuant to 7-4-2503(4), Montana Code Annotated, county governments are required to appoint a county compensation board to prepare a compensation schedule for the elected county officials for the succeeding fiscal year. Also, in accordance with 7-4-2503(4), the Clerk and Recorder prepared and presented a worksheet showing salary comparisons to other counties as well as the City of Conrad and the Clerk of the Conrad School District and other demographics of the counties. The Board reviewed the worksheet. The National cost-of-living adjustment for the fiscal 2026-27 year is 2.69%.

There was review of the proposed options for cost-of-living increases in elected officials' salaries for the 2026-27 fiscal year. There was discussion on the possible expenditures for the upcoming year. The cost of insurance for property, workers compensation, as well as employee health insurance are continuing to increase. Pondera County Courthouse loan for HVAC is still being paid of \$35,000 per year. Road/Bridge Department is looking into new leases for road graders. Total cost for maintenance on the Courthouse of \$285,000. The cost of fuel and vehicle/equipment replacements are anticipated to remain higher than past years. However, all departments have been able to remain within their budgets and overall cash within the county funds is in a decent position.

After some discussion, Chris Torgerson moved and Dana Davis seconded to recommend an increase of up to 4% for elected officials.

The hearing closed at 11:31 am.

JUNE 10, 2026 REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSION:
PRESENT: Commissioner Jim Morren, Commissioner Thomas Kuka, Commissioner Zane Drishinski, Clerk & Recorder Kody Farkell, Deputy Clerk & Recorder Tammy Bartsch, DES Coordinator Ali Broesder, McKenzie Graye, Angela Otero, Paul Anderberg, Undersheriff Bob Bender

MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMISSION'S JURISDICTION OUTSIDE REGULAR MEETING

Commissioners attended the District MACO meeting in Chester, MT June 3, 2026.

INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT REGARDING LAW ENFORCEMENT DISPATCH
Commissioner Drishinski moved and Commissioner Kuka seconded the first draft of the Interlocal Agreement regarding Law Enforcement Dispatch Services and Operation of an Emergency Telephone System with The City of Conrad. To be sent back to The City of Conrad for approval. Motion carried.

MONTANA STATE FUND WORKER'S COMPENSATION INSURANCE

Commissioner Kuka moved and Commissioner Drishinski seconded the approved the fiscal year 2026-2027 premium of \$98,397.97 with Montana State Fund. Motion carried.

CYBER LIABILITY INSURANCE WITH LEAVITT INSURANCE

Commissioner Drishinski moved and Commissioner Kuka seconded the approved cyber liability insurance with Leavitt Insurance for a \$5,000.00 deductible. Motion carried.

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PONDERA COUNTY TO ENTER INTO A REPRESENTATION AGREEMENT WITH EARTHJUSTICE AND WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

PONDERA COUNTY MONTANA
RESOLUTION #25 - 2025/26

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PONDERA COUNTY TO ENTER INTO A REPRESENTATION AGREEMENT WITH EARTHJUSTICE AND WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTY IN SEEKING JUDICIAL REVIEW OF THE EPA DECISION TO AUTHORIZE AN AQUIFER EXEMPTION FOR THE MADISON FORMATION

WHEREAS, there is an ongoing dispute regarding the injection of high strength industrial wastewater into oil wells described as Jody Field 34-1 and Jody Field 34-2.in Pondera County; and

WHEREAS, an aquifer exemption to the Safe Drinking Water Act has been granted for the Madison Formation; and

WHEREAS, the aquifer exemption permits the injection of high strength industrial wastewater into oil wells located in Pondera County; and

WHEREAS, taxpayers and other interested parties have indicated a desire that such waste water not be dumped into wells located in Pondera County and specifically the Wells identified as Jody Field 34-1 and Jody Field 34-2; and

WHEREAS, the ongoing dispute regarding this matter is an issue of County wide importance, impacting every person who may at some time need safe drinking water from the Madison Aquifer, which can and should be more efficiently resolved by an original action for Judicial Review before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Mont. Code Ann. § 7-5-2104 the board of county commissioners has jurisdiction and power, under such limitations and restrictions as are prescribed by law, to direct and control the prosecution and defense of all suits to which the county is a party; and

WHEREAS, County Attorney has spoken with members of the law firms EarthJustice and Western Environmental Law Center who have prepared a litigation memo outlining the possible courses of action which may be taken to dispute the Aquifer Exemption of the Madison Formation;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Pondera County Board of County Commissioners are authorized to enter into a Representation Agreement with EarthJustice and Western Environmental Law Center to take all steps necessary to file and prosecute an action for judicial review before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and to represent the interests of Pondera County in that action. Commissioner Jim Morren, is further authorized to sign said Representation Agreement and serve as point of contact on matters related to the lawsuit and report back to the Commission.

