

Quality Life Billings  
319 S 64th Street W  
Billings, MT 59106

Commissioner of Political Practices  
Jeff Mangan  
PO Box 202401  
Helena MT 59620

April 22, 2021

To the Commissioner of Political Practices:

I am the Treasurer for Quality Life Billings, a Independent Committee. We recently sent out 140 letters with information regarding the Billings Heights Water Board Election. A disclaimer was included at the bottom of the letter with the committee's name and address; however, the disclaimer inadvertently did not include my name as the Treasurer.

I have attached a copy of the letter that was sent. Because the mail piece has already been sent, we cannot correct the error. However, any future mailings will include my name.

Sincerely,  
Travis Cady  
Quality Life Billings, Treasurer

## HEIGHTS WATER DISTRICT: BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021 ELECTION

County Water District of Billings Heights Election - Tuesday, May 4

Close of Regular Voter Registration: Monday, April 5th at 5:00 PM

Start of Late Voter Registration (In Person Only): Tuesday, April 6th

**Deadline for Non Resident Property Owners to Request a Ballot:  
April 9th at 5:00 PM**

Absentee Ballots Mailed: April 14th

[NonregisteredElectorMailBallotRequestFormforYellowstoneCountyWater.pdf \(mt.gov\)](#)

**RETURN THE BALLOT REQUEST TO: Yellowstone County Election Department PO Box 35002, Billings, MT 59107-5002. For additional information call Bret Rutherford, Yellowstone County elections administrator, (406) 256-2812**

This spring individuals living in the Water District service area or an owner of taxable real property within the boundaries of the district (or, if the property is owned by more than one person, an agent designated by the owners) will have a rare opportunity – the chance to vote for three members of the Board of Directors. Non resident property owners need to request a ballot before April 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm. A link to the ballot form is above and a copy was included with this letter.

There has not been an election for Water District Board Members in decades. Directors are elected every two years, but because the District hasn't announced elections publicly, people didn't know that they could run for the elected positions. This year, however, there are eight individuals who have filed for the election. More than 11,000 registered voters will receive ballots in the mail. Non resident property owners will receive a ballot ONLY if they have applied for a ballot before the April 9<sup>th</sup> deadline.

The Heights Task Force, together with the Heights Business Association, has been working to understand the barriers to development in our neighborhood. There are many reasons that a particular project may make sense in any given neighborhood. Available land, population density, income levels, transportation, and relative project costs all weigh into the decision to build. However, there has been a similar refrain – the Heights Water District is a barrier to development.

Over the past few months, we have seen a significant increase in the number of residents, business owners, and developers who are expressing frustrations with the operations of the district. Concerns have been raised repeatedly at Heights Task Force meetings. Business owners who came together to launch the Heights Business Association have shared their experiences with projects being delayed due to unexpected fees and unpredictable timelines – increasing the cost of developing in the Heights by tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars. Members of the public have indicated that attending meetings can be difficult and that agendas are not easily available ahead of time. (see Q2 news report [Heights Water Board: Help or hindrance to development? \(ktvq.com\)](#))

The Task Force invited representatives of the Water District to speak at Task Force meetings, so that concerns could be heard and addressed. Those invitations were declined or ignored.

The Water District is independent entity, governed by a 7-member board. Five of those members are – or should be – elected by the ratepayers in the district. The other two spots are for appointees of the County Commission and the City of Billings. The Water District is not under the jurisdiction of the City or Yellowstone County – it operates on its own, serving a significant portion of the Heights and adjacent county residents (about 10,000 – 11,000 customers). As you may have seen in the press recently, the current Water Board is refusing to accept the City’s appointee ([Heights water board waits to seat new member as tiff with city continues | Local News | billingsgazette.com](#)) and has now notified the County that it will no longer recognize the County’s appointee as legitimate ([Attorney Asserts County’s Appointment To Heights Water Board Made in Error | Yellowstone County News](#)).

Given the widespread concerns, Heights Representative Larry Brewster introduced HB 255, a bill to make some important reforms to the way water districts across the state have operated. ([Heights Community District Encounters Murky Waters | Yellowstone County News](#)) The bill sailed through the House on a 95-2 vote, and passed unanimously from the Senate Local Government Committee; it needs to be voted on the floor of the Senate.

The Heights Task Force invited the eight Heights Water Board candidates to a candidate forum in March. Four candidates in attendance were: Josh Benson, Ming Cabrera, Donna Dinsmore and Laura Drager. The forum was recorded and posted [Heights Task Force - Candidate forum | Facebook](#). The final question to candidates was “Where can people to find information about you? “

### **Josh Benson**

- [Josh Benson for Heights Water District - Home | Facebook](#)
- [Home | Josh Benson for Heights Water District \(josh-benson-for-heights-water-district.org\)](#)

### **Ming Cabrera**

- <https://www.facebook.com/Ming-for-Billings-Heights-Water-Board-943684792459365>
- [Home | Ming Cabrera for Heights Water Board \(ming-for-billings-heights-water-board.org\)](#)

**Donna Dinsmore\*** no contact information provided

### **Laura Drager**

- [Laura Drager for Heights Water Board - Home | Facebook](#)
- [Home | lauradragerforcountywaterdistrictbillingsheights.org](#)

### **For more information**

- [qualityoflifebillingspac@gmail.com](mailto:qualityoflifebillingspac@gmail.com)
- <https://heightswaterboardelection.org/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/Billings-Heights-County-Water-Board-Election-107602224738905>