



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

**WORK SESSION  
SUMMARY**

**September 6, 2022**

**5:30 5:35 P.M.**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Cole

Started late due to technical difficulties.

**ABSENT:** None

Gulick, Owen, Joy, Choriki, Tidswell, Purinton, Boyett and Rupsis in attendance, Shaw and Neese attended via Zoom

**Staff:** Chris Kukulski, City Administrator  
Karen Tracy, Assistant City Attorney  
Denise Bohlman, City Clerk

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Melanie Schwarz, Rimrock Foundation, Billings, MT, spoke about Substance Abuse Connect and selecting a new executive director, and she is the acting executive director in the interim. Looked at funding for crisis – hopes Council supports Crisis Response Unit (CRU) RFP.
- Megan Vaden, 1942 Lake Elmo Drive, Billings, MT, son was hit on Lake Elmo Drive, has been talking about the traffic on it and no stop signs, 35 MPH is not appropriate. Has asked PW to do traffic studies. Only 2 crosswalks.
- Amber Dunn, Dorothy Lane, Billings, MT, apologized for fraudulent information given to Council with Police Chief St. John's letter.
- A.P., Amber Dunn's daughter, Dorothy Lane, Billings, MT, stated it's been horrible to watch her mother and father always on edge due to worries about safety. It's not okay to publicly humiliate them.
- Jaquelyn Garcia, Dorothy Lane, Billings, MT, stated Police Chief St. John's letter to Council. stated they were overacting. She spoke to the neighborhood investing in security cameras, but for what purpose when the police will do nothing.
- Patti Webster, 4432 Vaughn Lane, Billings, MT, she is the grandma of the second child that was hit on Lake Elmo Drive. She asked for a task force to be developed to help create a safety buffer for the hundreds of school children that utilize Lake Elmo Drive to access school busses or walk to school.

**1. Department of Homeland Security**

(Presented by: Jason Lyon, Battalion Chief)

Chris Kukulski stated this was an opportunity for members of the Fire Department to travel to Israel for training. Must be approved by Council. Has been added to the consent agenda for Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>.

Jason Lyon, Fire Battalion Chief, stated this training was grant funded and explained the opportunity.

-Public comment:

None

## 2. Community Health Needs Assessment / Update

(Presented by: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator)

Eden Sowards, Healthy by Design, Community Health Manager, acknowledged the various tribes and the hospitals and health care businesses that have been involved in the collaboration of the community needs assessment, it is a wellness check. In the data collection process now to develop the plan for the next 3 years beginning in 2023. She spoke about the methods to collect information and advisory board. Survey has 125 questions conducted via phone. CDC grant has been received to help reach the vulnerable individuals. Provided an invite to the public forum, November 18, time TBD, at Billings Hotel and Convention Center. The report will be published in early 2023.

Gulick: looking forward to the report. Are recommendations going to be brought to the Council?

Eden: perhaps as initiatives, for support, etc.

Purinton: How is Healthy by Design funded?

Eden: St. V's, Riverstone and Billings Clinic for 2 positions.

Boyett: only 400 people called?

Eden: may need to go over the 400 to meet the demographics.

Gulick: Do you look for other grant opportunities?

Eden: Yes, we look for additional staffing.

-Public comment:

None

## 3. Discussion of allocation of 2 mills and local option marijuana revenues

- **Crisis Response RFP Update**
- **Low Barrier Shelter Options**
- **Crime Prevention – Nurse Family Partnership Introduction and Recommendation (Riverstone Health, Eric Owen)**

(Presented by: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator)

Chris Kukulski reviewed his weekly report information provided. Improving the safety of the community is complex. Mobile crisis response RFP goes out tomorrow. Spoke about the Council's priorities and the public safety mill levy. Spoke about the desire to be as efficient with calls for help through 211, 911, and 988. Spoke about the identifiers to future crime and the need to address the sources of future criminals. Advised that \$432,000 from marijuana revenue goes to Billings, not millions. The RFP due date is September 30<sup>th</sup>. Goal to come to Council on October 14<sup>th</sup> with a recommendation. Have not made a recommendation for a low barrier shelter option. Off the Streets is not the effort to have something in place for this winter season, but will work with Continuum of Care for a long-term solution. Spoke about childhood trauma and its effect on criminal behaviors.

