

CITY/COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

TUESDAY, May 13, 2025 at 6:00pm

	Position	01/14/2025	01/28/2025	02/11/2025	02/25/2025	03/11/2025	03/26/2025	04/08/2025	04/22/2025	05/13/2025	05/28/2025	06/10/2025	06/24/2027	07/08/2025	07/22/2025	08/12/2025	08/26/2025	09/09/2025	09/23/2025	10/14/2025	10/28/2025	11/12/2025	11/26/2025	12/09/2025	12/23/2025
Jim Ronquillo	Billings Ward I	1	A	1	1	A	1	1	1	A															
Roger Gravggaard President	Billings Ward II	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1															
Dennie Stephenson	Billings Ward III	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1															
John Staley Vice President	Billings Ward IV	V	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1															
David Nordel	Billings Ward V	A	V	V	A	V	A	1	V	1															
Troy Boucher	YC District 1	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A															
Dennis Cook	YC District 2	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1															
Vacant	YC District 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-															
Vacant	YC District 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-															
Woody Woods	YC District 5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	A	1															
Alexis Bonogofsky	YC District 6	1	1	V	1	V	1	1	1	A															
Morgan Tuss	YC District 7	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A															
Vacant	YC Cons. District	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-															
Scott Reiter	Ex-Officio SD2	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A															

Please note: "A" stands for excused absence, "1" stands for present, "V" stands for Zoom participation, "C" stands for Canceled

Call the Meeting to Order: President Gravgaard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Planning Board Members and Planning Department Staff

President Gravgaard called for introductions of the members of the Planning Board and staff.

Attending Staff: Wyeth Friday, Planning & Community Services Director; Anna Vickers, Planning Division Manager; Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator; Dave Green, Planner; Brenda Berns, Planning Clerk

1. Others in Attendance: Mac Fogelsong, Engineering Department Manager

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion

Motion made by Board member Staley, seconded by Board member Stephenson to approve the agenda as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes: April 8, 2025 & April 22, 2025

Motion

Motion made by Board member Stephenson, seconded by Board member Cook to approve the meeting minutes of April 8, 2025. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Board member Stephenson, seconded by Board member Nordel to approve the meeting minutes of April 22, 2025. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment: As required (3 minutes maximum per person). Any member of the public might be heard on any subject that is not on the agenda. The Planning Board will not take any action on these items at this time but could choose to add an item to the next meeting agenda for discussion. There were no comments from the public.

5. Disclosure of Outside (Ex-Parte) Communication – There was none.

6. Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest – There was none.

7. Old Business – There was none.

8. New Business:

a. Public Hearing. Board Presentation. Transportation Alternatives Program.

Elyse Monat clarified that no vote would be taken by the board at this meeting. She noted that the board is already familiar with the Transportation Alternatives Program and provided a brief overview. A funding round took place in 2023, with federal funds allocated through the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Applications are submitted directly to the MPO. The available funding for this round is \$1,784,111 - Eligible applicants include city, county, and tribal governments. Non-profit organizations are not eligible to apply as primary applicants but may participate with sponsorship from a local government entity.

TAP Process

- Grant process – Local review with project recommendation to MDT for programming.
- Default is for the local entity to administer the project under the MDT LAG (Local Agency Guidelines) program.
- All projects must include a local match of 13.42%. Instructions on developing the budget were included in the TA instructions.

Elyse Monat presented the two applications for the Transportation Alternatives Program Funding. The City of Billings submitted a proposal for a bundle of safe routes to school projects across seven focus areas, requesting approximately \$1.3 million in federal funds with a \$200,000 local match. Yellowstone County, on behalf of the Lockwood Pedestrian Safety District, applied for the Johnson Lane sidewalk Connector Project, seeking about \$256,000 in federal funds with a \$40,000 local match.

The Technical Advisory Committee has requested clarification on the cost estimate for the Lockwood portion of a sidewalk project, particularly for 500 feet of sidewalk. The planning team is reaching out to consultant Erin Claunch for more details on the cost breakdown. While the project's validity is not in question, there are concerns about potentially high estimates, which have been common in past projects due to market conditions. The project will be brought back for review at the first meeting in June, possibly with a revised application.

Board Discussion

No concerns were raised regarding the projects. A question was brought up about the cost estimates, and clarification was sought from the consultant. It was noted that estimates are often on the higher side due to rising material costs, and there is no guarantee on project timelines—some, like Johnson Lane, have faced multi-year delays. There were no questions about the validity of the projects themselves; the inquiry was solely to clarify cost details.

Public Hearing

President Gravggaard opened the public hearing. Seeing no members of the public, the public hearing was closed.

b. Presentation and Board Discussion. Clearwater Estates Subdivision, 2nd Filing. The subdivision creates 69 lots for residential and commercial development. The subject property is generally located south of Central Avenue, and west of Twin Pines Townhomes. The property is zoned CMU1 – Corridor Mixed Use 1, N2 - Mid-Century Neighborhood Residential, NX1 - Mixed Residential 1, NX2 - Mixed Residential 2.

