

**MINUTES
OF THE BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
December 8, 2025**

The Billings City Council met in regular session in the City Council Chambers, located at 316 N. 26th Street, 5th Floor, Billings, Montana, at 5:39 P.M. due to technical difficulties.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cole

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Cole

INVOCATION: Mayor Cole

ROLL CALL:

Present: Councilmember Kendra Shaw, Ward I
Councilmember Ed Gulick, Ward I
Councilmember Roy Neese, Ward II
Councilmember Jennifer Owen, Ward II
Councilmember TJ Rogers, Ward III
Councilmember Bill Kennedy, Ward III
Councilmember Scott Aspenlieder, Ward IV
Councilmember Daniel Tidswell, Ward IV
Councilmember Mike Boyett, Ward V
Councilmember Tom Rupsis, Ward V
Mayor William Cole

Staff

Present: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Toni Keehner, Deputy City Clerk
Brandon Schmidt, Cemetery Supervisor
Brandon Wooley, Police Captain
Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Development Director (Via Zoom)
Andy Zoeller, Finance Director
Debi Meling, Public Works Director

MINUTES: November 24, 2025

The minutes from November 24, 2025 were pending.

COURTESIES:

Councilmember Shaw announced the City Hall Open House on Thursday, December 11, 2025, from 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

PROCLAMATIONS:

There were no Proclamations.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

There were no Council reports.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS - CHRIS KUKULSKI

Mr. Kukulski advised Council that:

- Council Chambers was utilizing a temporary room configuration for the meeting due to other organizations using the room.
- The upcoming City Hall open house would be on Thursday, December 11, 2025. He discussed highlights of the new facility.
- The next regular business Council meeting would be held on Monday, December 15, 2025.
- There were no exparte communications to Mayor and Council received after 3 P.M. concerning items on the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT on "NON-PUBLIC HEARING" Agenda Items: 1, 2 and 3 ONLY. Speaker sign-in required. (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes or as set by the Mayor. Please sign the roster at the counter located at the entrance of Council chambers. Comments on items listed as public hearing items will be heard ONLY during the designated public hearing time for each respective item. For items not on this agenda, public comment will be taken at the end of the agenda.)

The following individuals provided public comment:

Myrna Lastusky, Beartooth RC&D Project Manager, in reference to Consent Agenda Item 1E, described the organization’s role in economic development across Yellowstone County, including administration of revolving loan funds, food and agriculture business assistance, Brownfields redevelopment, and coordination of federal funding.

The following constituents, in reference to Regular Agenda Item 3, encouraged support for funding trail projects in the CIP:

- **Mark Sevier.**
- **Jim Nichols.**
- **Steve Shandera.**
- **Kristi Drake.**
- **Paul Clark.**

- **Brandon Schmidt, Cemetery Supervisor**, in reference to Consent Agenda 1J, spoke of the success of the Patriot Run held in November and thanked those that had participated and donated.

There was no further public comment.

Councilmember Aspenlieder separated Consent Agenda Items 1N and 1O1 to abstain due to business involvement.

Councilmember Rupsis separated Consent Agenda Item 1O2 to abstain due to business involvement.

Councilmember Kennedy separated Consent Agenda Item 1A1 (appointments 21-27) and 1E for discussion.

Motion: I move to approve all items on the Consent Agenda, except for items moved for separation.

Moved by Councilmember Neese
 Seconded by Councilmember Rogers
APPROVED 11-0

1. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Mayor Cole recommends that Council confirm the following appointments:

1.

