

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL
March 21, 2011

The Billings City Council met in special session in the Council Chambers located on the second floor of the Police Facility, 220 North 27th Street, Billings, Montana. Mayor Thomas W. Hanel called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and served as the meeting's presiding officer.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers present on roll call were: Ronquillo, Gaghen, Pitman, Cimmino, McFadden, Ruegamer, McCall, Ulledalen and Clark. Councilmember Astle was excused.

City Administrator Volek noted the only item in the ex-parte notebook that evening was Mr. Bartlett's weekly report that was distributed to the City Council in their Friday packets.

SPECIAL AGENDA:

1. Legislative Review with Lobbyist Ed Bartlett

Mr. Bartlett began his presentation.

- Medical Marijuana: Three-person subcommittee appointed by the chair of the Judiciary Committee was still meeting to combine several bills dealing with regulation and control. No recent news on repeal issues. That day there was a hearing on a House bill that would send repeal to the voters as a referendum.
- HB230: Transfer of the Board of Crime Control from the Department of Justice to the Department of Corrections. Said Attorney Brooks planned to travel to Helena on Tuesday to testify at the hearing.
- HB2: Lots of action taking place in the House and Senate on budget and appropriation bills. House Appropriations Committee and the House passed HB2, and Senate Finance and Claims started its hearings on Friday and went through the weekend. Most likely HB2 will report out of committee with only a few minor changes. Likely to go to the floor of the Senate a week from today.
- HB316 and HB317: Decreases the amount of distributions in numerous statutory appropriations, including entitlement programs. City opposes these bills.
- HB439: \$90 million general obligation bond bill for state government building projects could come out of House Appropriations that evening or tomorrow with a couple of minor changes.
- HB495: Entitlement bill that would freeze the entitlement program shares and amounts at today's rates for two years and then a new statutory entitlement formula and new base would be established. Said most legislators were in favor and it was moving relatively fast.

Mayor Hanel: Asked for the reasoning behind the two years.

Mr. Bartlett: Said it was purely budgetary.

Ms. Volek: Said the loss of entitlement would be in excess of \$1 million, and it would have a very severe impact on the city budget.

- HB564: Tabled on Friday by the House Taxation Committee.
- HB560, HB561, HB562: Amended significantly and almost down to nothing. City took strong opposition to the bills. Committee passed the bills as significantly amended. He recommended, with HB564 tabled, that they become neutral on HB560, HB561, and HB562.

Mayor Hanel: Said he agreed with Mr. Bartlett.

Ruegamer: Suggested staying neutral.

Clark: Asked if the amendments had passed or were sitting in committee.

Mr. Bartlett: House Taxation Committee adopted the amendments proposed by Representative Arntzen and did not adopt any other amendments.

Clark: Asked if there was a chance they could come out of committee without the amendments.

Mr. Bartlett: Next stage for the bills would be the floor of the House and there was always a possibility they could be amended.

- SB234: Solid Waste bill. When hearing occurred on March 17, there was a lot of discussion from committee members that they would like to see suggested amendments come from the cities. Major cities represented were Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, and Bozeman. They had talked to the sponsor of the bill and a number of the proponents about amendments. Thinks the bill will be amended significantly, especially Section 1.

Pitman: Asked Mr. Bartlett to elaborate on the amendments.

Mr. Bartlett: There would be no payment or five-year waiting period after annexation. Practical result would be there would be no exclusive service by a municipality or private service provider in an annexed area.

- SB372: Business Equipment Tax – 90% reimbursement to local governments passed out of committee on a 7 to 5 vote.
- SB392: Business Equipment Tax – increase tax exemption amounts and provide reimbursement to local governments for tax year 2012 losses. Tabled in committee.

McCall: Said she would be driving to Helena that evening for the hearing the following morning. She said she would be providing testimony for Gary Buchanan and Judge Hernandez.

There were no further comments or questions for Mr. Bartlett.

PUBLIC COMMENT on Agenda Item #1 ONLY. Speaker sign-in required.
(Comments offered here are limited to one (1) minute. Please sign the public comment sheet located on the podium).

The public comment period was opened. There were no speakers, and the public comment period was closed.

There was no further business, and the meeting adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

CITY OF BILLINGS

BY _____
Thomas W. Hanel, Mayor

ATTEST:

BY _____
Cari Martin, City Clerk