

Billings City Administrator Weekly Report

November 10, 2023

- 1. Operational Change for Storm Billing** - Public Works is planning to migrate from charging the storm fee as an assessment on property taxes to instead charge the fee on the utility bill effective July 1, 2024, to coincide with the implementation of the new storm rates and rate structure. While there are many communities who still assess storm fees on the property tax statement, it has become more common to charge the fee on the utility bill as it is a type of utility similar to water and wastewater.

The primary advantages of the change are transparency and decreased reserve requirements. Residents are far more likely to look at their utility bill each month and ensure they are being charged correctly than look at their property tax statement which is often mailed to a mortgage holder. Also, when assessed on property taxes, we only receive funding twice per year, requiring Public Works to carry a reserve of about 42%. Currently this amounts to \$2.1M, but as we ramp up spending over the seven years, the reserve requirement would be around \$5.2M. Moving the storm fee to the utility bill will allow us to decrease the reserve needed to 18%, or about \$2.1M, saving approximately \$3.1M that we will not have to put away for reserves.

In the long term, this operational change will increase the efficiency for billing the storm fee. In the short term, it will require an immense amount of staff time and effort to convert from assessments to the utility bill. Thus, if Council has concerns about the change, Public Works is asking for that feedback now via email. If the majority of council does not express concerns, staff will proceed with the work needed to make this change.

Council will still see the final proposed rates and rate structure at a future Budget and Finance Committee meeting and then at a council work session prior to the adoption of annual rate resolution, as well as an ordinance change that will, among other things, make the change to bill for storm on the utility bill.

- 2. Billings/MDT - SWOT-MPO-TMA Meeting** – Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) leadership, including Director Long, Commissioner Aspenlieder and city leaders met for a full day Monday discussing how to make a significant change in how state owned and funded projects are planned, built, and maintained within the city limits. This idea has been promoted by the cities across Montana for decades. The idea is money would flow to the city to design, build and maintain state owned roads within the city limits. The city will have to comply with federal and state standards. The goal is to have more projects completed within shorter timeframes for less money thus resulting in more projects being built consistent with local priorities.
- 3. Heights Water District/City of Billings Meeting** – HWD board members (Laura, Doug, and Ming) their interim manager, Jennifer and I spent most of our time focused on the key issues to be resolved in a new or amended agreement between the city and district. The district wants to remain the sole water deliverer within their district boundary while the city wants to fix problems related to unlimited water, no expiration date and no provisions requiring customers who connect to HWD to annex into the city. This dialogue will continue in January.

4. **Continuum of Care Site Visit in Boise ID** – Members of the CoC along with Don Jones, Mike Yakawich, Tom Rupsis, and I spent 2 days in Boise, ID to learn about solutions to chronic homelessness through permanent supportive housing. The trip was paid for by a grant from the Montana Healthcare Foundation. Boise's success is in a strong partnership between the CoC, City and County that appears to have only begun to flourish over the past few years, particularly since costs of housing have increased so drastically and the community demanded solutions.
5. **Park News** - Parks staff completed winterizations of irrigation systems, restrooms, and park buildings for the season. Fall cleanup and leaf mulching is underway in the parks and will continue as weather allows. A new full-time employee was hired and starts November 13th at Mountview Cemetery. Forestry removed hazardous limbs and dead trees in several parks. Over 150 trees were mulched throughout the parks.

Parks Projects - The slide for Castlerock Park playground has been delivered and is scheduled to be installed on November 13 & 14. The replacement parts for the swings and zip-line are on order and will be installed once they arrive. All structures will be inspected at that time for defects. The new solar lights at Commanche were installed and are working great, creating a much more inviting environment in the park. (See the Parks Project Progress Report attached.)

Recreation - The 2023-2024 Winter Activity Guide is completed, and all November 2023-April 2024 program offerings are open for registration. Click [Billings Parks and Recreation Winter Supplement](#) for the digital copy.

