

City Council Work Session

5:30 PM

Hybrid, Billings Public Library Community Room and Zoom

June 7, 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) ✓ Cole, ✓ Shaw, ✓ Yakawich, ✓ Neese,

✓ Ewalt, ✓ Joy, ✓ Choriki, ✓ Purinton, ✓ Ronning, ✓ Boyett, ✓ Brown

CM excused: ALL COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT, BUT BOYETT LEFT AROUND 7:40 PM DUE TO ILLNESS

ADJOURN TIME: 11:02 PM

Agenda

TOPIC #1	COVID-19 Update
PRESENTER	John Felton, Yellowstone County Health Officer
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Kukulski:** Introduced Pepper Valdez as the incoming Fire Chief. Mr. Valdez made a statement of intent to the City.
Commended everyone involved in the emergency response of the BBWA ditch leak. Street conversion of 2 one-way to 2-way, on June 21st. 29th and 30th streets being converted after 5 decades of being one-way streets.
- **John Felton:** Manageable levels and hospitals are managing fine. Provided updated statistics concerning infections, vaccinations and variants – younger people are being hospitalized with the variants. Montana is remaining steady. Children as young as 12 may be vaccinated. Outreach vaccinations have slowed to about 5 to 25 vaccinations a day from about 800 per day initially. Continuing to do outreach, looking into school vaccinations. 42% of eligible people in Yellowstone County have been vaccinated. Montana’s average is 46%. City lagging behind the rest of the country.
- **Mayor:** Yellowstone County 10% behind national average for vaccinated population but still have low rate of infection. **Felton:** Statewide map shows vaccination rates on eastern side have higher percentages. Not seeing surges, but not a small number of cases. Vaccinations will drive numbers down.
- **Ronning:** will people be able to get vaccinated by their primary physician soon? **Felton:** starting now some physicians’ offices have the vaccine.
- **Neese:** risk to County by not vaccinating? **Felton:** Risk of becoming ill to selves and others around them. Masking requirements gone. Economic risks etc.
- **Ewalt:** why aren’t the surrounding counties that Yellowstone County serves regularly seeing higher numbers – taking COVID back to their communities?

Felton: interestingly 2 cases in Big Horn County equates to 24 cases in Yellowstone County percentage-wise per capita.

- **Public Comment:**
- None

TOPIC #2	Fire Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) Report
PRESENTER	Michael Iacona, Fire and EMS Senior Manager Bill Rash, Fire Chief ; Pepper Valdez, Incoming Fire Chief; Matt Hoppel, Assistant Fire Chief
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator:** Introduced Thomas Wieczorek, CPSM Director and stated Chief Rash was ill and would not be attending the meeting. He stated Incoming Fire Chief Valdez and Assistant Fire Chief Hoppel were available to answer questions.
- **Thomas Wieczorek:** explained how information was collected from staff and introduced Mr. Iacona.
- **Michael Iacona:** Stated the City was an excellent organization and leadership knows what is going on and is high quality. The workload is manageable, sufficiently staffed, and there are sufficient resources just needs some tweaking. The City has an excellent maintenance and equipment program. Call-screening process needs improvements, cannot be sending 5 units to a false alarm. Recommend establishing a contract agreement rather than an ordinance or resolution with the ambulance provider. Stated there should be an expanded number and type of performance measures utilized to evaluate service outcomes. Suggests audits of the payroll system periodically. Repurpose employee performance appraisals that can be improved. Institute and employee safety and injury avoidance program to reduce injuries. Adjust response patterns for minor and non-emergent calls – scale down. Consider options for 2-person EMS roving units and peak-period staffing. Move to a common radio frequency with the ambulance provider. Explore establishing a MIH/community paramedicine program. Expand certification and college education requirements for promotions – eliminate seniority-based appointments. Incorporate skills assessments and written testing in fire training. Establish an annual physical fitness evaluation process. Institute annual medical evaluation and health screening. Require new firefighters to complete FF-1 & 2 programs during probation. Conduct a Fire Risk Assessment for all high-risk occupancies. Consider the hiring of a seasonal fuel crew for wildfire mitigation. They are self-sustaining for help outside the area and can be loaned out or hired out to recoup the cost. Develop an integrated risk managements plan focusing on structure fires (who, why, where and when). Expand cost-recovery options for inspection and plans reviews-should be much higher. Extended response time pilot study-2017 Long Range Master Plan does not address timeline. Evaluated process and reviewed fire station location analysis.

Proposed 3 deployment strategies for new stations: Hilltop Road and Topaz Avenue Station. 48th N. of Hesper. Locations can shift due to population shifts and current stations needing major improvements.

Reviewed extended response times (over 10 minutes to get there).

