

City Council Work Session

August 3, 2009

5:30 PM

Community Center

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Tussing, Ronquillo, Gaghen, Brewster, Pitman, Veis, Ruegamer, Ulledalen, McCall, Astle, Clark.

ADJOURN TIME: 7:12 p.m.

Agenda

TOPIC #1	<i>Public Comment</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Michele Johnson, 2705 Blue Creek, inquired about the proposed initiative to eliminate some boards and commissions and specifically asked about the Ethics Board. Mayor Tussing explained the process that had to be followed to eliminate a board or commission. Councilmember Ruegamer commented that he felt the Ethics Board was redundant because ordinances were in place to address the issues handled by that Board and he felt it was abused on occasions. City Administrator Volek advised that an ordinance established the boards and commissions and a public hearing and two readings would be required to amend it.

Mayor Tussing acknowledged VISTA Volunteers in the audience who introduced themselves and stated their assignment.

Mayor Tussing announced that it was requested to move Item #5 to Item #2 on the agenda unless there were objections. There were no objections.

TOPIC #5	<i>LED Lighting</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Montana Department of Transportation representative Stefan Streeter advised he was asked to provide an explanation as to why LED lights were not feasible for Shiloh Road. He introduced Steve Keller from the Helena office. Mr. Keller distributed a comparison of high pressure sodium lighting and LED lighting. He reviewed the lighting criteria regarding when lighting was needed and the type required, and explained the requirement for Shiloh Road based on the criteria. He said the minimum criteria was met for Shiloh and there was no overlighting

planned on it. He noted that the State's guidelines were the same as AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials).

Mr. Keller reviewed the diagrams and data on the lighting on Shiloh with both types of lighting. He reviewed comparison data from a manufacturer regarding recommended lighting and photopic data. He pointed out that the comparison indicated that more LED lights would be required to produce the same number of photopic lumens, which would result in a 2% energy use increase. Mayor Tussing asked Mr. Keller if it was his professional opinion that the manufacturer's recommended lighting would not be adequate. Mr. Keller responded that based on the required standards, it would not be adequate. Mayor Tussing stated that if Mr. Keller said the manufacturer was wrong and that did not work, he would take his word for it because he considered him the expert on the topic. Mr. Keller explained that there were two different types of lights and the standard required 19,000 photopic lumens and the manufacturer's recommendation of 9600 was not adequate because it did not meet the standard.

Councilmember Ruegamer asked about cost differences. Mr. Keller said if the 9600 LEDs were chosen, an additional 91 luminaires would be needed at approximately \$1100 each, opposed to \$250 for each high pressure sodium light. Councilmember Ronquillo asked about the life of the lights. Mr. Keller advised that the high pressure sodium light bulbs would need to be replaced after approximately 25,000 hours, and the entire LED fixture would have to be replaced after about 70,000 hours. Mayor Tussing asked about energy savings. Mr. Keller reviewed estimated monthly costs which indicated that LED lighting that met the standard was more costly.

Councilmember Veis asked if an economic comparison of long-term maintenance costs was done. Mr. Keller advised that it was, and there was about an 11-1/2 year payback on the LED lights. He said the new technology indicated that when the luminary reached 70% of its expected life, it had to be replaced, which was expected to be in 11-1/2 years. Mr. Keller explained that in addition to the 2% increase in energy costs, it would cost an additional \$400,000 to install LED lights. Mr. Streeter advised that lights were already being installed near Poly Drive, and if it was decided to use LED lights, there would also be redesign costs and change orders that would typically cost more than what was estimated. He said those costs were unknown at the current time, but he estimated them to be around \$1 million.

Councilmember Ronquillo said that at one time, the City had three options - whether to use LED lights, high pressure sodium lights, or no lights at all. He asked if those options were still available. Mr. Streeter advised there were no options because the lighting was needed and it was a little late to make changes. Councilmember Ronquillo asked if it was possible to put lights on only one side of Shiloh near the big ditch, similar to what was done on State Avenue. Mr. Keller responded that the same criteria still had to be met regardless of how the lights were placed.

Councilmember Pitman asked if Mr. Keller knew anything about the failure rate of LED lighting. Mr. Keller responded that it depended on the manufacturer but it could mean that the whole unit had to be replaced.

Councilmember Veis asked Mr. Keller if it was his opinion that LEDs were not less expensive than high pressure sodium. Mr. Keller responded that based on the lighting standard, the high pressure sodium lights were less expensive. He added that projects could attempt to deviate from the standard but a process had to be followed and support from the State's chief engineer would be required, which he did not believe would happen in that case. Councilmember Veis stated that his issue was that the City had to maintain the lights, which was

a less expensive option now, but when the standards changed in the future, the City would have to pay for the upgrade to LED lights. He said the cheap option could go forward now and the City would pay later, or time could be spent thinking of the future and putting that out there. Mr. Streeter advised that if LED lights were used, the lights needed to be installed according to current standards and it would cost up to \$1 million more. He asked if the City was willing to put up that money for the project. Councilmember Veis said the LED standards should be used and if so, it might not cost as much as Mr. Streeter estimated. He said he did not believe MDT would change its stance, and it was a short-sighted way to look at things.