Adopted this 10th day of June, 2026 as moved by Commissioner Drishinski, seconded by Commissioner Kuka, and passed on a 3-0 vote of the board. Effective upon passage and approval

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Pondera County, Montana

/s/ Jim Morren
Jim Morren, Chairman

/s/ Thomas A Kuka
Thomas A Kuka, Member

ATTEST:

/s/ Zane Drishinski
Zane Drishinski, Member

June 2026

/s/ Kody L Farkell

Kody L. Farkell, Clerk and Recorder

EXPENDITURES IN EXCESS OF \$1,500-APPROVED

Commissioner Kuka moved to approve the purchase of 2 30"x20' culverts for the Road/Bridge Department in the amount of \$2,170.00. Commissioner Morren seconded. Motion carried.

CONTRACT WITH AXON FOR SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Commissioner Drishinski moved and Commissioner Kuka seconded the contract with Axon for the Sheriff's Department for 9 new tasers, cameras for vehicles and body cameras, including software. Total cost for fiscal year 2026-2027 is \$34,771.19, adding to the current contract. Annual payment for year 2-5 (2027-2030) is \$35,765.00. Motion carried.

JUNE 15, 2026 MEETING OF THE COMMISSION:

PRESENT: Commissioner Jim Morren, Commissioner Zane Drishinski, Commissioner Thomas Kuka, Clerk & Recorder Kody Farkell

CANVASS OF FEDERAL PRIMARY ELECTION

Commissioner Drishinski moved to approve the June 15, 2026 Canvass of the June 2, 2026 Federal Primary Election conducted by Commissioner Drishinski, Commissioner Kuka, and Commissioner Morren and directed the Clerk and Recorder to enter the official results in the records of the County. Commissioner Kuka seconded. Motion carried.

JUNE 17, 2026 REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSION:

PRESENT: Commissioner Jim Morren, Commissioner Thomas Kuka, Clerk & Recorder Kody Farkell, Deputy Clerk & Recorder Tammy Bartsch, DES Coordinator Ali Broesder, McKenzie Graye, Paul Anderberg, Undersheriff Bob Bender

HAYING AGREEMENTS-APPROVED

Commissioner Kuka moved to approve the following Yearly Right-of-Way Forage Removal Agreement/Applications:

Casey Vandenaere	Coalmine Road for 6 miles on north and south side; Letz Road west and east side; Liberty School Road going north 2.5 miles both east and west side*
Zane Drishinski	Old Shelby highway from Ledger Rd north to Bullhead Rd both sides, S Camp Rd from Old Shelby Hwy to Pioneer Rd both sides, Bench Rd 2 miles north from S Camp Rd both sides, Pioneer Rd from S Camp to Depot Rd both sides, Depot Rd from Pioneer Rd to Old Shelby Hwy both sides, Fowler from Bench Rd to Old Shelby Hwy both sides*
Brad and Nancy Bruner	Price Rd S from Midway Rd to Berland Hoop Rd, both sides*
Ronald & Darlene Denney	Pondera Coulee Rd, from Price Rd to Moulton School Rd; North Price Rd from Sollid Rd to Hwy 366*
Wylie Gustafson	Price Rd ½ mile S of Sollid Rd to Midway Rd; Furlough Rd from Sollid Rd 1 mile south, Price Rd from ½ mile south of Sollid Rd to Midway Rd*
Ray & Kevin Moritz	Hovde Rd N & S Sides; Prospector Rd both sides; Primrose Rd both Sides; Pondera Coulee Rd both sides; Kelly Rd both sides; Old Shelby Rd E & W sides; Rodeo Dr N & S sides* Liberty School Rd. 1.5 mile to 2.25 mile N Sollid Rd; Pondera Coulee Rd from Primrose to Liberty School Rd; Kelly Rd from Sollid Rd to Pondera Coulee Rd*

Tyler Arnold

Conrad Airport, all sides of roadways*

Commissioner Morren seconded. Motion carried.