Over 1,500 calls were within this time period. They were reviewed and were all over town, not just in a couple of areas. There are some 2.5 miles out that account for some of the calls, but mostly they are much closer to a fire station. Only 1 call with an extended response time that had over \$25k in damages, and it should have been a 4-minute drive. 7 minutes was spent processing the call.

What are the reasons for Extended response times (R/T's)? 4 senior living facilities are generating many of the calls. High number of calls when the primary response unit was out of position; calls occurring at locations with more than 2.5 miles travel. Longer than expected; dispatch turn-out and travel times. There were 369 calls to the 4 senior living facilities.

Call-type was reviewed: recommended not counting non-emergent calls in with the same numbers of emergent so response is accurate.

7 part plan to reduce ERTs:

Institute 2-person peak period roving EMS squads.

Identify minor/non-emergent call types and downgrade response.

Work with Senior Living staff on how to request assistance so ambulances response.

Review and monitor dispatch handling times (set standards)

Review and monitor Unit turn-out times (set standards)

Review and monitor Extended Travel Times (set standards)

Conduct a 6 month evaluation period-evaluate impacts

Conclusion:

Excellent organization providing quality services.

Recommendations are being considered.

Current workload is significant will continue to increase.

Alternative department strategies are needed to improve efficacy and better manage. 1:17

- **Valdez:** Stated it was good to have a third-party review practices and offer a different viewpoint on what is occurring.
- **Kukulski:** Provided 5 policy topics: 1) Peak period deployment
- 2) medical response teams; 3) ambulance service contract; 4) 911 dispatch services; and 5) Fire Station 8.

RECESS: 7:34 PM **RECONVENE:** 7:40 PM

- **Public Comment:**
- **Dennis Ulvestad:** stated that BUFSA should have an increase to use our fire equipment.
- **Tom Rupsis:** thought the study was well-done and gave pause to consider other solutions. Stated on page 93, Emergency Response, speaks to Public

Information Officer – differs from the conversations people have had, i.e., marketing.

TOPIC #3	Budget Wrap-Up
PRESENTER	Andy Zoeller, Finance Director
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Zoeller:** Identified items that changed per staff and Council’s changes. He asked for Council’s direction on the changes to the FY22. Reviewed General Fund changes and what a Public Information Officer would do to the General Fund. It would take approximately \$80K to \$90K / year. Police Department would increase by \$250K. Reviewed investment toward accomplishing Council’s priorities. Reviewed PD1 assessment.
- **Shaw:** Moved to approve staff’s recommendation for 1.4097% increase that tied to property values for PD1, seconded by Joy. Motion failed 5-5, Yakawich, Neese, Ewalt, Purinton and Brown opposed.
- **Neese:** Moved for a 3% increase to PD1 each year, seconded by Ewalt. Motion passed 6-4, Shaw, Joy, Mayor Cole and Choriki opposed.
- **Public Comment:**
- **Catherine Card:** Asked that Council consider how the police department handle cases and documentation and transparency. She asked to fund them, but to make some changes to properly keep records and they have lacked in investigating things properly. Stated proper permitting was not being done with motor cycle gangs
- **Tom Rupsis:** reminded Council they spent 15 mins. Over a .41 difference for Parks and nothing on \$5+ on the Arterial Fund.
- **Mayor:** moved for staff to put in the budget a PIO that would include grant writing skills, development director to assist with raising funds for the City, among other items as City staff saw a need, seconded by Ronning.

Discussions followed about how a PIO would be utilized.

Shaw called the question, seconded by Brown. Motion passed 9-1, Neese opposed.

Mayor’s motion was approved 8-2, Neese and Purinton opposed.

RECESS: 10:06 PM **RECONVENE:** 10:13 PM

TOPIC #4	Public Safety Mill Levy (PSML) Discussion
PRESENTER	Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Valdez:** Introduced Matt Hoppel, Assistant Fire Chief and Derrick Yeager - 911 Coordinator.
- **Kukulski:** Outlined the timeline for PSML approval to go for election.
- **Public Comment: None**
- **Yakawich:** gave his condolences to Kevin Iffland for the loss of his mother-in-law, who was also the wife of Richard McFadden, a former councilmember.
- **Kukulski:** BBWA found a blockage at the tunnel and immediately responded to the removal of the blockage. This caused a 10% breach of water – 15 min. longer could have lost the entire ditch. Everyone responded within minutes. Damages were caused to the ditch and repairs are expected to be finished in the next day or two. This is a separate issue from the movement of the land further down.
- **Mayor:** Gave kudos to the BBWA and Fire Department and \$500,000 to stabilize the area.

TOPIC #5	Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Public Comment: None**