



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

WORK SESSION SUMMARY

Council Chambers
316 N. 26th St.

April 7, 2025

5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cole

Present: Councilmember Shaw, Ward I
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:

Staff: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Denise Bohlman, City Clerk
Jeff Roach, Aviation and Transit Director
Rusty Logan, Transit Manager
Wyeth Friday, Planning Director
Anna Vickers, Planning Manager
Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator
Pepper Valdez, Fire Chief
Rich St. John, Police Chief

Public Comment:

- Danny Choriki, former Councilmember, spoke about legislative issues affecting the community.
- Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, Montana, spoke about the City's TIF policy and traffic safety issues.

1. Billings Industrial Revitalization District (BIRD)

Keith Robinson and Matthew McDonald, BIRD members gave an update regarding their incorrect filing status. They indicated they had hired an attorney to get things corrected.

General Council discussion and questions.

-Public Comment

None

2. Federal Funding Priority – Grand Ave.

Lora Mattox gave an overview of the Policy Coordinating Committee's (PCC) request to add Grand Avenue and portions of 62nd Street West to the urban system to receive Federal funding.

General Council questions and discussion: proposed improvements, other streets needing Federal funding for improvements, City expansion policies, and the need for improvements on Rimrock Road.

Chris Kukulski spoke of Federal funding use for Rimrock Road.

-Public Comment

None

3. 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment 2

Lora Mattox gave an overview of the TIP amendments and new performance measurements. She reviewed next steps to take recommendations back to the Policy Coordinating Committee.

Rusty Logan gave an overview of transit amendments, capital funding updates for 5307, 5339, 5310 and TransADE programs.

General Council questions and discussion: urban roadways, and Council's decision to not act on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Lora indicated staff would provide all information in a memo to MDT. County Commissioners voted no, City tabled the item, therefore, the City would not have a vote for the PCC.

Wyeth Friday spoke about the Grand Avenue project status and funding.

-Public Comment

None

4. Police Department annual report.

Chief St. John gave an overview of calls for service and reviewed the numbers of all classes of crimes. He reviewed the arrest statistics and mentioned the special programs: volunteer program, animal control and the units that had seized drugs and firearms.

General Council questions and discussion: staff numbers, hiring process, Camp Blue, and speeding issues on main streets.

Chief St. John spoke of some upcoming potential projects: City starting their own Police Academy, PD1 expansion to add classrooms, a gym and parking, regional training center for other surrounding areas.

-Public Comment

None

5. Fire Department annual report.

Chief Valdez gave an overview of the Fire Department's call volume, numbers for various types of calls, call volume by station area and time of day. He reviewed false alarm numbers, types of 911 calls and progress of the new National Guard/Swat Medic program. He indicated there had been 7 new hires for the department that would start training soon.

General Council questions and discussion: Fire Station 9, National Guard/Swat Medic program, a 2nd fire station in the Heights, staffing deficiencies and Medical Response Teams (MRT's). They spoke of response times and ways to improve.

Chief Valdez spoke of the need for an additional fire station. He indicated Fire Station 5 and 7 split calls for the area that would be Fire Station 9 and it would have received over 1800 calls. He indicated 1 MRT for every fire engine would be ideal. He spoke of the condition of fire stations 1, 2, 3 and 5 and the need for major renovations.

-Public Comment

None

6. Airport Authority.

Jeff Roach gave an overview of the Airport Authority benefits, transition process and the MT State code. He reviewed the different areas of the Airport Authority.

Some of the discussion not included due to audio issues.

General Council questions and discussion: creating a transit authority program and expanding to provide services outside of City limits.

Rusty Logan spoke of an upcoming RFP for the Unified Work Program that could answer some of the questions about adding transit.

Motion: Direct staff to define the scope and bring information back to Council becoming an Airport Authority.

Moved by CM Shaw

Seconded by CM Owen

Council continued discussion on how the changes would affect the city, expanding services, costs, and the inclusion of MET Transit.

Mayor Cole and CM Neese spoke of concerns with moving forward.

APPROVED 10-1, Neese opposed

-Public Comment

None

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE.

Chris Kukulski gave an update on the following Legislative topics: criminal justice and safety, land use, taxation and street assessments. Biggest issues - HB231 and 155 (lower value of a mill).

Mayor Cole gave overview of language and background of HB231 and the impact of the City's Charter.

Council discussion about the State overriding the City's Charter cap, and options available to the city.

Council consensus: hold off on making any decisions until further information can be compiled.

HIGHLIGHT UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS OF COUNCIL INTEREST.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION.

CM Gulick spoke against the Council decision to table Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

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: 9:18 P.M.