

City Council Work Session

5:30 PM
Council Chambers
May 27, 2015

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Hanel, Cromley, Yakawich, Cimmino, Pitman, McFadden, Bird, Swanson, McCall, Crouch, Brown.

All councilmembers were present at this work session.

ADJOURN TIME: 9:50 pm

Agenda

TOPIC #1	Tourism Business Improvement District
PRESENTER	Steve Wahrlich and Alex Tyson
NOTES/OUTCOME	

TOPIC #2	Public Works
PRESENTER	Dave Mumford, Public Works Director
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Dave Mumford: PW overview. Budget. Rates. Challenges (pipe sizes, storm drain system, ditch ownership and maintenance, bike path and landscaping maintenance, facility limitations, staff retention).
- Bird: questions about road building and time/cost effectiveness.
- Hanel: Poet Streets SID? Offered three or four times and still no positive SID response from residents; made several attempts to make standards more accommodating for residents.
- Bird: questions about subsidization of these residents and street maintenance. Slight improvements lead to overall maintenance cost reduction.
- Bird: can City ever go in and simply do the work? Council can vote on this, and the City can complete certain improvements, but funding is an issue. City does not have funding to offset the costs for residents.
- McFadden: can City add gravel to alleys after they have been graded? City does this, but there are often issues of the durability/longevity of gravel in alleys.
- Pitman: possibility of five-year arterial construction plan? Can look into this if Mayor and Council direct staff to do so.
- Yakawich appreciates the steady progress. Could City Link news be used to further educate the public on the benefits of public works improvement? What is cost allocation?

Jennifer Duray: cost allocations are funds that go back into the general fund to fund other departments that provide service to public works.

- **Public comments:**

- Tom Zebruchen, 1747 Wicks Lane, Billings, MT: questions for PW: arterial street fees, SBRs. Doesn't believe City is following ordinance for arterial street fees.
- Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT: landscaping on Shiloh Rd. being dug up and installing boulders. Hand pulling weeds on 48th.
- Dennis Ulvestad, 3040 Central Avenue, Billings, MT: commended Mumford and the Public Works staff.

TOPIC #3	Parks, Recreation and Public Lands
PRESENTER	Mike Whitaker, Parks Director
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Mike Whitaker: examining trends and costs for services, budget requests, department overview, community involvement, accomplishments, Park Maintenance District projects and progress, challenges.
- Pitman: where does the 2.4 million visitors statistic come from? From a needs assessment survey.
- McCall: timeline for tennis court completion? Hope to start construction in the middle of the summer, and would like to have them completed by the end of the year.
- Brown: question about water costs for parks. Parks Dept doesn't pay for water in General Funds, but does pay for water in Park Maintenance District Parks. Paid from funds collected from Park Maintenance District fees.
- McCall: how often is water running in the parks? Either during the day (for manual water systems), or at night (for automated water systems). Not 24 hours a day.
- Bird: when will Rose and South Park update the pool facilities? FY 2017 will include a recommendation for updating restroom facilities at those parks.
- Cimmino: is FY 2017 the earliest that restroom facilities can be updated? Parks would need to cancel/reschedule other previously scheduled projects to complete restroom facility updates.
- Cromley: what are programmable park spaces? Empty greenspace/fields in parks that are not assigned specific uses.
- Yakawich: feasible to do concrete patch work instead of waiting for full repair? Creation of the Park Maintenance District is heading in that direction.
- McCall: would like to see enrollment numbers for children playing baseball, soccer, rugby, lacrosse, etc. Approximately 5,000 baseball players, but will research additional figures.
- Hanel: any further discussion for developing a ball field for children with special needs? Could find an existing ball field and convert it into a field for children with special needs. Would take about \$250-300,000 to develop
- McCall: has heard concerns about Rush Park. Would like to have further discussion about the future of this park.
- Bird: too late to revisit the sale of Lampman Park? (could be used for programmable space). Could revisit this; the land has not yet been sold.