	Name	Board/Commission	Term	
			Begins	Ends
1	Jill Paul	Animal Control Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
2	No Applications	Animal Control Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
3	No Applications	Animal Control Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
4	No Applications	Animal Control Board*	01/01/26	12/31/29
5	Anna O'Donnell	Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee	01/01/26	12/31/28
6	Blake Wahrlich	Billings BID	01/01/26	12/31/29
7	Randy Stone	Billings BID	01/01/26	12/31/29
8	Peter Sanderson	Billings Parking Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
9	Jennifer Webber	Billings Parking Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
10	Brian Keserich	Billings Parking Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
11	No Applications	Billings Parking Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
12	George Warmer	Board of Adjustment	01/01/26	12/31/29
13	Michael Bruschwein	Board of Adjustment	01/01/26	12/31/29
14	Chris Hayes	Board of Adjustment	01/01/26	12/31/29
15	Josh Sayer	Board of Adjustment	01/01/26	12/31/29
16	Elizabeth Shumaker	Board of Adjustment	01/01/26	12/31/29
17	No Applications	Board of Adjustment	01/01/26	12/31/29
18	No Applications	Board of Adjustment	01/01/26	12/31/29
19	Josh Sayer	Board of Appeals	01/01/26	12/31/29
20	No Applications	Board of Appeals	01/01/26	12/31/29
21	Denise Boggie	Citizens Police Advisory Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
22	Jordan Webber	Citizens Police Advisory Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
23	No Applications	Citizens Police Advisory Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
24	Joseph Stout	Citizens Police Advisory Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
25	Kari Boiter	Citizens Police Advisory Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
26	Michael Fuss	Citizens Police Advisory Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
27	Derek Grimmell	Citizens Police Advisory Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
28	No Applications	Community Development Board - Low-Mod	01/01/26	12/31/29
29	Andy Zoeller	Downtown Revolving Loan Committee	01/01/26	12/31/29
30	Lucy Aspinwall	Downtown Revolving Loan Committee	01/01/26	12/31/29
31	Zachary Dunn	Downtown Revolving Loan Committee	01/01/26	12/31/29
32	Kim Olsen	Downtown Revolving Loan Committee	01/01/26	12/31/29
33	Heather Kirpach	Downtown Revolving Loan Committee	01/01/26	12/31/29

34	Mark Hutchinson	Exchange City Golf Corp	01/01/26	12/31/29
35	Zach Audet	Housing Authority	01/01/26	12/31/30
36	Tara Williamson	Human Relations Commission*	01/01/26	12/31/28
37	Erin Tate	Human Relations Commission	01/01/26	12/31/29
38	Staci Samuelson	Library Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
39	Trudi Paulson	Library Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
40	Jennifer Smith	Library Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
41	Lawrence Klee	Library Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
42	Jim Rott	Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
43	Laura Drager	Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
44	Jon Thompson	Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
45	Aaron Redland	Public Works Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
46	Morgan Sevier	Public Works Board	01/01/26	12/31/29
47	Hanna Teti	EBURD Advisory Committee	01/01/26	TBD*
48	Allen Hodges	EBURD Advisory Committee	01/01/26	TBD*
49	Stefan Cattarin	SBBURD Advisory Committee	10/01/26	TBD*

4* - Unexpired term of John Scheuering
36* - Unexpired term of Jeanelle Wassmer

Councilmember Kennedy expressed concerns with the same people serving on the Citizens Police Advisory Board and spoke of the opportunities provided by the Citizens Police Academy.

Council discussed the Citizens Police Advisory Board appointments and asked for clarification on the term limits. Mayor Cole explained the board had expired earlier in the year and most positions had been reestablished with a few new appointments. He explained the Citizens Police Academy was a separate program that was not related to the Advisory Board.

Motion: I move to delay appointments 21-27 to allow further discussion at the 2nd Work Session in January.

Moved by Councilmember Kennedy
Seconded by Councilmember Aspenlieder
APPROVED 7-4, Councilmembers Shaw, Gulick, Rupsis and Mayor Cole opposed

- B. **Bid Awards:** None
- C. **Cooperative Purchasing Agreement** with Axon Enterprise for Police Department equipment and software.
- D. **2026 City-County Special Investigations Unit (CCSIU)** agreement.
- E. **Memorandum of Agreement** with Beartooth Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. (Beartooth RC&D).

Councilmember Kennedy voiced opposition for the Memorandum of Agreement.

