

From: [John Ringert](#)
To: [Mattox, Lora](#); [Monat, Elyse](#); [Neese, Roy](#); [Martonen, Dakota](#); [janderson@yellowstonecountymt.gov](#); [Logan, Rusty](#); [kschnieber@mt.gov](#); [Mehmet Casey](#); [sdonovan@ae.design](#); [michellewilliams@billingsdepot.org](#); [Janet.D.Hardy@p66.com](#); [.MayorAndCouncil](#); [mmorse@yellowstonecountymt.gov](#); [jostlund@yellowstonecountymt.gov](#); [mwaters@yellowstonecountymt.gov](#); [mplecker@yellowstonecountymt.gov](#); [Friday, Wyeth](#); [Vickers, Anna](#); [katie.potts@dot.gov](#); [Wood, Samantha](#); [heather@billingsbird.com](#)
Cc: [Fischer, Lisa](#); [Justin Delgado](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Billings 21st St. Underpass Study - Bi-Weekly Update
Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 3:58:38 PM



Hello PAC Members, Elected Officials, and Interested Parties,

Following is an update on our work on the 21st St Railroad Underpass Study:

Recent Work Activities

- Received some preliminary input from BNSF Railway.
- Completed a draft of the survey questions for Round 2 of the public involvement.
- Completed a draft of the web page for Round 2 of the public involvement.
- Continued work on the alternatives analysis memo.

Upcoming Work Activities

- Continue work on the alternatives analysis memo.
- Receive additional comments from BNSF.
- Continue preparation of the public involvement materials for Round 2 of public involvement anticipated to start in December.

Please contact Elyse Monat (MPO project manager) at monate@billingsmt.gov or myself at jringert@kittelton.com if you have any questions regarding the project or this update.

Thank you for your participation and have a Happy Thanksgiving!

John

John F. Ringert, P.E.
Senior Principal Engineer
Kittelton & Associates, Inc.
101 South Capitol Boulevard, Suite 600
Boise, Idaho 83702

www.kittelson.com
iringert@kittelson.com
208.472.9802 (direct)
208.863.0201 (cell)

From: [Cole, Bill](#)
To: [Council](#)
Cc: [Kukulski, Chris](#); [St. John, Rich](#); [Hoppel, Matt](#); [Rep. Mike Yakawich](#); [Mark Morse](#); [Mike Waters](#); [Chris White](#); [Jon Forte](#); [Charlie Brereton](#); [Dan Villa](#)
Subject: Correspondence concerning forensic mental health facility
Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 4:32:36 PM
Attachments: [2025 11 5 to C. Brereton and D. Villa re MH facility.pdf](#)
[2025 11 11 email Dr. Amy Schuett.pdf](#)
[2025 11 14 letter from Dr. Joe Rich.pdf](#)

Dear Council Members:

I would like to call your attention to two letters that I received earlier this month related to the proposed forensic mental health facility proposed to be located in eastern Montana. Both are from local psychiatrists who are longtime, recognized experts in the field of forensic psychiatry, Dr. Joseph D. Rich, MD, and Dr. Amy Schuett, MD. The letters are attached to this email.

The letters speak for themselves, and I will not attempt to summarize them here except to say that they both argue that the forensic mental health facility should be located in Billings.

I have also attached the letter that I sent to Charlie Brereton (DPHHS) and Dan Villa (MBOI) on November 5, 2025, which you previously authorized and have seen. Charlie and Dan are copied here. To the best of my knowledge, no decision has been made by the Governor and DPHHS about where to locate the proposed facility. Ultimately it will be up to the state to make that decision, not the City of Billings.

As cogently argued in the attached letters, there are many reasons to locate the facility in Billings, and my November 5, 2025 letter clearly states that the Billings City Council does not oppose -- but also cannot currently support -- that option due to the lack of information coming out of Helena and the existence of many unanswered questions. Those include, but are not limited to, the intended scope of the facility, possible long-term goals for growth or expansion of the facility, staffing needs, plans for attracting staff and possible aggravation of local labor shortages, the number of patients/inmates that would be released into our community, plans for reintegration into the community, etc.

