

Billings City Administrator Weekly Report

March 14, 2025

1. **HB 155 and 231** – This week's focus was to educate our state representatives of the significant negative impacts to Billings if HB 155 or HB 231 are signed into law. We are also talking to the Dept. of Revenue, Budget and Governor's office. Monday and Tuesday we will be in Helena to talk with the bills authors and testify on HB 231. The two bills result in a reduction of revenue to the city between \$6.6 and \$6.9 million annually. This is equivalent to nearly erasing the voter approved 2021 Public Safety Levy. Attached are the notes from Tuesday's legislative lunch, Wednesday's Legislative Committee meeting and Andy's presentation.
2. **CJCC Meeting** – See the enclosed draft bylaws.
3. **Library News**- Please see the February 2025 Library Statistics attached.
4. **Heights Neighborhood Plan** – Please see the attached notes from the BPAC, BSEDA/Chamber, and Parks stakeholders meeting.
5. **Lead & Inspire Mentorship Recruitment Event** – Wednesday, March 19th 3:00 – 6:00 pm. Empowering Youth, Transforming Futures Rocky Mountain College, Great Room. The enclosed flyer will be sent out to all city employees on Monday.
6. **2024 Council Meeting Schedule** – Please review the attached draft agendas and provide any feedback regarding the order of business, modification of agenda items, or other changes to the consent or regular agendas. City code requires a specific order of business as it relates to certain items on meeting agendas, e.g., placement of public hearings first on the regular agenda, so your feedback will be incorporated with those code requirements in mind. ([BMCC 2-214](#)) Work session agendas are more flexible and can also easily be modified by the mayor with the consensus of Council during those informal meetings.
7. **Next Week's Meetings/Task Forces**
 - a. Westend Task Force, Tuesday, March 18th 7:00 PM, Connections Church, 56th Street W.
 - b. Legislative and Local Affairs Committee, Wednesday, March 19th 4:00 PM, Rimrock Conference Room, 316 N. 26th Street, 5th Floor.
 - c. Southside Task Force, Thursday, March 20th 6:00 PM, Hope Center, 425 S. 28th.



P.O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103
P 406.657.8433
F 406.657.8390

MEETING MEMO

MEETING DATE: March 11, 2025
BY: Jessica Fust
RE: Discussion of HB 231 and HB 155 with State Legislators
PARTICIPANTS:

Legislators:

- Denise Joy
- Sue Vinton
- James Reavis
- Anthony Nicaastro
- Emma Kerr-Carpenter
- Larry Brewster
- Denise Baum
- Katie Zolnikov
- Daniel Zolnikov

City Council:

- Scott Aspenlieder
- Mike Boyett
- Bill Kennedy
- Roy Neese

City Staff:

- Chris Kukulski
- Andy Zoeller
- Kevin Iffland
- Jessica Fust

Billings Chamber:

- Dan Brooks

Dan Brooks opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for being here to discuss this important issue. Participants introduced themselves.

Dan explained that the Chamber is concerned about maintaining and supporting public safety in Billings and these bills could significantly impact public safety if they pass as written and Billings is forced to make budget cuts in the range of \$6-7 Million.

Andy Zoeller then presented the financial impact to Billings and how the bills affect the City's revenues because of the Billings Charter fixed mill cap. Billings does not have the ability to 'float' mills to make up the revenue difference like other Montana cities can.

There was general consensus that this is a serious issue and that the legislators wanted to help solve the problem. The ideas discussed included:

- Killing these bills and working on passing SB 90 for property rebates, possibly with increasing the rebates to property owners to make it a more attractive option
- Excluding cities with fixed mills from the bill for a period of time: 1 to 3 years was discussed as appropriate time frames

- Requiring all cities in Montana to follow MCA 15-10-420, thereby eliminating the mill cap
- Amend the charter to remove or increase the mill cap through a vote (which would also require a later effective date for the law or specifically for Billings to allow time for change)
- Adjust the State Entitlement Share for Billings to offset the lost revenue from these bills (this would require a different vehicle as the bill titles are not broad enough to include something like that)

Additional remarks included encouraging the city to reach out to the Governor's office directly to make sure they are aware of the issue. The legislators present again expressed a willingness to help solve this issue, but there was no clear consensus on what the best path forward would be.

The meeting ended with thanking the legislators for their time and support in this matter.



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MEETING MEMO

MEETING DATE: March 12, 2025

BY: Jessica Fust

RE: Discussion of HB 231 and HB 155 with Legislative Council
Committee

PARTICIPANTS:

City Council:

- Scott Aspenlieder
- Mike Boyett
- Roy Neese
- TJ Rogers
- Mayor Bill Cole

City Staff:

- Chris Kukulski
- Andy Zoeller
- Jessica Fust

The Legislative and Local Affairs council committee met to discuss the City's position going forward on HB 231 and HB 155. They discussed the possible options and decided on the order of preferred actions:

1. Kill HB 231 and HB 155 and encourage tax rebate (SB 90)
2. Full permanent exclusion/exemption for Billings (or cities with fixed mill caps) from the law
3. 3-yr exemption for Billings (or cities with fixed mill caps). This gives Billings time to amend the charter with a vote and also an opportunity to revise the law during the next legislative session
4. Entitlement share backfill. This is problematic because there would need to be a companion piece of legislation to achieve this, and it also would not be a permanent fix unless there was some provision to adjust it as needed in the future should the deficit change



Billings Levies and the impact of HB 231 & HB 155

Billings' Mill Levy Limitations

- City of Billings Charter Cap
 - 74 mills for General Purpose (1977)
 - 5 mills for Library (1994)
 - 10 mills for Transit (1992)
 - 114 mills for Public Safety (1998, 2020, 2021)
- Voted Debt Mills (permissive)
 - 5.4 mills for Library and Ballpark Debt

Billings 10-Year Mill Levy History

tax year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
General	67.64	70.61	70.61	74.00	74.00	74.00	74.00	74.00	73.10	73.63
Library	4.57	4.77	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.27	4.98
Transit	9.17	9.54	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	8.53	9.95
Public Safety	64.41	64.30	62.40	62.88	60.17	80.00	80.00	114.00	114.00	113.43
GO Bonds	13.05	11.18	10.99	11.24	10.85	10.48	8.30	8.00	6.67	5.38
Total Mills	158.84	160.40	159.00	163.12	160.02	179.48	177.30	211.00	206.57	207.37

tax year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Charter Mills	145.79	149.22	148.01	151.88	149.17	169.00	169.00	203.00	199.90	201.99
Total Cap	155.13	154.22	152.32	151.88	149.17	169.00	169.00	203.00	203.00	203.00
Available Mill Cap	9.34	5.00	4.31	-	-	-	-	-	3.10	1.01

