

**CITY OF BILLINGS**  
**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION SUMMARY**  
**November 17, 2025 5:30 P.M.**  
**Council Chambers – City Hall, 316 N. 26th Street**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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

Councilmembers Present: Gulick, Neese, Kennedy, Rogers, Tidswell, Boyett, and Mayor Cole

Councilmembers Absent: Shaw, Owen, Aspenlieder, Rupsis

Staff Present: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator; Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator; Denise Bohlman, City Clerk; Gina Dahl, City Attorney (via Zoom); Andy Zoeller, Finance Director; Gavin Woltjer, Interim Parks & Recreation Director; Brandon Schmidt, Parks & Recreation Supervisor; Nick Westburg, Motor Pool Manager; Tricia Mae, Facilities; Jeff Roach, Aviation & Transit Director; Paul Khera, Assistant Aviation & Transit Director; Rusty Logan, Transit Manager; Wyeth Friday, Planning Director; Debi Meling, Public Works Director; Jennifer Duray, Deputy Public Works Director; Derick Miller, Streets & Traffic Supervisor; Matt Hoppel, Fire Chief; Brandon Wooley, Police Captain

Guests: Senator Yakawich; John Forte (RiverStone Health/Public Health Officer); Yellowstone County Commissioner Mike Waters;

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**PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda and Non-Agenda Items)**

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- Warren Ussery addressed homelessness, severe weather exposure, youth living on the streets, and advocated for opening unused city buildings to shelter vulnerable persons.
- Peter O'Brien raised concerns about dramatic increases in downtown encroachment permit fees, urging better communication and equitable policy.
- Paul Clark commented on South Side safety, darkness due to lack of street lights, capital infrastructure gaps, and voter engagement issues.

Public comment closed.

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## AGENDA ITEM #1 – FY2027 Equipment Replacement Plan (ERP)

Presenter: Nick Westburg, Motor Pool Manager

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Westburg explained the ERP as a 20-year rolling plan considering age, hours, mileage, and condition.

- 175 units eligible for replacement; 125 deferred; 50 recommended.
- Major replacements: landfill dozer & compactor, sanitation trucks, seasonal equipment, eight police vehicles.
- ERP cost patterns show FY28 will spike due to deferred equipment.
- Public Surplus auction system yields better returns with no seller fees.

### wCOUNCIL DISCUSSION

- asked about auction performance; Westburg compared the old 10–11% seller fee model with Public Surplus' 0% fee structure.
- requested clarification on “non-governmental departments”; funding differences were reviewed.
- Mayor Cole discussed the recurring issue of inflated future-year spikes due to consistent deferrals and explored whether replacement thresholds should be modernized given improved equipment durability.
- emphasized the need for multi-year projections visible to Council.
- asked about inflation planning and ensuring departments adjust supplemental requests accordingly.
- Fire Chief, Matt Hoppel explained safety benefits of switching to pickups for Deputy Fire Marshal fleet, noting carcinogen exposure risks in SUVs.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

- Kevin Nelson questioned fleet departments spending for cardboard collection and efficiency.

Public comment closed.

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## AGENDA ITEM #2 – FY2027–FY2031 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Presenter: Andy Zoeller, Finance Director

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Zoeller gave an overview of Version 2 of the CIP totals approx. \$502M over five years.

Key revisions:

- Removed 5th Avenue Corridor & 21st Street Underpass from 5-year cycle.
- Modified Evidence Facility funding and added planning costs for FY27.
- Noted Safe Routes to School backlog (~\$20M).
- Reviewed funding sources and homeowner impacts (rising to ~ \$1900/year by FY31).

### COUNCIL DISCUSSION

- emphasized creating greater transparency through annual workshops to prevent Council and public confusion.
- raised concerns about geographic funding inequity, especially that Heights receives disproportionately fewer projects.
- reinforced that some recent large transportation projects favored Heights.
- requested better maintenance cost modeling, particularly for widened arterial roads.
- Parks Director Woltjer discussed feasibility of moving South Park Pool construction to FY27 under a design-build approach, with staff to report back.
- Council debated the need to include long-term unfunded projects for grant competitiveness.
- Debi Meling, PW Director, spoke of asset management system that was collecting data to determine costs better in the future.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

- Kevin Nelson spoke of concerns with traffic on King/24<sup>th</sup> St. W. Needs new lane configuration
- Jeffrey Kettleson spoke of what was important to constituents and telling taxpayers what the bottom line would be. fairness in sports facility funding.
- Kristi Drake, TrailNet, encouraged trail planning to be included with Safe Routes to School.

Public comment closed.

## MOTION

Add 5th Avenue Corridor, Cottonwood Park and 21st Street Underpass to the “Future Projects” list (outside the 5-year CIP).

Moved by Mayor Cole

Seconded by CM Neese

APPROVED 4-3, Rogers, Tidswell and Kennedy opposed

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## AGENDA ITEM #3 – Cooperative Purchasing Agreement with Axon Enterprise

Presenter: Captain Brandon Wooley, Billings Police Department

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Wooley presented BPD’s plan to replace outdated body cams, in-car video, tasers, and evidence systems through a 5-year Axon agreement.

Issues with current system include:

- Body cam battery failures mid-shift
- Manual evidence workflows requiring hundreds of officer hours
- Obsolete Taser X2 units losing support by end of 2025
- Incompatible evidence systems creating inefficiency for prosecutors and officers

Axon’s package includes:

- Taser 10 units
- Body-worn cameras with automated activation triggers
- In-car video systems

- Evidence.com cloud storage
- Standards internal affairs system
- Integrated CAD tagging
- Verizon credit for upgraded CradlePoint routers

#### COUNCIL DISCUSSION (Expanded)

- Councilmembers asked about upgrade cycles; Axon confirmed 30-month refreshes for cameras and 5-year refresh for tasers.
- Discussions included integration with legacy data, county adoption benefits, future subscription costs, and appropriations clause protections.
- Concerns raised regarding digital evidence migration and retention schedule management.
- Wooley confirmed system would substantially reduce out-of-service time and reassign evidence techs to higher-value duties.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURNMENT: 8:05 PM