Eric Owen, VP of Public Health Services - spoke about prevention-based solutions. Key terms – trauma – sexual abuse, exposure to chronic stress, early death of parents. Adverse childhood experiences, before the age of 18 years. Toxic Stress on a repeated and ongoing basis have lifelong affects. He tied these to criminal behavior and children's lack of being able to concentrate in school, difficulty forming healthy relationships, diseases, unstable work histories, etc. Spoke about foster care statistics and compared other states to Montana and other Montana cities to Billings. He noted that 0-5 years is the most important

formative years.

Shannon Houck, supervisor, nurse / family partnership, explained how it works – nurses are assigned to a pregnant mom and stays involved with her and the children for the first 2 years of the child's life = to 60 visits over 2 years. 300-400 families In Yellowstone County could benefit from this model. Spoke about the successes over the past 10 years in Yellowstone County. Spoke about relational problems need relational solutions.

Greg Upham, School District No. 2 Superintendent, spoke from the education perspective and the impacts to students/families' lives. He said there was common sense to nurse/family partnership. He spoke about the breakdown of the family

Dr. Eric Arzubi, board certified in child psychiatry, he spoke about a grant obtained in 2015. System breakdown, not a mental health crisis, been playing defense during someone's crisis, need to start playing offense through nurse/family partnership. Build protective factors to mitigate risk factors. There is clear evidence of positive impacts. Robustly studied model. It's working, invest in it and make a bigger impact.

Eric Owen stated prevention services are not a one size fits all. Encouraged Council to invest in other community coalitions and partners.

Gulick: Supported the model – how is it funded now?

Shannon: Maternal Infant early childhood – DPHHS – funding is being decreased.

Neese: How many are City residents vs. County residents?

Shannon: Limited to Yellowstone County. Do not have a breakdown, but can provide.

Neese: What happens from age 2-5 to avoid recidivism?

Shannon: work with graduates to use resources, etc. If support is still needed they are referred to parents.

Greg Upton: Allow us to implement what is needed. Just because there isn't a program for 2–5-year-olds, let's create one.

Dr. Arzubi: brain development happens more quickly during the earlier years. Don't dilute the focus by sprinkling funding throughout.

Shaw: Nurses training?

Shannon: Maternal / child health experience is necessary, as well as other training.

Owen: Supports nurse/family partnership because it addresses so many of the components to criminal behaviors later.

Dr. Arzubi: Explained the risk factors that blueprint on children that affect their decision-making skills later.

Joy: What was the percentage for more than 1 adverse childhood experience (ACE)? Assume most children in foster care have had their fair share of ACE's.

Eric Owen: The study was from adults looking back identifying ACES and the foster children.

Mayor: Are there other funding resources to bringing the goal for up to 5 nurses?

Greg Upham: Have not brought this to the Board yet, but they are aware of how it is affecting the school district. Have to get involved, cannot be silenced. Supports entities supporting other entities and each other.

Chris Kukulski: Testing the temperature of the Council for this. Need to take care of the community.

Break: 7:35 PM Reconvene: 7:45 PM

Choriki: Identified multi-generational cycles and how parents stress affects children.

Shannon: Spoke about working with pregnant moms and after the baby is born. Answers all their questions and provide good support.

Dr. Arzubi: Targeting relationships and the fabric of families.

Tidswell: Showed appreciation for the program.

Purinton: How are families referred?

Eric Owen: There are roughly 2,000 births in Yellowstone County. 1,000 have Medicaid and we look for 300 pregnant women. OB practices, Riverstone, LaVie, Probation Officer, Counselor, Self-referrals, WIC.

Purinton: How are you able to access cooperation with the native population?

Shannon: Meet the client where they are and it takes a lot of trust building but they are open to this model.

Boyett: Spoke about a transient on the street and the public's wish to eliminate that. Does the City fix families, is that our job? How much can you do with – there's only \$800,000 and that's not enough. Can you do anything with one more nurse?

