



A morning at one of Montana's busiest cattle auctions, in photos

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'Must bake' Christmas cookies make some of the best gifts

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## Helena to meet city manager finalists

Public interviews and town halls set for candidates of critical government position

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The final decision may be the City Commission's, but Helena residents still have a chance to meet its city manager finalists.

The role of city manager is one of the most critical in the Queen City's government. Whoever takes over the position following

current manager Tim Burton's Dec. 31 retirement will command over 380 employees and direct a multimillion-dollar budget. The manager's chief goal is to translate the City Commission's direction into action plans.

The Commission, in its quest to find a new city manager, has set up a schedule to get to know the three candidates.

Dec. 8 and 9 will be dedicated to learning more about Janet Hawkinson, a Colorado town manager; Alana Lake, the Montana Public Service Commission executive director; and a California city manager named Douglas Schulze.

Each candidate will have a packed day of tours, meetings and interviews, including discussions with city department heads. However, the public will be able to see two major parts of each finalist's pitch: an interview with the Commission, and a public-facing town hall where citizens are invited to ask questions. The town halls will be partially organized by the Helena Citizens' Council.

Parts of the Commission interviews could be closed if they skew into particularly private topics, the agendas state.

For those who cannot make these meet-

ings in person, the interviews and town halls will be streamed at [zoom.helenamt.gov/j/36053471/publicmeetings](https://zoom.helenamt.gov/j/36053471/publicmeetings), as of Dec. 12.

On Monday, Schulze will be publicly interviewed by the Commission at 8:30 a.m. in room 326 of the City-County Building.

Helena officials said Schulze most recently served as city manager for Banning, California, where he oversaw electric, water, sewer and airport operations in an over \$100 million budget.

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## SHOWER FOR THE SHELTER 'SPEAK VOLUMES TO THE COMMUNITY'S GENEROSITY'



BLAIR MILLER PHOTOS, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Renee Bauer stands next to goods gathered by Soroptimist International of Helena to donate to Family Promise of Greater Helena Shelter for Women and Families for the annual "Shower for the Shelter" drive on Dec. 5, 2025.

## Helena-area organizations, businesses donate truckloads of necessities to Family Promise

INDEPENDENT RECORD

A handful of volunteers boxed up home necessities, toiletries and other goods Friday morning at Uncommon Ground Realty in Helena to donate to Family Promise of Greater Helena that will be used by women and children staying at the shelter as part of the "Shower for the Shelter" drive.

Renee Bauer, executive director of Family Promise, was on hand to collect the donations. She said they will hold on to the supplies until their new shelter now under construction is completed in early spring. The shelter is currently not operating.

"The donations speak volumes to the community's generosity," Bauer said.

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Dennis Storni loads goods gathered by Soroptimist International Of Helena and local businesses that are headed to the Family Promise of Greater Helena Shelter for Women and Families for the "Shower for the Shelter" drive on Dec. 5, 2025.

## Montana teen sues Roblox, Discord

Girl and her mother allege platforms failing to protect minors from exploitation

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A 16-year-old girl from Richland County in northeast Montana and her mother sued the online gaming and communications platforms Roblox and Discord this week alleging their failure to implement age checks and other safeguards led the girl to be groomed and sexually exploited, causing her to contemplate and attempt suicide and leaving lasting psychological harm.

The 117-page federal lawsuit is now one of dozens filed against Roblox, Discord and other online platforms across the country — but the first in Montana — that accuse the tech companies of putting growth and profit above protecting the millions of children who use the platforms from pedophiles and others who take advantage of children despite the companies marketing their platforms as safe.

"Plaintiff's mother allowed Plaintiff to use these apps only because she trusted Defendants' representations that their apps were safe for children to use. Plaintiff's family learned the truth only after it was too late," says the lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court of Montana on Wednesday. "Plaintiff's mother discovered that Roblox and Discord had enabled child predators to identify, groom, and coerce Plaintiff into sending sexually explicit images and videos of herself which has ultimately led Plaintiff to threaten and attempt suicide."

The plaintiff, since she is a minor, is identified in the suit only as Jane Doe J.H., while her mother is identified as Jane Doe M.O.

The lawsuit comes as Montana strengthened its Consumer Data Privacy Act this year, adding more protections for minors that require companies operating in Montana to exercise "reasonable care" to avoid a "heightened risk of harm" when the company knows users are, or could be, under age 18. The updates also make it so a data controller cannot process most data of a minor unless they receive consent.

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