

Great Falls Rising Monthly Newsletter

August 2023

“Summertime and the livin’ is easy,” so the song goes. After a 4th of July break, it's time to get back to work. Your editors have been vacationing and preparing for upcoming elections. How about you? Yes, we need more progressive candidates, so if you are inclined, please contact [Great Falls Rising](#). Although the Montana opponents of its constitution are relatively quiet, they aren't resting. And, neither can we.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION HEARING: Come join us to pack the Public Service Commission hearing about NorthWestern Energy's 20-year energy plan in Great Falls. Monday, **August 14th**, at **6:00 PM**, at the Civic Center (2 Park Dr. South).

NorthWestern Energy (which provides energy to two-thirds of Montanans) would like us to believe that a clean energy future isn't affordable or possible, but we know that it is. We need Montana Public Service Commissioners to reject the company's latest plan to continue investing in out-dated energy sources.

NorthWestern Energy is the only utility in the country that is currently increasing its share of coal power, along with investing in new methane gas plants and mass advertising campaigns to make the case that there's no other option for Montana. For better or worse, NorthWestern Energy is a for-profit public utility with a guaranteed monopoly over much of the state, and this system can only work if the company is held in check by our elected officials. Montana Public Service Commissioners are key; they have the power to approve or deny

NorthWestern Energy's proposals, based on whether or not they're in the public interest.

Showing up to make sure our democracy is working as it should be is an essential part of the puzzle to move towards the clean energy transition we know that we need. When we show up together, we are powerful. For more information: [\[Great Falls\] Tell the PSC: Montanans Deserve a Renewable Energy Future | Help Wildlife, Protect the Environment, Support Nature Conservation, Save the Planet \(sierraclub.org\).](#)

VOICES & VIEWS WITH ARLYNE REICHERT: Arlyne joined host Thomas Risberg ON KGPR, 89.9 FM, on August 1st to discuss the upcoming Cascade Preservation Annual Event, **September 18th**, at **7:00 PM** in the Gibson Room at the Great Falls Civic Center. The event is free and will include a presentation by Bruce Pollington, the President of the River's Edge Trail Foundation, on how the Trail has been integrated with the Bridge, as well as a discussion of ways to best utilize the Bridge in the future.

Arlyne also recounts the epic story of how the Bridge was saved from demolition and restored to its former glory. In addition, Arlyne gives priceless insights into living a good life, sharing her struggles and successes, and providing an example for all of us of how to maintain optimism and positivity through trying circumstances. Listen to the podcast here: www.podbean.com/ew/pb-5knt8-146dd57.

LUMINARIA WALK: This year's Luminaria Walk is **August 25th**, from **7:00 PM to 11:00 PM**. The goal of the Luminaria Walk is to celebrate the world-class trail we have here in Great Falls, Montana. More than 1500 luminarias will line the trail. This is a free, family-friendly event for the community.

If you would like to share your music along the trail, sell drinks or food, help place luminarias on the trail or fill all 1500 bags with sand, please call Becky at 899-

8642 for various volunteer opportunities. Visit the Facebook event here: [Luminaria Walk | Facebook](#).

STUFF THE BUS: United Way of Cascade County will be collecting school supplies and living essentials as part of our 13th annual Stuff the Bus drive. Supplies will be donated to local students through Great Falls Public Schools, nonprofits and the Back 2 School BLAST. You can help by running a supply drive, volunteering or donating supplies on **August 10th, 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM**. We will have three buses at Target and both Walmarts. Please join us in helping every child be prepared to succeed when school starts this fall. Sign up to volunteer, see a list of needed supplies or get materials to run a supply drive at your workplace, church or organization at www.uwccmt.org/stuff-bus-1. Facebook event here: [Stuff the Bus | Facebook](#).

BACK TO SCHOOL BBQ: Electric City Circle of Parents is having their annual Back to School BBQ, hosted by The Sober Life and held at The Alliance for Youth (3220 11th Ave. South), with yard games, prizes and pie. Join us on Thursday, **August 17th from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM** for a night of good food, fun outside games and a chance to win some fun prizes. Facebook event here: [Electric City Circle of Parents Back to School BBQ | Facebook](#).

BACK 2 SCHOOL BLAST: The Back 2 School BLAST is a free event for all of Cascade County on **August 18th from Noon to 4:00 PM** at the Civic Center. There will be more than 1,000 free backpacks filled with all the supplies students need to start school this fall. There will be free haircuts, free food, free health screenings, and a limited number of free sports physicals. (Everyone can get a low-cost sports physical.)

