



CITY/COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

TUESDAY, May 28, 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	1														
Roger Gravggaard President	Billings Ward II	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1														
Dennie Stephenson	Billings Ward III	1	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	1														
David Nordel	Billings Ward V	A	V	V	A	V	A	1	V	1	1														
Troy Boucher	YC District 1	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A														
Dennis Cook	YC District 2	A	1	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	1														
Alexis Bonogofsky	YC District 6	1	1	V	1	V	1	1	1	A	1														
Morgan Tuss	YC District 7	A	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	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; Dave Green, Planner; Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner; Brenda Berns, Planning Clerk.

1. Others in Attendance: Craig Dalton, Performance Engineering; Dave Coppock, BPAC; Stephanie Donovan, BPAC

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion

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

3. Approval of Minutes: May 13, 2025

Motion

Motion made by Board member Staley, seconded by Board member Nordel to approve the meeting minutes of May 13, 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 were no outside communications.

6. Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest – There were no conflicts of interests.

7. Old Business

Public Hearing

President Gravgaard opened the public hearing.

a. Public Hearing. Board Recommendation and Motion. Clearwater Estates Subdivision 2nd

The subdivision creates 69 lots 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 provided an overview of the proposed subdivision. The development includes pedestrian access on the east side and a private park area proposed adjacent to the subject subdivision. The initial Traffic Impact Study (TIS) reviewed multiple intersections, and developer contributions will be required based on traffic impacts identified in the study. The City of Billings Engineering Department noted that while the current TIS may not show the need for a turn lane with this filing, it is anticipated that one will be required in the future. Parkland dedication for the subdivision totals 1.67 acres, with the remaining 1.10 acres of undedicated parkland to be addressed through a cash-in-lieu payment. The City of Billings will provide water service, and sanitary needs will be met through septic systems. A 30-foot-wide easement will be needed to accommodate the necessary infrastructure. Police and fire protection will be provided by the City of Billings.

Staff Recommendation

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

Board Questions

A board member inquired about the commercial portion of the project and whether there was any information available regarding the types of businesses proposed. Staff responded that no specific commercial uses have been confirmed at this time. The board member also expressed concern regarding existing traffic conditions, noting that the area already experiences congestion, in part due to the lack of turn lanes. Staff explained that while turn lanes are not required under the current subdivision filing, they are anticipated to be included in a future phase of the project. The board member indicated that this response did not fully address concerns, citing the limitations of the current roadway and the potential for further impact from future commercial development. Another board member asked for clarification on the proposed use of a private road within the development and questioned the rationale for including a privately maintained roadway.

Applicant's Agent; Craig Dalton, Performance Engineering

Mr. Dalton responded to the questions by explaining that the private road is being proposed to allow for the potential of a gated community and to provide greater flexibility in the development.

The board raised concern about road maintenance and how lot assessments would be handled. In response, Mr. Dalton noted that a Homeowners' Association (HOA) would be required. Since the subdivision will already have an HOA in place for stormwater management, a maintenance agreement for the road would be included in the governing documents. The board expressed concern based on past experience, noting that in other developments, HOA responsibilities and documentation often become unclear or lost over a period of 5 to 10 years. While the proposed approach appears sound, it was emphasized that over time, important elements can be overlooked.

Wyeth Friday commented on the Traffic Impact Study (TIS), noting that City Engineering is evaluating the study based on established requirements and standards. He acknowledged the concerns that have been raised but emphasized the importance of relying on the expertise of professional engineers to guide those evaluations. At this point, he expressed uncertainty about what additional steps could be taken to further address that specific concern. Mr. Friday also mentioned that City Engineering is reviewing both this project and the adjacent development in a coordinated manner. As additional projects are submitted in the area, they may collectively trigger further improvements or requirements based on cumulative impacts.

Board Discussion

A board member inquired whether turn lanes were required by Engineering and, if so, who would be responsible for installation. Staff responded that the developer would be responsible for contributing to the cost and construction of a turn lane, if required. It was clarified that the current filing does not meet the threshold for a turn lane based on projected trip generation; however, such a requirement may be considered with future filings, depending on traffic impact.

Another board member raised concern about the absence of a turn lane in the current proposal and questioned whether the board could evaluate the project's safety with confidence. While acknowledging the financial considerations, the members emphasized the importance of proactive improvements rather than reactive measures following an incident. Staff stated that all applicable requirements are being met under current regulations, and any additional measures would be pursued if warranted.

Several board members expressed concerns about the lack of clarity regarding potential future infrastructure needs and the broader safety implications of the development. One member noted a pattern of unanswered questions, while another acknowledged staff effort but indicated continued uncertainty about the overall process.