Motion: I move for approval of Consent Agenda Item 1E, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Rupsis
Seconded by Councilmember Boyett
APPROVED 9-2, Councilmembers Kennedy and Aspenlieder opposed

- F. **Purchase** of eight (8) Paratransit small buses; Northwest Bus, Inc.
- G. **2026 Domestic Violence Grant Award** for Police Department.
- H. **First Interstate Bank Grant** to the Fire Department.
- I. **Donations** to the Billings Public Library from Montana Arts for Senior Art; Brooklyn Public Library; and Friends of the Library.
- J. **Donation** to Parks and Recreation from Partners for Parks.
- K. **Annexation Agreement** with Kenneth Kramer, Jack Kramer, Gerald Kramer, Larry Kramer, and Carolyn Gerondale.
- L. **Resolution 25-11309** approving the FY2027 Equipment Replacement Plan (ERP).
- M. **Resolution 25-11310** approving the FY2027 Technology Replacement Plan (TRP).
- N. **Second/Final Reading Ordinance 25-5925** expanding the boundaries of Ward IV - Annexation 25-05.

Motion: I move for approval of Consent Agenda 1N, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Neese
 Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy
APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained

0. Bills for the Weeks of:

- 1. November 3, 2025

Motion: I move for approval of Consent Agenda 1O1, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Neese
 Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy
APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained

- 2. November 10, 2025

Motion: I move for approval of Consent Agenda 1O2, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Neese
 Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy
APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Rupsis abstained

REGULAR AGENDA:

- 2. **TAX INCREMENT FINANCING ASSISTANCE** from the Downtown Urban Renewal TIF District for Frontier Law Firm for building facade improvements at 2923 Montana Avenue, up to \$14,194.64. Downtown Billings Partnership (DBP) Board recommends approval.

Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Development Director, presented a request for tax increment financing to support exterior facade improvements at the Frontier Law Firm at 2923 Montana Avenue.

Mehmet Casey, Development Director for the Downtown Billings Partnership, provided background on the project, noting that the program is designed to encourage reinvestment in downtown buildings, stimulate economic activity, and enhance the overall appearance and vitality of the downtown core. He reviewed the history of the building, including its long-standing presence along Montana Avenue, and described the proposed scope of work. Improvements included replacement of existing garage-style doors with energy-efficient doors designed to maintain the historic character of the building, sidewalk and curb repairs to address uneven surfaces and accessibility concerns, and exterior lighting enhancements. He emphasized the improvements would improve pedestrian safety, ADA accessibility, and the visual continuity of the streetscape.

The applicant briefly addressed Council and thanked the City and Downtown Billings Partnership for their support.

Motion: I move to conditionally approve tax increment financing assistance from the Downtown Urban Renewal TIF District for Frontier Law Firm for building facade improvements at 2923 Montana Avenue, up to \$14,194.64, as recommended by DBP Board.

Moved by Councilmember Shaw
Seconded by Councilmember Gulick

APPROVED 11-0

3. **RESOLUTION 25-11311** approving the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
Staff recommends approval.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, presented the proposed FY2027–FY2031 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), identifying 128 capital projects totaling approximately \$502 million, with approximately \$103 million projected in FY2027. He emphasized the CIP was a long-range planning document intended to guide future budgets, infrastructure investment, and grant applications, and did not authorize or appropriate funding.

Council discussed projected utility rate assumptions and their impact on affordability for residents.

Staff clarified that the projected rates were illustrative estimates showing the level of investment necessary to maintain existing infrastructure and to avoid costly deferred maintenance. Final rate decisions would be made during the annual budget and rate-setting process.

Motion: I move to direct staff to reduce amounts planned for water, wastewater, storm, solid waste and street maintenance, and bring those changes back to Council for approval.

Moved by Councilmember Kennedy
Seconded by Councilmember Neese

Councilmembers Neese and Kennedy spoke in support of the motion.

Debi Meling, Public Works Director, indicated Council wanted the Public Works Department to return with projected numbers that would allow financing of projects that need to be completed to responsibly keep the systems maintained. She indicated the Budget and Finance Committee had requested her department return with various numbers based on potential projects. She spoke of the budget process and opportunities for Council to set rates.

Council discussed the method Public Works presented rate increases and the role the Council Budget and Finance Committee played in the rates presented.

