

City Council Work Session

January 16, 2007

5:30 PM

Community Center

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Tussing, Ronquillo, Gaghen, Stevens, Brewster, Veis, Ruegamer, Ulledalen, Boyer, Jones, Clark.

ADJOURN TIME: 8:00 p.m.

Agenda

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

- KATHLEEN GILLULY, 904 S. 31ST ST. reported that the preparation for the St. Patrick Day parade and committee will not be completed before the event has to be planned or held. Ms. Gilluly asked the Council why the insurance limits have been raised without committee input. City Administrator Tina Volek replied by explaining the following:
 - 1) State Tort Cap limit is the amount of liability that the City occurs if it is below the dollar amount set forth by the State. She further explained the amount the City of Billings would be required to pay is the dollar amount difference.
 - 2) The pooled insurance option requires a dollar amount retainer and then an amount per event per the number of participants in the event on a per day basis.
- Councilmember Jones asked what the dollar amounts were for the pooled insurance.
- Deputy City Administrator Bruce McCandless explained the pooled insurance requires an approximate \$2,000 retainer and then so much per event. He further explained the dollar amount for the events are quoted on the number of participants in the event on a per day basis. He suggested that due to the timelines involved in the events, perhaps it would be more cost effective on an interim basis going forward to allocate Council Contingency funds. Councilmember Jones asked that given the time limits would the Council want to purchase the pooled insurance. Councilmember Veis noted the purchase of the pooled insurance would be completed by mid-February.

TOPIC #2	<i>Teleconference with Jani McCall</i>
PRESENTER	Jani McCall
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Councilmembers moved to the conference room for the teleconference with City Lobbyist Jani McCall. The Council reviewed with Ms. McCall the written report that she

had sent by email. Ms. McCall reported that so far the local government issues are low key. The House of Representatives' meetings are January 9th – 23rd and there are only five (5) bills up for hearing. Ms. McCall also reported that there are more bills in the Senate, but none are high priority for the City. She said there are two (2) bills today in the House for local government. The first one is land use. She stated she did not testify on either bill as both are relatively benign. Ms. McCall reported that the upcoming Thursday noon teleconference is with the Yellowstone County delegation through MSU-B Downtown. In the future she will identify specific issues and try to have legislators on those committees attend these teleconferences.

- Charles Brooks discussed sharing lunch expenses for the legislators.
- Linda Moss announced that the January 29th event at Great Northern is about developing better urban and rural relationships. There is a panel from various cities, including Larry Swanson, COT, etc. Ms. Moss also reported that to date, there is no local Option Bill or Resort Tax Bill. She added that she is working on the Resort Tax Bill amendments in case they're needed. MLCT Director Alec Hansen said these bills will start in the House Local Government Committee with the revenue sharing; the fallback is an accommodations tax with no revenue sharing.
- City Administrator Tina Volek reported that the sponsor for the Shiloh Road legislation will transfer ownership to the City. Ms. McCall replied: "Yes, but I do not know who. Commissioner Kennedy says there are 20 sponsors." Public Works Director Dave Mumford reported it amends the existing bill. He also reported that he wants to make sure to get control along with the maintenance responsibility.
- Ms McCall suggested a bill draft for scenic byways. Mayor Tussing stated that Branae introduced a draft bill for scenic byways. He asked for a status update. Ms. McCall stated she was not aware of this draft bill for scenic byways, however she would check this evening to see if it made the deadline. Mayor Tussing requested to be advised as he would like to know whether it was introduced or whether or not the Council needs to discuss it.
- Councilmember Boyer asked if the BID legislation is the same as the Accommodation Tax Bill. Ms. McCall replied: "No. I will need to look at them together. I do not think it will pass."
- Councilmember Boyer asked if there would be any effect on the Resort Tax Bill. Ms. McCall replied: "No. The Accommodation Tax might be supported by rural legislators." Councilmember Gaghen asked if there would be any restrictions on the use of the money. Ms. McCall stated she did not recall. Councilmember Veis asked if there are any restrictions in the bill. Ms. McCall stated that since it is voter approved, all goes to the local jurisdiction.
- Councilmember Ulledalen asked what the "buzz" was about the local taxes. Ms. McCall stated Dan McGee definitely opposed the resort tax. The tax has a little more momentum than before. Brad Griffith, lobbying for retailers, is considering not opposing.
- Mayor Tussing reported that the Governor was giving him a "bad" time about *Gazette* survey results. The *Gazette* reported only 12% in favor, but 34% support if there is property tax relief. Mayor Tussing also stated he will leave a copy for the Governor tomorrow or Thursday. He supports the tax relief. Ms. McCall stated that is a different

attitude than when he met with MLCT. Mayor Tussing added there was no explanation in the survey.