A question was raised regarding the possibility of the developer voluntarily constructing a turn lane. Staff reiterated that based on current traffic data, the filing does not require a turn lane. Should future filings indicate the need, appropriate requirements would be applied. The developer referenced the Traffic Impact Study (TIS), stating that the impact on traffic is influenced by overall road usage, not solely by the proposed development. The intended commercial component is expected to remain small in scale with limited traffic impact. Staff advised the board to adhere to established standards and rely on technical analyses such as the TIS. If further clarification is needed, staff recommend direct consultation with the Engineering Division.

Board members restated their concerns related to public safety and referenced previous developments that later necessitated traffic calming measures. They emphasized their role in evaluating both regulatory compliance and the potential safety implications of land use decisions.

Public Hearing

President Gravgaard closed the public hearing.

Motion

Board member Stephenson moved to recommend approval of the Clearwater Estates subdivision, including the findings of fact and conditions of approval. The motion was seconded by Board member Ronquillo to forward the recommendation to City Council for action on June 23, 2025. The motion carried with a vote of 5 in favor and 3 opposed.

Public Hearing

President Gravgaard opened the public hearing.

- b. Public Hearing. Board Recommendation and Motion. 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 provided a brief overview of the subdivision. The new street will connect to a section of Bell Avenue; however, a portion of Bell Avenue remains undeveloped and will be addressed by a future developer. Carriage Lane will serve one or two lots, with the dead-end street providing access to two lots before connecting to the main street. The Traffic Impact Study (TIS) for this subdivision is similar to that of the adjacent subdivision. The required parkland dedication for the 44 West subdivision is 0.46 acres. The parks will be privately owned and maintained by a Homeowners' Association (HOA) established by the subdivider. The development features smaller parcel sizes compared to neighboring areas. Utility services will be similar across the development, with stormwater managed through designated collection systems. Carriage Lanes function essentially as alleys, and garbage collection will occur within these alleys. Additionally, a bike trail is proposed within the development, which will be constructed by a private contractor. The City of Billings Engineering Department has stated that if the current TIS does not demonstrate a need for a turn lane with this filing, it is expected that a turn lane will be required in the second filing of the subdivision.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends conditional approval of the proposed subdivision, subject to the 4 conditions of approval as presented in the staff report. City council action on June 23, 2025

Board Questions

The board asked if the Traffic Impact Study covers both adjacent subdivisions, which staff confirmed. Questions about a future public road connection were raised, but staff noted it depends on access across developed apartments. A concern was recalled about promised road access blocked by a drainage issue. Staff also noted that the subdivision's parkland borders an undeveloped parcel to the south.

Applicant's Agent; Craig Dalton, Performance Engineering

The applicant's agent addressed the board's concerns by noting that developments to the east plan to cross the drainage area. Proposed pedestrian paths will be constructed with berms to accommodate this. He acknowledged that traffic issues increase as development moves westward and emphasized that road improvements can only be undertaken by the City, as the County has little incentive to invest given the City's impending involvement. He mentioned that property has been purchased for a high school, highlighting the need for better coordination between City and County agencies. Currently, the County and City Traffic Impact Studies (TIS) are not aligned, and it is unreasonable to expect developers to be fully aware of all ongoing and future projects and their cumulative impacts.

Mr. Dalton asked how collaboration between the City and County could be improved to be more proactive. Regarding road widening, he noted that progress is limited due to the patchwork of City and County parcels, making solutions complex and unresolved.

Board Discussion

Board members expressed concern about the lack of collaboration between the City and County, noting that a new commission to separate the two governments is being formed, which they felt is a step backward and will hinder progress. One member remarked that the County's choice not to participate feels like a return to past divisions.

There was appreciation for the discussion and a request for interim transportation plans, particularly regarding traffic on Central Avenue, which had not been addressed in recent briefings. Staff noted previous efforts to study the city and county road systems, acknowledging ongoing challenges with county coordination. They mentioned upcoming updates from the West Neighborhood plan and plans to explore roundabouts as potential solutions.

Finally, the board discussed the possibility of involving developers in future conversations, with staff confirming that real estate professionals would be attending an upcoming meeting.

Public Hearing

President Gravgaard closed the public hearing.

Motion

Motion made by Board member Stephenson moved to recommend approval of the 44 West subdivision including the findings of fact and conditions of approval. The motion was seconded by Board member Ronquillo to forward the recommendation to City Council for action on June 23, 2025. The motion carried with a vote of 7 in favor and 1 opposed.

8. New Business:

- a. Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Annual Presentation to the Governing Bodies.

Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner, introduced Robby Gress, the new Transportation Planning Intern, to the board.