HB 231 & HB 155 Impact on Billings

HB 231

Residential				
Min	Max	TV Rate	Billings Parcels	%
0	720,000	0.9%	37,052	97.7%
720,001	1,440,000	1.1%	737	1.9%
1,440,001	all else	1.9%	149	0.4%

Commercial				
Min	Max	TV Rate	Billings Parcels	%
0	2,000,000	1.50%	3,142	88.8%
2,000,001.00	all else	1.90%	397	11.2%

Current Residential Taxable Value Rate 1.35%

Current Commercial TV Rate 1.89%

HB 155

Residential				
Min	Max	TV Rate	Billings Parcels	%
0	50,000	0.00%	672	1.8%
50,001	500,000	1.00%	33,568	88.5%
500,001	750,000	1.25%	2,940	7.7%
750,001	1,000,000	1.30%	477	1.3%
1,000,001	1,500,000	1.40%	134	0.4%
1,500,001	2,000,000	1.89%	56	0.1%
2,000,000	all else	2.00%	91	0.2%

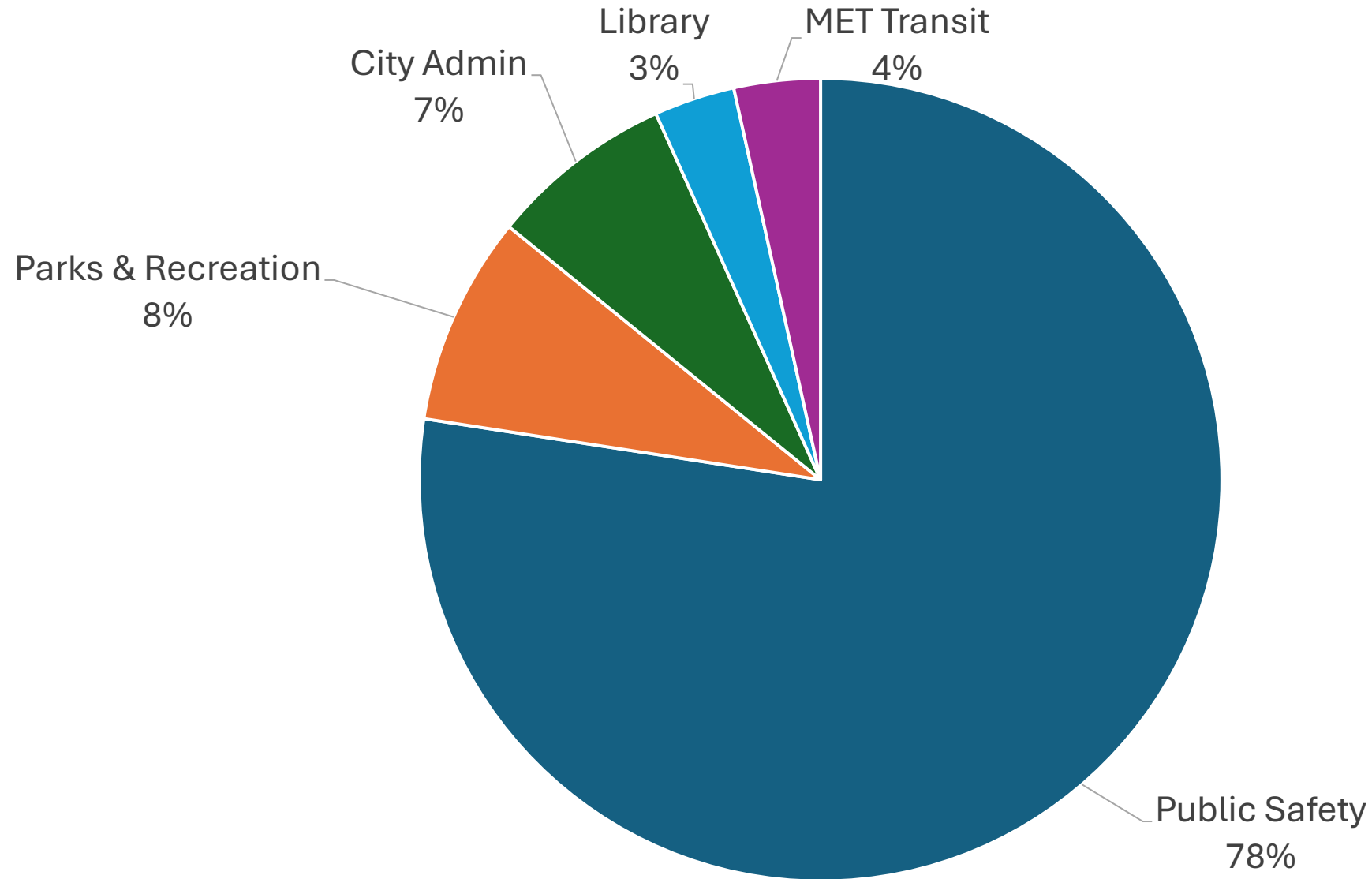
Commercial				
Min	Max	TV Rate	Billings Parcels	%
0	400,000	1.40%	1,684	47.6%
400,001.00	all else	1.89%	1,855	52.4%

HB 231 & HB 155 Impact on Billings

	2025 Current Law	2026 Current Law	HB 231	HB 155
CITY OF BILLINGS	TY2024/FY2025	TY2025/FY2026	TY2025/FY2026	TY2025/FY2026
Total TV (Less Increment)	273,621,835	302,418,146	241,584,616	239,476,179
Value Per Mill	273,622	302,418	241,585	239,476
Fixed Mills	203.00	203.00	203.00	203.00
Debt Mills	4.37	4.11	5.14	5.19
Total Mills	207.37	207.11	208.14	208.19
Tax Revenue	56,740,994	62,633,391	50,284,345	49,856,149

Percentage Change	10.4%	-11.4%	-12.1%
Revenue Change	\$5,892,397	(\$6,456,649)	(\$6,884,845)

Tax Revenue Allocation



\$6.5 Million Budgetary Reduction

Department	\$6.5M Reduction	Potential Impact
Police	2,407,000	24 FTE
Fire	2,052,000	18 FTE
Parks	547,000	8 FTE
Legal	246,000	2 FTE
Courts	157,000	2-3 FTE
Code Enforcement	88,000	1 FTE
Crime Prevention	84,000	
Finance	159,000	2 FTE
Human Resources	82,000	1 FTE
Administration	104,000	1 FTE
Mayor & Council	29,000	
Non-Departmental	108,000	
Library	211,000	3 FTE
Met Transit	226,000	3-4 FTE