If DPHHS decides to engage with Billings in order to further address these and other legitimate issues, in my opinion it will be important to enlist the expertise of various community experts, including those who have worked in the field of corrections and forensic psychiatry. If that happens, and although I will soon be put out to pasture, I hope that you will keep experts such as Drs. Rich and Schuett in mind if it later becomes expedient to put together one or more working groups to wrestle with the many questions raised by the possible siting of a forensic mental health facility in Billings.

Bill

Bill Cole, Mayor
City of Billings, Montana
coleb@billingsmt.gov
406-294-5700



November 5, 2025

CITY OF
Billings
MAYOR'S OFFICE

Charles T. Brereton, Director
Montana DPHHS
PO Box 4210
Helena, MT 59620

Don Villa
Executive Director
Montana Board of Investments
2401 Colonial Drive, 3rd Floor
PO Box 200126
Helena, MT 59620-0126

Bill Cole, Mayor
P.O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103-1178
Phone 406.657.8296
FAX 406.657.8390

Dear Gentlemen:

This letter is provided in response to the request by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Board of Investments (BOI) for proposals from eastern Montana communities interested in hosting a new 32-bed forensic mental health facility.

I was instructed by the Billings City Council to send you this letter respectfully informing DPHHS and BOI that the City of Billings will not be submitting a proposal prior to the November 10, 2025, deadline identified on the MONTANA.GOV website (hb5.mt.gov) for the reasons stated below.

Billings understands the need for a forensic mental health facility in eastern Montana and appreciates the dedicated efforts of the governor, state legislators, DPHHS, BOI, and others to define the scope and identify a location for such a facility. As ably described in the October 2025 report by DPHHS titled *"Building a Foundation for Future Generations: Montana's New Behavioral Health Facility,"* Montana has a growing forensic psychiatric population that is overwhelming the state's limited capacity to diagnose, adjudicate, incarcerate, and reintegrate these individuals.

These realities adversely impact Billings and Yellowstone County as much as any other Montana city or county. Behavioral health issues are key drivers of criminal activity; every year our overcrowded county detention facility must house, without adequate state reimbursement, dozens of individuals who should be receiving mental health services at state-owned facilities; and it takes a lot of time and money for local law enforcement officers to transport individuals with behavioral health issues to western Montana. As a result of these and other challenges, the quality and timeliness of mental health services is often suboptimal, and if individuals are transported to western Montana, it is often difficult for their families to visit and provide valuable emotional support.

However, although we recognize the need for a forensic facility in eastern Montana as a general matter, Billings is not prepared at this time to submit a formal "proposal" asking that such a facility be located here. This is a state project, not a city project. If the city were to submit an

application and actively advocate for it, that would suggest a level of understanding, confidence, and commitment that simply does not exist at the present time.

Going forward, we invite the state to begin a meaningful dialogue with our city and county -- and any other communities that might be interested -- to better define the purpose, size, function, staffing, and operating needs of the proposed institution, and, very importantly, analyze the potential impacts on the host community. Billings is the pre-eminent healthcare center for the Northern Rocky Mountain Region, and we do not want to prematurely close the door on something that might eventually prove to be a good fit. But we also do not want to open the door to something that might have consequences we do not fully understand and might come to regret.

This letter is not intended to identify all the issues that might be relevant to this decision-making process and that should be important to any interested community, but some of the obvious issues are:

- Projections for needed staffing levels by job function and local availability and competition for skilled labor resources;
- Maximum occupancy rate, typical period of incarceration in the facility, and average number of persons discharged into the host community, penal facilities, or alternate custodial settings each year;
- Anticipated demographics of incarcerated persons including county of origin, age, sex, alleged offense, etc.;
- Level of state financial commitment to assist with local gaps in workforce development, step-down capacity, wraparound services, and housing supports;
- Process for discharge planning and information sharing with local healthcare providers;
- Likelihood of future expansion of facility and evolution or change of purpose, including addition of possible non-forensic mental health services;
- Level of state commitment to expanding Medicaid reimbursement rates relevant to local healthcare and service providers.

