



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

WORK SESSION SUMMARY

**BILLINGS PUBLIC LIBRARY
COMMUNITY ROOM
510 N. BROADWAY**

December 4, 2023

5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cole

Present: Councilmember Gulick, Ward I
Councilmember Jennifer Owen, Ward II
Councilmember Neese, Ward II (Zoom) absent from 5:50 pm - 6:00 pm
Councilmember Denise Joy, Ward III
Councilmember Danny Choriki, Ward III
Councilmember Pam Purinton, Ward IV
Councilmember Mike Boyett, Ward V
Councilmember Tom Rupsis, Ward V
Mayor William Cole

**Absent/
Excused:** Councilmember Kendra Shaw, Ward I
Councilmember Daniel Tidswell, Ward IV

**Staff
Present:** Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Rich St. John, Police Chief
Wyeth Friday, Planning Director

Dr. Erwin Garcia, School District 2 Superintendent, spoke of:

- Project Engage – how can the City help with this endeavor?
- Graduation rates: 86% (overall); 69% (Native American)
- 90 students have dropped out as of Nov. '23; anticipated 150 by Jan. '24 – Opportunity School

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- **Catherine Card, 2815 4th Avenue South, Billings, Montana**, spoke of homelessness.
- **Mark Snyder, 3547 Prestwick Road, Billings, Montana**, spoke about public safety.
- **Katie Harrison, 2901 6th Avenue South, Billings, Montana**, got an order of protection against a man emailing the Mayor and Council about using violence against her.
- **William (no last name given)**, spoke about being homeless.
- **Gary Buchanon, no address given**, spoke about the increase of crime in Billings.
- **Alba Pimental, Moms for Liberty**, spoke about public safety.
- **Tonya Ludwig, 378 Jefferson Street, Billings, Montana**, spoke of public safety.

1. PUBLIC SAFETY ROUNDTABLE

Objective: Reduce Family Violence:

- Ben Halvorson, Domestic Violence Prosecutor: “notoriously difficult to rehabilitate domestic violence offenders”; “we need to intervene with small children”; “too many broken homes”
- Sheriff Linder: “15 people incarcerated this past weekend for domestic violence assaults”
- QUESTION: Does this need to be a legislative discussion? (no real conversation followed question)
- CM Purinton: pushed Family Justice Center
- Katie Nash: “[We] are on a path to creating a Family Justice Center...this is a place for survivors...still in development phase”
- Ellie Stanton: “...Family Justice Center is also for children...”
- Chief St. John: “50% of all assaults in 2022 were domestic violence related”
- CM Owens: “Need community support...we can’t government our way out of this...we need to have church leaders, higher education, and hospitals part of this conversation...more training needs to be done for all City employees to be able to identify [abuse and trafficking]...we need to discuss if [the City] is appropriately levying the correct restitutions and fines [for these cases]...we need to change the way [BPD] gathers evidence at the scenes...too many passes...crimes in front of children need to [have harsher penalties]...this objective needs to have measurable.”
- CM Neese: “Look at [Omaha 360](#)...we need a community-based system...people need hope...ACEs need to be a factor [when addressing this issue]...we need to look for ways to help people who fail—incarceration is only one option...need to disrupt generational violence”
- CM Choriki: “The system needs to be fully funded...we need to have a robust public awareness campaign”
- Chantel Anderson: “We need to address the bail bond issue...there is a power and control dynamic [that needs to be addressed]”
- CM Joy: “It is too late to wait until middle school” (referring to bullet point #4)

Objective: Develop Intervention/Diversion Strategies:

- QUESTION: What does this objective mean?
- St. John: “Prevention...Intervention...Suppression. This objective is [reactive], new measures dealing with known perpetrators”
- Strategies include: credible messenger (someone who experienced this lifestyle); hospital liaison (intervene to dissuade retaliation)
- St. John: “This objective relies heavily on probation and parole.”
- Katie Weston: “Collaboration is needed...giving a dedicated person for the gang task force.”
- Steven Hurd: “Accountability is key...peer support, too. The Parole Board has more accountability.”
- QUESTION: Why is there a higher amount of parolees in Yellowstone County than anywhere else in the state?
- Steven Hurd: “There is a higher number of perpetrators who live in Yellowstone County that when released come back to where they live.”
- [Parole Board Accountability](#)
- [2023 BOPP Biennial Report](#)
- Billings has the largest parole office in MT.