Equivalent to 67 FTE across tax funded departments

Billings Compared to Other MT Cities

	Total Tax Revenue			
	2025 Current Law	2026 Current Law	HB 231	HB 155
GREAT FALLS	26,930,269	27,955,753	27,520,382	27,456,619
MISSOULA	50,104,679	51,946,441	51,946,137	51,945,728
HELENA	14,541,234	15,151,476	15,151,883	15,151,680
BOZEMAN	38,780,788	41,260,450	40,178,047	40,335,722
BILLINGS	56,740,994	62,633,391	50,284,345	49,856,149

Billings Compared to Other MT Cities

	Tax Revenue Change		
	2026 Current Law	HB 231	HB 155
GREAT FALLS	1,025,484	590,113	526,350
MISSOULA	1,841,762	1,841,458	1,841,049
HELENA	610,242	610,650	610,446
BOZEMAN	2,479,662	1,397,259	1,554,934
BILLINGS	5,892,397	-6,456,649	-6,884,845

	Tax Revenue Percentage Change		
	2026 Current Law	HB 231	HB 155
GREAT FALLS	3.8%	2.2%	2.0%
MISSOULA	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%
HELENA	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%
BOZEMAN	6.4%	3.6%	4.0%
BILLINGS	10.4%	-11.4%	-12.1%

Discussion

- Q&A
- Potential Solutions?

- Contact Info:

- Andy Zoeller zoellera@billingsmt.gov 406-657-8209
- Dan Brooks Daniel@billingschamber.com 406-580-8560

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL BYLAWS

Article I: Name

The name of this council is the Yellowstone County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, referred to as the CJCC in the following Bylaws.

Article II: Authority

The CJCC is convened under the authority of [_____]. CJCC is an advisory board to the criminal justice system stakeholders in Yellowstone County. Criminal justice officials agree to work together to accomplish the purpose of the CJCC, as set forth below.

Article III: Purpose

Section A. Mission

The CJCC exists to strengthen the local criminal justice system in Yellowstone County and improve the safety of its residents. Its purpose is to 1) facilitate communication and collaboration between criminal justice agencies operating in Yellowstone County; 2) identify and address problems and challenges facing the criminal justice system; 3) ensure fair and just treatment of victims, defendants, and offenders; 4) develop and implement strategies for improving the efficiency of the system; and 5) promote public safety and reduce crime.

Section B. Guiding Principles

1. The CJCC exists to pursue a criminal justice system that is fair, just, and efficient. In this pursuit, the CJCC shall embrace the following guiding principles: system focused, data informed, results oriented, collaborative, consensus driven, shared leadership, transparent, accountable, strategic, educational, innovative, and inclusive of all stakeholder perspectives.
2. The CJCC will endeavor to study the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems in Yellowstone County, identify deficiencies that cross multiple agencies/systems, raise public awareness of the unique needs of the systems, coordinate efforts, and formulate plans and programs to improve the system.
3. The CJCC is committed to the coordinated planning of innovative corrections programs that reflect the County's desire for safety and cost effectiveness.
4. The CJCC will serve as the central planning body for the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems and will make recommendations to the public policy boards on behalf of our justice system.

Article IV: Members

Section A. Membership

1. By Position. There are fifteen (15) voting members of the CJCC who are members due to the positions they hold. The individual shall serve on the CJCC for such time as that person holds the stated office.

- Yellowstone County Attorney
- Yellowstone County Sheriff
- City of Billings Attorney
- The Billings Chief of Police
- The Laurel Chief of Police
- Laurel City Judge
- Laurel Criminal Prosecuting Attorney
- Youth Services Center Director
- Yellowstone County Chief Juvenile Probation Officer
- Billings Region Captain, Department of Corrections Probation & Parole
- Regional Public Defender, Region 3
- Billings City Administrator
- Billings Municipal Court Administrator
- Yellowstone County Public Health Officer
- Warden, Montana Women's Prison

2. By Appointment. There are eight (8) voting members of the CJCC who are members by appointment. The individual shall serve on the CJCC for a two-year term, unless the person no longer meets the eligibility requirements of the position. The individual may be reappointed to additional terms.

- A District Court Judge of the 13th Judicial District, selected by the District Judges
- A Yellowstone County Justice of the Peace, selected by the Justices of the Peace
- A Billings Municipal Court Judge, selected by the Municipal Court judges
- A Yellowstone County Commissioner, selected by the Commissioners
- A representative of District 4 of the Montana Highway Patrol, selected by the Colonel of the Highway Patrol
- Billings City Council Member, selected by the Council
- (2) Community Members at-large, selected by the Chair of the CJCC

3. *Ex Officio*. The Chair of the CJCC may appoint non-voting, ex officio members from among the criminal justice partners in Montana, including the US Attorney's Office, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Montana Attorney General's Office, and similar agencies.

Section B. Qualifications

1. CJCC members shall have primary policy or decision-making authority within their respective agencies.
2. CJCC members may designate an alternate individual within their agency, office, or department to represent them at CJCC meetings, so long as that representative has decision-making or policy-making authority within the organization.

Section C. Expectations

CJCC members are expected to be actively involved, engaged in consensus-based decision-making, and prepare appropriately for Council meetings. Members are expected to review meeting agendas, accompanying documentation and proposed action items in advance of the meeting, and prepare share information during meetings regarding changes in their organization that might impact others in the criminal justice system. CJCC Members must serve on at least one standing committee of the CJCC.

Members shall be transparent, open, and collaborative, working for the improvement of the overall system of criminal justice in Yellowstone County. CJCC members shall be active in committees and/or workgroups.

Article V: Meetings

Section A: Regular Meetings

The CJCC shall meet once per quarter at a time and location specified by the Chair, and with public notice. The meeting schedule may be changed by consensus of the members. Meetings shall be held in February, May, August, and November.

Section B. Quorum

A quorum is no less than a simple majority of the total voting membership of the CJCC.

Section C. Attendance

A member who misses two (2) consecutive regular meetings, or three (3) meetings out of a twelve (12)-month calendar year, without a reasonable excuse as determined by the Chair, shall forfeit membership. The remedy concerning that office being represented on the CJCC is left to the discretion of the CJCC.

