

City Council Work Session

5:30 PM
Council Chambers
March 5, 2018

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Cole, Cromley, Yakawich, Brewster, Ewalt, Joy, Friedel, Gibbs, Ronning, Clark, Brown.

CM excused:

ADJOURN TIME: 9:40 pm

Agenda

TOPIC #1	Montana Legislature Interim Update
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Ed Bartlett: City lobbyist for 10 years. City is primary client. Primary job is education. Must build relationships. Not seeing anything from interim committees that will impact the City. Time to start thinking about legislative session. Hands out 2017 session topics just as an example. Must have team/network of relationships. Public incapacitation – need authority from State legislature. Local option authority, not money. Gas tax increase from last session.
- Clark: what happens if two of your clients disagree? City is the primary.
- Cromley: concerned about statement that Bartlett says “educate, not advocate.” Bartlett: 70%-80% of time is spent on education and the rest on advocacy.
- Yakawich: appreciate the meet and greet, noon teleconferences and reports. Concerned about not being more successful and about coalitions. How can you reassure me that we'll do better? Bartlett: Disagree – look at the issues reports, City is involved with about 30 issues per year. Very few have not been successful. Built teams and that's necessary to accomplish things.
- Cole: Council could be more involved. Attend, participate in lunches, contact legislators personally.
- Ronning: Billings is different from other Montana cities; have more foster kids, human trafficking, etc. Feel it greater here than elsewhere. How do local legislators view these issues? Bartlett: when they work together, could accomplish great things. Proud of local delegation, but need to work together more often.
- Brown: how involved are you with State budget discussions and actions to reduce funding? Bartlett: lobbyists get involved in June/July before session and represent local governments. Always important issue.
- **Public comments:**
- Connie Wardell, PO Box 21432, Billings, Montana: City could lobby more effectively by paying attention to certain things: County Commissioners can be influential because it's a rural legislature; skype with other cities with same issues

and ideas; population thresholds could be used to distinguish. Should invite Legislators to work plan session; need to meet Governor and House and Senate leaders.

- Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, Montana: RTIC March 13-14 agenda includes changing economy and long term viability of present tax structure – definitely impacts the city. Need to develop relationships and issues now, not late in the year. Someone from Council needs to be in Helena, March 13-14.

TOPIC #2	One Big Sky Center – Term Sheet Response
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Put the Phase 1 plan on the City's website.
- Steve Arveschoug, Executive Director, Big Sky Economic Development: 2 public sessions well attended. Have secured about \$535k of the needed \$675k. Will ask Council to contribute \$100k general fund. Proposal is for BSED loan \$400k to DBP, with building as collateral. Brings resources to the table immediately. questions about sign in parking lot, accuracy of website material; will remedy them. Important to continue the public engagement sessions. Immediate steps: finalize funding, draft development/planning agreement with Landmark, execute MOU among local partners.
- Katy Easton, Executive Director, Downtown Billings Alliance: thanks for Council's attendance at public meetings and agree that we need to continue having them through the project. 2016 City Council approved up to \$850k for building; specifically, for the project. Use the building as collateral, greatest asset. Property will be retained for this project. Important to keep moving forward. Will not circumvent Council on building's disposition.
- Dan Brooks, Chamber of Commerce: convention center study being updated by mid-April. Chamber support for the OBSC, 63% of survey respondents said OBSC is important to the city.
- Cole: question about process. Committing only to investigation; need clarity on what to call it.
- Yakawich: thanks for the community events. Might be good to plan for 1 each month or every other month.
- Friedel: perplexed that City is being asked to commit \$100k when City already spent \$830k to buy a building that is part of the project. Why isn't the building being used to generate \$500k? Arveschoug: Scope of work has expanded, asset is protected, leveraging other money to show community commitment. Think that \$100k GF shows community support.
- Ronning: appreciate the community meeting. Received extraordinary comments from people who attended or watched on TV 7. Inspired by number of young people who attended. Hear that OBSC benefits the downtown and medical corridor; what is the value to Heights or West end residents? Arveschoug: Young people support it and will stay or move here and downtown is heart of the community here and other cities.

