

2020/2021 City Council Priorities

Progress Report – October 13, 2020

Adopted March 9, 2020

HIGH

Improve the safety of Billings

- Adopt Public Safety Mill Levy (PSML) Ordinance for 2020 ballot measure
- Educate the community on the impacts of the PSML
- Implement 911, PD, FD, Code Enforcement, Legal, Municipal Courts strategies to improve safety
- Resolve criminal justice system facility space deficiencies
- Adopt spa/massage parlor business license ordinance
- Pursue supplemental funding sources (Impact fees, increase cost of fines, BUFSA)
- Support critical partnerships w/Substance Abuse Connect, Yellowstone County, and Continuum of Care partnership
- Continue improving “Safe Routes to Schools”

No other issue received more of my time and attention during my first two years as your city administrator, than the priority to improving the safety of Billings. Voters approved the repeal and replace public safety levy Sept. 15: For – 21,224 Against – 10,106. Prior to the Council’s decision to ask voters to repeal and replace the 2004 public safety levy, hundreds of hours were spent by our leadership team analyzing and presenting options to the Council and public. Once the public safety levy was set, we spent the next few months educating our electorate on the impacts of the levy question.

In order to better understand the challenges, we face improving the safety of Billings, the Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) was hired during the summer of 2020. The CPSM analysis will include statistically valid survey input from our citizenry on law enforcement services. The CPSM analysis will provide staff, the Council and public with a thorough review of Billings data surrounding public safety services. Their analysis will be presented to the council this winter and will be extremely helpful in refining the long term needs of the criminal justice and emergency response systems in our community. This analysis also includes a partnership with Yellowstone County by reviewing data pertaining to incarceration.

Additionally, our budget includes funding to conduct the National Citizen/Community Survey. This tool also provides the city with statistically valid data on all city services. Billings conducted this survey in 2009, 2012 and 2016, therefore the data will track changes in citizen opinions over the past twelve years. Our 2021 data will also be compared to peer communities throughout the US.

To date, we have received over \$13 million dollars in CARES Act funding specifically for public safety services.

Complete Project Re-Code

Dozens of citizens, city staff and elected officials have spent the past several years reviewing and working on Project Re-Code. Project Re-Code is expected to be approved by the Zoning Commission this Wednesday (Oct. 14). The council is scheduled to review Project Re-Code during next week’s work session. The first reading is scheduled for November 9, 2020. This is one of the most important policy opportunities our city will face over the next several years. Project Re-Code will directly impact the

economic viability and livability of Billings for the next several decades.

✚ Complete Airport Terminal Reconstruction Project (2023)

Despite the pandemic, lending has been secured for the entire project. As an added benefit, the lender is our own First Interstate Bank. This project is on schedule and if weather continues to cooperate, may be completed ahead of schedule.

✚ Advance West-End Reservoir and Water Treatment Plant Projects (reservoir 2022/H2O 2024)

This project is on-time. Several critical contracts have been approved by the Council over the past year to keep the project moving forward in a thoughtful deliberate manor. To date, utility rate adjustment recommendations have been approved by the Council to finance the project. We have adjusted the schedule to build the water plant in 2022 and the reservoir in 2023. We are also actively pursuing a FEMA BRIC Grant to assist in funding the project.

✚ Create a Park Development Fund

A park development finance option was presented to the Council as a part of the city administrator FY 2021 recommended budget. The idea was not supported by a majority of the Council and therefore was not included in the adopted budget.

✚ Improve Communication with our citizens

- Create a Public Information Officer position for the City
- Overhaul City Website

Funding for a public information officer was not included in the adopted FY 2021 budget. However, we have made several steps to improve communication with our citizens. We completed a branding effort that ties all components of city services together to help citizens understand which services are being provided by their city. We also completed an overhaul of the city's website in 2020.

During the pandemic, we also put a team together to provide PIO-like information specific to COVID-19. This has included sharing of press releases, notification of press conferences, and development of a COVID specific city website.

✚ Approve 2021 Legislative Agenda/Priorities

The communication of this priority has suffered under the pandemic as well as the realities of time limitations. The Montana League of Cities and Towns (MLCT) adopted its platform last week with the help of Mayor Cole who sits on the MLCT board. Our lobbyists Greg Dorrington and Aimee Grmoljez, along with MLCT and the Montana Infrastructure Coalition (MIC) were engaged in the interim sub-committees of the MT Legislature looking out for the City's interests. The City is an active member of both MLCT and MIC. Preparation for the 2021 legislative session is on the Council's agenda for Monday Oct. 19.