Section D. Convening Special Meetings

The Chair of the CJCC may convene a special meeting by written notice, specifying the topic of the meeting or a meeting agenda, served at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance, but otherwise only in case of an emergency. It is the Chair's prerogative to determine an emergency.

Section E. Agendas and Minutes

A written agenda shall be provided to each member of the CJCC at least forty-eight (48)-hours in advance of any regularly scheduled meeting outlining with sufficient particularity any action item that will be proposed for decision at the meeting.

Minutes shall be kept of all meetings. Both agendas and minutes shall be available to the public.

Committee chairs shall provide agendas for Committee or workgroup meetings at least forty-eight (48)-hours in advance of any regularly scheduled Committee or workgroup meeting. Minutes shall be kept of all committee or workgroup meetings. Both agendas and minutes shall be available to the public.

Article VI: Roles and Responsibilities

Section A. Officers

Chair: The Chair of the CJCC is a Judge of the 13th Judicial District. The responsibility of the Chair is to ensure the orderly discussion of issues, to present for discussion the issues and agenda, and to oversee the voting process.

Vice-Chair: the vice-chair of the CJCC is chosen by the CJCC each November, with a term that begins in February and lasts for a period of two years. The duty of the vice-chair is to act in place of the Chair should the Chair be unable to attend.

Section B. Executive Committee

The CJCC shall have an executive committee responsible for guidance and management of the CJCC. The executive committee shall include the officers and the chair of each standing committee. The executive committee shall meet at least every other month, beginning in January of each year. The executive committee shall develop an onboarding program to orient new members to the CJCC's work, and shall also make recommendations to the full CJCC for ongoing training for CJCC members.

Section D. Staff Support

The CJCC shall have the authority to hire such staff as necessary to carry out the duties of the CJCC.

CJCC staff shall act as support to the CJCC and its committees. Communication shall be provided to committees and workgroup membership to maintain continuity and progress toward goals and objectives.

Article VII: Voting

The CJCC is advisory in nature and shall rely on consensus. All decisions of the CJCC shall be reached by the majority of the Members who are present at the meeting when the action item is presented for consideration. No decision may be reached unless a quorum is present at the meeting.

Voting shall be reserved for significant and procedural matters unless otherwise specified in bylaws or as required by open meetings law. Each CJCC member has one vote. A record of votes shall be recorded in the minutes. The CJCC has a conflict-of-interest policy which requires members to abstain from voting when they have a personal and/or fiduciary conflict of interest.

Article VIII: Committees

The CJCC may create and utilize committees for the purpose of addressing complex, ongoing priorities. Committees shall develop and implement initiatives, under the guidance of the CJCC, that advance the strategic work of the CJCC, as well as provide recommendations to the CJCC on cross-cutting, multi-agency priorities or policies.

Membership of standing committees shall include CJCC members and non-members with subject matter expertise. Standing committees shall have a chair or co-chair, with at least one being a CJCC member or designee.

A. Standing Committees. The CJCC shall have the following standing committees, with membership appointed by the CJCC. Additional standing committees may be added through amendment to these bylaws. Standing committees shall meet at least once per month.

- ***Prevention, Diversion & Reentry:*** focuses on crime prevention strategies, diversion programs, criminal mediation, crisis response, homelessness, treatment courts, supports for persons on supervision (*e.g.*, employment, housing, treatment), communication among stakeholders, reducing recidivism, and sanctions. This Committee shall include at least one community member with lived experience in the criminal justice system.
- ***Arraignment, Pre-Trial Services, & Case Processing:*** Focuses on multi-jurisdictional arraignment court, pre-arraignment holding, booking and pre-trial services, timely case processing, and coordination among jurisdictions.
- ***Data, Technology, & Communications:*** Focuses on data and metrics across the system, implementation of evaluations/analyses, technology barriers and needs, external communications with the public (*e.g.*, data dashboards), and systems-level communication tools.
- ***Victim Services:*** Focuses on best practices for supporting victims and witnesses, ensuring continuity of support, preventing crime revictimization, and appropriate restorative justice options. This Committee shall include community members who have been victims of crime.
- ***Juvenile Justice:*** Focuses on violence prevention among juvenile population, diversion options, best practices, youth education and training, youth treatment services, improving system-wide rehabilitation practices, education and training for juvenile offenders, transitions between youth and adult systems, and treatment/problem-solving courts. This Committee shall include at least one community member who has lived experience in the juvenile justice system within the past three years.
- ***Criminal Justice Workforce:*** Focuses on building a local workforce system to ensure adequate workers for criminal justice operations, develop strategies for improved worker retention and attraction, and make recommendations for training and professional development opportunities at a community level.

B. Special Committees or Work Groups

The CJCC executive committee may create special committees or work groups for the purpose of addressing task-specific and time-bound initiatives. Special committees or work groups shall meet on an as-needed basis. Members shall include CJCC members and may also include community members not serving on the CJCC.

Article IX: Planning and Reporting

The CJCC shall produce a three-year strategic plan, identifying goals and outcomes for the criminal justice system in Yellowstone County. The CJCC shall produce an annual report, identifying accomplishments, system needs, and making recommendations to elected bodies. The CJCC may produce additional reports as needed.