Councilmembers Shaw, Gulick, Aspenlieder and Mayor Cole voiced opposition to the motion.

FAILED 4-7, Councilmembers Shaw, Gulick, Aspenlieder, Tidswell, Boyett, Rupsis and Mayor Cole opposed

Motion: I move to approve the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Plan, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Aspenlieder
Seconded by Councilmember Boyett

Councilmember Shaw asked for clarification on the funding source for the future 25th Street Bridge Project. Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Development Director, indicated staff pursued a federal grant in the past. Those efforts were not successful, but it would have been a good fit. He indicated there was no specific funding currently in place for the project, but staff planned to continue application efforts for grant funding.

Councilmember Aspenlieder requested staff add a 6th column showing projects for future years for each department budget.

Motion to Amend: I move to remove the 25th Street bridge, Alkali Creek trail connection, downtown Heights trails connection, the trail corridor from King Avenue West to Transtech Center and Yellowjacket Trail from the current proposed years to proposed out years and remove Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding sources from those that are committed outside of TA, Urban and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) dollars.

Moved by Councilmember Aspenlieder
Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy

Councilmembers Aspenlieder and Kennedy spoke to the motion.

Councilmember Shaw asked for clarification on the process of submitting grant applications for projects that were further in the future. Mr. Friday indicated the language written in the future projects list was challenging. He spoke of staff needing Council approval for future projects if grant funding was found that may be a good fit for projects. He discussed feasibility projects that were added in the current year work program as directed by Council.

Council discussed the importance of trails and Safe Routes to School.

Councilmembers Gulick, Rupsis and Mayor Cole spoke in opposition of the motion.

APPROVED 7-4, Shaw, Gulick, Rupsis and Mayor Cole opposed

Councilmember Owen asked for clarification on the high proposed cost of the evidence facility lot expansion.

Mr. Zoeller indicated the design costs were allocated for Year 1 and staff expected it would cost less than the proposed amount. Councilmember Aspenlieder offered his company's services pro bono to get more concrete costs for the project.

Mayor Cole called for a recess at 7:47 PM. He reconvened the meeting at 7:55 PM.

Motion to Amend: I move to shift all funding for the evidence facility lot expansion to FY2028 and reduce the total amount to \$500,000.

Moved by Councilmember Owen
Seconded by Councilmember Rogers
APPROVED 11-0

Motion to Amend: I move to direct staff to change the wording above the Future CIP Projects List to state "are not the highest priority".

Moved by Mayor Cole
Seconded by Councilmember Gulick

Councilmember Shaw suggested the last sentence be removed: "and as a result are not being focused on by City staff at the current time."

Mayor Cole agreed to the friendly amendment and Councilmember Gulick concurred.

Councilmember Owen explained that the sentence gave staff permission to say "don't forget these", but the items on the Future Projects list would not need a lot of staff time or preparation.

APPROVED 11-0

A vote on the original motion to approve the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Plan was taken with the following amendments: remove the 25th Street bridge, Alkali Creek trail connection, downtown Heights trails connection, the trail corridor from King Avenue West to Transtech Center and Yellowjacket Trail from the current proposed years to proposed out years and remove Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding sources from those that are committed outside of TA, Urban and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) dollars; shift all funding for the evidence facility lot expansion to FY2028 and reduce the total amount to \$500,000; and direct staff to change the wording above the Future CIP Projects List to state "are not the highest priority" and remove "and as a result are not being focused on by City staff at the current time".

Councilmember Neese spoke in opposition of the amended motion.

APPROVED 10-1, Councilmember Neese opposed

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.)*

There was no public comment.

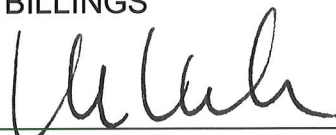
COUNCIL INITIATIVES:

There were no Council initiatives.


ADJOURN: 8:03 P.M.



CITY OF BILLINGS

BY: 
Mike Nelson, Mayor

ATTEST:

BY: 
Denise R. Bohlman, City Clerk