



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

WORK SESSION SUMMARIZATION

Council Chambers
316 N. 26th St.

March 3, 2025

5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cole

Present: Councilmember Gulick, Ward I
Councilmember Neese, Ward II
Councilmember Owen, Ward II
Councilmember Rogers, Ward III
Councilmember Kennedy, Ward III
Councilmember Tidswell, Ward IV
Councilmember Aspenlieder, Ward IV
Councilmember Boyett, Ward V
Councilmember Rupsis, Ward V
Mayor William Cole

Absent/
Excused: Councilmember Shaw, Ward I

Staff: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Denise Bohlman, City Clerk
Rich St. John, Police Chief
Brandon Wooley, Captain
Shawn Mayo, Assistant Police Chief
Sheila Kolar, Judge
Daniela Pavuk, Assistant City Attorney
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Sam Hancoop, Deputy City Attorney
Pepper Valdez, Fire Chief
Jason Banfield, Assistant Chief of EMS
Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner
Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner

Mayor Cole spoke of the potential effects the proposed property tax relief bills may have on the City.

-Public Comment

- **Paul Clark, no address given**, discussed moving a HUB to South Park, change code enforcement of dealing with abandoned vehicles to patrol, asked that snow removal for handicap ramps be prioritized during snow storms, and water bill audit.

1. CPSM Report.

- **Wooley** – Deployment affecting 911 response times. Over 50% of calls are high priority. Focused on top high priority calls, not everything is a high priority. Typing priorities is more accurate now. Provided data and slides from 2023 CPSM report. 18% drop in high priority calls and better dispatch times. Provided theories for the reduction in numbers. Shift times were changed which flattened some of the peaks. Reviewed staffing for patrols and records and support services.
- **Mayo** – He reviewed investigations staffing, running case audits in LERMS and utilizing an EXCEL system for quick reference. Explained operations of CSI unit and detectives. Fingerprinting on scene – more technical systems will be acquired. 2 IT specialists within IT department. Holding off on officer immersion training for records management as considering other options.
- **St. John**– Overtime recommendations. Working with Finance – disagrees with concurrence with finance – bill private businesses for officers used for security – timing for reimbursement is slow but does happen.
- **Mayor** – what's made the difference in dispatch calls.
- **Wooley** – responded recoded priorities allows officers to get to the truly priority calls.
- **Neese** – Asked about 911 predictions for response times to callers.
- **Wooley** – gave examples that criteria has changed for types of priorities. Too soon to be able to predict.
- **Neese** – LERMS / EXCEL – why retain both, seems inefficient.
- **Mayo** – EXCEL is quick reference for case assignment. Faster using EXCEL for certain at a glance information but LERMS gives the finer details.
- **Neese** – LERMS incapable of quick reference? Can Tyler Technologies make this quicker for reporting.
- **Mayo** – Gave examples of how the systems work.
- **Neese** – billing for outside services.
- **St. John** – who is handling invoicing – suggested to hand over to Finance, but they would do the same as the PD, so decided to keep it in PD.
- **Boyett** – How does dispatch know priority calls.
- **Wooley** – Explained Tyler CADD System – several disturbance designations, etc. has been added to assist dispatchers.
- **Aspenlieder** – clarity on budget amendment for 2 detectives – where will they go? DV?
- **Mayo** – Intended to general detective – there is overlap.
- **Aspenlieder** – budget amendment was specific that detectives were to go to DV units.
- **St. John** – responded PD postured to divide into crimes against people / crimes against property.
- **Kennedy** – How many more detectives are needed.
- **Mayo** – Trying to balance detectives with no more than 10 cases at a time.
- **Owen** – Reviewed DV staffing with St. John. She clarified that 2 additional detectives would add capacity to crimes against the family. She continued about having diversional programs.

- **St. John** – spoke about getting the CRU unit back up and running – was very helpful for the Police Department to quickly move on to the next call.
- **Sam Hancock, Deputy City Attorney**, stated the MAAP program was reinstated.
- **Judge Sheila Kolar**, mentioned implementing Project Reset in her 5-year goals.