This list is not exclusive, and other examples would likely be identified as part of the dialogue process. We encourage DPHHS, BOI, the Department of Corrections, and other state agencies to work together in order to create a detailed written analysis investigating these and other relevant issues. In-person meetings might also be helpful, but only a comprehensive written report can provide the data, detailed analysis, and consistent delivery of information that will be necessary for dozens of people in many different communities to determine whether their community is a good fit for this facility.

Thank you again for your work on this valuable project.

Very truly yours,



William A. Cole

Cc: Governor Gianforte



Outlook

[EXTERNAL] State psychiatric mental health facility

From Amy Schuett <athinkshrink@gmail.com>**Date** Tue 11/11/2025 12:33 PM**To** Cole, Bill <coleb@billingsmt.gov>

As a psychiatrist in Montana who has worked at the current state hospital (MSH) for the past year, I am advocating for the new state hospital to be located near or in Billings.

- The new state hospital will evaluate and treat psychiatric patients who are severely ill. These patients often have complex medical and neurological problems. The state hospital refers out for all but routine medical care and treatment. Having the state hospital located around expert care at 2 excellent hospitals will decrease cost of transportation and help with overall care of the patients. We sent patients to Anaconda, Missoula, Helena, Great Falls and even Billings for medical care while I was practicing at MSH
- Currently the MSH relies a great deal on contracted staff- travels (psych techs and nurses) and locums (physicians and NPs). I was a locum at the state hospital for a year on the forensic unit in the main hospital. I thoroughly enjoyed my job. I took on the role of Interim chief of staff during my time there. I considered employment through the state, but my home, my husband and 3 of my 4 daughters are here in Billings. Therefore I chose to decline the state position. I would have readily taken it if in a bigger city. In considering hiring physicians and other professionals for the new hospital, Billings has the best chance of recruiting professionals from the cities and towns in eastern Montana. Psychiatrists are in need everywhere and as it will be difficult to recruit forensic experts to smaller areas. Young physicians often look to areas with excellent school systems, some entertainment, and good restaurants. Being a product of the Billings public schools (Boulder Elementary) and then the Catholic school system (Fratt and Central), I would say we have more to offer than some smaller cities. Billings also has more jobs for spouses or significant others who will work at the new state hospital.
- Yes, we do need a state psychiatric facility in eastern Montana. I would advocate for a civil with step down units, diversion center and on site group homes. This will help with shared staffing and coverage by professionals (SW, physicians, PT, OT, Pharmacist and NPs) rather than forensic. However, the backlog for the forensic evaluations is long and needs to be resolved. If we had a civil unit and a step down unit we could do a diversion type of care that prevents full commitment. Group homes in communities can be difficult to share resources and the population will be less likely to want in their neighborhood which I understand.
- In addition, we have several professional schools and the new state hospital would be an excellent training site for students in all types of medical or related social work fields. I have taught medical students most of my 30 years of professional practice as a psychiatrist and this potential opportunity for students is optimal.

Amy Schuett, MD, LFAPA
City of Billings Resident

Joseph D. Rich, M.D.
1209 Cresthaven Way
Billings, MT 59102
406-606-8983

November 14, 2025

TO: Mayor Bill Cole
FROM: Joseph D. Rich, M.D.

Dear Mayor Cole,

Attached is a letter I have sent to DPHHS Director Brereton and Executive Director Villa in Helena. I hope you will read it and discuss it with your Council members.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Joseph D. Rich, M.D.

Joseph D. Rich, M.D.
1209 Cresthaven Way
Billings, MT 59102
406-606-8983

November 14, 2025

Charlie Brereton, Director
DPHHS
111 N. Sanders St.
Helena, MT 59601

Dan Villa, Executive Director
Montana Board of Investments
P.O. Box 200126
Helena, MT 59620-126

Dear Sirs:

After reading the Billings Gazette article yesterday about the search for a home for the state's new forensic mental health facility, I decided I should provide my unique perspective. I practiced psychiatry here in Billings for forty years. During that time I developed the Billings Clinic Psychiatric Center and served as its Medical Director. Later I served as Medical Director of the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch. During those years I recruited, hired and supervised many psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health professionals. I practiced Forensic Psychiatry for about ten years, and retired in 2011. During my retirement years I served for several years on the Board of Yellowstone County's youth detention facility.

