



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

WORK SESSION AGENDA

Council Chambers

February 5, 2024

5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cole

Present: Councilmember Kendra Shaw, Ward I
Councilmember Gulick, Ward I (Arrived at 5:41 P.M.)
Councilmember Jennifer Owen, Ward II (Via Zoom)
Councilmember Neese, Ward II
Councilmember Denise Joy, Ward III
Councilmember Bill Kennedy, Ward III
Councilmember Scott Aspenlieder, Ward IV (Via Zoom/left at approximately 7:16 P.M.)
Councilmember Daniel Tidswell, Ward IV
Councilmember Mike Boyett, Ward V
Councilmember Tom Rupsis, Ward V
Mayor William Cole

**Absent/
Excused:**

Staff

Present: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Karen Schexnider, Assistant City Attorney
Pepper Valdez, Fire Chief
Jason Banfield, Assistant Fire Chief
Rich St. John, Police Chief
John Caterino, Facilities Manager
Nick Miller, Park Operator

Public Comment:

- None

1. Yellowstone County Short-Term Jail Request.

CA Kukulski reviewed the letters sent and received by Yellowstone County regarding a short-term jail request. He spoke of upcoming meetings and invited Council to give input.

Council discussed funding, timeframe, the City's liability with potential involvement, and the need for public input. CM Kennedy reviewed MT State Code details for detention facilities.

Public Comment:

- None

2. Montana Rescue Mission (MRM) Overview.

Matt Lundgren, MRM Executive Director, gave a brief overview of MRM's role in the community and showed photos of the unified campus construction.

Public Comment:

- Catherine Card, 2815 4th Avenue South, Billings, Montana, indicated presentation was not truthful, could not verify numbers. Spoke of MRM not being a low barrier shelter and not ADA accessible.

CM Rupsis asked for clarification on the 14 day stay policy. Mr. Lundgren indicated the amount of stay was decided on a case-by-case basis. He spoke of programing and how intake occurred.

Council spoke of crime concerns at the shelter and how MRM handled those situations.

3. Crisis Response Unit (CRU) and Mobile Response Team (MRT) Update.

Jason Banfield, Assistant Fire Chief, gave an overview of the purpose and goals, types of calls that could and could not be responded to. He reviewed CRU statistics and an overview of incident types and disposition codes. Pepper Valdez, Fire Chief, gave a timeline of MRT since implementation and an overview of the number of calls.

Council discussed how the program was working and what challenges were presenting during the first few months. Zach Terakedis, Substance Abuse Connect, spoke of a delay in Medicaid reimbursement and issues with the delay in Medicaid rules being announced. He spoke of difficulties due to the delays. He spoke of care coordination and insurance coverage.

Council discussed unspent dollars and how the funds could be used. They spoke of call volume and how MRT responses were avoiding large engine calls.

Public Comment:

- Catherine Card, 2815 4th Avenue South, Billings, Montana, spoke of not using "transient" terminology but "unhoused" instead.

4. Domestic Violence Investigation (DVI) Unit Initiative Discussion.

Rich St. John, Police Chief, spoke of the staff memo outlining recommendations to increase the capacity for the Family Violence Investigative Unit without increasing FTE's. He spoke of the financial impact and alternatives available for consideration. He indicated the department would be hiring 6 new officers for patrol and then 6 new hires for the DVI unit.

Council discussed current staff numbers and how new hires could be utilized. They spoke of utilizing community partnerships for training, and implementing a new study with Center for Public Safety Management group.

Public Comment:

- None

5. **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Committee Plan Update.**

John Caterino, Facilities Manager, gave an overview of the people on the committee. Nick Miller, Parks Operator, gave a presentation on: six parks involved - North, South, Dehler, Pioneer, Stewart and the Skate Park. He reviewed the number of incidents at each park, ways to improve, and next steps.

Council discussed improvements, timing of improvements, and ways to improve certain areas. They asked staff to send Council a list of parks by ranking.

Public Comment:

- Peter O'Brien, downtown business owner and Skate Park Committee, requested funds for skatepark and spoke of CPTED principles needed.
- Amanda Kelly, Skate Park Committee, spoke of safety issues at skatepark and hoped for support for improvements.

Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator, spoke about an upcoming meeting regarding a City owned parking lot and plans to activate the area to increase safety.

Chis Kukulski, City Administrator, spoke of a business owner loaning the City a camera to monitor activity at the skatepark.

Karen Schexnider, Assistant City Attorney, spoke of regulations regarding camera monitoring.

6. **Highlight Upcoming Agenda Items of Council Interest.**

CA Kukulski spoke of Yellowstone Valley Animal Shelter (YVAS) and potentially donating Wilson Park, Council Retreat, Sale of City Hall, Budget, and ISO Rating Fire Department.

Council discussed how departments would present their budget narratives for future decisions. They spoke of the upcoming initiative from CM Rupsis.

Public Comment:

- None

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

CM Neese spoke of the Police union letter Council received regarding "excess funds".

CA Kukulski explained the increase in property values combined with the franchise fee lawsuit settlement could allow some funding that could be spent in the general fund.

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: 8:14 P.M.