

**SEELEY LAKE – MISSOULA COUNTY WATER DISTRICT**  
**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**November 6, 2024**

**Attendance:**

Charlie Hahn	President	<b>PRESENT</b>
Todd Johnson	Vice President	<b>PRESENT</b>
Kris Martin	Director	<b>PRESENT</b>
Chris Lorentz	Director	<b>PRESENT</b>
Freda Rathbun	Director	<b>PRESENT</b>
Vincent Chappell	General Manager	<b>PRESENT</b>
Felicity Derry	Office Manager	<b>PRESENT</b>
Tammy Lewis	Operator	<b>PRESENT</b>

**OPENING:**

Johnson moved to open the meeting at 6:01pm. Martin seconded the motion. The meeting was held at The Community Hall, 3248 Highway 83, Seeley Lake, MT.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Hahn opened Public Comment.

Chappell thanked everybody for attending and reviewed the rate increase stemming from the Pyramid Mountain Lumber (Mill) closure. Johnson added that the mill closure would free up some of the District's water allocation and allow the District to consider mainline extensions outside of the District. Chappell noted that because the mill had used a large amount of water, once it shut down this would allow the District to consider expansion, such as a mainline extension or subdivision, within reason.

Chappell reviewed the proposed rate increase. Adding that the bond debt was due to be paid off on July 1, 2029, at which point the rates would need to be restructured. Chappell discussed the District's budget and asked for questions.

John Richards asked what the difference was between a  $\frac{3}{4}$  and a full  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Chappell reviewed the difference.

Claire Muller questioned if an expansion of the District would have to be close. Chappell noted that there had been a couple of calls on possible expansions, such as Daisy Lane. Chappell then reviewed what would be required to annex into the District. With the surplus water that the District now had, potentially an additional 250 to 300 homes could be serviced. Chappell reviewed the previous subdivision and approval.

Chappell noted that the mill closure equated to a huge loss of revenue for the District. Johnson added

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that if an industry did buy the property, because of the large leaks, the water lines would be redone, resulting in less water usage.

John Richards asked what the status of the District's leaks was. Chappell replied that this last summer the entire town was leak detected. Eleven small leaks had been found, along with one large leak. All those leaks were repaired. Last winter the loss had jumped up to 1.3 million gallons per month. It is now down to approximately 300,000 gallons per month, which is approximately 12%. The national average is about 35%. Mike Richards added that the leaks at the mill were metered and paid for, and so not part of the District's leak. Chappell concurred, that the mill had been paying for all their usage, which included the leaks. John Richards asked what was the anticipated date that the mill would shut the water off. Johnson replied that the water would be on until the end of March, beginning of April. Chappell added that the rate increase had been timed to coincide with the original date of the shut down at the beginning of 2025.

Claire Muller thanked everybody for serving on a local board. She had been interested to see if there was going to be a lot of outrage and if people were really upset about this. Acknowledged that there were not tons of people attending. Chappell noted that the District had started the process early in 2024 and had tried to be open about where the rates were going to land. Chappell had one person make a derogatory comment, out of 700 customers. Derry fields most of the calls, along with Lewis, and they have been very upfront with customers in discussing the rate increase. Most people understood and had accepted the rate increase.

Claire Muller questioned if it would be a hardship to a lot of people and if there needed to be some kind of assistance set up. Chappell replied that while he had not heard that, there were numerous retired and low-income folks, that any increase hurts. At times there had been help from the County with water bills. Typically, the older folks found a way to pay their bills.

Johnson moved to close Public Comment.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### Ordinance 2K24-1

Chappell read the ordinance.

Lorentz moved to accept Ordinance 2K24-1. Martin seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Chappell reviewed the number of larger meters within the District.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

Johnson moved to adjourn. Lorentz seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.

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Attest

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Charlie Hahn, Director

-And-

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Vince Chappell, General Manager

APPENDIX A

SEELEY LAKE – MISSOULA COUNTY WATER DISTRICT  
PUBLIC HEARING  
The Community Hall, 3248 Highway 83, Seeley Lake  
November 6, 2024

NAME	ADDRESS/EMAIL	PHONE #
Michael & Linda Richards		
Claire Muller		
Kelley Larson		
John Richards		