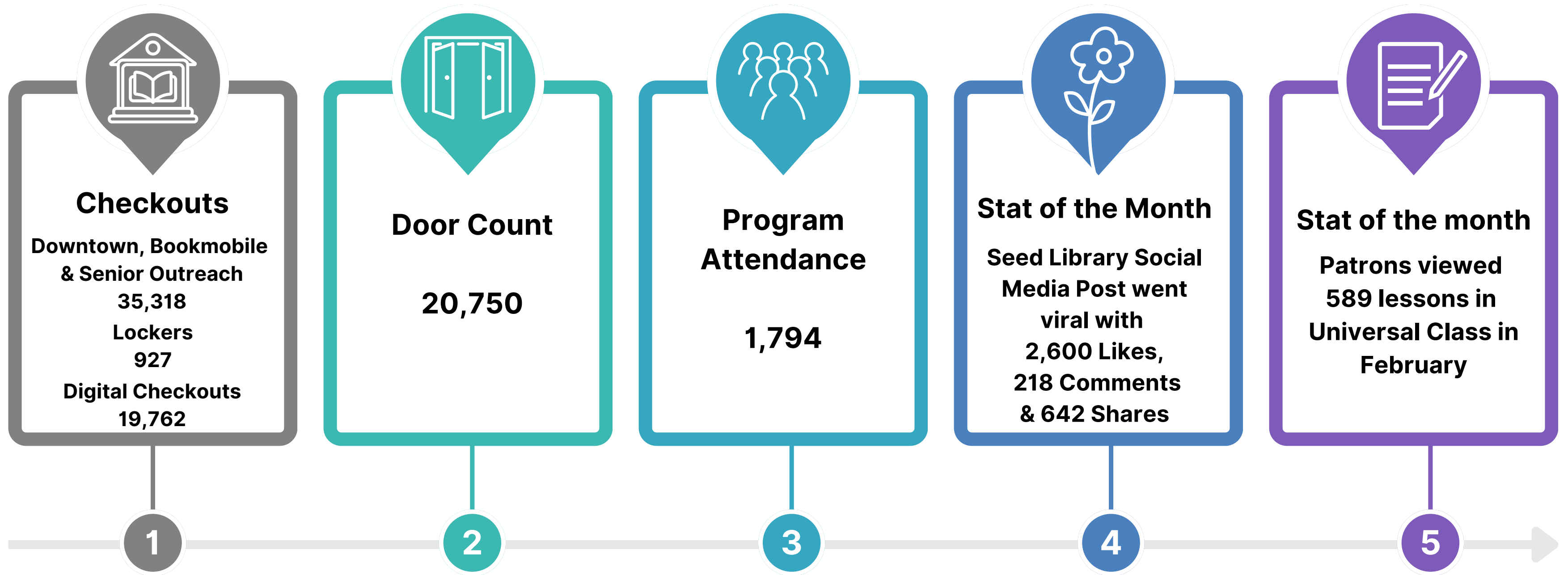
Article X: Amendment of Bylaws

Proposed amendments to the Bylaws are to be included on the agenda of a regularly scheduled CJCC. Any action will become effective immediately.

Approved by the CJCC, _____ -

[vote/date]

February 2025 Library Statistics



PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	2/25/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	11:30 am
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:	ORGANIZATION:		
Elyse Monat	Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); BPAC		
Anna O'Donnel	YMCA; BPAC		
Jason Wood	BPAC		
Dave Coppock	BPAC		
Kristy Halderman	BPAC		
Stephanie Donovan	A&E; BPAC		
Megan McLean	DOWL		
Lisa Olmsted	DOWL		

The DOWL team attended the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee's (BPAC) monthly meeting on February 25 to share an update on the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update and collect feedback from a non-motorized transportation perspective.

Key Takeaways

- Challenges:
 - Perceived lack of support from Heights leadership for sidewalks.
 - Pedestrian connectivity and safety are often considered reactively, after the public is engaged in certain transportation or development projects. Would like to see more forethought as the Heights continues to grow.
 - Noted bicycle crashes on Lake Elmo Drive.
 - Discussed difficulty crossing Main Street.
- Updates since 2006:
 - Safe Routes to School was updated in 2022.
 - Heritage Trail Plain was superseded by the Billings Active Transportation Plan.
 - Facilities listed in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan must be incorporated into new subdivision development plans (only applies to developments in city limits).
 - Kiwanis Trail has been good for keeping kids off the roadway when traveling to/from school and home.
 - New cul-de-sacs within city limits must connect with a pedestrian facility per updated regulations.
- Opportunities/Recommendations:
 - More bike/ped connections away from busy corridors while still offering connectivity (i.e. perhaps more diversions connecting busy corridors to adjacent neighborhood paths or trails).

MEETING SUMMARY

- The Heights has some unique views of Billings and the Yellowstone River. There is opportunity to promote/amplify that. (i.e. when coming down Bench toward Main Street, you see Two Moon Park/Yellowstone River and Four Dances Recreation Area on the left and the rimrocks straight ahead.) Would like to see those unique views protected with future growth/development.
- Would like to see gateway feature welcoming people to Billings in the north side of the Yellowstone River bridge once it opens.
- There seems to be increasing interest among Billings residents to bring back neighborhood businesses (i.e. Harper & Madison, Poly Food Basket, etc.).

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	2/14/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Dianne Lehm		Big Sky EDA	
Cathy Grider		Billings Chamber of Commerce	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	
Megan McLean		DOWL	

The DOWL team presented about the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update to representatives from Big Sky Economic Development Association (Big Sky EDA) and Billings Chamber of Commerce and collected feedback from an economic and tourism perspective.

Discussion from the group included:

- Overview of Plan purpose/focus areas
 - Land Use/Development
 - Community/Public Facilities
 - Transportation/Connectivity
- New developments/changes since the 2006 Plan was adopted
- Challenges and opportunities for future growth/development

Chamber of Commerce:

- Recent / Past Efforts:
 - Chamber has current focus on hosting after-hours events at Heights businesses and hopes to establish a Heights business networking group.
 - Would like to increase Chamber membership to include more Heights businesses. Heights area businesses have the lowest Chamber membership of any other area of Billings but have expressed interest in Chamber services.
 - Chamber is predominantly member-funded.
- Challenges:
 - Ice hockey will be moving to the new sports complex at Amend Park soon, removing another incentive for people to spend money in the Heights.
- Recommendations / Opportunities:
 - Grow Heights membership with the Billing Chamber of Commerce.
 - Start a Heights business round table (perhaps quarterly at a place like Pizza Ranch) to bring new members into the fold, highlight the value of Chamber membership, and discuss challenges and opportunities for Heights businesses.
 - Find ways to collaborate with and revamp Heights Business Association, which isn't currently meeting.
 - Provide Heights specific networking opportunities.
 - Skyway Drive good be a good spot to develop a resort-style hotel (i.e. Sage Lodge, etc.).

Big Sky Economic Development:

