



EXHIBIT 1
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HB 320

Gallatin County Legislative Liaison

January 20, 2005

Testimony on HB 320 a fee per household for parks and recreation.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Representatives, on behalf of the Gallatin County Commission I want to thank you for opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 320 which would allow counties the option of utilizing a per household fee to fund the needs of parks and recreation.

This bill was made at the request of Gallatin County and the Montana Association of Counties in an attempt to provide alternatives to the methods of funding available for local government for parks and recreation. Under current statute the only provisions allowed for a county to raise funds to provide county-wide parks and recreation is through a county-wide park levy.

As you are aware, a levy is a broad reaching tax that impacts individual property owners at different levels. Under a levy proposal the cost maybe only a few dollars annually for a \$100,000 home, but the cost to businesses, commercial property, agricultural lands and timber lands is substantially greater. By using a single fee per household everyone would pay an equal share.

In Gallatin County for example, using the figures from the 2000 Census we have roughly 29,489 housing units. In looking at increments from \$5 annually to \$20 annually the people of Gallatin County could raise between \$147,000 and \$590,000 to build and maintain park and recreational facilities.

	Number of Households	\$5 per year	\$10 per year	\$15 per year	\$20 per year
Gallatin County	29,489	\$147,445.00	\$294,890.00	\$442,335.00	\$ 589,780.00

While funding of this level may not solve all of the needs for parks and recreation in Gallatin County it would at least help keep the lawn mowed, the baseball fields watered and the sandboxes cleaned.

It is important to mention that included in the provisions of this bill is a requirement that no county can implement a fee per household without the vote of the people. We wanted to ensure that this fee would only be used in a situation where the voters of the county had an opportunity to choose if funding for parks and recreation was a priority.

Additionally provisions have been added to ensure that a fee per household could not be implemented at the same time that a levy was being used. This is an added protection to the taxpayer that they will not be taxed twice in different forms for the same programs.

Again, while adding the ability to use a fee per household would likely not be the solution to all funding needs for parks and recreation adding the option gives the people of a county greater flexibility in determining how to funds the needs of parks and recreation.

Again, thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,



Michael Harris
Legislative Liaison