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR A DETENTION OFFICER

Commissioner Kuka moved and Commissioner Morren seconded the approval of the job description for a Detention Officer for the Sheriff Department. Motion carried.

JUNE 24, 2026 REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSION:

PRESENT: Commissioner Jim Morren, Commissioner Thomas Kuka, Deputy Clerk & Recorder Tammy Bartsch, DES Coordinator Ali Broesder, McKenzie Graye, County Treasurer Shaunna Graham

MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMISSION'S JURISDICTION OUTSIDE REGULAR MEETING

Commissioner Kuka updated on the board meeting for Many Rivers Whole Health.

CONTRACT WITH SHERIFF'S APPLICATION

Commissioner Kuka moved to approve the contract with Sheriff's Application with an addition for IPaws. First year setup total will be \$11,055.00, and the annual total being \$6,650.00 for five years. Commissioner Morren seconded. Motion carried.

BIDS FOR COURTHOUSE SIDEWALKS

Commissioners received one bid for the replacement of sidewalks outside the Pondera County Courthouse.

1. Neil Weisgram Concrete & Construction \$7,500

Commissioner Kuka moved to select Neil Weisgram Concrete & Construction for the new sidewalks and Commissioner Morren seconded. Motion carried.

ALLOCATION OF SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS ACT STATE PAYMENTS

Commissioner Kuka moved to allocate the anticipated revenue for Secure Rural Schools payment and submit the paperwork to the State of Montana. The money, in the amount of \$68,281, is allocated per law, as 2/3rds payment to the county road department and 1/3rd to schools. Commissioner Morren seconded. Motion carried.

CONTRACT WITH BLACK MOUNTAIN FOR WEB PAY

Commissioner Kuka moved and Commissioner Morren seconded to approve the contract with Black Mountain for Web pay, a program for tax payers to pay online. The total will be \$1,155.00 per year. Motion carried.

MAY COMMISSION MINUTES APPROVED

Commissioner Kuka moved and Commissioner Morren seconded to approve the May 2026 Minutes of the Commission. Motion carried.

CLAIMS APPROVED FOR PAYMENT

<u>FUND</u>		
Fund	Fund Description	
1000	GENERAL	44,747.78
2110	ROAD	31,438.01
2130	BRIDGE	845.32
2140	WEED	3,609.75
2150	PREDATORY ANIMAL CONTROL	4,667.00
2160	COUNTY FAIR	5,000.00
2170	AIRPORT	615.40
2220	LIBRARY	206,777.00
2230	AMBULANCE	228.54
2280	SENIOR CITIZENS	14,218.79

2290	EXTENSION SERVICE	15,171.05
2300	PUBLIC SAFETY (LAW ENFORCEMENT)	33,861.73
2390	DRUG FORFEITURE	658.17
2401	BRADY LIGHTS MAINTENANCE	360.99
2811	DUI PREVENTION	1,000.00
2830	JUNK VEHICLE	3,218.86
2850	911 EMERGENCY	15,616.52
2860	LAND USE PLANNING	800.00
2866	NORTHERN TRANSIT INTERLOCAL	233.84
2958	EP (DES) GRANTS	473.37
2961	PERFORMANCE MTG GRANT	29.00
2963	ORAL HEALTH SERVICES GRANT	570.00
2965	INNOVATION BEH HEALTH	267.66
2971	WIC GRANT	73.03
2973	MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH	11.63
2976	IMMUNIZATION ACTION GRANT	173.36
2978	CHRONIC DISEASE GRANT	109.99
2980	HEALTH CARE FOUND. GRANT	2,083.00
4009	PUBLIC SAFETY CAPITAL IMP	14,783.60
4012	GENERAL FUND CAPITAL IMP	10699.63
4013	ROAD/BRIDGE EQUIP PURCHSE	71,788.24
7920	REFUND FUND	2,260.05

TOTAL CLAIMS	\$486,391.31
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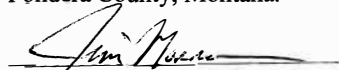
TOTAL PAYROLL	\$378,632.52
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TOTAL CLAIMS AND PAYROLL FUNDS	\$865,023.83
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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. on June 30, 2026

Pondera County, Montana.


Jim Morren, Chairman

ATTEST:


Kody L. Parkell, Clerk & Recorder

