

Missoula County Media Release

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Commissioner Rowley to Leave Office for Position with Gallatin County

Commissioner Nicole “Cola” Rowley announced today that she will vacate her seat on the Missoula County Commission to take a position as deputy county administrator with Gallatin County. Rowley, whose term expires at the end of 2020, will assume her new role on July 1.

“This is an amazing opportunity to further my dedication to public service for years to come,” Rowley said. “It will allow me to capitalize on my strengths and interest in data, administration and collaborative innovation. I’m excited for a new challenge and the accompanying personal and professional growth.”

Rowley is the current chair of the Missoula Board of County Commissioners. Since taking office in 2015, she has worked to bring data to the forefront of local government and is passionate about finding data-informed solutions to address issues like climate change, criminal justice reform, public health and land use planning.

“In a few short years, Cola has left an indelible impression on Missoula County government,” said Commissioner Dave Strohmaier. “Among other things, her data-driven approach to criminal justice reform has put Missoula County on the map and will position us well for realizing jail diversion efforts and fostering healthy communities. She’s smart, motivated and passionate — all attributes that will serve Gallatin County well. I look forward to collaborating across county lines, and I wish Cola the very best in her new role.”

Rowley currently serves on several boards and authorities, including the Partnership Health Center, Western Montana Mental Health Center and Missoula Aging Services boards and the Housing Policy Steering Committee. She’s also the elected chair of the Urban Counties Coalition of the Montana Association of Counties and serves on the National Association of Counties Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee.

“Cola’s encyclopedic understanding of local government, focus on data-driven solutions and commitment to an equitable future have made her an effective elected official,” Commissioner Josh Slotnick said. “I have appreciated Cola’s openness and willingness to pass on her knowledge, as she has been a great help to me as well as the county. Our loss is indeed Gallatin County’s gain.”

With Rowley leaving before her term expires, an appointee will fill her seat upon her departure. Pursuant to Montana Code Annotated 7-4-2106(2), the Missoula County Democratic Central Committee will provide a list of three names to Strohmaier and Slotnick. The commissioners will decide on a process and timeline for selecting the candidate, and Missoula County will issue a media release when that is finalized.

The newly selected commissioner will carry out the remaining year and half of Rowley's term and have the opportunity to run for the open seat in the November 2020 election. The winner of the election will then serve the standard six-year staggered term beginning Jan. 1, 2021.

"It's been an honor to serve Missoula County and to work with such amazing people every day, within the organization and in the community," Rowley said. "I'm proud of the work I've done forwarding the redevelopment of the fairgrounds, justice system improvement, addressing climate change and resiliency planning, policy and regulatory updates and development, transparency and efficiency. Missoula County has been recognized nationally for the work we do on many fronts, and I look forward to its continued success."

Rowley will be available for media interviews today from 1 to 2:30 p.m. To schedule an interview, call Communications Coordinator Allison Franz at 406-258-3161 or email af Franz@missoulacounty.us.

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Missoula County is governed by a Board of County Commissioners, consisting of three elected members who serve six-year staggered terms. All legislative, executive and administrative powers and duties of the local government not specifically reserved by law or ordinance to other elected officials reside in the Commission (MCA-7-3-401). The current Board of County Commissioners includes Chair Nicole "Cola" Rowley, Dave Strohmaier and Josh Slotnick.