- Brown: \$400k from DBP and \$100k from City. Concerned that the other partners are committing only \$100k+. Arveschoug: found out that there is little TIF available, reached out to other donors, cobbling together those amounts. Thinks amount that Hammes is committing shows cost sharing and over long period of time, this isn't that big of an investment – prime the pump. City will have to partner on infrastructure.
- Clark: glad this program is different than Thursday's and thanks. Lots of education still needed.
- Brown: any barriers to lending, using building in this way? McCandless: Not at this time but will research and respond.
- **Public Comments:**
- Connie Wardell, PO Box 21432, Billings, Montana: glad that we're working with this developer. Concerned about City spending money now. Who owns the building? Concerned that medical reps weren't at the meetings or here. Careful about spending City money for development planning because that doesn't occur outside the downtown.
- Danny Wyrwas, 2732 Avalon Road, Billings, Montana: need to be looking long term. Billings and MT at critical stage; Billings could grow to 250k population. Should not force density but sprawl is bad. Need a statewide sales tax. Agree that we need transparency – need to see where the money comes from and what it goes to. Need to grow but caution about the project.
- Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, Montana: Friday meeting statement by Mr. Tuss (CTA Architects) – said that City should invest downtown because there's a greater return. Numbers aren't accurate. Don't have time to wait for a study.

TOPIC #3	MET Transit Funding
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Kevin Ploehn, Aviation & Transit Director: introductions. Council has seen some of this before, some is new. Reviews the infrastructure, statistics and operations.
- Questions about tripper (student trip) routes. New busses cost \$450,000. Refurbished about \$260,000. Fares are hurting disabled, debating delaying fare increase.
- Ploehn: cost centers; buses, personnel, customer expectations for technology solutions. Revenue sources: operating subsidy. Future services; trial service to airport, daily fare increases may be delayed, installing AVL system, starting with 5 buses.
- Friedel: also suggested parking in discount store parking lots and about a daytime circulator.
- Clark: what happens if grants disappear? Can't replace grants with fares, even if raised.
- Ploehn: moving toward buying a few refurbished buses, continue working on reserves by increasing revenues and watching expenses. Don't need a mill levy now, but may in the future.

- Ewalt: why do 17 buses need replacing at one time? Grant purchased all at once (approx. FY 2000).
- Cromley: other revenues?
- Ronning: participated in community poverty session last week. Most frequent comment given to her was about MET and costs. Schedule makes it hard to get to groceries.
- **Public Comments:**
- Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, Montana: points out that the MET levy is captured in the Tax Increment Districts and should not be.

Recess at 8:02 pm. Reconvene at 8:10 pm.

TOPIC #4	CIP/ERP/TRP
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Vern Heisler, Deputy Public Works Director: brief PowerPoint presentation and explains purposes and processes.
- Scott Emerick, Public Works Distribution and Collection: brief PowerPoint presentation explains the process, criteria, transfers.
- Dave Watterson, IT Director: brief PowerPoint presentation explains process, ID the committee members, criteria.
- Brown: same RFP system? Watterson: routine purchasing bought from NASBO. Non State contracted items, will use RFP.
- Gibbs: technology security officer? Hired one this year.
- Yakawich: is Council receiving the quarterly updates/advice from Watterson – are they part of “all City email employees.”
- **Public Comments:**
- Steve Ziere, South Billings Urban Renewal Association: 5-year capital plan prepared by the BSURA. Aquatics facility needed, it's in the FY 19. March 19 meeting 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. first time presentation to public. Study presentation to Council at that night's work session. Private user groups have committed that they will fund raise to match City money. 3 facilities identified: aquatics, courts, ice rink.
- Friedel: best location for a center? SBBURA has the money, so that's where the facility will be. Hard to get 3 uses in a single building, so may be broken up.
- Cole: effort to bring ice back to the METRA. This project won't interfere with the METRA project.
- Mike Whitaker, Parks Director: would be a great partnership between Parks and SBURA.
- Ziere: SBBURA will be for youth and adult sports, not competitive sports like is being discussed for METRA.

TOPIC #5	Bresnan Communications Franchise Contract
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- McCandless:
- Won't be presented tonight.
- Friedel: requirement to limit rates? Brent Brooks, City Attorney:
- No. Franchise fee and other charges can be regulated. Very limited ability to control. Tentative date of March 19, 2018 to meet with representative. Send questions in advance, utilize outside attorney with telecommunications experience.
- **Public Comments:**
- None

TOPIC #6	Council Discussion
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Ronning: recognize death in Dave Mumford's family. Condolences.
- Joy: interesting meetings last week about OBSC. Seems to be push and pull between development on west end and in downtown. Not needed and doesn't feel that occurring.

TOPIC #7	Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- None