- Crouch: lost many trees and shrubs from the winter? John Thompson, Park Superintendent: City did not lose many trees, although the winter was harsh on them. Most trees that were damaged are recovering.
- Bird: is there a way for citizens to find out what types of trees are the best selections for our community? Urban Forestry section on Parks website recommends certain tree types.
- Bird: what percentage of current tree population is at the end of its life? Plan for repopulating? Difficult to say; each tree species has a different life cycle and it depends on the environment that they're in (city, parks, yards, etc.). Replanting program is in place. Over 250 trees will be replanted this year.
- McFadden: would like to see more picnic benches in parks. 75-90 picnic tables have been purchased, benches are purchased annually. Tables and Benches have been placed in several places (Pioneer Park, Riverfront Park)
- Hanel: commended staff for their work on the various Memorial Day events that took place
- **Public comments:**
- Tom Zebruchen, 1747 Wicks Lane, Billings, MT: SBR for \$60k for part-time park employees. What is the city's goal – pay more than WalMart? Whitaker: pay matters to part-time seasonal employees. Parks Dept was able to bring back experienced workers thanks to Council approving a \$1/hr pay increase. Market is the driving factor.
- Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT: State legislature considered funding special needs playground equipment. May have to say no if it's not really worth the money.
- Whitaker: park district project to build splash pad at South Park. Reviews 3 potential sites, and recommends placing the splash pad between the playground and the restrooms.

TOPIC #4	Council's Addition or Deletion to Proposed Budget
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Yakawich: remove court remodeling from budget (\$310,000). Good evidence supplied by residents. Don't need higher security. Could still support accessibility improvements and for additional scanner or other safety item.
- Brown: vote tonight? Tina Volek, City Administrator: need direction from Council so we can change the proposed budget. Public hearing on budget is on 6/8, and that is when Council will vote.
- Swanson: concern is additional office space or other?
- Bird: disagrees with Yakawich. There is a security issue with taking court participants into areas where Staff members work. Council does not have authority to dictate to elected Judge on how to run her court. Need to address municipal court accessibility and security issues. Must take court security seriously.
- Bird: security issue is real, accessibility needs to be improved and scheduling is up to the judge. Employees had an ax to grind.
- Cimmino: SBR was from administration not from court and space was just improved.

- Hanel: Council directed this study due to space needs and security. May be better use of space and improves security.
- McCall: won't support the proposal to remove the court remodel from the budget.
- Brown: no harm in looking at improving security and accessibility at a lower cost.
- Cimmino: should not assume there is an ax to grind. Testimony from City employees is OK and valued.
- McFadden: look at less expensive improvements.
- Bird: frustrated; have been having this conversation for months. Council is not listening to recommendations from paid professional consultants. A lawsuit from someone who may get hurt due to lack of security will cost more than \$310,000.
- Cromley: same concern as Yakawich. Like to see the whole facilities plan first.
- Pitman: thought this was just a discussion, not final decision. Appropriate to see the budget, make an amendment, and discuss at the public hearing.
- McCall: will be at least 5-10 years for the master plan changes to begin/complete
- Volek and McCandless: will send partial \$165,000 remodel information/plan to Council
- Pitman: Arterial fee projects and water/sewer/trash charges to GF depts – get list of projects from the PW Director.
- Bird: Sacagawea Park master plan? Report on Optimist Park planning process. Volek will provide information.
- Cimmino: Mayor's opinion about budget process?
- Hanel: have some questions. Want to see some PW projects that weren't presented. Waste does occur in any government budget, but confident it's a good budget. Uncomfortable with the health insurance committee and decision that insurance contract is an unlimited contract with one hospital. Small city, 2 exceptional medical facilities. Think it should be bid again.
- **Public comments:**
- Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT: questions about 3 budget items. \$11 or \$12 million undesignated reserve – what is to be done with it? Charter/Bresnan payment – used for what? Audit finding about Building Department reserve – what will the city do about it?
- McFadden: question to Mr. Nelson: reserve helps get better bond rates, why should we find ways to spend money?
- Volek: Audit finding relates to Building Department; have about \$500,000 more in the reserve than is allowed. DPARB recommends using Building funds for digitizing Building Department records and to buy equipment that quickens building inspection reporting. Will also recommend reducing roofing permit fee. Charter payment went into general fund reserve; some will be used to balance Police and Fire budgets.
- Tom Zebruchen 1747 Wicks Lane, Billings, MT: reserve is from overtaxing property owners. Balance grew several years.
- McFadden: City staff and department heads did a good job at managing the budget and not overspending.

- Brown: a lot of the reserve was planned because we knew the Public Safety Levy 2 would expire?
- Volek: yes and it also was built by reducing spending.

TOPIC #5	Council Discussion
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Hanel: Pleased that Relay for Life event last weekend was run successfully at Shiloh Conservation area with several hundred participants. Event did not require assistance from any City department, and no City streets were crossed or closed (no need for barricades or stopping traffic). Example of the ability to hold events in Billings without adding additional burdens onto City staff. Great facility to utilize.
- Yakawich: Received a thank you note written in crayon from Matt Lennic's son. Note thanked Council for allowing him to attend and learn about City Council meetings.
- Hanel: receives many notes from citizens and is happy to share them as well, both positive and negative.

TOPIC #6	Public Comment
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- None