- Judge Kolar: “There is a lack of accountability in the programs, and a lack of funding...mental health issues need to be addressed...lack of jail space...addiction issues”
- Judge #2: “Crimes need to be placed in different buckets...we need better data...and there is a need for the courts to work more coherently...more communication” -
- QUESTION: Diversion at the State level?
- Scott Twito: “There is a lack of interest and funding. We are trying.”
- CM Choriki: “Is the enough money being levied for mental health?” (no real conversation followed question)
- QUESTION from CM Rupsis: “How can resources be shared?” (no real conversation followed question)
- CM Owens: “This [objective] needs precision...need policy...need to employ the Zach Terakedis map”
- Zach Terakedis: “Sequential Intercept Map...prevention mapping...[utilize] community professionals to identify soft spots...stolen guns need to be addressed...this conversation needs to have a Native American representative.” – opportunity here to identify next steps
- QUESTION: When to use diversion?
- Ben: “Not effective for domestic violence.”
- Scott Twito: “Needs to have the right person. This deals with the *who*, not the type of crime.”
- Scott Twito: “The City would benefit from a screening tool.”
- POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM: establish a working group (City and County) to determine what screening tool could be used.
- QUESTION: Is there a pre-release facility being built in western MT?
- Katie Weston: “Yes, looking to be expanded in Kalispell.”

Objective: Reduce Violent and Property Crime

- Prevention and intervention are entwined
- This objective is enforcement focused
- 12/14/2 cars are needed for every shift – speak with Chief to get further understanding
- 16 per shift is ideal (20 new officers total)
- POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM: partner with SD2 for Gang Reduction Task Force
- US Attorney: “All agencies want to do their part...data needs to be a free-flowing sharing of intelligence...ATF gun crimes analytic team coming to Billings...keep investing in Project Safe Neighborhoods.”
- US Attorney: 2022 violent crimes 342 (122 w/ firearms); as of Nov. ’23 363 (221 w/ firearms)
- DCI Chief: “30% of agents located in Billings...MHP/Forensics are all helping...we are committed...fentanyl focus”
- Mayor Cole: Can there be a sentencing enhancement for crime with a stolen gun?
- Scott Twito: “There are already enhancements. If you want to look at enhancements, look to do so gang activity in commission of a crime.”
- CM Owen: Should we focus on an individual or the type of crime?
- US Attorney: “Not mutually exclusive.”
- Sherriff: “Focus needs to be on the opportunity of a crime. [Average] citizen can help with prevention.”
- St. John: “Task forces are mandated on what [crime] they can go after.”
- Scott Twito: “Look at the Tampa model.”
- [Tampa Model](#)
- QUESTION: What is the situation with Deer Lodge capacity?

- Katie Weston: “120 inmates will be transferred out of the state; 60 have already been transferred. 10-15 inmates are ready to be moved from the jail to Deer Lodge.”
- Jail capacity: 434 capacity/600 beds in use
- Average jail capacity is 80% (nationally)
- US Attorney: “Many hurdles when dealing with a juvenile offender.”
- Scott Twito: “Youth Court Act is 30 yrs. outdated.”
- CM Neese: “This objective is missing a community component...include the CPMS report as part of this objective”
- Chief St. John in response to CM Neese’s request of updating the CPMS report: “Yes, the report is being updated.”
- POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM: Quarterly update on CPMS report to Council
- CM Owens: “This objective needs to have measurable.”

Develop Intervention/Diversion Strategies

- Chief St John – opening remarks in general about topic
- Katie Weston – collaboration between departments
- Steve Hurd – accountability
- Judge Kohlar – accountability, sentencing, mental health, resources
- Judge Fehr – coordination, violent offenders, rise in violent crime, youth offenders on rise
- County Attorney Twito – diversion programs funding
- CM Choriki – how large should county mill levy be?
- CM Rupsis – expand resources available for diversion
- CM Owen – light on action steps, precision, policy steps, sequential intercep mapping (juvenile and adults maps)
- Zach Terakidas – Substance abuse connect – seq. intercept mapping
- Ben Halverson – diversion not effective for domestic violence
- Twito – mapping based on person not where point of entry
- CM Owen – where to get unified screening tool
- Katie Weston – state working in other communities to expand beds for P&P
- CM Purington – Alpha House – needs education and job training

Reduce Violent and Property Crime

- Chief St John – opening remarks, increase ofc presence, be proactive in problem areas, follow up appropriately, staffing
- US Attorney, Jesse Laslovich – data free flow of information, gun violence, project safe neighborhood,
- Steve Crawford – DCI narcotics resources,
- CM Boyette – staffing levels of PD
- CM Owen – they talk about people rather than crimes, what’s missing
- CA Twito – Tampa Model – identify people that are high risk, go after them
- Steve Hurd – unilateral cooperation is good, especially with US Attorney
- Katie Weston – status of inmates at YCDF and need to head to Deer Lodge
- Sheriff Linder – DOC doing well getting people out of jail, jail hovering at 600
- US Attorney Laslovich – youth issues
- CA Twito – how to deal with dangerous youth offenders, changes to youth court act,
- CM Neese – good list, missing community element, look for model that works for Billings
- CM Owen – we need targets,