- Councilmember Boyer suggested polling the Tax Committee members about the local option taxes. Ms. McCall replied: “Yes, we need to communicate with our own delegation; the Senate Local Government committee too, since that’s where they will start in the Senate.” She said the City also needs to set up a more consistent system to work with its bills, possibly focusing on a rating system that indicates support, opposition, watch and degree of importance.
- Ms. Volek asked the Council for comment. Ms. McCall asked how the Council wants her to communicate to them - more specific or less; MSWORD format that could be cut and pasted with committee status links, etc. She stated she should have more detail and activity next week.
- Ms. Volek noted that the Local Government Committee meets on Tuesday and Thursday, so Monday evening reports are good for someone to attend the Thursday hearings.
- Mayor Tussing asked if the lunch meeting is all in one place and where. Ms. McCall stated in Room 472 in the Capitol, but she did not know if it’s in the same room each week, however.
- Mayor Tussing requested they call Representative Branae with the information. Councilmember Jones asked what the bill is about. Mayor Tussing replied it was in regard to the scenic byways. The 1999 bill authorized it, but a committee was never formed. It could apply for money for Black Otter Trail, if all is on public property. The bill would force Lynch to form the committee so money can be distributed. He said it would be federal money with state control.

TOPIC #3	<i>Board & Commission Reports</i>
PRESENTER	None
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- There were no Board & Commission reports.

TOPIC #4	<i>Highland Neighborhood Plan</i>
PRESENTER	Lora Mattox
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- City Planner Lora Mattox reported that the two-year old Highland Neighborhood Plan process initiated by the residents and the Council began with a March 2005 kickoff meeting. In May 2005, there were over 2000 letters mailed out to residents about the plan process and meetings. Ms. Mattox also stated that over 30 meetings have been held since the March 2005 kickoff meeting. She noted that each month, the Steering Committee and the public meetings are alternated. She also explained that in November 2006, neighborhood meetings were held on the draft plan. On January 9, 2007, the Planning Board reviewed the document, a recommendation to approve the plan was sent to the Council, and the plan was posted on the City’s website.

- Ms. Mattox reported the planning area definition required lots of work. The North Elevation Task Force is still meeting and supports the planning effort.
- The Planning Division worked with the Highland residents to develop six (6) focus areas of discussion to include:
 - 1) Transportation
 - Intersection issues such as: 13th and Parkhill is considered “dangerous” for pedestrians and vehicular traffic.
 - 2) Institutional Facilities (Hospitals)
 - Mainly focused on improving communications.
 - Get hospitals and MSU-B to notify residents about plans before taking action.
 - MSU-B working hard on it and the hospitals less so, but willing to work on improvements.
 - 3) Land Use
 - Community character (maintain residential character)
 - Encourage infill development or redevelopment that's in character with the neighborhood.
 - May support performance zoning.
 - 4) Housing
 - Revitalization with focus on infill housing (8th and Ave. E) and property maintenance.
 - Focus on maintaining and retaining houses.
 - 5) Parks & Recreation
 - Create pedestrian/bike trails to link parks and recreational facilities.
 - BBWA maintenance is important.
 - 6) Schools & Education
 - To get children safely to the elementary schools through pedestrian routes.
 - Establish school pilot projects.
 - Periodically review a Safe Route to School Plan.
- Ms. Mattox also reported that on February 2nd, comments from the Department Heads will be received and minor language changes will be made.
- On February 12th, the Public Hearing and Resolution of Intent is due to the Council.
- On February 25th, the Council will adopt the plan.
- On March 13th, the Board of County Commissioners will adopt the plan. The likely changes will be on the land use/zoning map with clearer definitions. The preferred land use map has no major changes; however there are concerns about possible commercial encroaching on residential areas along Grand Avenue. There might be some coloration changes on the map for better distinctions.
- Councilmember Ronquillo asked about parking in the residential areas. Ms. Mattox stated she looked at permit parking in Bozeman and Missoula. Billings considered it several years ago, but it was dropped due to many unanswered questions. She also reported that residents can “reopen” the issue if they want to restart the process. She said that the hospitals are hoping that the garage will resolve the parking issue.
- Councilmember Ronquillo said the same problem exists on the 100 block of Alderson.
- Councilmember Boyer asked if a street petition for “no parking”, can that be put in place. Ms. Mattox replied: “Yes, through the Traffic Control Board.”