It is my opinion that too many community leaders are missing the most important issue when trying to determine where in Eastern Montana this facility will be located. The issue is that the chosen community must be able to recruit and retain the many highly specialized mental health professionals who will be needed in this type of psychiatric facility. This group of professionals will include forensic psychiatrists, general psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, nurses and behavioral specialists. In addition to the psychiatric assessments that must be performed, there will also be medical as well as psychiatric treatment that must be provided, and much of it will be long term. Reports must be written of diagnoses, opinions and recommendations, and then testimony provided to courts of law throughout the state. Frequently, the testimony will be required to be presented in person in court.

Some of the required staff members can be individuals currently living in most of the Eastern Montana Communities, but they will require specialized training. Most of the specialized mental health professionals needed will not be currently available in any of

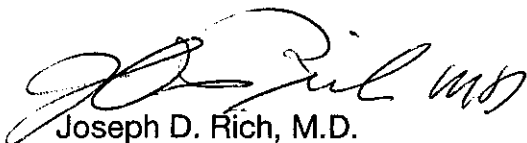
the these communities, and will have to be recruited from elsewhere. This will be the biggest challenge for any community. Potential candidates for these specialized positions will certainly be attracted to Montana for the same wonderful natural resources that we all love. However, they will already have spent many years of their education and work experience in large cities, and will have become accustomed to the resources and amenities available there. They will love Montana, but they will still want easy access to mass transportation and to the same resources and amenities they are used to having. They will also seek employment where they will have peer professionals for relationships and for support.

It is true that eastern Montana is very much in need of this projected facility, and it is most important that it be developed in the right location. This facility must be in a community that can best provide for all of these needs. It is also necessary that this type of facility will have easy access to a general hospital which has all specialties represented. We all know that Billings is the only city in eastern Montana that will meet these needs. Billings has become a large city and has already proven that it can attract and retain specialized professionals in many different areas of our society. This facility must be located in Billings. It will thrive in Billings. Placement in any other community in eastern Montana will prove to be a mistake, and will most likely not thrive.

There is no reason that this new psychiatric facility cannot fit comfortably into our community. It does not have to be built close to existing residential areas. It can be located on the fringe of our city, as long as the staff members don't have to drive too far to work from their homes. The public can certainly be assured of its security as it has been with the women's prison, the county jail, the youth detention center and the Billings Clinic Psychiatric Center. Our business and labor communities will undoubtedly welcome it.

Thank you for your consideration. This is a very important decision to be made, and I strongly urge you to choose Billings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Rich M.D.", written in dark ink.

Joseph D. Rich, M.D.
Board Certified Psychiatrist

From: [Rogers, TJ](#)
To: [Cole, Bill](#); [Kari Boiter](#)
Cc: [St. John, Rich](#); [Denise Boggio](#); [Kevins computer](#); [Hannah Reno](#); [Joe Stout](#); [Jordan Webber](#); [Chris Kukulski](#); [Maddox, Wynnette](#); [Iffland, Kevin](#); [Council](#); [Nelson, Mike](#)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] End of Term Recommendations from the Citizen Police Advisory Board
Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 11:35:47 AM

Is it possible for me to apply for the open position, since I'll be off the Council by then?

Thanks!

From: Cole, Bill <coleb@billingsmt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 10:56 AM
To: Kari Boiter <kariboiter@gmail.com>
Cc: St. John, Rich <stjohnr@billingsmt.gov>; Denise Boggio <dnisey77@aol.com>; Kevins computer <kccholland@charter.net>; Hannah Reno <hreno@kw.com>; Joe Stout <downtownstout@gmail.com>; Jordan Webber <Jordan_webber@mac.com>; Chris Kukulski <cakukulski@gmail.com>; Maddox, Wynnette <MaddoxW@billingsmt.gov>; Iffland, Kevin <ifflandk@billingsmt.gov>; Council <council@billingsmt.gov>; Nelson, Mike <NelsonM@billingsmt.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] End of Term Recommendations from the Citizen Police Advisory Board

Kari:

Thank you for your thoughtful comments and past service on the Citizen Police Advisory Board.