Eric: One is one more than we have. It's \$60,000 per person for all the interventions of criminals. Can keep cycling people in and out of jail, in and out of the emergency rooms, etc. only \$8,500 per person with a nurse / family partnership.

Greg: Do your best to choose the solution-based strategies. But don't have hope – must start with one person at a time to make a difference. Keep hope in front of us.

Dr. Arzubi: look at the best solution for your investment.

Rupsis: This has been in Billings for 10 years, so by now should be able to see the effects on the school-aged children from this program. Do you have the data?

Eric: Do not have local data. We are trying to build that into the program.

Mayor: is there a short-term need for data collection? Or would it be better to put money toward one or 2 more nurses for a year or 2?

Eric: This is a robustly studied and is proven national model that has been over the past 40 years.

-Public comment

- Matt Lundgren, Montana Rescue Mission (MRM), Executive Director, has served 75 years in Billings and their work has results. 300 people moved into permanent housing over the past quarter. Building new campus with a preschool for 0-3 years. Started outreach program, moved 30 people off the streets and into the shelter overnight. \$4 million annual budget – will accept any help. Have an emergency shelter. 70% increase in numbers on a nightly basis since COVID. Spoke about more services available under one roof on the new campus.

Boyett: Do you work with the crisis center?

Matt Lundgren: Yes, we accept people from there.

Purinton: Where do the families go that need housing with the housing shortage?

Matt Lundgren: Some have bus tickets to home, wherever that is. Or have arrangements with landlords and some are moved to Laurel/Lockwood, etc.

Purinton: Meet with police to bring people there? Can pull data

Matt Lundgren: Yes, have met with Police Department shifts and trained on warm hand offs. Can pull data from their system. The State's system does not protect HIPPA for residents.

Owen: Asking for \$76,000 for a parallel data entry system?

Matt Lundgren: Need a full-time person to enter data through ServicePoint.

Rupsis: Clarified his statement to not fund the largest provider of the service but not

- John Smiley, supports the CoC's request for funds.
- Lisa Harmon, Pastor of First Congregational Church, supports the CoC's request for funds to provide valuable care for those needing shelter. Provided a history of the City's efforts to decrease homelessness. She stated shelters gave push back to implementing additional sheltering options.
- Sierra Riesberd, Rimrock, the CoC has developed – struggles to understand immediate affect on chronic homelessness, incarceration.
- Oksana Zakharchenko, MRM, stated no one data base can provide all the information. Need someone to look at pooled information ServicePoint is not user-friendly. MRM was instrumental in entering the data with no benefit realized to their clientele.
- John Felton, Riverstone Health, all of these programs have value. Prevention doesn't show results immediately. It's difficult to correlate the results.

Purinton: Does Riverstone Health have staffing for this program?

John: No. recruiting now, has very specific training.

Purinton: Needs outcomes. Needs local data, not just national data.

John: explained outcomes can be a long time coming, i.e. the graduation of a child that was involved in nurse/family partnership program.

Shaw: Where did the 5-year commitment come from?

John: It will take 6 months of training before nurse can get to mom and child. 2-3 years aid is not long enough for prevention.

- Teri Todd, witnessed the mission's outreach efforts. Spoke about the benefits of sober living homes and the other - a portion of funding should be offered to all of these programs because the issues need a holistic approach.
- MarCee Neary – Community Crisis Center, asked Council to consider the CoC's coordination of care.

Mayor: What could be done with ½ of the asking price?

MarCee: Care coordination is necessary once a homeless person finds housing. Everyone will need to give a little to create a collaborated effort.

Purinton: Where do you get your funding from?

MarCee: No federal funds. No longer receive monies from the hospitals. Gets County Mental Health Public Safety Mill levy funding – which has been reduced. Can keep people 23 hours 59 minutes but do not house them.