- Councilmember Boyer recognized the Highland Neighborhood Steering Committee members – Mark Restad and Peggy Greenfield, in the audience.
- See handout attached.

TOPIC#5	<i>Parking Rate Report</i>
PRESENTER	Chris Mallow
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Parking Supervisor Chris Mallow gave the following presentation:

Information:

- “During the June 26th, 2006 City Council meeting, Staff was asked to bring back a report on the impact the rate increase was having on Downtown parking. The rates were changed as follows: Garage hourly rates changed to \$.25/hour for the first two hours and \$1.00/hour after that, to a maximum of \$5.00/day. Monthly garage roof reserved spaces increased from \$20 to \$25. Monthly garage general reserved spaces increased from \$45 to \$50. Monthly garage assigned/basement spaces increased from \$50 to \$65 with a yearly \$10 increase to a maximum of \$100. The street meters were increased from \$.25/hour to \$.35/hour. A discount schedule was set up for the garage rates that will allow parkers who rent a “group” of spaces to receive discounted rates. This report will discuss the impact on garage monthly, garage hourly, on-street meters, 10-hour meters, 10-minute Zones, and enforcing parking around the Medical Corridor and MSU-B. This report was presented to the Parking Advisory Board at its December 2006, and January 2007 meetings.

Garage Monthly:

- “The new monthly rates for all City of Billings’ owned parking went into effect on September 1st, 2006. Overall, the Parking Division has seen a 13% increase in Garage Monthly revenue from September to November of FY06 compared to September to November of FY07. The Parking Division has not seen any dramatic variance in the utilization of garage monthly spaces since the new rates have gone into effect for three of the four garages. Park 4, located at 31st Street and 6th Ave., has seen a significant decrease only in the assigned spaces; also per the rate resolution the secured basement of Park 4 was entirely converted to assigned parking. This added to the overall number of assigned spaces and brought the overall garage utilization down. Park 4 has available monthly non-assigned spaces and no waiting list, as it has since before the rate increase went into effect. Staff believes this migration from the most expensive spaces is due to the availability of less expensive spaces in this garage. The other three garages do not have immediate availability of the cheaper roof and covered spaces and they still maintain a long waiting list for these spaces. If a parking patron wanted to give up their more expensive assigned space for a cheaper space, they would have to go to the end of the waiting list and wait for a considerable amount of time. Staff recommends that more time pass before any changes are made. The Parking Advisory Board agrees with the Staff recommendation.

Garage Hourly:

- “The Parking Division increased the hourly rate on September 1st, 2006. Overall, the Parking Division has seen a 55% increase in Garage Hourly revenue from September to November of FY06 to September compared to November of FY07. One reason for this is the DBA Park & Shop program. Since September 1st, 2006, Staff has seen a decrease in the amount of long-term parkers and an increase in the number of short-term parkers. The DBA Park & Shop program allows its members to purchase a special rubber stamp and this allows them to validate the garage parking tickets. Many of the DBA members use this to provide free parking to their customers and sometimes their employees who were previously paying for their own parking. The Parking Division then bills the DBA for the parking that was validated by the Park & Shop program. The DBA then bills their members for the amount that each member validated. The usage of the DBA’s Park & Shop program has increased approximately 15%, as it provides a way for business to pay for parking for its employees. More downtown businesses and employees are using the 10-hour meters that are located around downtown. These meters are providing an economical alternative for downtown parkers who are on garage waiting lists or choose not to rent a space in the garages. Staff recommends that no change be made at this point to the hourly garage rates. The Parking Advisory Board also recommends that no change be made at this time.

Ten-Hour Meters:

- “Staff and the Parking Advisory Board have worked continuously to identify areas where 10-hour meters could be a good fit. Staff and the Parking Advisory Board have decided to lower the price of the 10-hour meter permit from seventeen dollars (\$17) a month to ten dollars (\$10) a month and to allow the DBA to sell the meter permits at its office. The DBA agreed to provide this service to allow its members and the downtown community and it is not taking any portion of the sale of these permits. So far, the effect has been outstanding. Sale of these permits has increased approximately 184% and awareness of how these special meters can benefit downtown businesses is beginning to spread throughout downtown. Before the cost of the permits was lowered to ten dollars (\$10) and the DBA began selling them, the Parking Division was selling an average of fifteen (15) permits a month, which generated two-hundred fifty-five dollars (\$255) of revenue. In the past two months, the DBA has sold a total of ninety-three (93) permits and generated a total of nine hundred thirty dollars (\$930) of revenue for the Parking Division. Staff has also seen a large number of individuals using coins at the 10-hour meters, which shows there are more permits that could be sold. Staff recommends making no changes at this time as these meters are fulfilling their purpose. The Parking Advisory Board agrees with the Staff recommendation and states that this issue was added to the agenda and will be reviewed every month. The Parking Advisory Board also wants to put a map of all downtown parking spaces on the City’s website and will work with the Parking Staff and other City Departments to implement this goal.