Councilmember Astle commented that after considering the long-term replacement costs, high pressure sodium was not the least expensive route because the bulbs would be replaced more often, but it was a matter of doing the best that could be done at the time. Mr. Keller pointed out that when a high pressure sodium lamp went out, only the bulb had to be replaced, but when a LED went out, the whole unit had to be replaced at the cost of approximately \$1100 each, and even though that would happen further into the future, it was much more expensive.

Councilmember Ulledalen stated that he thought the LED costs would decrease as time went on and the related technology improved. He asked about a possible retrofit in the future. Mr. Keller advised that some manufacturers claimed to have a retrofit, but most recommended against it right now. Mr. Keller commented that he expected a new standard based on LED technology would be adopted in three to five years. He confirmed that in order to adhere to the current standard, almost twice as many LED lights would be needed along Shiloh, or bigger LED lights would be needed to project the same amount of light and that would result in increased energy usage.

Mayor Tussing asked if the street classification made a difference. Public Works Director Dave Mumford advised that LED lighting was more viable in residential areas. Councilmember Ulledalen stated that twice as many light poles would be unsightly. Councilmember Brewster commented that he thought technology would change that would allow a retrofit, and he also believed that manufacturers underestimated the life of the LEDs. Mr. Keller explained that catastrophic failure would not be seen with LED lighting, but when the output declined to about 30%, the unit needed to be replaced.

Councilmember Ulledalen asked about solar panels with the LED lights. Mr. Keller explained it would mean more expense because a storage unit and battery would be required. He advised that was not cost effective at the current time.

Mayor Tussing stated he wrote to the Governor and MDT Director. He asked if that was the official response from the State. Mr. Streeter advised that MDT Director Jim Lynch intended to call Mayor Tussing.

Councilmember Brewster commented that he agreed it was too early to go with LED lighting because he felt the manufacturing processes and technology would improve and eventually energy savings would be realized.

Ms. Volek explained that construction and installation of the lighting had begun and asked if there was alternative direction from Council. Councilmembers agreed the project should proceed as planned.

TOPIC #2	Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment Results
PRESENTER	

NOTES/OUTCOME	
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Parks, Recreation and Public Lands Director Mike Whitaker advised that the recent parks and recreation needs assessment would provide information about current needs and would help prioritize the needs. He introduced Ananda Mitra from Management Learning Laboratories, the firm that conducted the needs assessment.

Mr. Mitra reviewed the method used in the assessment, and reported that approximately 900 responses were received, which was a 16.5% response rate. He explained that his report reflected analysis of the adult data, and youth data would be collected and analyzed after the start of school. He explained that a web-based survey would be available on the City's website that was available to anyone, but cautioned that the data collected from that survey would not be statistically valid.

Mr. Mitra reported that he would spend the next two days working in the Parks Department to install a computer program that would allow analysis of the data of a long period of time. He said staff would be able to break down specific items by demographics from the survey questionnaire.

Mr. Mitra highlighted major findings of the report. He said the results indicated Billings was doing a good job with its facilities and people were generally satisfied with them. He noted that communication was key in keeping the people informed of what went on and the majority of respondents seemed to prefer to receive information by mail, and also relied on the newspaper for information. Councilmember Brewster asked if the financial questions on the survey differentiated between asking if people agreed more funding was needed for the department or if they were willing to pay more. Mr. Mitra responded that they did to some degree and he would explain that later in his presentation. Mr. Mitra pointed out that within the financial questions, it was clear that people did not agree to sell off park land to fund other park development. Councilmember Ulledalen asked if people understood that the park land that could be sold was undeveloped or if he thought people believed it meant developed parks. Mr. Mitra advised that it could be both.

Mr. Mitra advised that there was significant focus on financial options which asked about increased fees, reduction in services and maintenance.

Mr. Mitra reviewed the results regarding recreation interests and top needs. He summarized that indoor recreation was important to residents; the Parks Department was doing a good job with its facilities and services which contributed to the quality of life; and cutting services was not a solution to funding issues, and increased user fees or taxes could help maintain services.

Mr. Mitra advised that the final report would include recommendations and an action plan. He commented that the study went very fast and the response rate was fairly good. Ms. Volek asked about the timeline for the final report. Mr. Mitra advised it would be after questionnaires were collected from schools. He noted about 500 questionnaires would be distributed, and he hoped to have the final report in mid-September.

Councilmember Clark commented that he attended one of the group meetings and thought it went very well. He added that his wife received and completed one of the questionnaires.

Councilmember Ronquillo commended Mr. Mitra for a good study that would provide valuable information to the department.

Councilmember Ulledalen stated that some park standards were outdated, and he asked if there were evolving standards about what parks were and should be. Mr. Mitra explained that NRPA produced national standards that were based on facility size and not much on programming. He said trends were changing and family recreation had become more important to people but NRPA was resisting that change.

