



ELECTION 2025

HELENA'S MAYORAL CANDIDATES FACE OFF



THOM BRIDGE PHOTOS, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Emily Dean and Andy Shirtliff answer questions during a Helena mayoral candidate debate at Brothers Tapworks on Oct. 15 hosted by Montana Free Press.

Dean, Shirtliff weigh in on wide range of issues in last forum before ballots sent out

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Helena's mayoral candidates Emily Dean and Andy Shirtliff faced off Wednesday in the last forum before the general election's ballots are sent out.

Dean, who was elected to the City Commission in 2019 and 2023, is director of engagement for the Montana School Boards Association.

In her pitch to voters, she says she's a third-generation Helenan who does her homework, answering questions with encyclopedic knowledge of the city's processes and history.

Shirtliff is the executive director of the Montana Building Industry Association and was appointed to the City Commission in 2022.

Chief in his campaign has been visibility, referencing his time working in housing and business, and his many, many public appearances at Helena's events.

In the Sept. 9 primary, the first Queen City primary in 24 years, Shirtliff took home 5,470 votes



State Editor Holly Michels asks a question during a Helena mayoral candidate debate at Brothers Tapworks on Oct. 15 hosted by Montana Free Press.

(48.34%) and Dean claimed 4,134 (36.53%).

Also winning the primary for commission candidates were Haley McKnight, Melinda Reed, Ben Rigby and Shawn White Wolf. Reed is an incumbent commissioner.

The general election will be Nov. 4, and ballots will be sent to voters starting Oct. 17. If you're voting by mail, ballots should be sent in by Oct. 28, elections officials

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US Supreme Court hears Montana police case

Challenge to warrantless entry in Anaconda may have national implications

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The U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday heard arguments in the case of a Montana man challenging police's ability to enter his home without a warrant, even when police initially arrived with the intention of rendering him aid.

The case stemming from William Case's 2021 encounter with Anaconda police — in which he was ultimately shot and charged with a crime — may have nationwide implications for warrantless entries made without probable cause, and the justices on Wednesday pressed attorneys repeatedly on how much police need to have already determined regarding an emergency before they breach the home.



Case

Case's ex-girlfriend had notified police that he was armed and suicidal. When they eventually entered his home 40 minutes after receiving the call, an officer shot Case in the abdomen after seeing his arm extended with what looked like a gun, according to court documents. Case was later convicted at a jury trial of assaulting a police officer, but on appeal has argued that the gun should not have been admissible at trial because police entered his home without a warrant.

The nation's high court already determined in 2006 that police can enter a home without a warrant as long as they have an "objectively reasonable basis" to believe someone is seriously injured or in imminent danger of such an injury. However, courts across the country have produced a patchwork of legal standards since that time wherever that threshold has become ambiguous to the facts of the case.

Attorneys for Case assert that law enforcement needs to meet the probable cause threshold, something higher than "objectively reasonable basis," before they cross the door, theoretically preventing overzealous police from entering a home with relative ease.

Montana Solicitor General Christian Corrigan with the state attorney general's office countered that such a change would leave police outside the door of a person in danger, "applying legal standards, rather than saving his life."

Case was sentenced to 10 years with the Montana Department of Corrections and is currently imprisoned at a private facility in Arizona.

Arguments

Even with existing standards for when police can enter a home without probable cause, Fred Rowley,

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NTSB releases report on Lincoln helicopter crash

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The pilot of a Life Flight helicopter out of Missoula that crashed in Lincoln in late August had looked at multiple landing areas, scouted the chosen one and received clearance from a person on the ground that it was safe to land before the aircraft crashed, according to a preliminary report from the National Transportation Safety Board.

The report details the three-person crew's flight in the early morning hours of Aug. 26 that ultimately resulted in the helicopter crashing into a sign 10 feet above the ground near the middle of downtown Lincoln. None of the crew members were injured in the crash.

The crew was responding to a four-wheeler crash and arrived from Missoula around 12:48 a.m., then had to orbit the scene for about 15 minutes as they waited for an ambulance to arrive, according to the report. Skies were clear at the time.

The pilot looked at several possible landing areas during that time and picked a

100-foot-by-100-foot parking lot to land in, identifying trees, wires and tall signs as hazards nearby. Once the ambulance arrived, the pilot took a low pass on the approach path to take a closer look, the report states.

The pilot and crew decided it was safe to land and also discussed an approach and possibilities for if they needed to abort the landing, the NTSB found.

"The pilot then spoke to the ground contact and received a landing zone brief and was told that the landing zone was clear with no overhead obstructions and that the police would block the road," the report states.

The pilot performed a steep approach in order to avoid obstacles and aimed for the middle of the landing zone. When the helicopter was 50 feet above the ground, dust was kicked up by its rotor wash, but the crew was wearing night-vision goggles and could see through the dust, according to the report. They decided to continue the

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SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

A Life Flight helicopter rests on its side after crashing Aug. 26 in Lincoln as a Federal Aviation Administration investigator kneels on the ground.