

CITY OF BILLINGS
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
September 15, 2025
5:30 P.M.
Council Chambers – City Hall, 316 N. 26th St.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Bill Cole called the Work Session to order at 5:30 P.M. Councilmembers present were:

Present:

Councilmember Gulick, Ward I
Councilmember Owen, Ward II
Councilmember Neese, Ward II
Councilmember Rogers, 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
Councilmember Kennedy, Ward III

Staff:

Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Toni Keehner, Deputy City Clerk
Debi Meling, Public Works Director
Jennifer Duray, Public Works Deputy Director
Derick Miller, Streets/Traffic Superintendent
Gavin Woltjer, PRPL Director
Kory Thomson, Recreation Supervisor

- City Administrator Kukulski gave an update on the incident at Yellowstone Valley Animal Shelter: reported on the September 10th smoke exposure incident during narcotics incineration. Fourteen shelter employees and five law enforcement officers were treated at the hospital for CO2 exposure; no animals were lost. The facility remains closed, and restoration is underway. Concerns were raised about safety protocols and communication with shelter staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Audio issues/speakers could not be heard.

1. Snow Operations Update

Presented by: Derick Miller, Streets/Traffic Superintendent

- Reviewed priorities (arterials, collectors, residential streets), snow/ice treatment methods, and communication strategies.
- Discussed products used (sand, Ice Slicer, liquid deicer) and their costs/effectiveness.
- Residential plowing remains costly (\$43,000/day), taking ~5 days to complete, with strong public demand for equitable service.
- Council emphasized the importance of communication with residents (advance notices, mapping, social media).
- Contractors will be tested this season to supplement City crews for residential plowing.
- Special attention areas include school zones, Zimmerman Trail, protected bike lanes, downtown 2-way conversion, and multi-use trails.

Council Discussion:

- Councilmembers asked about cost recovery, survey results (80% support for residential plowing), and improving collaboration with School District #2.
- Emphasis placed on clear communication to reduce conflicts over driveways, sidewalks, and parked cars.

Public Comment:

None

2. Utility Billing Update

Presented by: Debi Meling, Public Works Director and Jennifer Duray, Deputy Public Works Director

- Reviewed new bill format and customer communication strategy.
- Outlined options for implementing late fees and water shut-offs:
 - Option 1: Begin immediately.
 - Option 2: Delay until after the holidays.
- Communication plan includes bill inserts, letters, phone calls, social media, and media releases.
- Council feedback sought on timing and customer assistance options.

Council Discussion:

- Considered balancing fiscal responsibility with compassion during holidays.
- Discussed outreach efforts to large commercial customers and vulnerable households.

Public Comment:

None

Option 1 APPROVED 5-3, individual vote not taken

3. Amend Recreation Center (ARC) Update

Presented by: Gavin Woltjer, PRPL Director

- ARC Operations Committee (Councilmembers Gulick, Neese, Kennedy, Aspenlieder, Rupsis).
- Reviewed progress since April 2025 presentation on facility design and pro forma.
- Current focus on finalizing operational structure, programming, and financial sustainability. Spoke of naming rights.
- Council feedback requested on governance, committee roles, and next steps.

Council Discussion:

- Emphasized importance of ensuring equitable community access, noise issues, .
- Considered partnership opportunities and coordination with schools and community groups.

Council consensus – move forward as needed. APPROVED

Public Comment:

None

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS OF COUNCIL INTEREST.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

- CM Rupsis – upcoming initiative.
- CM Boyett – 2-way lanes downtown are very confusing.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

ADJOURN

8:41 P.M.