



DEBBIE PIERSON  
**FLATHEAD COUNTY ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR**

CLERK & RECORDER/AUDITOR/SURVEYOR  
290 North Main Street, Suite B - Kalispell, Montana 59901

Phone: (406) 758-5535

Fax: (406) 758-5877

Website- [flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/election](http://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/election)



## 2023 Municipal General Election Canvass Report

### Canvass Process Overview:

Title 13, section 15-401 calls for the governing body to serve as the Board of County Canvassers. The canvass process evaluates the comparison of the number of ballots voted to the number of ballots tabulated. The canvass report as outlined in 13-15-404, is required to include: the total number of electors voting in each city, or city ward; the name of each candidate running for office; the number of votes received per candidate or ballot issue; the number of write-in votes received. The canvass includes reviewing returns, auditing records of votes cast, reviewing totals and declaring or certifying the results. In Flathead County, the secretary to the Board of County Commissioners keeps minutes of the proceedings on behalf of the County Election Administrator.

### COLUMBIA FALLS:

- 3,271 ballots were mailed to Columbia Falls city voters on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. This was an all-mail ballot election.
- Voted ballots returned were 876 or 27%.
- Review of ballot results and resolution spreadsheet.
- The Election Administrator recommends certification of the results of this election.

### WHITEFISH:

- 6,290 ballots were mailed to Whitefish city voters on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. This was an all-mail ballot election.
- Voted ballots returned were 2,311 or 37%.
- Review of ballot results and resolution spreadsheet.
- The Election Administrator recommends certification of the results of this election.

## KALISPELL:

- Kalispell city has a total of 16,894 eligible voters. 5,745 are poll voters and 11,149 are absentee.
- Kalispell city absentee voters were mailed ballots on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. The poll election was conducted at the Fairgrounds Trade Center on November 7, 2023.
  - Voted ballots returned were 2,869, or 26% absentee and 239, or 4% poll.
  - Review of ballot results and resolution spreadsheet.
  - The Canvass numbers as presented are accurate for the election conducted. However, ballots were not distributed according to ward boundaries updated in December of 2021. Concerns exist; however, the Election Administrator recommends certification of the results of the election (MCA 13-15-405). Once completed, MCA 13-36-102 allows for a candidate to contest the nomination. "The contestant shall make application to the district court in the county where the contest is to be had." The Flathead County Election Administrator fully supports readministering the November 7, 2023, Kalispell municipal election for wards one through three. (The races in ward four were non contested). Ward boundaries will be updated in the election database and ballots distributed according to boundary lines approved by Kalispell city council in December of 2021. A minimum of 60 days is needed to complete printing, ballot distribution, required postings, ballot acceptance, tabulation, and candidate canvass and certification. Flathead County Elections Department is willing to cover all expenses associated with readministration of the election.

### Concerns:

In the final days prior to the November 7, 2023, municipal general election, the election office became aware that there may have been an issue with the Kalispell city ward boundaries utilized for ballot distribution. Research was conducted which indicated that the updated boundary lines approved by the city council in 2021 that were based on updated census data, were never entered into the election system by the Flathead County Election Department. This was an extremely unfortunate clerical error.

Of the 16,894 total eligible voters in Kalispell city, the boundary line impacts were as follows:

- 1,413 Total eligible voters impacted (8%)
  - 1,312 Eligible voters with ward changes.
  - 101 New annexations (99 into ward four, two into ward two, none for ward one or three).
- 176 Total voters receiving an **incorrect** ballot who **VOTED**:
  - 112 Voted ballots for ward one where the voter should have received a ward two ballot.
  - 12 Voted ballots for ward one where the voter should have received a ward three ballot.
  - 37 Voted ballots for ward two where the voter should have received a ward three ballot.
  - 6 Voted ballots for ward three where the voter should have received a ward two ballot.
  - 9 Voted ballots for ward three where the voter should have received a ward four ballot.