

City Council Work Session

5:30 PM

Hybrid – Billings Public Library – Community Room & Zoom

April 19, 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) ✓ Cole, ✓ Shaw, ✓ Yakawich, ✓ Neese,
 ✓ Ewalt, ✓ Joy, ✓ Choriki, ✓ Purinton, ✓ Ronning, ✓ Boyett, ✓ Brown

CM excused: ALL COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT

ADJOURN TIME: 10:36 PM

Agenda

TOPIC #1	Legislative Updates
PRESENTER	Greg Dorrington, City Lobbyist
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Greg Dorrington: a lobbyist at the capitol building tested positive for COVID and the sessions were ceased for Friday last week and Monday this week. Back in session tomorrow. Conference committees are meeting now. Need to be vigilant to track language changes so something isn't added or subtracted that is not intended. HB 578 regarding DOC moving their prisoners out of local jails has been fully supported and is moving to the Senate for approval.
- **Public Comment:**
- **Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT**, encouraged Council and Administration to use ARPA funds on the Hallowell Lane project that is ready to go.
- **Kristi Drake, 2950 Walden Place, Billings, MT**, stated the BUILD grant and Skyline Trail were ready to go and she hoped some of the monies would be used there.

TOPIC #2	Water and Wastewater Rates
PRESENTER	Jennifer Duray, Public Works Deputy Director
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Jennifer Duray:** stated this was reviewed every 2 years. Provided primary rate increase drivers and stated at the current level of funding for pipe replacement we were requiring our pipes to last 130 years. She offered suggestions for fees and charges. She explained charges for water and wastewater rates and how they are determined. She identified 3 bulk water resellers and Heights Water District is also a reseller. Proposed a new class of user for resellers. With a 25% increase FY 23 over FY22. She reviewed system development fees that are assessed to new developments. She asked for decisions to be made by Council on 1. Residential Water Tier Structure (Option 1 or Option 2) and Bulk reseller rate so adequate notice could be given to customers.

- **Yakawich:** Moved to direct staff to use Option 2 for residential users water rate, seconded by Boyett. Motion was approved 9-2; Ewalt and Purinton opposed.
- **Shaw:** Moved to approve the proposed 2-yr. outlined increases of 36% and 25%, respectively, for bulk resellers, seconded by Neese. Motion was unanimously approved.
- **Public Comment: None**

TOPIC #3	Safe Routes to Schools and Trail Funding
PRESENTER	Jennifer Duray, Public Works Deputy Director
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Jennifer Duray:** Provided a presentation and outlined funding options – but there may be restrictions of how much can be assessed in special districts. No opt out because of legal concerns and doesn't recommend the special district option because of the legislature – staff recommends street maintenance fees. Staff doesn't recommend Opt in because it is cost prohibitive and those usually only get 10-15% participation at \$2/mo. Parks GO bond or mill levy option for trails.
Direction needed from Council – what to include in the Public Works budget?
Must be in City's right-of-way, not the State's such as with Stage Coach Trail.
- **Shaw:** How do other cities do this?
- **Kukulski:** his experience to share the cost for sidewalks with residents to install missing sidewalks. Parks trails and open space bonds in Bozeman for trails. Billings doesn't have a funding mechanism in place for trails.
- **Neese:** how much would we need to budget to get this caught up?
- **Duray:** about a million a year. More than that is put into sidewalk facilities. Could only provide bring this up from \$750K to \$1 million because would have to add more staff and get contractors to do the extra projects.
- **Public Comment:**

The following constituents spoke in favor of finding funding:

- **Clare Oakley, Northridge Circle, Riverstone Health Rep.:**
- **Kristi Drake, 2950 Walden Place, Billings, MT:** Billings Trail Net cannot fundraise enough money to fund sidewalks and trails, suggested a roundup option like Yellowstone Valley Electric does. She gave other options, i.e., legalized marijuana tax, utility bills, local option taxes and voter approved bonds.
- **Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT:** suggested using TIF districts to construct missing sidewalks.
- **Melissa Henderson, 525 Parkhill Drive, Billings, MT:** representing Healthy by Design and said safe routes are important beyond school children, but also for the elderly for walking to grocery stores and Dr. appointments, etc. Safe routes are for everyone.

- **Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT**, spoke of Safe Routes to School.
- **Morgan Miller, Billings, MT**: spoke of the benefits of walking and safe routes.
- **Jed Barton, LIFTT representative, Billings, MT**: stated that people with disabilities need safe routes too.
- **Mike Ormsby, 2930 Walden Place, Billings, MT**: stated the City’s detriment is that they cannot go out for grants without having matching funds and they lack shovel-ready projects.
- **Kathy Aragon, 645 O’Malley Drive, Billings, MT**: stated with safe routes to schools, the School District may realize a reduction in bussing costs.

- Wyeth Friday, Planning Director, spoke of the limitations of grants.
- Mike Whitaker, Parks and Recreation Director, spoke of how a GO bond or a levy could assist in trails funding.
- **Neese**: Moved to direct staff to increase budget from \$750K to \$1 million by increasing the street maintenance fees and prioritize rights-of-way near schools to install missing sidewalks and multi-use trails, seconded by Yakawich.
- Elyse Monat spoke of grants the department had applied for and how they would be used.
- Council continued discussion.
- **Yakawich**: Called the question. Approved unanimously. Neese’s motion was approved unanimously.

TOPIC #4	Energy and Conservation Commission Update
PRESENTER	Louis Engels, Water Quality Superintendent; Randy Hafer and Glenn Foy, Energy and Conservation Commission
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Randy Hafer**: gave an overview of the executive summary, monthly cost of resource use inventory, and key learning from those numbers. He reviewed key recommendations from ECC and their conservation strategy, next steps and a roadmap and LEED preliminary assessment. Louis Engels spoke of additional assistance and resources available.
- Council questions and discussion. Grant acceptance on next Business meeting.
- **Public Comment:**
- None
- Mayor Cole made a motion to continue with grant acceptance. Seconded by CM Boyett. Approved unanimously.

TOPIC #5	Property Purchasing Resolution- Removed from Agenda
PRESENTER	Jessica Iverson, Facilities Manager
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Shaw:** moved to remove this item from the agenda and have staff identify a future meeting date to bring back to Council, seconded by Brown.
- Council discussed the legality of postponing the topic. Gina Dahl, City Attorney, read the section addressing the removal of an agenda item and indicated it was at the discretion of the Mayor.
- Unanimously approved.
- **Public Comment:**
- None

TOPIC #6	Council Discussion
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Chris Kukulski and Gina Dhal gave an overview of Council's ability to meet in subcommittees and the definition of a quorum.

TOPIC #7	Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT:** provided a petition to Council asking that the sidewalks on the 4200 block of Bruce Avenue's be finished when the Hallowell Lane project is completed and he provided funding information.