Ms. Monat then introduced Dave Coppock, the Planning Board appointee, and Stephanie Donovan, one of the City appointees, who were present to deliver the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) annual report.

Mr. Coppock provided an overview of the committee's purpose and responsibilities. He explained that BPAC is composed of volunteer members who serve three-year terms. He also noted that there are currently two vacant seats representing the County.

Committee Members:

Chair Dave Coppock (Planning Board)

Vice Chair – Jason Wood (County)

Stephanie Donovan (City)

Kristy Halderman (City)

Anna O'Donnell (City)

Mr. Coppock explained that the committee's primary focus is to ensure that the community's infrastructure supports safe and accessible transportation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and wheelchair users. This mission is carried out by advising City and County staff as well as elected officials, aligning recommendations with community needs, collaborating with decision-makers, and referencing national standards. Key concerns raised by the community include high-speed traffic, unsafe crosswalks, and incomplete bicycle route networks.

Stephanie Donovan presented data related to traffic crashes, highlighting locations where accidents are frequently linked to inadequate signage. A density map covering the period from October 2022 to March 2025 showed the downtown area and Main Street in the Heights as the most impacted by crashes. The West End appeared to have fewer incidents, which may be due to lower pedestrian and bicycle activity in that area. The presentation also included a breakdown of pedestrian crash data, showing higher concentrations in the downtown area and along Grand Avenue. Bicycle-related crashes were also concentrated downtown and on Main Street, with additional scattered incidents throughout Billings. From 2022 to 2025, the severity of crashes was most often categorized as "possible injury." The severity chart was provided by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), while earlier maps were sourced from the Police Department.

Ms. Monat added that the committee regularly contacts the Police Department each month to obtain updated crash reports for ongoing monitoring and analysis.

Board Discussion

A board member noted that police may not respond to every incident, suggesting dispatch records might provide more complete information. Another member inquired about data distinguishing adults from children in crash reports. Staff responded that police crash reports lack that level of detail and some information is protected for confidentiality. It was suggested that the time and location of incidents can sometimes indicate whether a child or adult was involved, for example if the incident happens around a school during drop off or pick up hours. BPAC members also observed that many pedestrian-vehicle incidents involve fault on both sides, often due to distractions. For example, right-turning drivers sometimes strike pedestrians in crosswalks.

The board discussed bicycle and pedestrian counts, which are collected across the trail and bikeway system. Trail counters also collect pedestrian data, and locations like Lillis Park have shown high foot traffic. BPAC members emphasized that even well-designed intersections can still see crashes, and they strive to share data with relevant community stakeholders.

Concerns were raised about the lack of bike lanes on State Ave. One of the Planning Board members requested bike lanes there in the future.

The discussion also addressed the West End Neighborhood Plan. There was agreement on the importance of integrating safe routes for children, especially in growing subdivisions.

Staff explained that with the new subdivision regulations, developers can now be required to implement shared use paths identified in the 2017 Bikeways and Trail Master Plan. One of the Planning Board members commented that this seemed like an old document and a staff member stated that the updated 2025 Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan was denied. Another staff member noted that a multimodal plan for the West End is currently underway and that the Long-Range Transportation Plan will begin soon.

A staff member also mentioned that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) hopes to update the Household Travel Survey in the next fiscal year, which is a statistically valid survey looking at where residents travel and what modes they use. A board member asked if qualitative questions were added to this survey, and staff confirmed that surveys and app-based feedback had been used. A Planning Board member suggested that comparing infrastructure with other cities like Missoula could be valuable. BPAC members noted they have conducted informal research but would need more resources to expand on that.

9. Other Business.

Wyeth Friday informed the board that the first meeting of the Interim Planning Commission (IPC) will be held on May 29, 2025. The agenda will be full, including topics such as bylaws, elections, and consultant discussions. He also announced the upcoming Highway 3 Corridor Study open houses: a virtual session on June 4th and an in-person event at the airport on June 5th. Mr. Friday added that there will be a presentation to City Council on June 14th regarding legislative updates and building code changes.

Wyeth shared that a meeting was held recently to gather information about the southside triangle area, with plans to present the findings to City Council in July. Further updates will be provided next week.

Anna Vickers reminded the board that June is the Commuter Challenge month, featuring a kickoff event at Thirsty Street Brewing Company. She encouraged participation, noting there will be prizes and giveaways as part of the campaign.

Anna also reported that progress is being made on the West End Plan. The steering committee is actively working, and public meetings will be scheduled to discuss land use categories. She will continue to keep the board informed.

10. Future Agenda Items

ADJOURNMENT: 7:45PM

Brenda J Berns, Planning Clerk