

8.27.21 DBP Board Meeting

Downtown Billings Partnership At Large Members		
PRESENT:	James "Andy" Patten	Norman Miller
Chris Montague	Ethan Kanning	Jock West
Sam Merrick	Joni Harman	Steve Wahrlich
ABSENT:	Steve Tostenrud	Marguerite Jodry
Partners		
PRESENT:	Chris Kukulski	Wyeth Friday
Commissioner Denis Pitman	Janna Hafer	Steve Arveschoug
Matt Blakeslee	Katy Easton	Sean Lynch
David Fishbaugh	ABSENT	Ignacio Barron Viela
Guests		
Chief St. John	Dan Brooks	Mary Underriner
Kelly Donovan	Matt Hobble	
Staff		
Mehmet Casey	James Chandler	Jenny Ross

- 1) Call to Order - Introductions, Courtesies and Public Comments - 7:30 Mr. Patten called the meeting to order and requested attendees to introduce themselves for the benefit of the guests/speakers.

- 2) Regular Agenda:
 - a. Minutes - July 23, 2021 meeting minutes, vote to approve minutes – Mr. Wahrlich made a motion to approve, Mr. Lynch seconded the motion; all were in favor and none were opposed.
 - b. Presentations:
 - i. Public Safety Mill Levy- City of Billings / Chamber of Commerce – Mr. Kukulski provided a presentation on the Public Safety Mill Level that provided a quick overview of the City of Billings’ responsibilities as well as their partner’s responsibilities. Mr. Kukulski shared that the number one problem is that crime is too high and shared the involvement of the fire department and police department on the calls. He provided a slide that reviewed the results of the comprehensive analysis of the police and fire services executed in 2020. Of this, the study provided 102 recommendations to the police department and 34 to the fire department; he shared that of these recommendations, the majority was not money related and would likely save the departments money. He shared an overview of the \$7.1M ask and what services these funds would be allocated to as well as the median average of what this would cost households on a monthly and annual basis.

Chief St. John, shared an overview of the Billings Police Department's (BPD) objectives; he shared that 95%+ of the activity is drug driven violence here in Billings. Chief St. John shared that Violent Crime Reduction, Improving Downtown Safety, Improving Traffic Safety and supporting mental health in priority order or 1.1.3.4. He shared that in 2019, the BPD was able to target problematic areas where officer presence, along with proactive policing diminished crime and he believed the statistics reflected this. He shared that in 2020 due to the pandemic, the BPD saw a significant increase and right now, he believes that BPD has been stalled, but believes they need to get the crime rate numbers on a downward trend. He shared that of the \$7.1M, the BPD is asking for \$2.1 M to Personnel Services and the Remaining 278,000 would be allocated to O&M.

Assistant Chief Matt Hobbie shared that the Billings Fire Department (BFD) ask is different from the previous Safety Mill Levy and that it is efficiency related. He shared that the BFD is an all hazard department, not just a fire department. He shared that the large BFD fire trucks carry all equipment needed when on an EMS call and they are looking to be more efficient by being able to use smaller vehicles with less equipment for specific calls.

Mr. Kukulski shared a brief overview of the district attorneys slides and gave an overview of their caseload per prosecutor and shared their current caseload and also covered domestic violence statistics. Mr. Kukulski shared that this is not a new Public Safety Mill Levy, and that they have been preparing this discussion and how to make this situation better. He believed that the proposal is comprehensive and targeted. He shared that those presenting are unable to advocate but simply educate.

Mr. Brooks and Ms. Underriner introduced themselves as members of the Chamber's Citizens for a Safer Billings Committee. This group was formed to help lead on the advocacy efforts for the Public Safety Mill Levy. Mr. Brooks asked that ultimately, he wishes for the Board to take a vote in favor of this Public Safety Mill Levy. The meeting was then opened up for questions.

Mr. Arveschoug asked about the challenges finding the talent to fill these positions. Chief St. John stated that he believed BPD to be a desirable employer and he shared that his last four hires came from other departments across the country and he believed that Billings and the BPD are places people want to be. Chief St. John shared that he is currently operating at +2 over the authorized strength and he shared that this is within the permission of Mr. Kukulski. He

shared it takes eight months to get someone up to speed but it only takes two weeks for someone to leave and this is a challenge that the BPD faces. Mr. Montague asked about the portion of the 1.1.3.4. and the priority of Downtown Safety? Chief St. John shared that this can be accomplished by partnering with social services and increasing officer presence, adjusting schedules, and other priorities. Mr. Kukulski shared that yesterday he did a ride along with the Downtown Resource Officers and learned a lot from the experience.

Mr. Patten asked about the opportunity to expand the jail? Mr. Kukulski said they are working with the County to get State/Federal people out of the County jail; however, they are hitting a roadblock with having State inmates in County jails, and they are working with various partners to determine what the jail should be. He confirmed that there is consensus that there is a jail problem.