On-street Meters:

- “The new rate for the on-street short-term meters went into effect around August 20th, 2006. The new meter rates went into effect with minimal public outcry and Staff has had no negative comments from downtown merchants about the meter rates reducing their

business. There has been a positive revenue impact from this increase; the increase in meter collections is in line with the 9% - 10% that the Parking Advisory Board and Staff projected when the rate increase was approved by City Council. There is still congested parking in some areas. Staff finds this happens mainly during the lunch hour but, as a whole, there appears to be more turnover and more availability of on-street parking. Staff has also noticed that downtown patrons are using more parking tokens that are available through the DBA. Many businesses are buying rolls so they can provide free parking for their customers. Many people who work and come downtown frequently also seem to be using tokens more frequently. The token program lets patrons park for an hour for a reduced rate and seems to be helping to promote the downtown area. Staff and the Parking Advisory Board recommend not making any changes at this time.

10-minute Zones:

- “During the June 26th, 2006 City Council meeting, Staff asked for additional time to obtain feedback from the Downtown Community about how the Parking Division handled adding and removing 10-minute and Loading Zones.
- Staff prepared a survey and the DBA distributed them. The survey asked the DBA membership how well they liked some different methods of managing these short-term parking Zones. The results were shared with the DBA Board at its October 25th, 2006 meeting. There were two options that were tied as being the best liked of all presented. The first option was to grant the same amount of Zones free on each block and charge for any additional with Parking Advisory Board (PAB) approval. The other was to have the Parking Division manage these zones in the same manner it is currently using, letting individuals send in a Special Parking Application which formally states that they would like to have a 10-minute or Loading Zone added or taken away from a certain area. Part of that application states that the individual making the request needs to poll the surrounding businesses about the requested changes. Once the Parking Division receives the application, it is reviewed and Staff prepares a Request and Recommendation document for the upcoming Parking Advisory Board meeting. In that document, Staff gives its insight concerning the request. The Parking Advisory Board discusses the request at its next meeting and votes on the request. The only cost to the applicant is if implementing the request costs more than one hundred dollars (\$100). The DBA Board was asked to choose one of these two options, mentioned above, that would show what its membership would like to see. The DBA Board recommended the City keep managing these zones the way it does now. The DBA will make a constant effort to let the Parking Division know of any 10-minute and Loading Zones that need to be added or removed. Staff and the Parking Advisory Board recommend that the Parking Division continue with the current method.

Enforcement outside the CBD:

- “Council directed Staff to gather information to help determine if the Parking Division should continue enforcement in the Medical Corridor and around MSU-B. Staff contacted Rod Schaffer from the Billings Clinic, Dan Pohling from St. Vincent’s Hospital, and Barbara Hagel from MSU-B Campus Security. All would like the Parking Division to continue its patrols. They state that not only do they appreciate the service, they do not feel that they have the resources or time to do the parking enforcement

themselves. The Parking Division has collected data which shows that the time spent in these areas is between 30 and 120 minutes per day depending on resources available.

During the time spent in these areas the Parking Division is writing 5 - 25 tickets. Most of the tickets written in these areas are for Handicap Zones, Yellow Zones, and Loading Zones. Staff feels that enforcing these laws is crucial since they help to insure public safety and help control congestion in these busy areas.

- Most of the tickets written in the area of MSU-B are Yellow Zone tickets, written on the “tree” streets as students tend to block the driveways of homeowners in this area. Staff feels that its presence in this area also helps keep people mindful of parking regulations and shows the property owners around MSU-B that their needs are being met.
- Enforcing in these areas generates approximately \$3000.00 per month or approximately \$36,000 per year which is 32.5% of the projected total revenue for parking violations. Staff has identified that the cost of enforcing in this area is approximately \$749.00 per month or about \$8988.00 annually. Staff recommends that the enforcement continue in these areas. The Parking Advisory Board does agree that enforcing the parking in these areas adds to the revenue of the Parking Division, and based on that fact agreed with Staff that the enforcement should continue. Staff and the Parking Advisory Board also feel that these areas should be enforced and the Parking Division is the organization best suited to provide diligent and continuous enforcement.”