- **Downtown Safety:**
- Ofc. Richardson: “Main goal of this patrol is downtown safety...community policing...CPTED...trespassing individuals from businesses...deescalate situations...work with homeless and the HOT Team...MAP”
- CM Purinton: Can these officers be shared?
- St. John: “These officers are focused downtown but may called to other situations, when needed.”
- City Admin: need to encourage community to create BID in other areas of the City
- Chantel Anderson: “concentration of resources to downtown area exclusion...can this be zoned? Dedicated jail space needs to be established.”
- Chief Valdez: CRT active for two (2) months; no official data available
- CM Neese: Who does the officer report to?
- St. John: Informed CM Neese that the officers are part of BPD
- Ofc. Richardson: Officers speak with businesses to best understand their needs that helps with setting direction.
- Mayor Cole: How is this measured? (no real conversation followed question)
- CM Gulick: “Vacant store fronts need to be addressed...need private reinvestment in these areas...”
- CM Purinton: What is the percentage of vacant properties downtown? (no answer available at time of meeting)
- POSSIBLE ACTION ITEM: Improve Downtown Vitality – not sure what this means
- CM Neese: Why do the officers wear yellow shirts and not standard police uniforms?
- Ofc. Richardson: We want to be visible to those groups downtown that need assistance
- State Sen. Friedel: Officers need to be visible...in European countries they are visible.
- Chantel Anderson: Can the City be informed when residents of Warm Springs are transferred to the MT Rescue? Does Billings have the caring capacity for these individuals? How can this be communicated to City officials? – (no real conversation followed questions)
- CM Owens: What comes next? What are we doing in the next 30, 60, 90 days?
- St. John: Modifying hours...SRO...exploring curfew sweeps...implementing more patrol trainings (stop and talks)...actively disrupting gathering of youths in parking lots...increasing sweeps of schools for guns and narcotics”

- **Improve Downtown Safety**

- Officer Richardson – downtown safety opening remarks
- CM Purington – task force numbers, moving downtown officers around
- Chantel Anderson – MAP program, concern over concentrating services in an area, jail space
- Chief St John – lots of quality of life issues, crisis response unit,
- Chief Valdez – CRU successful, in infancy stage, give resources back to EMS, Police Fire
- CM Neese – looking at crime stats from years ago lots of crime downtown
- Mayor – comments on additional bullet points
- Chief St John – identify % decrease that is the target based on metrics from past years
- CM Gulick – downtown quality of life issues, vacant storefronts, improve downtown vitality generally
- Mayor – one way to prevent crime is to have good neighborhoods
- CM Purington - % of vacant properties downtown
- CM Boyette – bright yellow shirt, why
- Chris Friedel – they see you, going back to more physically noticeable markings on vehicles and uniforms
- Sheriff Linder – responding to dangerous calls, argument for other side

- Chantel Anderson- MRM accepts individuals that are discharged from Warm Springs, decisions by these organizations about carrying capacities
- CM Owen – hear from city administrator on what is next
- CA Kukulski – other objectives next, future dialogues on components, new council in retreat format, resource allocations, feedback from each other
- Chief St John – items to implement, specialized positions (modified hours), SRO work, researching curfew violations, P&P partners, stop and talks patrol trainings, identify hangouts and disrupt, sweeps at schools for drugs and weapons
- CA Kukulski – items are all interconnected with other partners, city, county state feds
- CM Owen – figure out how we share data across agencies

Public Comment

- **Catherine Card, 2815 4th Avenue South, Billings, Montana**, spoke of public safety, motorcycle gang concerns.
- **David Iran (no address given):** Niece murdered in Fargo, ND, lack of jail space is an issue. Need more funding.
- **Clementine Lindley, Ward IV:** victim of property crime, had a bad experience with the cops. Product of a high ACE score, need to educate children at a young age.
- **Kylie Lammers, Ward IV, Moms Demand Action:** spoke of the importance of gun safety.
- **Ione Young, Ward IV:** gun responsibility concerns, need more activities for kids in our City.
- **Rep. Mike Yakawich:** bring policy ideas now—don't wait until only a few months before session...HB 872 (behavioral health).
- **Gary Buchannan:** need more cops on the streets, jail space needs to be addressed.
- **Rep. Greg Oblander:** focus on 2-3 needs for the next 60 days, then focus on another 2-3 things for the next 120 days.

2. Highlight Upcoming Agenda Items of Council Interest.

- Chris Kukulski, City Administrator, reminded Council the Capital Improvement Plan would be on the agenda at the next Council meeting.

Public Comment:

None

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

- CM Neese suggested adding a Special Work Session in December or January.
- CM Joy moved to have the next Public Safety discussion on January 2, 2024, seconded by CM Boyett. No vote taken.

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: 9:15 pm