Mr. Lynch commented to the Board that he wants to go past the endorsement on this and he believed that this problem downtown needs to be taken care of, so he made a motion to approve. Mr. Montague seconded the motion. All were in favor and none were opposed. The motion carried. Ms. Easton shared that the DBA is the only Board that has the ability to advocate but encouraged the DBP Board to do whatever it is they can to help this initiative pass.

Mr. Lynch made a motion to do whatever is in their legal power to do what they can to try to get this Mill Levy to pass. Mr. Wahrlich seconded. All were in favor and none were opposed. Mr. Lynch shared that a lot of people in this room are in a better position than others and he believed those in attendance should put money where their mouths are, and support Citizens for a Safer Billings and Mr. Brook's initiatives. Mr. Kukulski thanked the Board and those in attendance for their time.

3) Action Items

- a. Public Safety Mill Levy Endorsement
- b. Billings Community Foundation (BCF) TIF Assistance Reconsideration - Mr. Casey provided an overview of how we arrived at this potential reconsideration. He gave an explanation on the four qualified expenses that are being reviewed for a second consideration. Mr. Lynch asked to clarify whether BCF expects this payment upfront or knows that it is a reimbursement? Mr. Casey shared that BCF has access to committed funds that would be available to them if there is a formal indication that the City has committed TIF dollars. Ms. Hafer asked about the reason behind Council's desire to only offer half of the requested funds? Mr. Casey shared that it was made as a substitute motion at the July 26th Council meeting. He added that he reached out to Council members and to his understanding, the opposition was due to the nature of the applicant being a nonprofit

and requesting TIF assistance. Another concern was reflecting that the DBP vote seemed reluctant. Another expressed that they did not find a benefit to the public or blight elimination in this project. Mr. Kanning asked about any current policies for nonprofit v profit allocations? Mr. Casey shared that MCA, City's resolution, and DBP's application currently allow nonprofits to apply and be considered.

There was further group discussion regarding the BCF project. Ms. Easton shared that this result in a tie vote wasn't an expected outcome and she commended Mr. Casey for his efforts on reaching out to Council members for direction and guidance, and she suggested that this is something the Board continues to pursue and move forward on. Mr. Merrick shared that the sewage problem is the epitome of blight. Mr. Patten shared that the next meeting will explore our TIF portfolio and determine our priorities moving forward.

Mr. Lynch made a motion to take this proposal to Council stating that those items address safety, accessibility, and stability of the property. Mr. Wahrlich seconded the motion.

Ms. Hafer made a comment that she supported this the first time around because she believed the first request was addressing many valid qualified expenses. A 50% reduction in the amount is random and not based on policy. She believed the project needs to be done but the reduction does not offer enough reasoning for her to confidently support it. She stated that such inconsistencies do not offer clarity and may discourage future applicants.

Ms. Easton shared that there was a process that the BCF went through, where the BCF determined to focus on qualified expenses of utmost significance and that happened to be right around half of their initial ask. When this went to a vote, all were in favor and only Ms. Hafer was opposed.

- c. MRM Update Review - Mr. Casey and Mr. Patten met and they wanted to bring it to the Board's attention that initially, the Montana Rescue Mission's proposal of mitigating Granny's Attic, which is the building adjacent to the men's shelter, was to demolish the east half of it to make it a parking surface for the Low Income Housing tenants. The facade facing Minnesota Ave would be maintained however to hide the surface parking and maintain the pedestrian experience as a gesture to pay homage to what existed there once before. The DBP staff was then made aware of another rendering that was used by the MRM team at the Yellowstone Historic Presentation Board, and that the facade extension was no longer there. Mr. Casey was reassured that these were simply artist renderings and that MRM is still fundraising. Once their plans are finalized, they would be shared with the DBP Board. Mr. Casey indicated that an agreement is not signed yet and is seeking the Board's guidance as to whether to execute an agreement or wait until we have the final plans? Mr. Patten's recommendation was to wait and see what they are actually going to do. Mr. Lynch agreed. Mr. Casey said the tenant isn't

changing but the structure might look different. Discussion was had about the process and ability in regards to application, presenting to Council, the Board's approach to presenting to Council, and other policies and procedures in which to handle items and varying situations which have arrived.

Ms. Hafer asked if a motion is needed to delay the award in a final plan? The board gave direction that no motion is needed but simply stay in touch with the applicant and wait for further details.

4) Staff Update/ Financials- It was determined that the Board is going to meet on the 17th of September instead of September 24th. Mr. Wahrlich made a motion to move the meeting to the 17th. Ms. Hafer seconded the motion; all were in favor and none were opposed.

5) Old Business / New Business

6) Partner Reports (if time permits)

- a. City of Billings
- b. Yellowstone County
- c. SD#2
- d. BSEDA
- e. Downtown Billings Property Owner Association
- f. DBA
- g. BID
- h. Billings Cultural Partners
- i Billings Parking Board

7) Mr. Patten adjourned the meeting at 9:05 AM