- Challenges:
 - Barrett Road (county) is not maintained, weird pockets of county that aren't maintained.
 - Higher cost to develop within the Heights water district.
 - The Heights doesn't have a town center with walkable shopping etc.
 - Out of state businesses typically look at developing along I-90 corridor where infrastructure exists and is reliable.
 - TDS fiber installation is in progress in the Heights but taking longer than anticipated due to geotechnical issues (i.e. ground is more rock than soil, etc.).
- Recommendations / Opportunities:
 - There are opportunities to create attractions unique to the Heights (i.e. Peaks to Prairie; some sort of outdoor event and/or markets centered around certain neighborhoods such as the area from Lake Elmo to Dover Park to get people away from Main Street)
 - Lockwood Industrial Complex would be a good place to develop (i.e. good location for data centers or something similar that would add to the local tax base while also creating jobs – would like to see fewer storage units in this area as they don't create many jobs or contribute as much to the local economy)
 - Opportunity to create a commercial node with a neighborhood shopping area on the north side of the Yellowstone River bridge once bypass opens (i.e. restaurants, convenience store, coffee shop, etc.)
 - Development opportunities in the green space northwest of Highway 212.
 - "Dark fiber" – Fiber is installed along I-90 but it's not yet accessible. If the city/county can tap into fiber, it may change the development potential of those areas.
 - There are a lot of vacant commercial spaces in the Heights with no sale sign (i.e. Stadium Club) that have become a public safety issue. Still need to inventory those spaces and develop a marketing brochure for businesses looking for locations. Engagement with landowners about future plans is needed.
 - Having an anchor event in the Heights could bring people from other areas of town to the Heights (i.e. art fair/market around Lake Elmo or Castlerock Park, a weekday farmer's market, Peaks to Prairie, etc.).
 - Define the Heights neighborhood with gateway signage to give the community pride and ownership. (This could be an action item assigned to Heights Task Force and City/County Planning).
 - Building a base of volunteers and promoting community involvement could be beneficial for the Heights Task Force (more collaboration and inclusion).

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	2/10/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	9:00 am
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:	ORGANIZATION:		
Emily Tyler	Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks		
Scott Reiter	Director of Facilities, Billings Public Schools		
Carolyn Sevier	Yellowstone River and Parks Association (YRPA)		
Megan McLean	DOWL		
Lisa Olmsted	DOWL		

The DOWL team presented about the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update to representatives of agencies that oversee parks and public facilities in the Heights and collected feedback.

Discussion from the group included:

- Overview of Plan purpose/focus areas
- New developments/changes since the 2006 Plan was adopted
- Challenges and opportunities for future growth/development

Schools and Public Facilities:

- **Castlerock**
 - Challenges:
 - Traffic congestion on Governor's Blvd. between Castlerock Middle School and Skyview High School especially during pick-up/drop-off hours.
 - Current Plans/Projects since 2006:
 - Multi-use fields, paths, and a new parking lot were completed at Castlerock Park in the last five years.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Add arrows to the traffic signals on Governors Blvd. to improve traffic flow.
 - School owns narrow strip of land west of Governors Blvd.; there are plans to use this for staff housing, parking, etc. DNRC owns the larger chunk of land west of this strip, which is full of prairie dogs, cacti, etc.
- **Beartooth Elementary, Bitterroot Elementary, and Medicine Crow Middle School**
 - Challenges:
 - Limited pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and the schools. Students walk/bike in the shoulder where there are sidewalk gaps.
 - Pedestrian/bicyclist connectivity issues between Bitterroot and Medicine Crow especially.
 - No sidewalk from Medicine Crow to Barrett Lane or from the trail off Khyl Lane to Wicks.
 - Current/Recent/Future Projects:

- Developed green space with irrigation behind Beartooth Elementary for sports and recreation.
 - Upgraded two fields at Medicine Crow and added a football field, which get used a lot outside of school hours.
- **Independent School**
 - Challenges:
 - Pickup/drop-off and pedestrian safety issues due to the school being located along a highway with limited connectivity to surrounding parks and neighborhoods.
- **Skyview**
 - Challenges:
 - Parking and irrigation continue to be a challenge. Watering Skyview fields with city water costs about \$20,000-\$25,000 per month during the warmer months.
 - Sanbell consulted on the irrigation issue at one point and due to the absence of well water, their recommendations focused on alternate/drought-resistant landscaping.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Look into astroturf, gravel mixture, or other drought-resistant options for landscaping to reduce watering costs.
 - Potential for spring water to be funneled to Skyview into an irrigation pond irrigation pond.
- **Career Center**
 - Challenges:
 - Not accessible for Skyview students due to distance.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Skyway Drive (Inner Belt Loop) could help more students access the career center if buses can take Zimmerman Trail.

State Parks:

- **Lake Elmo**
 - Challenges:
 - Vandalism (i.e. graffiti/property damage in public restrooms, broken glass/trash in parking lots) and littering.
 - Pedestrian safety. Lake Elmo Drive residents organized an action to reduce the speed limit on Lake Elmo Drive from 35 to 25 mph in recent years, but it was unsuccessful.
 - There's currently no sidewalk along the east side of Lake Elmo, or a designated trail/bridge for people from the eastside neighborhoods to use to cross the irrigation canal and access the park. People often use the maintenance/authorized-use only trail west of the canal to walk, bike, etc. but the path is not officially designated for those purposes.
 - Lack of shade structure limits summer camp groups' length of visit.
 - Limited staff/volunteers to manage needed improvements to Lake Elmo.
 - Current Plans/Projects:
 - Emily Tyler, with FWP, is working with local mural artist to paint a mural at Lake Elmo.
 - Plans to update the Lake Elmo master plan which was last updated around 2005. Current plan includes parking lot expansion.
 - Plans are in process to expand the dog park around Lake Elmo.

- Aspirational future projects:
 - Facility for paddle board/kayak rental concessionaire.
 - Small store for snacks, water, sunscreen, etc. to increase comfortability and motivate people to recreate longer.
 - Add shade structures.
- Recommendations / Opportunities:
 - Improved signage (i.e. wayfinding signs, pedestrian crossing, etc.). FWP plans to standardize and overhaul wayfinding signs statewide in the future.
 - More lighting to deter criminal activity and parking lot parties after-hours.
 - Additional connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists especially from Lake Elmo Drive (south of Lake Elmo) to the west side of the lake.
 - Add a bus stop on Lake Elmo Drive.
- **Dover Park/YRPA:**
 - Challenges:
 - With the Yellowstone River bridge opening (via MDT's Billings Bypass project), Dover Park may see an increase in homeless encampments.
 - Current Plans/Projects:
 - YRPA is helping Pioneer School develop a small section of land east of the school into a multi-use field. Timeline depends on completion of gravel pit reclamation.
 - Within 4-5 years, Dover Park is expected to be more fully developed.
 - Master plan recently updated to include expanded footprint.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Potential to provide activity/recreation space for Heights-based summer camp. There are only one or two summer camps offered through the City of Billings that are located/based in the Heights. Parks must have a public restroom and designated shelter to be approved for City of Billings summer camps and recreation.

