



## Kats, Cats, thump Dogs, B2

\$1.25

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# Hungry Horse News

The photo newspaper of Columbia Falls, Glacier National Park and surrounding communities

## City awards contract for \$10 million streets project

**By CHRIS PETERSON**  
**Hungry Horse News**  
The Columbia Falls City Council earlier this week approved a contract with a local firm for the Gateway to Glacier Safety and Mobility Improvement Project.

Nelcon Inc. of Columbia Falls was awarded a \$9.4 million bid for the project, which was about \$700,000 more than the engineer's estimate and exceeds the \$10 million federal RAISE grant, which pays for the bulk

of the project, by \$552,099. Some funds were previously used for engineering and planning of the project, which explains the shortfall. The city, in turn, will pay the gap in funding and extend the project out

to Sept. 30, 2027. City manager Eric Hanks told council the city has funds in its tax increment finance district account to bridge the gap. He also recommended the city add \$395,560 for unforeseen costs during

the project. All told, the city will finance \$947,658 additionally toward the project. A significant part of the project is within the city's urban renewal district, which makes it eligible for the TIF monies.

The TIF district has plenty of reserves, about \$4,412,438, Hanks noted in a report to council. The project consists of reconstructing 1.3 miles of roadway, installing 1.7

**See Roads on A2**

## Snow at the top



Ella Kuzyk and Katie Brust near the top of Mount Brown in Glacier National Park with Mount Edwards in background. While there is virtually no snow at lower elevations, there is plenty up high. The weather is supposed to take a turn next week after an abnormally wet and rainy December, but very dry January and early February. (Seth Anderson photo)

## Cabin Fever Days a go despite lack of snow in the Canyon

**By CHRIS PETERSON**  
**Hungry Horse News**  
Snow or not, Cabin Fever Days will go on, Ben Shafer of the Cabin Fever Days committee said last week. Organizers are moving forward despite the lack of snow in Martin City for the famous bar stool ski races which draw thousands of spectators as racers cruise in their homemade sleds down Sugar Hill. The unusually warm and dry January and beginning of

February has meant little or no snow. December was very wet, but most of the precipitation at low elevations fell as rain. "We're sticking to it and giving people the best show we can," Shafer said. There's still a slim hope, of course. Shafer said they'd realistically need about 6 inches of snow to put on the races. Snow is the forecast Friday and Saturday. Forty-five sleds have signed up to race.

There's still a host of events on tap, including an arm-wrestling tournament, snowshoe softball, Roshambo, kids 3-legged race, numerous live bands at local bars, a mountain man competition and other surprise events Shafer couldn't reveal just yet. There will also be a free shuttle to get folks to and from various events in the Canyon communities. The entire event was canceled just once in its

47-year history, when the pandemic hit in 2021. The bar stool races were moved to a different street in Martin City one time years ago, but the event wasn't canceled. This is the first time the lack of snow has been a problem. Shafer said they considered hauling snow in, but it takes about 40 dump truck loads to safely put a base on Sugar Hill, and with the lack of snow region-wide, there simply isn't any close enough to make

it economically feasible. They also considered snow machines, but this time of year, ski resorts are using their snow machines to keep their own slopes covered. So there is just one alternative. "Pray for snow," Shafer said. The event, while helping people shake the winter blues, is also a major fundraiser for volunteer fire departments in the canyon and the Canyon QRU. It also donates to

the Canyon Community kitchen, the Sheriff's posse and the canyon cleanup event. Last year it gave back \$10,500 to the community. If snow doesn't come, they simply hope to break even, Shafer said, as all the promotional materials and other advertising are completed. "We need the support of the community this year more than ever," he said. Learn more at the Cabin Fever Days website, cabinfeverdays.com.

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## Weekend weather: Snowy, 30-40s