- Tess Besaw, Laurel, MT, via Zoom, stated she is involved with the local CoC and is a data entry, provides data users support and provides \$1,038/yr. for 5 people to be able to enter data. She listed several agencies that enter data through coordinated entry. Provided stats.
- Kody Christensen, spoke to the importance of collaboration of all of the programs. They have been tracking the responses to homeless population in the downtown area. Supporting the CoC project. There is a gap in services very evident once off the streets project closed.
- Catherine Card, 2815 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Billings, MT, spoke about the CoC providing services to the most vulnerable and most difficult people. She said there were an urgent need to provide shelter to the homelessness this fall.
- Ann Treese, 111 Burlington Avenue, Billings, MT, spoke in favor of the CoC. She works for STEP and spoke about how they assist their population.
- Patti Webster, CEO of HomeFront, she wants to support MRM with their efforts, she supports CoC, and wants to believe MRM is doing what they say they are doing or will be doing because time and time again CoC has been left to pick up the pieces from the various agencies that closed. She encouraged Council to pause to get a very good look and plan to spend the mill levy monies.
- Kari Boiter, CoC volunteer, stated 756 individuals in April, May and June were served as literally homeless per HUD's definition of homelessness. There have been up to 51 volunteer staff working on case management, but even at that, they cannot keep up with the influx. CoC has asked for \$200,000 for 2 months of housing during the winter months or reduce the ask for 3 FTEs to 3 .75 FTEs to allow for more money for other collaborative agencies.

Mayor: Voiced concerns about low-barrier shelter site and affecting the neighborhood.

Kari: stated looking to mitigate the transportation of the homeless. But police stats showed that during the time the low barrier shelter was implemented that there were less calls for service to the police.

Purinton: What about clinicians for mental health and vocational rehabilitation? How to affect change?

Kari: Cannot make partners participate.

Shaw: Stated her appreciation to everyone that spoke tonight.

Boyett: How much will the Mobile Response cost?

Chris K.: \$200,000-\$250,000.

Mayor: What goes into the \$200,000?

Chris K.: EMT staffing, long-term equipment, data tracking and reporting.

Choriki: Has been uplifting and encouraging. Thanked all the partners that appeared, but wanted messaging to start being sent out that we are all in this together and we need to do the right thing.

Rupsis: MRM basically said they don't need the City's help.

Owen: Optimistic something can be created. Believes crisis intervention isn't the answer – prevention is necessary. Spoke about immediate impacts of home visiting. Yes and this is a great down payment.

Neese: Appreciates Patti's pause, but MRM has stepped up.

Joy: Gave appreciation to all those that spoke tonight. Great discussion and spoke about trauma on children's brains and the biological

Gulick: Need a low barrier shelter now. Supports the CoC. Has distrust of MRM, not satisfactory answers. Provided figures to be provided to each program.

Shaw: Would love to fund all of the programs. Staff provide short-term / long-term 5-yr. numbers. Lack of trust with an organization is a problem. Suggests MRM rebuild the trust. Would the County go for \$200,000? She would draft the letter.

Mayor: Not enough money to go around. Inclined to reduce numbers and the term commitment. Supports the Mobile response units because it is in our commitment to the community. Low-Barrier Shelter hiring people, for 3 FTEs – should be short-term, not a replacement for MRM. Need to do Low-Barrier Shelter quickly. Preserve some of the money from Marijuana revenues for other expenses that may come.

Owen: Timing issue is important. Don't understand the equipment needs – 18 months to get a vehicle?

Chris: Will try to patch for now due to supply chain problems. Everything is stated for over the fiscal year, with the exception of the low barrier shelter.

Choriki: Does not see anything permanent being done with these dollars – need to find other methods of funding. Supported only a 3-year commitment.

Rupsis: What are the next steps?

Chris: Mobile Response is immediate. Nurse/Family Partnership – someday. Deal with coordinated data entry, need a back up play for sheltering.

Boyett: Not a problem, you can get people to do things when you are holding the money.

Mayor: Does not support \$300,000 for Nurse/Family Partnership, it's too much, but prevention is important.

Rupsis: Place this on the next Work Session for an update.

Patti Webster: Pull funding information from various grants to the agencies.

#### **4. Highlight Upcoming Agenda Items of Council Interest.** (Presented by: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator)

Chris: noted items on the agenda for September 12<sup>th</sup>.

- Public comment: None

#### **COUNCIL DISCUSSION:**

Neese: Council procedures discussion coming soon?

Chris: Placed on both the Work Session and the September 26<sup>th</sup> agendas.

**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:** 10:36 PM

