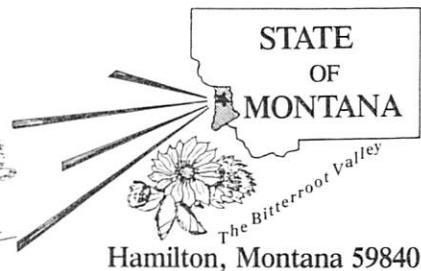
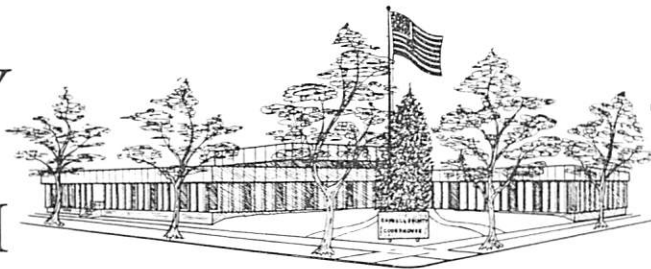


COUNTY OF RAVALLI

January 30, 2018



COPY

Montana Department of Commerce
Director's Office, Pam Haxby-Cote
PO Box 200501
Helena, MT 59620-0501

Montana Department of Agriculture
Director's Office, Ben Thomas
PO Box 200201
Helena, MT 59620-0201

Dear Directors:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that Ravalli County was subjected to anti-competitive behavior by Lake County Community Development Corporation (LCCDC), specifically by Jan Tusick and Gypsy Ray, its Executive Director. LCCDC intimidated Sanders County by saying that a collaborative relationship with Ravalli County's economic development organization would create problems for the relationship (and funding) with their Certified Regional Development Corporation. This conversation took place when the Ravalli County Economic Development Authority (RCEDA) applied in July 2017 to the Montana Department of Agriculture Request for Proposals for Food & Agriculture Development Centers.

Ravalli County Commissioners alerted the Montana Department of Agriculture as to this behavior in their support letter for RCEDA dated July 6, 2017. Unfortunately, the Montana Department of Agriculture failed to act on the concern. Although RCEDA lodged a protest, nothing came of it because the statements of LCCDC were verbal. RCEDA was not awarded the Food & Agriculture Development Center funding. Instead, LCCDC was awarded the funding and rewarded by the Montana Department of Agriculture for its concerning tactics. The effect was to reward irresponsible behavior by a state agency entrusted with taxpayer dollars for economic development.

The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Administration could have taken some action to condemn LCCDC behavior or offer an apology. By doing nothing, the Department appears to condone the LCCDC's actions and signals such actions can be undertaken by others without consequence.

When the 3-year period of the recent LCCDC award ends, LCCDC will have been funded to build capacity in Montana's agriculture communities for 9 years in a row to the exclusion of others. LCCDC has obtained this funding in part by claiming Ravalli County as its "territory" without ever asking for or seeking to work with the RCEDA during these 9 years. Ravalli County protests this misrepresentation. The practice of pretending to include another county in the service area of a grant application in order to win the grant undermines fair competition and misrepresents the truth. RCEDA best represents the needs of Ravalli County's agricultural and business community. Grants to other entities who claim to better represent Ravalli County agricultural and business interests directs funds away from where they were intended to be applied, and wastes taxpayer money. The practice also perpetuates certain programs to the exclusion of others, which is contrary to the purpose of the grants.

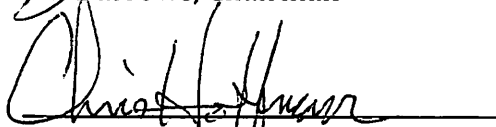
Since the concerns of Ravalli County and the RCEDA have not been addressed, they intend to bring this matter before the legislature audit committee and will seek a legislative remedy.

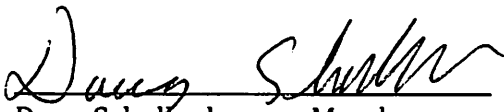
Thank you for your time and consideration of these matters.

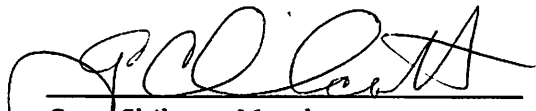
Sincerely,

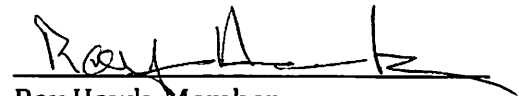
Ravalli County Board of Commissioners:


Jeff Burrows, Chairman


Chris Hoffman, Member


Doug Schallenberger, Member


Greg Chilcott, Member


Ray Hawk, Member

RCEDA:


Julie Foster, RCEDA Director

HD 88 Representative

Ed Greef

Cc: Governor Steve Bullock, Senator Fred Thomas, Senator Pat Connell, Representative Nancy Balance, Representative Theresa Manzella, Representative Ron Ehli, Lake County Commissioners, Sanders County Commissioners, Lake County Community Development Corporation and Board and Montana Department of Administration

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MONTANA DEPT. OF
ADMINISTRATION
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HELENA, MT 59601

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POLSON, MT 59860

SANDERS COUNTY BCC
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THOMPSON FALLS, MT 59873

LAKE COUNTY COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
407 MAIN STREET SW
PO BOX 128
RONAN, MT 59864

MONTANA DEPT OF COMMERCE
ATTN: PAM HAXBY-COTE
PO BOX 200501
HELENA, MT 59620-0501

MONTANA DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
ATTN: BEN THOMAS
PO BOX 200201
HELENA, MT 59620-0201

OFFICER OF THE GOVERNOR
ATTN: GOVERNOR BULLOCK
PO BOX 200801
HELENA, MT 59620-0801

SENATOR FRED THOMAS
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STEVENSVILLE, MT 59870

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REPRESENTATIVE THERESA
MANZELLA
PO BOX 1100
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REPRESENTATIVE RON EHLI
PO BOX 765
HAMILTON, MT 59840

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