Recreation is excited to announce a new Adaptive Recreation program called Love Serving Autism. LSA is a specialized therapeutic tennis program that will serve autism and development disabilities on and off the courts. A blending of tennis combined with therapy services such as speech, occupational, physical, and ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis), make this a unique program and the first of its kind in Billings.

3rd-5th grade Girl's Basketball heads into its third week of games on Saturday November 11. Tennis is Elementary (Kindergarten-5th grade), one of our many youth tennis programs, wrapped up late last week and the final championship rounds of our Fall Adult Coed Volleyball league will conclude on Sunday November 12.

Cemetery - On Sunday November 5, Mountview Cemetery hosted the inaugural Patriot Run. Sixty-three participants of all ages made their way through the 5k course within the Cemetery. Through the generosity of the sponsors and participants approximately \$2,100 was raised. This money will help up to three families inter their loved one in Mountview's Veteran section. Media coverage was provided by Non-Stop Local, and the Billings Gazette was there to document the event. We would like to thank our generous sponsors: Billings Monument, Wegner Roofing, Alternative Athletics, PlotBox, Pepsi Cola of Billings and Bill and Anne Cole.



6. Next Week's Meetings/Task Forces

- a. Southside Task Force – Thursday, November 16th 6:30 PM, Hope Center.

7. New City Hall Update –

5th floor

Ceiling grid finished on south end and started on the north end.

Lighting control work continued.

Council chamber soffit drywall, blocking and electrical/AV rough in started.

HVAC work around council chambers completed.

4th floor

Taping completed.

Overhead conduit/ cable tray completed.

Elevator lobby soffit still in progress.

Hydronics completed.

2nd floor

Cable tray was started.

Electrical wall rough in complete.

Misc. framing is nearing completion.

Soffit framing around new stairway started.

Plumbing wall rough in continues.

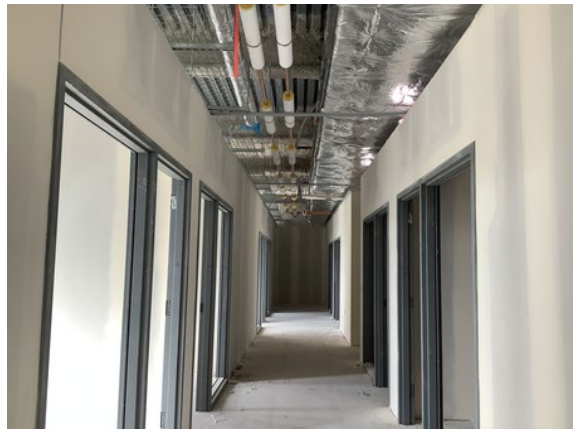
1st floor

Plumbing core drilling got started.

Main water line got relocated.

Soffit layout at new stairway completed.

East side of public access hallway moved for framing access.



8. From the PIO Desk –

Election

Awash in cash, Billings candidates spent big money, but not always for a win

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/billings-votes-for-city-council-judge-bond/article_a4960a88-7f36-11ee-88ad-8768775934df.html

BIL

Billings air service committee discusses future plans for Billings Logan International Airport

https://www.kulr8.com/news/the-billings-air-service-committee-discusses-future-plans-for-billings-logan-international-airport/article_955ee05e-7e90-11ee-b110-bf917ecb7cac.html

PRPL

Photos: Patriot Run at Mountview Cemetery

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/patriot-run/article_71625c16-7c25-11ee-99e7-9336ee6fe95d.html

Billings BIRD finalist for national grant to build dog park at North Park

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/billings-bird-finalist-for-national-grant-to-build-dog-park-at-north-park>

PD

Billings PD's Sgt. Stovall featured in Hometown Hero video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=KHPuOz65gV8Po7rq&v=HpoicCojbWo&feature=youtu.be>

South Side shooting hospitalizes man

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/south-side-shooting-hospitalizes-man-billings-police/article_eafbbec2-7f19-11ee-9fcf-63e9bbaa4ea6.html

