



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

SPECIAL WORK SESSION SUMMARY

Council Chambers
316 N. 26th St.

June 3, 2025

5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cole

Present: Councilmember Gulick, Ward I
Councilmember Owen, Ward II
Councilmember Neese, 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: Councilmember Shaw, Ward I

Staff: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Andy Zoeller, Finance Director
Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director
Matt Hoppel, Interim Fire Chief
Sheila Kolar, Municipal Court Judge

Public Comment:

- **Kevin Nelson, 4235 Bruce Avenue, Billings, MT** – spoke of a conflict of interest with the City/County planning department.
- **Adela Awner, 1109 Delphinium Avenue, Billings, MT** – spoke of the NorthWestern Energy rate increase and asked the City to be involved in the Public Service Commission (PSC) meetings.

1. FY2026 Departmental Budget Presentations

- Finance

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, gave an overview of the Finance Department's responsibilities, operating budget breakdown, and future outlook.

General Council questions and discussion: positions not being filled and other ways to find grants since the Grant Coordinator position would not be filled.

- Urban Renewal Districts

Mr. Zoeller gave an overview of the four Urban Renewal Funds: Downtown Revolving Loan, Downtown Tax Increment, East Billings Tax Increment and South Billings Tax Increment. He reviewed the total budget for each fund, and Legislative changes and impacts. He reviewed the growth for each district.

Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director, gave an overview of Legislative changes, impacts and next steps for Urban Renewal Districts. He indicated all the MOU's expired June 30, 2025, and recommended an extension through October to reevaluate.

General Council questions and discussion: possible budgetary changes, portion of entitlement shares to City, County and School District.

Zoeller – State allows districts to make distributions to taxing jurisdiction from revenue shares. Other jurisdictions have done that. City has not.

Council continued discussion: centralizing districts, and loan types.

Mehmet Casey, Downtown Billings Association, spoke of a preference toward SBA loans because they allowed 10% down instead of 20%.

- Fire

Matt Hoppel, Interim Fire Chief, gave an overview of the Fire Department's types of hazard responses, total calls for service numbers, breakdown of Emergency Services/Rescue and Fire calls, Mobile Response Teams (MRT), Crisis Response Unit (CRU) personnel, operating budget by division, overtime numbers and FY25 highlights. Additional funding requests: type I/III engine (ERP partially funded) and a Zoll Monitor. He concluded with FY26 goals for Fire and EMS and the department's 5-year strategy.

Jason Banfield, EMS Assistant Fire Chief, gave an overview of Zoll monitors and the funding request.

General Council questions and discussion: wild land fire predictions and concerns, rolling strategic plan forward with projected vacancy savings for investing in stations, costs of annexing and developing on outskirts of town. They discussed the lack of budget cuts in the Fire Department.

Recess at 7:36 P.M. Reconvene at 7:41 P.M.

- Municipal Court

Judge Sheila Kolar gave a recap of the FY25 overview of Municipal Court, identified fiscal challenges, CGL implementation overview, a breakdown of MC budget, court fees and fines, grant budget numbers. She concluded with an overview of Municipal Court: co-occurring courts, DUI Court, Drug Court and 10-year case file history.

General Council questions and discussion: pre-trial program and budgeting, work programs, and overall numbers for crime.

Many responses to questions were inaudible due to lack of proximity to microphone.

- Budget wrap-up

Andy Zoeller concluded the presentations with an overview of: FY26 budgeted revenue by numbers breakdown, overall City budget revenues and expenditures, Public Safety (PS) Crime Prevention Fund, property tax mill levy, 2025 Legislative mill requirement, typical residential costs, General Fund/PS fund detail. He reviewed recommended changes to the proposed FY26 budget: new employees proposed, remove \$20 million from South TIF fund, remove duplicated Grant revenue and expense of \$170,000. He concluded with upcoming budgetary challenges and property tax impacts.

General Council questions and discussion: Family Justice Center / HUD funding, and inviting Legislators to view information on the impacts of HB231 and SB452 for the City.

-Public Comment

None

HIGHLIGHT UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS OF COUNCIL INTEREST.

None

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

None

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: 8:04 P.M.