✚ Implement Lean Six Sigma/Continues Improvement program

Investments into the Lean Six implementation were removed from the proposed FY 2021 budget. This does not and has not prevented our organization from working on our commitment to continually

improve the City's service to its citizens. Our leadership team has established excellent communication links through weekly tactical meetings, monthly strategic meetings and semi-annual full team training sessions. We also held our first overnight retreat in early 2020 to set internal priorities and learn how to work better as a team.

MEDIUM

+ Improve Intergovernmental Collaboration

I have continuously worked for a respectful and collaborative relationship with School District 2, Yellowstone County, the State of Montana and our peer cities throughout Montana. Collaboration is a key principle that defines my management style. However, my commitment and preference to collaborate does not guarantee success. I need your help, particularly with the relationship between the City and Yellowstone County.

+ Stimulate Downtown Revitalization

- Improve legislative tools
- Implement downtown transportation study/one-way conversion plan – sold bonds
- Install traffic light N 27th/MT Ave

Funding has been secured and approved by the Council to tackle the first set of one-way street conversions in 2021. The state of Montana has assured the City that the 27th/MT Ave intersection traffic light will include a left turn signal. The project is nearing completion. Work is currently underway to solicit public feedback on the conversion of additional one-way streets and a potential road diet for Montana Ave. in downtown.

+ Complete the Cost of Services Study

We have not funded or begun a general Cost of Service Study for the city. The water, wastewater and solid waste cost of service studies are included in the current budget. Each of these analyses will be completed in 2021. The current budget also does not include appropriations for any specific services outside of water, wastewater and solid waste. Other common examples of system development charges are fire, police, streets and parks.

+ Resolve Heights Water Issues

The mediation dates have been rescheduled for later in 2020. The city has advertised for citizens interested in serving on the Heights Water District. To date, no applicants have been received.

+ Improve Transportation/Land-use System

- Advance Billings Bypass Interchange project – including adjacent land use and utility extension plans and Targeted Economic Development District (TEDD)
- Inner Belt Loop – including adjacent land use and utility extension plans

The Inter Belt Loop corridor study was completed in 2020. The City received notification from the federal government that we will receive \$11.6 million as a result of our BUILD grant application. This grant provides a clear path to constructing the Inter Belt Loop road project as well as the Skyline Trail. A team of staff members continue working on each of the key issues, policy and administrative, necessary to build the inter belt loop to maximize its benefits to Billings for future generations. This

project will require several policy issues to be determined by the Council in the upcoming year.

+ Improve city parks and trails system

- Complete - Centennial Park improvements Phase I
- Adopt - Coulson Park Master Plan
- Adopt Castlerock Park Master Plan
- Advance Poly Vista Park partnership w/Landan's Legacy Foundation
- Advance Marathon Loop

The primary contractor for Centennial Park has completed their work. The contract to install the new restroom is expected to be fulfilled this fall. The Centennial Park Phase I project ribbon cutting will be held in the spring of 2021. The Coulson Park master plan was adopted March 3, 2020. The Castlerock master plan is expected to come to the Council within the next 90 days. The Poly Vista Park partnership with Landan's Legacy continues to move forward. The City accepted a generous gift from Landan's Legacy this week (Oct. 12) funding the engineering design phase up to 30% in order to refine cost estimates tied to the master plans implementation. This year's proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) includes infrastructure investments critical to serve park users. The Skyline trail is also funded through the City's BUILD grant and is a part of the Marathon Loop. Amend and Optimist Parks also received significant investments during 2020.

+ Determine scope of the South Billings Recreation Center

I have spent very little time on this project in 2020. The proposed capital improvement plan will provide the Council and staff with an opportunity to discuss the prioritization of the South Billings Recreation Center.

Future Consideration

- + Increase Grant Writing Resources
- + Housing – Study Affordable Housing in General
- + Create a Storm Water Utility
- + Budget Process Review
- + Update Neighborhood Plans (West Side Plan priority)
- + Investigate a third transportation connector from the top of the rims to the valley