Dave Green discussed the Clearwater Estates Subdivision's second filing, which proposes to develop large lots into smaller residential and commercial areas. The subdivision will have 69 lots, with sizes ranging from 7,100 square feet to 2.69 acres. The developers plan to provide 0.58 acres of parkland and a cash contribution for the remaining required dedication. The project includes plans for road connections, pedestrian access, and future expansions. The traffic study for the entire planned development area has been conducted, and the developers will pay their proportional share for intersection improvements. The Parks department is requesting a minimum one-acre park in the center of the subdivision, with potential for more parkland in future filings.

Staff is recommending conditional approval of the proposed subdivision, subject to the 5 conditions of approval as presented in the staff report.

Board Discussion

Concerns were raised about traffic safety on Central Avenue, particularly following a reported incident involving a pedestrian. It was noted that there are currently no plans to widen Central, which lacks turn lanes and sees high vehicle speeds, especially in favorable weather. Members emphasized the need for a long-term plan to improve and expand Central Avenue, as no significant upgrades have occurred in over a decade.

Questions arose regarding future access to Monad and whether the existing infrastructure, including the Monad drain, can support ongoing development. There was an emphasis on the importance of coordinated planning as multiple subdivisions, such as Clearwater and 44 West, move forward simultaneously.

The Traffic Impact Study (TIS) for both Clearwater and 44 West has been submitted. It was proposed that engineering staff attend the next meeting to present the findings and clarify the methodology used in the analysis.

Board members expressed concern about the capacity of west-end schools and the additional strain that continued development may place on public services. It was noted that schools are already full, and the district may need to implement busing to manage enrollment. There was discussion about the financial challenges of maintaining parks and roads, especially with limited tax revenue and ongoing efforts to pass mill levies. Members agreed on the importance of engaging with school district representatives to better understand and plan for these impacts.

Clarification was requested on the phasing of the Clearwater and 44 West subdivisions, which are being developed by the same entity. It was confirmed that both are expected to begin at the same time, and that water and sewer infrastructure will be installed simultaneously. Concerns were also raised about temporary connections and how the developments will be coordinated during construction.

The proposed park was confirmed to meet and exceed frontage requirements. It will include sidewalks and streetlights, and its design aligns with local standards.

Discussion around a proposed private gated road raised several issues, including long-term maintenance, signage, and the potential for public confusion if the road is not clearly marked. Questions were asked about whether lot assessments would cover road maintenance. While maintenance is expected to be managed through HOA covenants, there were concerns about the long-term effectiveness of HOAs, particularly as enforcement of covenants often diminishes over time. Some members expressed hesitation about relying on HOAs but acknowledged they may be necessary in this case. Alternatives to gated access, such as chains or simplified barriers, were also mentioned. It was suggested that the board invite the school superintendent to a future meeting to provide insight into current capacity issues and how the district is planning for continued growth in the area. The board agreed that such collaboration would be valuable for future planning decisions.

A Public Hearing and recommendation will be at the next Board meeting, Wednesday, May 28, 2025.

c. Presentation and Board Discussion. 44 West Subdivision. The subdivision creates 62 lots for residential and commercial development. The subject property is generally located south of Central Avenue, and west of Twin Pines Townhomes. The property is zoned NX2 – Mixed Residential 2 (2 to 8 units) and NX1 Mixed Residential 1 (1 to 4 units).

Dave Green discussed the 44 West subdivision, developed by the McCalls, and will have 62 lots south of Central and west of Twin Pines, with plans for future expansion. The subdivision will feature lanes for garage access, private parkland, and connections to neighboring developments. The board also reviews traffic studies, parkland dedication, and utility plans for both subdivisions. Mr. Green provided details on the layout, including the future extension of Bell Avenue to Shiloh Road, and addressed concerns about potential confusion with the Carriage Lane road system.

Staff is recommending conditional approval of the proposed subdivision, subject to the 4 conditions of approval as presented in the staff report.

Board Discussion

The board discussed the 44 West subdivision proposal, which includes a 34-foot wide public street with boulevard-style sidewalks. Staff recommends conditional approval with four conditions, including coordination with the postal service and providing a proportionate share of contribution for traffic improvements. The board raises questions about road connections and future development plans.

A Public Hearing and recommendation will be at the next Board meeting, Wednesday, May 28, 2025.

9. Other Business.

Discussion began with a question from the board regarding mail delivery requirements in new developments. It was clarified that as long as there is a mail service provider—whether public or private—mail delivery must be accommodated. Addressing is handled by the city, and typically, centralized box units are required. There was a brief exchange about the potential privatization of mail services. While mail delivery is not one of the six key impact areas reviewed under state subdivision law, it remains a requirement under local subdivision regulations. A question was raised about whether mailbox placement—such as requiring boxes on one side of the street—would change under a privatized system, which was noted as an open question worth exploring.

An update on legislative matters was also discussed. Anna Vickers noted that an overview of relevant changes from the most recent session would be provided. When asked about the impact on mill levies, it was indicated that only limited information could be shared at this time, though more details will be provided from Wyeth Friday. Some changes may affect the general fund, and inquiries have been made by City Council regarding anticipated impacts.

There was also a question about the timeline for separation of boards. It was confirmed that the Land Use separation is still scheduled for May 2026, although recent legislative changes—some still awaiting the governor’s signature—are creating uncertainty. Ongoing legal developments are being monitored to understand their potential effects.

a. (Standing Item) Long Range Strategic Issues and an overview of future City and County issues and projects.

10. Future Agenda Items

ADJOURNMENT: 7:19 PM

Brenda J Berns, Planning Clerk