



**VISION STATEMENT:**  
"The Magic City: A diverse,  
welcoming community  
where people prosper and  
business succeeds."

**WORK SESSION  
SUMMARY  
July 18, 2022**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**5:30 P.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Cole

Shaw, Gulick, Neese, Owen, Joy, Choriki, Purinton, Boyett and Rupsis in attendance

**ABSENT: CM TIDSWELL (Joined On-line at about 6:30 pm)**

**Public Comment:**

- **Frank Ewalt, 2131 Phoebe Drive, Billings, MT**, spoke of the parolees and prerelease numbers sent to the City and the costs involved. He encouraged Council to get involved.
- **Catherine Card, 2815 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Billings, MT**, spoke of the 3 properties along S. 27<sup>th</sup> and the crime call statistics.
- **Frank Ewalt, 2131 Phoebe Drive, Billings, MT**, spoke of the initiative to increase landfill fees by 10% for out-of-town customers and how the funds had been used. He discussed Street Maintenance fees being charged for vacant lots.

**1. Parks and Recreation Funding**

Mike Whitaker, Parks and Recreation Director, introduced the Parks team. He gave an overview of Department and funding issues, benefits of Parks and Rec., cost per acre calculation, map of existing community parks and the benefits of community parks. He explained neighborhood parks and open space/natural parks, and sports complex parks. He reviewed the Park District 1 (PD1) accomplishments over the past 11 years, grants received, capital projects underway, and the FY23-FY27 Parks and Rec. Capital Improvement Plan. He gave a comparison of how Billings Parks and Rec. compared with other areas, a presentation schedule and indicated the goal was a public vote in 2023.

Mayor Cole questioned adding Parks to the agenda during the upcoming meeting with Legislators. Chris Kukulski, City Administrator, indicated the meeting would be August 16 and there would be more added.

Council questioned how PD1 funding was spent, operations, comparisons to national median, and undeveloped parks.

Mr. Whitaker discussed how Meadowlark Park would be suited as a community park.

CM Shaw questioned per capita costs for PMD's and how to stop having PMD's. Mr. Whitaker stated staff could compile PMD's per capita rates. He indicated PMD's could not be assessed if funding was available from other sources. He stated a former Council had looked into stopping PMD's but had decided against it.

CM Neese questioned the statistic that Parks owned 10% of the property in Billings. Mr. Whitaker stated that statistic was much larger than other cities but a lot of it was natural parkland.

Mr. Kukulski indicated staff was looking for Council recommendation on what amenities they wanted to see in the parks.

Council discussed how the City compared to other cities, neighborhood parks versus community parks, taxed amounts and creating a hybrid style park. They discussed recreational park programs and how it related to youth crime. Mr. Whitaker stated there was a direct correlation of a reduction in crime with recreational programs.

Council discussed subdivision park requirements, incomplete parks, how the City compared to the NRPA report stating cities spent 30% of capital expenditures on new projects instead of maintaining what they had. Mr. Whitaker indicated the City was higher because they were behind on maintenance and completion.

-Public comment

None

## **2. Street Fees**

Jennifer Duray, Public Works Deputy Director, gave an overview of road funding, Arterial Construction fees, Street Maintenance District fees, and the PAVER Program shortfall. She reviewed the loss of purchasing power, projects funded by gas taxes, arterial fees and SMD's. She explained the SMD assessment methodology and various scenarios. She wrapped up her presentation asking for Council direction.

Recess at 7:25 pm. Reconvened at 7:33 pm.

Council discussed the various scenarios, vacant lot fees, residential versus commercial road use, loss of purchasing power, visitor fee increases, and gas taxes.

The majority of Council indicated that vacant property should be charged.

Shaw - scenario 2, increase residential to 75%

Gulick - scenario 2, increase vacant lot assessments

Neese – allow petition process for undeveloped property

Owen – scenario 2 as is

Joy – scenario 2 - vacant properties benefit from street system

Mayor – make vacancy rate more consistent (about 1/3 less than developed property seems reasonable)

Choriki – different rate for vacant lot instead of cap

Tidswell – do not increase vacancy rates substantially

Purinton – vacant property without access should be able to request lower rates

Boyett – scenario 2

Rupsis – scenario 2, vacant lot around 50-75%

Council continued discussion.

-Public comment

None

Staff given direction on methodology, rate structures, caps, vacant properties.

## **3. Highlight Upcoming Agenda Items of Council Interest.**

Chris Kukulski, City Administrator, highlighted some upcoming items.

- Public comment

None

**COUNCIL DISCUSSION:**

CM Joy – spoke of a City parks smart investments article.

CM Purinton – spoke of a nurse practitioner program and potential items for use of 2 mills or marijuana tax dollars.

CM Boyett – bicycle licenses needed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT on "NON-AGENDA ITEMS". Speaker Sign-in required.** *(Restricted to ONLY items not on this printed agenda. Comments are limited to 3 minutes or as set by the Mayor. Please sign the roster at the cart located at the back of the Council chambers or at the podium.)*

None

**ADJOURN:** 8:59 P.M.