Your points are well taken. My nominations to the CPAB are scheduled to be reviewed and hopefully confirmed by the city council at its next business meeting on December 8th. I have nominated for reappointment all of the veteran CPAB members who wanted to be reappointed (Denise, Jordan, Joe, and Kari). In total, four of the seven nominees are reappointments and two are newbies (Michael Fuss and Derek Grimmel). One seat will be vacant, but that vacancy will be advertised in January so it can be filled as soon as possible. If you, other CPAB board members, Chief St. John, or members of the city council know someone who would be a good candidate to fill that spot please have them apply.

I agree that it's important for existing and incoming council members to attend a CPAB meeting, and thank you for extending that invitation. Chris Kukulski is overseeing the orientation process for new CMs, and I have added him to this email chain.

Thank you again for your service, and I hope everyone has a enjoyable Thanksgiving.

Bill

Bill Cole, Mayor
City of Billings, Montana
coleb@billingsmt.gov
406-294-5700

From: Kari Boiter <kariboiter@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 25, 2025 8:13 PM
To: Cole, Bill <coleb@billingsmt.gov>; Council <council@billingsmt.gov>
Cc: St. John, Rich <stjohnr@billingsmt.gov>; Denise Boggio <dnisey77@aol.com>; Kevins computer <kccholland@charter.net>; Hannah Reno <hreno@kw.com>; Joe Stout <downtownstout@gmail.com>; Jordan Webber <Jordan_webber@mac.com>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] End of Term Recommendations from the Citizen Police Advisory Board

Dear Honorable Mayor and members of City Council,

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Regarding appointment of the next iteration of CPAB members, we strongly believe that some members of the existing Board should carry over to preserve institutional knowledge and prevent the stutter stop-and-start that inhibited the progress of the existing Board. While new perspectives should always be considered, there is a steep learning curve on the issue of policing in Billings and the CPAB has a purposefully-limited scope. Re-appointing some members of the existing Board ensures a seamless transition.

The CPAB also recommends that appointments for the new Board be made before the end of 2025. Considering the language of the resolution approved by City Council in September, all future terms must end no later than December 31, 2029. Postponing appointment past December 2025 cuts into the four-year term that the new Board is limited to. This proved to be a detriment to the success of the existing CPAB.

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sitting member of City Council. Our final meeting of 2025 will be held on December 18th in the Rimrock Conference Room on the 5th Floor of City Hall. We hope you can join us as we conduct regular business and briefly celebrate our shared accomplishments over the past four years.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Citizen Police Advisory Board

Kari Boiter | Denise Boggio

Kevin Holland | Hannah Reno

Joe Stout | Jordan Webber

From: [Maddox, Wynnette](#)
To: [Rogers, TJ](#); [Cole, Bill](#); [Kari Boiter](#)
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Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] End of Term Recommendations from the Citizen Police Advisory Board
Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 4:59:29 PM

TJ ~

The open position will be advertised late December to early January, please feel free to apply. You can find the Citizen Police Advisory Board application on the Board and Commission page on the City of Billings website.

Thanks.

wynnette

From: Rogers, TJ <RogersTJ@billingsmt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 11:36 AM
To: Cole, Bill <coleb@billingsmt.gov>; Kari Boiter <kariboiter@gmail.com>
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strongly believe that some members of the existing Board should carry over to preserve institutional knowledge and prevent the stutter stop-and-start that inhibited the progress of the existing Board. While new perspectives should always be considered, there is a steep learning curve on the issue of policing in Billings and the CPAB has a purposefully-limited scope. Re-appointing some members of the existing Board ensures a seamless transition.

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Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] End of Term Recommendations from the Citizen Police Advisory Board
Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 10:56:03 AM

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Joe Stout | Jordan Webber

From: [Bohlman, Denise](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Work Session Agenda Packet has been posted and published
Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2025 11:50:00 AM

Good morning, Mayor and Council!

The Work Session Agenda Packet for Monday, December 1st has been posted and published and can be reviewed at the link below:

[Work Session Agenda Packet - December 1, 2025](#)

Thank you – wishing you and your families a very happy Thanksgiving!



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