Man injured in shooting on Billings South Side street

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/crime-watch/man-injured-in-shooting-on-billings-south-side-street>

One man shot, investigation underway in Downtown Billings

https://www.kulr8.com/news/one-man-shot-investigation-underway-in-downtown-billings/article_d7c38e62-7e96-11ee-ad3c-8b0fe8d8d4d4.html

Billings Police investigating homicide on West End

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/crime-watch/billings-police-investigating-homicide-on-west-end>

Man shot dead Thursday is 5th homicide in Billings in 13 days

https://billingsgazette.com/man-shot-dead-thursday-is-5th-homicide-in-billings-in-13-days/article_5679fb0c-7f86-11ee-b69c-5b7c5799330f.html

BPD on homicide scene on Monad Road

https://www.kulr8.com/news/bpd-on-homicide-scene-on-monad-road/article_f68703ae-7f83-11ee-baac-2b5b442a8de8.html

In other news...

Yellowstone County Commissioners plan to float bond for jail expansion

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/yellowstone-county-commissioners-plan-to-float-bond-for-jail-expansion>

Building a jail no easy decision

<http://bigskybusinessjournal.com/2023/11/07/building-a-jail-no-easy-decision/>

Advocates discuss need for services to stop gang violence in Southeast Montana

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/advocates-discuss-need-for-services-to-stop-gang-violence-in-southeast-montana>

Billings Public Schools aim to add Marine JROTC program in high schools by 2025

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/billings-public-schools-aim-to-add-marine-jrotc-program-in-high-schools-by-2025>

Lockwood gets new fire chief

<http://bigskybusinessjournal.com/2023/11/07/lockwood-gets-new-fire-chief/>

Billings artist fixing damages made towards 6th Street underpass mural

https://www.kulr8.com/news/billings-artist-fixing-damages-made-towards-6th-street-underpass-mural/article_4f84cb2a-7f62-11ee-91b2-6f44a113fbff.html

November 9th, 2023 progress report

Park	Progress	Project	Status	*updated information for this week
	Started ----->	Completed		
Arrowhead playground replacement	<div></div>		Contractor nearing completion	
*Castle Rock playground addition	<div></div>		*Slide replacement parts scheduled for install week of 11/13 by contractor	
Castle Rock parking lot & restroom	<div></div>		Design work with consultant underway	
Central tennis courts replacement	<div></div>		Submitting LWCF paperwork for project reimbursement	
Comanche playground replacement	<div></div>		Playground complete and open to the public	
*Cottonwood Park masterplan	<div></div>		*Presented at November 8th Park Board meeting and approved for recommendation to City Council	
Coulson Park South Improvements	<div></div>		Received approval from US Army Corps of Engineers, proceeding with design	
Gorham irrigation automation	<div></div>		Installation by contractor ongoing	
Grandview irrigation automation	<div></div>		Advertised twice, no bids both times, rebid at a later date	
Highland playground replacement	<div></div>		Playground equipment was delivered, installer under contract for Fall completion	
Millice irrigation automation	<div></div>		Sealed bids opened, project over budget, rebid at a later date	
*North Park adult exercise & shelter	<div></div>		*Old shelter demolished, new shelter building permit under review at City Building Division	
*North Park playground replacement	<div></div>		*Received delivery of new play equipment at Parks shop	
*North Park restroom replacement	<div></div>		*Pre-fab concrete restroom damaged during transport from manufacture, installation being rescheduled	
*Pioneer Park tennis courts replacement	<div></div>		*Consultant submitted Scope of Services, writing contract to proceed	
Poly Vista inclusive playground and parking lot	<div></div>		Landscape Architect hired for design of inclusive playground and complete parking lot for phase II	
Ponderosa irrigation automation	<div></div>		Final walkthrough complete, system fully operational	
Rose Park pool spray equipment replacement	<div></div>		New spray equipment ordered and scheduled for September delivery, contractor to install in Fall	
Skypoint sail replacement	<div></div>		Structural Engineer's report completed, proceeding with recommended repairs prior to painting	