Families are asked to pre-register today by calling Opportunities Inc. at (406) 761-0310. Families who pre-register will be able to get their backpacks starting at 11:00 AM. Hundreds of volunteers are needed to make this event happen. Both

on August 18th, to help set up and to fill backpacks in the weeks leading up to the event. You can also donate to sponsor a student. All information can be found at www.B2SBLast.org. Facebook event here: [Back 2 School BLAST | Facebook](#).

DESTRUCTIVE EDUCATION LEGISLATION: A notice from Montanans Organized for Education (MOFE) on the destructive education legislation the Republicans passed last session summarized below:

"Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined the June 21st and July 27th OPI Zoom to discuss the two charter school bills (HB 549 and HB 562), two bills legitimizing prayer and religious materials in schools (HB 744 and HB 745) and allowing school boards can adopt more restrictive obscenity policies than those that are currently in practices."

You can find a comparison chart of the two charter school bills (June 21st) [here](#).

Here is a discussion of the religion and obscenity July 27th OPI Zoom discussion: [State education forum addresses obscenity, religious expression in Montana schools \(montanafreepress.org\)](#).

Here is how our Cascade County delegation voted on the above bills:

HB 549: All present voted for charter schools with both MT School Board and local school board control, paid for by taxes.

HB 562: All voted for charter schools with no MT School Board or local school board control, paid for by taxes.

HB 744: Revise laws to protect religious expression for students and teachers: "However, any teacher, principal, or superintendent may open the school day with a prayer." All voted for this bill allowing an unconstitutional mix of religion and government/public schools.

HB 745: Revise laws related to religious materials and prayer in schools. "Prayer is permitted in a school, on school grounds, and at school-sponsored events, but a person may not be compelled to pray. The school

day may begin with a prayer." All voted for this bill allowing an unconstitutional mix of religion and government/public schools.

HB 234: Revise dissemination of obscene material to minors laws. All revisions voted for by the last vote, but there were some squishy changes between votes.

Our **Cascade County Senators:** Emrich, Fitzpatrick, McKamey, and Trebas

Our **Cascade County Representatives:** Anderson, Buttrey, Galloway, Gist, Kerns, Miner, Nikolakakos. and Sheldon-Galloway

Finally, here is a recent article on the consequences of HB 234:

[Montana Pride joins lawsuit against drag ban bill claiming permit for Helena event denied – Daily Montanan](#)

Here is the information for the next two OPI Zoom discussions:

- [August 23, 2023](#) – Special Needs Equal Opportunity Act: [HB 393](#)
- [September 20, 2023](#) – Parental Rights: [HB 676](#) and [SB 51](#)

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD: An urgent appeal from the Library Board for help:

"... There are two open positions on the Great Falls Public Library Board. I would like you to encourage people to apply. The deadline to apply is August 11th. To begin, please fill out this form: <https://bit.ly/3rw1cl7>

I would be happy to answer any questions and can be reached at 406.731.5240 or 406.788.6776. Please forward this to anyone you feel would make a good library board member.

*Thank you,
Whitney Olson
Great Falls Public Library Board Chair*

This article from The Electric explains a new problem facing the library. Also included are excerpts from a letter from Whitney Olson, Chair of the Library

Board, requesting action. [City delays library board reappointment | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](http://theelectricgf.com)

You can read the entire policy here: [Policy Concerning Appointments to Boards/Commissions | City of Great Falls Montana \(greatfallsmt.net\)](http://greatfallsmt.net).

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS: An opportunity to serve Great Falls as a member of our Neighborhood Councils and a notice of Council 5's annual city election forum:

We're asking you to become involved with your Neighborhood Councils and ask them to invite the candidates for a conversation. If you are a member of a council, work with your council to invite the mayor and city commission candidates for a conversation at one of your meetings in August and September.

[Neighborhood Councils | City of Great Falls Montana \(greatfallsmt.net\)](http://greatfallsmt.net).

We do have two councils which do not have a complete council membership: Council 5 is missing five members and Council 2 is missing two members. If you are in the area of Councils 5 or 2 and might be interested in filling a very important "lower" level of city government at this very pivotal time, please call Sharon Patton-Griffin at (406) 899-5917.