Councilmember Clark asked if park usage had increased. Mr. Whitaker responded that participation had increased and revenue was up \$100,000 over the past fiscal year. Recreation Superintendent Joe Fedin stated that this was the first year of online registrations and about \$50,000 was attributed to that process.

TOPIC #3	Minnesota Avenue Master Plan
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Transportation Planner Lora Mattox reported that the Old Town Neighbors group approached the Planning Department a couple of months ago seeking assistance in preparing a plan to update the Minnesota Avenue area. She said the Old Town Neighborhood Master Plan included the following three projects to improve that area: streetscape improvements along Minnesota Avenue; inclusion of Minnesota Avenue as part of the Historic District; and a pedestrian crossing over the bridge on 25th Street S, a project would include re-use of an existing railroad bridge. Ms. Mattox referred to funding information that was included in a packet provided to councilmembers. She explained that the area business owners were a unified group and were exploring funding options such as grant opportunities. Councilmember Brewster asked where the railroad bridge was. Ms. Mattox responded it was currently near Joliet.

Ms. Mattox advised that the plan was on the August 10 Council agenda for public hearing and adoption. She added that Board of County Commissioners would also review it, and the Planning Board reviewed it and made recommendations.

Councilmember Ulledalen commented that he thought the railroad bridge was a goofy idea until he saw one in Virginia. He asked if it had to be handicapped accessible. Ms. Mattox said it did if CTEP funds were used. Mr. Randy Hafer of High Plains Architects stated that either ramps or elevators could be used and the cost was about the same.

Councilmember Ronquillo stated he had a problem with that idea because it seemed like it was a bridge to nowhere that he did not visualize people using 20 years from now. He asked if another bridge was planned on South 30th and Minnesota. Mr. Hafer advised that was another proposal because the idea was to have two bridges to connect to the historic section of town. He said there were many reasons to provide that type of access.

Councilmember Astle commented that ramps were more conducive for bicycle use. Mr. Hafer said either way would work, but ramps would be better.

Councilmember Ulledalen described a similar area in Roanoke, Virginia, and said he felt there was some merit to it.

TOPIC #4	<i>Transportation Plan Update – Project Review and Prioritization</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Transportation Planner Lora Mattox reported that the 2005 Transportation Plan was being updated to make sure that safety regulations were met. She explained that one process being considered was to look at existing transportation projects. She said some high-ticket projects had been completed and the plan outlined projects to complete in the future.

Ms. Mattox reviewed a priority list from the Board of County Commissioners that was provided in the recent Friday packet. She said the Planning Board would also provide a list of prioritized projects. She requested ideas from councilmembers on what projects should be put into the plan. She explained that a Blue Creek Transportation study was in progress that would be included as part of the transportation plan after it was approved by Council.

Councilmember Brewster asked if another interchange was ever considered west of the river bridge to tie into Metrapark. Planning Director Candi Beaudry advised that she heard there was not enough separation from the 27th Street and Lockwood interchanges. Councilmember Brewster said he felt people would use the freeway if it was easier to get to it. Ms. Beaudry said it could be added to the list.

Councilmember Ulledalen mentioned that the two things he heard in Ward IV were Grand Avenue west of Shiloh, and some type of bike trail from Yellowstone Country Club to Phipps Park. He said that would probably be a project in conjunction with the County. He commented that the improvements on Rimrock Road resulted in increased use of the path.

Councilmember Veis asked if the list provided was the County's ranking. Ms. Mattox advised that was correct and the City had to prioritize the list. Ms. Volek asked about the timeline. Ms. Mattox said they were trying to get the transportation plan completed by fall and intended to conduct public hearings in September, with the 45-day review period to be complete by the end of October. Planning Manager Wyeth Friday explained the rankings that were displayed on the map distributed by Ms. Mattox.

Councilmember Brewster suggested having councilmembers email their priorities. Mayor Tussing asked if projects had to be prioritized even if there was funding for them. Ms. Beaudry said those projects should be included because construction would not start until after the plan was adopted. She said the likely sources of funding had to be identified also. Councilmember Ulledalen stated Council needed to consider whether or not federal funds would be requested for road projects. Ms. Volek advised that staff was trying to determine if the federal funding request should be refocused. She used the example of the increasing importance of trails that could benefit from federal funds. Councilmember Brewster commented that anything highway related needed to be done with federal funds because the City could not afford to fund those projects. He said the local projects that could be on the list for numerous years should be funded locally or they would never be completed. He cautioned that they needed to be realistic because there were more projects than funds. Councilmember Ulledalen stated that more focus should be placed on priorities that could be accomplished and not so much on relying on federal funds. Councilmember Veis advised that the priorities would be placed in the CIP and TIP projects.

Ms. Volek said a prioritized list was needed and asked how Council wanted to get one done. It was consensus to develop a list at the August 17 work session after the BOCC and Planning Board's lists were complete.

Additional Information:

Councilmember Astle advised Ms. Beaudry that he received a call from a citizen about the bike path crossing at Pierce Parkway - that it was difficult to see eastbound traffic when going west, possibly because the angle was wrong. Ms. Beaudry said she would check on it because that problem could be due to the railing.