Billings Parks & Recreation: (virtual meeting with Mike Pigg, director of Billings Parks on Wednesday, February 12)

- Mike is retiring in March 2025.
- Changes/improvements since 2006 Heights Plan:
 - A picnic structure was added to Castlerock Park. This is not a three-season structure as originally planned but if a community center is built in the future that could fulfill the need of a three-season shelter.
 - Signage plan for trails have been semi-implemented – it continues to evolve as the Heritage Trail system continues being developed.
 - Added playground, tennis courts, and parking area to Castlerock Park.
 - The Parks department has implemented strategies for using water more efficiently such as installing centralized control systems, recycling water, more efficient irrigation techniques, etc.
- Challenges/Voids:
 - Funding is a big challenge. Community surveys/outreach consistently show support for parks and community facilities but when voters are asked to support initiatives that would require them to pay for those facilities through taxes/levies/bonds/etc., they overwhelmingly vote against them. Billings residents don't typically vote for initiatives that exclusively benefit another area of town

without some sort of added value to their neighborhood, making it difficult to scale down those initiatives so they are more digestible.

- Bond failed that would have helped build a community center for the Heights, so there's no current plan for a community center. Would like to continue plans for community center if a funding source can be secured.
- Castlerock Park was developed using LWCF funds, so a community center would likely need to be developed on other land due to funding complexities (i.e. along Skyway Drive/Inner Belt Loop).
- No pickleball courts in the heights – players can divide the tennis courts at Castlerock Park, but they must bring their own nets.
- Dog parks are overcrowded.
- When a bond was proposed in the early 2000s to replace Cobb Field with Dehler Park (which would result in the closure of Athletic Swimming Pool), it initially included a swimming pool in the Heights but the bond failed. When the pool was removed, the bond passed. While Oasis Water Park has been a big improvement, many Heights residents still support a community-owned swimming pool.
- There's currently no protective structure at the Heights parks, preventing summer camps from originating in the Heights. There must be a shelter to protect kids from inclement weather while parents are working, etc. Schools aren't very accessible for this purpose during the summer due to deep cleaning and renovation projects that can't take place during the school year.
- Private developers are required to give either 11% of the land they purchase or 11% of its value to the city upon acquisition but there is no plan requirement for future development and often no available funding which results in neighborhood park space becoming neglected.
- Park maintenance and landscaping. Not many people support xeriscaping at community parks because they want to recreate / gather in areas with mowed and irrigated grass, etc.
- Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Community center (with an aquatic feature such as a swimming pool), sports complex, and more park space along Skyway Drive. This may also attract people from other areas of town such as the west end.
 - Proactively acquire land in areas of predicted growth while property values are lower in anticipation of future park and neighborhood development.
 - Safety:
 - Biggest focus around pedestrian safety moving forward should be on lighting upgrades using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
 - Currently seeking funding to add lighting to Castlerock Park. The next biggest need is to add lighting along "Safe Routes to School" routes and in parking lots and other areas where people are gathering when it's dark.
 - Wayfinding sign on trails more important.
 - Continue developing and adding trail connections through the Heritage Trail Plan.
 - Adding a community park (like Castlerock) to the east side of Main Street.
 - When the city inherits 11% of land acquired by developers, it should include long-term development and funding plans.
 - Public engagement:

- When asking citizens if they support parks/community facility initiatives, ask if they would be willing to help fund them. If the answer is no, ask what information they would need to support those initiatives and explain the importance/benefit/value to the community.
- Educate the community about SID/PMD (some city leaders are in favor of selling undeveloped parkland to developers if neighborhoods don't start
 - Add a city maintenance facility in heights so Parks staff could stay in the heights and originate work from there.
 - Find ways to bring people from other areas of town to the Heights in addition to focusing on ways to keep Heights residents in the Heights. Perhaps add more amenities to the Heights parks.

General Plan Recommendations:

- Improved coordination between the Heights and Lockwood (i.e. bring together city/county leaders in those areas to identify challenges and opportunities that impact both areas).
- Improved coordination between state parks and city parks departments (i.e. local FWP and City of Billings)
- Better signage on bike/pedestrian trails showing users how to connect to next segment/roadway/etc.
- Opportunity for increased connectivity between Lake Elmo and Dover Park (about 2 miles), or a marketing campaign (i.e. "Heights Greenway") to increase visibility for the two parks and their proximity to one another.
- Improved connectivity between Independent School and neighboring parks and neighborhoods. It is currently located on a highway which creates pedestrian safety and pick-up/drop-off issues.
- Additional bicycle/pedestrian connectivity from Kiwanis Trail to the new roadway running parallel to Mary Street (construction of this roadway is TBD due to Billings Bypass project).
- Include an action item in the Heights Plan for funding long-term park maintenance and development.
- Include an action item to coordinate with FWP as they update the Lake Elmo Master plan.
- Focus on improvements in the Heights that are equitable with downtown and the west end (i.e. improving dog parks, adding amenities, and building facilities/programs that build community pride and are of the same caliber/quality as west end improvements).
- Maintain smaller neighborhood parks in the Heights to provide residents/kids with green space and park amenities that are close to their homes, so they don't have to travel far to access the large parks.
- Include a public engagement initiative that focuses on activating the Heights community. This could include placemaking principles to explore ways to mobilize individual neighborhoods.
- The Billings Bypass presents an opportunity for an aesthetic Heights entryway. Once the bypass opens, the Heights might be first place people see when they enter Billings. Coordinate with YRPA on "Welcome to Billings" signage. Signage at entryway could also direct people to Lake Elmo and other Heights attractions.



Lead & Inspire

Mentorship Recruitment Event

Rocky Mountain College, Great Room
March 19th 3:00-6:00 PM

Empowering Youth, Transforming Futures

Join us as we bring together community members, local organizations, and business leaders to promote mentorship opportunities in Billings.

Hear from community leaders starting at 4:30 PM:

Dr. Erwin Garcia | School District 2 Superintendent
Jennifer Owen | City Counsel Member
Judge Rod Souza | 13th District Court Judge
Dr. Bob Wilmouth | Rocky Mountain College President

UPCOMING DRAFT AGENDAS FOR COUNCIL / LEADERSHIP

Please review the draft agendas below and provide any feedback regarding the order of business, modification of agenda items, or other changes to the consent or regular agendas. City code requires a specific order of business as it relates to certain items on meeting agendas, e.g., placement of public hearings first on the regular agenda, so your feedback will be incorporated with those code requirements in mind. ([BMCC 2-214](#)) Work session agendas are more flexible and can also easily be modified by the Mayor with the consensus of Council during those informal meetings.

Thank you for your feedback!