Here are the candidates running in the upcoming November municipal election for Mayor and City Commission:

Mayor: Abby Brown, Joe McKenney, Cory Reeves and Casey Schriener

City Commission: Kendall Cox, Eric Hinebauch, Micaela Stroop, Rick Tryon and Shannon Wilson

Neighborhood Council 5 is holding its 4th annual municipal candidate forum at 7:00 PM at the Great Falls Clinic Specialty Center, 3000 15th Ave. South, on August 21st.

CASCADE COUNTY ELECTION OFFICE: An "article history" of the Cascade County Election Office situation. At this point, the Election Protection Committee is awaiting the outcome of two suits filed over county elections in May, a complete accounting of the cost of the elections held in May, and an accounting of the cost of the library levy election.

[Clerk and Recorder Staff Changes – Is New Hire a Political Crony? - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[County election official tells Sun River Valley, City of Great Falls office can't handle mail ballot elections | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](#)

[GFPS budget committee recommends no levy this year | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](#)

[GFPS election also going to polls; Merchant says library levy email was a "misunderstanding" | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](#)

[Cascade County official says there won't be mail voting in the upcoming elections | YPR \(ypradio.org\)](#)

[The Monday Memo | The Western Word](#)

[Agenda - 03/31/2023 \(cascadecountymt.gov\)](#)

[Locals raise concern about private citizens working in county elections office | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](#)

[Ballots delivered to USPS on April 17; county staff, volunteers spent week stuffing envelopes | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](#)

[Election Protection Committee formed in Cascade Co. after concerns raised regarding Clerk and Recorder | ABC Fox Great Falls | montanarightnow.com](#)

[Concerns continue over Cascade County elections process \(newsbreak.com\)](#)

[Elections Update: Things Just Got Worse - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[GOP and business groups stifling voters' voices – Daily Montanan](#)

[Citizens form Election Protection Committee to demand Merchant's Resignation - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[Extremists Attempt to Distract from Merchant Incompetence - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[School District Accepts Canvas, Recognizes Election Errors - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[Think the Library Election Went Smoothly? - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[Why Is Julie Bass Running the Elections Office? - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[School District Accepts Canvas, Recognizes Election Errors - What the Funk \(wtf406.com\)](#)

[Great Falls Public Library election 'smooth' as city waits for results \(newsbreak.com\)](#)

[Montana Supreme Court denies Merchant's petition to remove or change election monitor | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](#)

[GFPS receives May 2 election bill | The Electric \(theelectricgf.com\)](#)

PROPERTY TAX INCREASE: An excellent opinion piece from Big Sky 55+ board member Ken Toole on big corporations and the potential increase in property taxes.

[Big corporations get tax benefits, while Montana resident get higher property taxes – Daily Montanan](#)

AND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE ELECTRIC CITY:

Montana State Fair - July 28th through August 5th at Montana Expo Park

Check schedules at: [Visit Great Falls Montana - Home - Visit Great Falls Montana - Adventure Awaits in Montana's Basecamp for Art & Adventure](#)

Great Falls Voyagers baseball games - home games are **August 4th, 5th, 6th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th.**

Check schedules at gfvoyagers.com

Great Falls Public Library - music every **Tuesday evening** at **6:00 PM**

Great Falls Municipal Band - every **Wednesday** evening at **7:00 PM** at bandshell at Gibson Park

Big Sky Pro Rodeo Roundup - Montana Expo Park **August 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th**

Great Falls Farmers' Market - every **Saturday** from **8:30 AM** until **1:00 PM**

All About Snakes - First People's Buffalo Jump on Thursday, **August 10th**

Substitute for the Saloon: The Drug Store during Prohibition, 1920-1933 - Saturday, **August 12th** at **1:00 PM** at The History Museum. For more information go to greatfallshistorymuseum.org

The Russell: An Exhibition and Sale to Benefit the CM Russell Museum - **August 17th, 18th and 19th**

Montana Multi-Cultural Fair - 400-500 block of Central Avenue, Thursday, **August 17th**

Choteau County Fair - Fort Benton, **August 17th, 18th and 19th**

The Great Western Show - Montana ExpoPark, **August 17th, 18th and 19th**

Cooking with Solar Power - First People's Buffalo Jump, **August 17th**

Space Cowboy Educational Symposium - Montana ExpoPark, **August 19th**

Montana Little Shell Chippewa Powwow - University of Providence, **August 26th and 27th**

Shakespeare in the Parks - The Three Musketeers, Gibson Park; **August 28th, 6:00 until 8:00 PM**

WILD MONTANA HIKES - guided hikes throughout Montana; for information go to wildmontana.org

Quote from The Lorax by Dr. Seuss- "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

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