After the presentation was completed the Councilmembers asked the following:

- Councilmember Ronquillo asked if there would be a Park IV attendant. Mr. Mallow replied: “Yes. There are two attendants. The first shift hours are from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and the second shift is from 1:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. For customer service reasons, the hourly time does fall off late in the day; however, the garage is a “secured” garage.
- Councilmember Ronquillo asked if this would be cost effective. Deputy City Administrator McCandless suggested talking with the customers. Councilmember Jones stated that if the customers want it, they should pay for it. He also suggested installation of an automated attendant operation.
- Councilmember Ulledalen wanted to know how many customers are on the garage waiting list. Mr. Mallow reported the following:
 - 1) Park II garage waiting list is about 60 people.
 - 2) Aaron Sparbo has asked for 200 spaces.
 - 3) Park III has an approximate six-year waiting timeframe.
 - 4) Park I about 30-40 people on the waiting list.
- Councilmember Ulledalen requested reports to see what happens with waiting lists and revenues after the Park II expansion opens. Councilmember Boyer asked when the Park II garage will be completed. Mr. Mallow replied: “The end of June.”
- Councilmember Ulledalen asked for a breakdown of the meter revenues by zone. Mr. Mallow stated he is working on getting revenues by blocks and/or spaces and is also trying to obtain automation so information collection is easier. Councilmember Ulledalen said that would be good information.
- City Administrator Tina Volek suggested that wireless technology may help. She also stated she talked with Spokane about its program.

- Councilmember Ulledalen stated that he thought the Council should pay attention to several items, i.e. automation and keeping hourly spaces vacant when there are monthly rental wait lists. He also inquired to what the City's ongoing obligation is on Park IV.
- Mr. Mallow stated the garage is on an hourly rate. He also stated that when the rate changed, there were complaints from the long-term parkers using the hourly spaces instead of renting monthly. There was a 55% revenue increase. The long-term parkers found other options i.e. Park and Shop, 10-hour meters, DBA tokens. Mr. Mallow also stated that the 10-hour meter monthly rate has been lowered to \$10/mo. The DBA has been selling permits and “they’ve taken off”.
- Councilmember Gaghen asked if the reason for the increase is due to education about hourly vs.10-hour meters. Mr. Mallow replied; “Yes, with reference to the street meters, there are no substantial complaints about business loss. However, there is more “turnover” reported by the merchants.”
- Councilmember Boyer asked if there is a fine for “plugging”. Mr. Mallow stated the fine is \$25 and that previously it was \$10 for the Loading Zones and the 10-minute Zones. The DBA survey showed no clear favorite, pay-for-space was not supported. The Parking Division will continue with the current method as the preferred option. The DBA will help identify zones that can be eliminated.
- Councilmember Boyer asked, “How do we determine where they should be located?” Mr. Mallow stated some businesses do not want or like the 10-minute Zones. The businesses suggested locating these meters at the end of the block so they benefit many merchants.
- Councilmember Gaghen noted that previously there were 36 minute-meters, which were used for short-term parkers. She asked if a 10-minute zone is a viable replacement. Mr. Mallow said the survey report was too confusing; the merchants want simplicity, but, it’s an option. He also reported there is no enforcement outside the CBD – institutions are not willing to take over. A revenue/cost analysis shows a positive trend and patrolling helps people follow regulations.
- See handout

TOPIC#6	<i>A & E Committee Report</i>
PRESENTER	Bruce McCandless
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Deputy City Administrator Bruce McCandless reported the Committee was initiated in June 2005 and formed in July 2006 to examine a contract, identify problems and recommend changes. He stated the committee met three times and identified problems that included: (1) Section 9 in the standard contract, which didn’t sufficiently indemnify consultants if the City reused or if the consultants wanted to reuse equipment going back to City if it was purchased by consultant and (2) insurance.
- The Committee makes the following recommendations:
 - 1) City can reuse, but must indemnify consultants;