-Public Comment

None

2. **Municipal Court update.** Judge Sheila Kolar, Daniela Pavuk (Assistant City Attorney), Gina Dahl, (City Attorney)

Judge Kolar – Second Judicial is up and running; in new Courtroom and learning technology. Failures to appear have reduced. Cases are moving more quickly. Orders of Protection are being processed quicker. Working on emails and texts reminders. Will be asking for more money in her budget - \$15,000 for software ticket entry. GPS monitoring is helpful in DV cases and will ask for more money to help with that. Arraignment help will occur in June / July 2025.

Dahl – provide slides to City Attorney’s responses to recommendations from CGL. State’s interfaces are not available at this time due to their limited resources but will try again. Systems don’t talk with each other and the workflow needs to be streamlined for the benefit of all agencies. Would take dedicated staffing to consolidate LERMS and Full Court, etc. Prosecutors use all systems to determining defendant’s conflicts. Focused on early case resolution through template offers, i.e. plea agreements. Been beneficial. Also implemented an officer directed complaint process which has reduced delays. Pretrial diversions are considered. Suggested Council invest in software to coordinate Sheriff’s office, courts, etc. Biggest cost and biggest need. Also staffing needed for a person to investigate what the needs are in departments.

Owen – noted significant changes had been met. GPS units – may need our own system. Wants arraignment court multi-collaboration sooner. How can that happen?

Judge Kolar – When Judge Carter is ready, Municipal Court is ready.

Owen - HB 236 – hold mental health cases in our community for 60 days before going to a local hospital rather than moving them to Warm Springs state hospital for a couple of days. The state hospital is expensive to the City.

Rupsis – Project Reset – did the City Attorney’s office go? No. Needs to be lead by prosecution. Quickly becoming best practice and keeps offenders out of the system. Top on the list to fund.

Sam Hancock – Much time is spent on repeat offenders. Big shift being at arraignments or first appearances having a prosecutor to put them on a path to not have them repeat. Pre-Arraignment diversion – prosecutors could reach out.

Judge Kolar – Explained direct officer charging takes away prosecution for a crime. Doesn’t understand how Project Reset works.

Rupsis – Concerned about metrics and wants those during budget talks.

Mayor – cost of electronic monitoring? About one tenth of holding someone in jail.

Judge Kolar – will provide the numbers at budget time. Big savings.

-Public Comment

None

RECESS 7:18 P.M. – 7:23 P.M.

3. **Citizens Police Advisory Board.** Kari Boiter, Board Chair; Kevin Holland, Denise Boggio, Joe Stout and Hannah Reno
 - **Boiter** – reviewed goals and objectives. 1. Workplace Recruitment and Retention of Native Officers (St. John's idea). 2. Community Support and Engagement (St. John's idea) 3. Data Collection and Analysis (community idea) 4. Crime Prevention and Diversion (community idea)
 - Board consistently has had quorums for a year. She reviewed accomplishments.
 - **Stout** – 3 CSO's recommended and adopted, along with vehicles.
 - **Holland** – Community SAFETY Campaign to increase citizen involvement. Victoria Hill helped with campaign. Reviewed whether the resolution that created the CPAB needed to be renewed.
 - **Boggio** – Reviewed data and analysis of wide crime tracking. Determining impact of nuisance properties – the cost and community impact of those properties, adult establishments, etc.
 - **Reno** – Need sustainable CRU unit and expansion 24-7-365 coverage to ensure full reimbursement from Medicaid. Need solutions for unhoused neighbors.
 - **Boiter** – She summarized the recommendations.
 - Council comments were made about appreciation for accomplishments. Overall they wanted the resolution renewed with more specifics. Encouraged obtaining a representative from RiverStone Health to replace Substance Abuse Connect (SAC) representative. May need to revise the resolution to reflect that change.

-Public Comment

- **Jon Forte, RiverStone Health CEO**, reported that SAC disbanded but coalition and work will continue. Coalition Coordinator is being hired.
4. **Crisis Response Unit Models of Service.** Jon Forte (RiverStone Health Executive Director); Fire Chief, Pepper Valdez; Jason Banfield, Assistant Fire Chief of EMS)
 - **Valdez** – introduced Jon Forte, CEO RiverStone Health.
 - **Forte** – RiverStone Health is taking over the behavioral health where SAC left off. He offered the deliverables to the Council. CRU is on hold until failures can be determined and corrected so it can be effective.
 - **Banfield** – 2 people from the FD were in the CRU team but have lost one and the other is serving housed persons in crisis. Holding the vacancy open at this time.
 - **Rupsis** – talked about the chronically homeless and the cost to the community and City in particular. The report will be finalized soon and shared.

