



Whitefish Pilot

121st year / issue 25

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

\$1.25



Three of six kittens recovering in Albert's living room. (Julie Engler/Whitefish Pilot)



Gordon, one of two cats with broken legs at KittyMom's Rescue. (Photo provided)



This kitten was found in a parking lot in Whitefish on June 1. (Photo provided)



One of six tiny kittens recovering from ringworm. (Julie Engler/Whitefish Pilot)

Council approves \$63.5M preliminary budget

By **JULIE ENGLER**
Whitefish Pilot

The Whitefish City Council approved its fiscal year 2027 preliminary budget last week totaling \$63.5 million, reflecting a \$2.8 million increase in expenditures.

For the proposed budget, the city's total taxable value for 2027 was estimated at \$106,240,964, a 2% increase over 2026.

"Tax rate changes enacted by the Montana State Legislature have significantly shifted the distribution of taxes among the type of homes in our community," Whitefish City Manager Dana Meeker said. "Second homes and short-term rentals will experience a substantial increase in their property taxes. Even if we were to not increase taxes, their taxes would go up because there is a shift of who's paying the tax."

Primary residences and long-term rentals will experience a modest, inflation-level increase.

With the preliminary budget, Meeker said changes at the state level mean a \$1 million home would see about a \$4.50 increase per month, whereas a second home of similar worth would pay about \$57 per month.

Resort tax collections will provide \$395,501 more in tax relief in fiscal year 2027 than the prior year, but the total property tax relief from resort tax will decrease by \$127,749 from 2026 when the Haskill easement bond

Animal welfare group says cat abandonment becoming an 'epidemic'

By **JULIE ENGLER**
Whitefish Pilot

The phone rang again. Four kittens were found in a pontoon boat after their mother leapt from the craft as its shrink wrap was being removed.

Darcy Albert, president of KittyMOM's Rescue in Kalispell, collected the kittens and returned with a trap to capture the mother cat, which employees at the location deemed wild because she had fled from them.

Albert sat in wait for the cat to return and after about two hours — success. Not wild at all, the mother cat appreciated Albert's attention and was returned to her kittens.

The next day, another call, another kitten — a

pale orange one, alone in a field. Albert figured it was about the same age as the boat litter, so she placed him with the others.

The mother cat pulled him to her, licked the new

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Whitefish school administrator Lori Martin thankful for 35-year career

By **MAGGIE MERCER**
For the Pilot

After 35 years at Whitefish High School, Lori Martin reflects on the blessing that her job has been.

When asked what she most looked forward to about going into work each day, she answered with a smile on her face.

"Besides Jenny [St. Onge, coworker], the personal relationships that I got to build with each individual student and staff member," Martin said. "This is my social outlet."

Martin started at Whitefish High School in 1985 and taught math and physics for 26 years. She took a short break and returned to work in the front

office for the past nine years.

Born and raised in Columbia Falls, Martin earned her teaching degree from Montana State University. While getting her pre-requisites for optometry, she picked up a teaching job and immediately fell in love with the classroom.

"Teaching was the perfect fit for my personality, and so to do that for 29 years, was a blessing," she said.

After teaching, she worked in an optometry office in Whitefish for a few years. While she enjoyed the job, she said that it confirmed for her that she had made the right choice in choosing to pursue teaching and sought to get back into education.



Whitefish High School administrator Lori Martin retired this month after 35 years with the school district. (Maggie Mercer/Whitefish Pilot)

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"It's not about the wins and losses of today but about building the program for the future."

— Glacier Twins Coach Nathan Brown

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Bulldogs play in Shrine game



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