- 2) Equipment use will vary by contract. Where it does, i.e. modeling software, then the City will own. This will be specified in the scope of the work.
- 3) Insurance reflects the MMIA recommendation and transfers risk wherever possible. There are two types: General Liability & Professional Liability. The insurance may be anti-competitive. Consistency is important across the departments. The Committee said it is a policy decision whether to transfer risk and whether it should be in contracts.
- Councilmember Jones asked if all the Staff will be ordered to use the contract. City Administrator Tina Volek replied, "Yes."
- Councilmember Ulledalen asked if Professional Liability and Errors & Omissions are the same. Councilmember Jones stated the options are in multi-year contracts. Mr. Leuthold stated it should be built into the contracts. Mr. Enright reported it had to be renegotiated if a multi-year contract and is not an issue on shorter contracts. Mr. Leuthold reported it is advantageous to look at the contract annually to fit what is happening to the economy. Mr. McCandless stated the insurance is something that has to be repeatedly dealt with. Councilmember Ulledalen said they are trying to insure against an inverse relationship and it is easier for a small firm to withdraw, which may work against the City. Mr. Enright said this places a risk on the taxpayers. It might penalize the firm, but the City is a business.
- Mr. Olsen stated the fee is based on the workload and it could cost several thousand dollars. Mr. Enright noted that if the firm wants the work, then it has to plan for funding. Councilmember Clark suggested keeping it where it will cover the City. Mr. McCandless said consistency and clear identification of limits are important, so consultants can include this cost in their proposals to the City. Councilmember Jones said continuing to enforce it may be tough on smaller businesses and he was not sure if the City would want to take the risk. Mr. McCandless said the Council would have to set a limit.

TOPIC#7	<i>Chamber Hotel B.I.D.</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- City Administrator Tina Volek said "wires were crossed" with the Chamber. The Chamber will be present at the January 29th work session instead.

Additional Information:

- City Administrator Tina Volek asked about the resolution supporting Delta Airlines. She also noted that Aviation & Transit Director Tom Binford had supplied the additional information.
- Councilmember Ruegamer asked about the SkyWest ownership. Mr. Binford reported that SkyWest is a publicly traded company and cannot provide service independently if not paired with Delta.

- Councilmember Boyer asked if US Air is detrimental to the City because it “put’s the staff in a difficult situation”. Mr. Binford replied, “Probably not. Historically Staff has tried to not favor one business over another.” He said he is sometimes asked to write letters of support and usually declines. Councilmember Ruegamer inquired if there is any doubt that Delta will “drop us” if not profitable. Mr. Binford stated that his personal opinion is to not adopt the resolution, but he added it probably won’t really hurt anything either.
- Councilmember Ulledalen said ComAir will lose this fight. They may get access to some US Air hubs that the City does not have access to. Mr. Binford stated he has not heard anything from either Delta or US Air.
- Councilmember Gaghen said this information is worthwhile. This will go on for a long time and will impact the service to the West. She further stated that United serves them but might not have the same number of flights and this needs to be watched. The Statewide Chamber is being approached and the MT delegation is aware of this. She said the City also needs to be ready to react if it sees a detrimental effect.
- Councilmember Boyer stated that Helena and Butte are adopting the resolution, but they have less service. Mr. Binford said this is simple economics and reduced competition leads to higher fares.
- Ms. Volek said she hopes to have resolutions in hand for the January 29th meeting. Councilmember Gaghen stated the employees are causing a lot of this because they will be asked to cut wages.
- Mr. Binford said the U. S. Justice Dept. will have to evaluate the merger and hasn’t usually favored them. He further reported that this process has not started yet. Ms. Volek stated this will not be added to the agenda. She will let them know.
- Councilmember Ronquillo asked if the Crisis Center will be open 24 hours/day. It was originally stated that they would be open less. He also asked if there was a need for a zoning change. Ms. Volek reported that Staff says the zoning is “right” for a 24-hour operation, so they do not need a special review or zone change. She said she will check the records about promising to not operate a 24-hour facility. Councilmember Boyer reported that Police Chief Rich St. John said it is working very well and not impacting the Police as much. Ms. Volek stated it is impacting the hospital emergency rooms (fewer clients) and that’s a cost savings for them. Councilmember Boyer noted the North Elevation Task Force had real concerns. Ms. Volek said she would check.
- Councilmember Ruegamer reported that 13 streetlights are out on Broadwater Avenue. He said he has been complaining to the Street Department and has not had a response. Ms. Volek stated that Northwestern Energy does the maintenance.
- Mayor Tussing asked to talk about the Renae Coppock application for the Events Ad-Hoc Committee. Councilmember Ruegamer said she applied on January 8th, but the application isn’t in the packet. Mayor Tussing named his top 7 applicants and asked to replace Lisa Woods and Kim Albright with Renae Coppock and Lori Simon. The Council concurred.