- **Forte** – Crisis response is dispatched regardless of who is in crisis.
- **Kennedy** – Not a fan of the Crisis Center. Explained the problems experienced with chronic people visiting there.
- **Forte** – Crisis Center needs support. Crisis care is fragmented in the community. The care continuum has gaps.
- **Aspenlieder** – attracting a workforce?
- **Banfield** – difficult but do have previous CRU members interested in staffing CRU.
- **Forte** – spoke about St. Pete’s in Lewis and Clark County CRU being the only functional unit in the state.
- **Aspenlieder** – Wants a structural plan. There is only about 3 months to receive that from Forte.
- **Boyett** – There were complaints that it was underutilized to the tune of 2 calls per day.
- **Forte** – Model was changed toward the end as they learned logistics.
- **Kukulski** – There is a disconnect but agrees that without a CRU unit we are sending police officers to mental health crisis calls which is not an efficient. Livingston is telemedicine with a company in Texas. Would that be an option for Billings.
- **Forte** – CRU is to be 24 hours to get full reimbursement.
- **Owen** – Stay in the lane of mobile crisis unit space for 24/7 with limited transport to social services. Suggested getting pre-certified behavioral health specialist. May need neutral staff. Needs clarification on Medicaid funding. Telemedicine would be a secondary service. In person consult would be first line of defense.
- **Boyett** – one clinician 5 days a week burns out. Suggested spreading it to several clinicians to take a day here and there.
- **Forte** – a multitude of staffing and community partners are needed.
- **Owen** – wants direct dispatch not waiting on Police.
- **Kennedy** – spoke about allocations of money through mill levy dollars. Suggested coordinating with the Crisis Center for possible staffing.
- **Kukulski** – stated County lost their funding because the COC didn’t have data.

-Public Comment

None

5. **Billings Area Pedestrian Bicycle Master Plan.** Mack Drzayich - Alta Planning + Design (Via Zoom), Elyse Monat (Active Transportation Planner), Lora Mattox (Transportation Planner)
 - **Monet** – Introduced Mack Drzayich
 - **Drzayich** – provided disclaimer and provided presentation. Stated the goals were simplified from the 2017 goals. Provided stats on mileage built for bikeways, sidewalks and trails. Explained the implementation strategy with the synergy between planning and public works and coordinating the implementation. Grant funding has been successful. Reviewed outreach efforts for phases 1 and 2 and implementation of the plan.
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- **Rupsis** – Loved the plan. Encouraged stoplights over roundabouts for high comfort.
- **Mayor** – liked the plan - noted in the funding list did not contain anything for private gifts and donations. Needed clarification on feasibility and costs.
- **Monat** – Wanted to leave flexibility for public works on the high comfort and supplemental – costs couldn't be determined.
- **Neese** – Spoke about prioritization – Council spoke to schools. Heights has no prioritization but has school. The presentation and the plan don't have the same order.
- **Gulick** – spoke to active transportation being a preventative mode. Liked the plan.
- **Neese** – asked about changing the multiplier from 3 to 4 for schools.
- **Drzayich** – responded it could be changed but would take time to recreate the map.

-Public Comment

None

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

- **Mayor** – spoke about the proposed new legislation that will impact our community due to the charter. Mr. Zoeller is communicating with other cities to see about their impacts. \$6.5 to 6.9 million deficits for Billings. Our charter is a problem. Only Billings and Sunburst have this problem. HB231 – governor's bill. HB 151
- **Kukulski** – Chamber is helping put events together to get the word out. Need a positive impact as these bills move forward. Comfortable with numbers Andy Zoeller has put together.
- **Mayor** – Concerned about how it will impact the jail expansion.
- **Rupsis** – the state will allow Billings to ignore its charter?
- **Kukulski** – yes. No easy fix.
- **Boyett** – Would Andy Zoeller support this?
- **Kukulski** – hiring freezes? How to effectively communicate the impacts to the public.

HIGHLIGHT UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS OF COUNCIL INTEREST.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

- None

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: 9:37 P.M.