March 17, 2025– WORK SESSION (Kennedy will be absent)

1. PRPL Sponsorship Program and Endowment (Brandon Schmidt)
2. 5-Yr. Consolidated Plan Findings (Brenda Beckett)
3. Legislative updates

March 24, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS (Kennedy will be absent)

CONSENT:

1. BID AWARD: Airport's Runway 7/25 Reconstruction
2. BID AWARD: WO 24-32: N. 12th St. Gravel Street Improvements
3. Agreement for Audit and Redesign of the LRTP Project List & Urban Planning Boundary Update
4. Contract with Pride of Montana, Inc. for Custodial Services at City Hall
5. Contract with ABM Industry Groups, LLC for Custodial Services at BOC
6. Sale of Park 1 Ground Retail Space (Unfinished staff memo)
7. Lease Agreement with Yellowstone Ice – Amend Park (Not in AQ)
8. West End Hangar Ground Leases with Beacon Air Group, LLC
9. MET Transit's Title VI Program and Public Participation Plan Update
10. Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Program Update
11. Donation - Library from Friends of the Library
12. Donation – North Park benches from Partners for Parks Foundation
13. Donation – Crime Prevention Volunteer Parking Spaces at Stillwater Garage from WC Commercial
14. Relocated irrigation ditch easement w/Suburban Ditch Company
15. Final Plat – Grove Ventures Sub.
16. 2nd Final/Rdg. ORD – Ward Boundary Expansion Annexation 25-02 – Exchange Subd.

REGULAR:

2. PH and 1st Rdg ORD – ZC 1060 - Text Housekeeping Amendments
 - a. Sec. 27-300, etc. general cleanup to correct errors
 - b. Sec. 27-309, etc. definition of a manufactured home
 - c. Sec. 27-1704, violations of zoning code options
 - d. Table 27-1000, re vehicle sales as a special review in CMU1
3. PH and 1st Rdg ORD - ZC 1062 – Missions United
4. PH and 1st Rdg ORD – ZC 1063 – 4500 Block – King Ave. W.

5. JT PH - Annexation 25-01 and ZC 1061: 441 Riverside Rd. - Wilson Park
 - a. RES Annexing Wilson Park
 - b. 1st Rdg ORD - ZC 1061: 441 Riverside Road, Wilson Park
 - c. PH and 1st Rdg ORD – Annexation 25-01 Ward Boundary Expansion
6. EBURD Tax Increment Assistance - 2115 2nd Avenue North - Air Controls Billings, Inc.

April 7, 2025– WORK SESSION

Executive Session 4:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.

1. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Lora Mattox
2. Police and Fire Annual Report
3. Airport Authority
4. Aspenlieder's Initiative RFP/RFQ
5. Legislative updates

April 14, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1. BID AWARD: 1302 Parkhill (Not submitted)
2. BID AWARD: WO 25-08: Rose Park Trail (Not submitted)
3. BID AWARD: WO 25-11: 10th and Broadwater (Not submitted)
4. BID AWARD: WO 25-25: Culvert Replacement (Not submitted)
5. West end hangar lease w/ TFES 1167
6. Public Sidewalk Easement from Tanner Bennion - Rim Pointe Subdivision
7. Perpetual Right-of-Way Easement for Multi-Use Trail from Griffin Automotive Enterprises, Inc.
8. 2nd Final/Rdg. ORD – Ward Boundary Expansion Annexation 25-01 – Wilson Park
9. 2nd Final/Rdg. ORD – ZC 1060 - Text Housekeeping Amendments (Not submitted)
10. 2nd Final/Rdg. ORD - ZC 1062 – Missions United (Not submitted)
11. 2nd Final/Rdg. ORD – ZC 1063 – 4500 Block – King Ave. W (Not submitted)

REGULAR:

12. PH - Consolidated Plan Findings (Not submitted)
13. Tax Abatement – Rocky Vista University Veterinary school (Dianne Lehm – BSEDA)

April 21, 2025 - WORK SESSION

1. Big Sky Senior Services – Adult Resource Alliance (Erika Purington)
2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Annual Presentation (Elyse Monat)
3. Public Art Policy (Elyse Monat)
4. Snow Plowing Update
5. Legislative updates

April 28, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1. Acceptance of Consolidated Plan Findings

REGULAR:

- 2.

May 5, 2025 - WORK SESSION (BUDGET ONLY)

May 6, 2025 - WORK SESSION Tues. (BUDGET ONLY)

May 12, 2025 (Tues.) REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

- 1.

REGULAR:

- 2.

May 19, 2025 - WORK SESSION (BUDGET ONLY)

May 20, 2025 - WORK SESSION Tues. (BUDGET ONLY)

May 27, 2025 (Tues.) REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

- 1.

REGULAR:

June 2, 2025– WORK SESSION

June 9, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

- 1.

REGULAR:

2.

June 16, 2025– WORK SESSION

Executive Session 4:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.

June 23, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

July 7, 2025– WORK SESSION

July 14, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

2. RES Establishing a Procedure for the Disposition of Unclaimed Property (Has not be submitted into routing in AQ)

July 21, 2025– WORK SESSION

July 28, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

August 4, 2025– WORK SESSION

August 11, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

August 18, 2025– WORK SESSION

August 25, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

September 2, 2025 (Tues.) – WORK SESSION

September 8, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

September 15, 2025– WORK SESSION

Executive Session 4:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.

September 22, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

October 6, 2025– WORK SESSION

October 13, 2025 REGULAR BUSINESS

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

October 20, 2025– WORK SESSION

October 27, 2025 **REGULAR BUSINESS**

CONSENT:

1. [*Council Meeting Schedule for December](#)

REGULAR:

November 3, 2025– WORK SESSION

November 10, 2025 **REGULAR BUSINESS**

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

November 17, 2025– WORK SESSION

November 24, 2025 **REGULAR BUSINESS**

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

December 1, 2025– WORK SESSION

Executive Session 4:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.

December 8, 2025 **REGULAR BUSINESS**

CONSENT:

REGULAR:

December 15, 2025– WORK SESSION

December 22, 2025 **REGULAR BUSINESS**

CONSENT:

1.

REGULAR:

CLERK'S NOTES

*Annual Items shown in Blue

January (First Work Session) after an election: Swearing in of new Councilmembers and Nominations and Elections of Deputy Mayor Pro Tempore

January: Amend Park Development Council Proposed Budget

January: Beartooth RC&D MOU

February or March: Legislative Updates (ODD years only)

March: Budget Calendar

March: Council Priorities

September: City Administrator's Annual Review

October: TRP, ERP and CIP

October: Council Holiday Schedule for December

November (First Regular Business Meeting) after an election: Nominations and Elections of Deputy Mayor