

**MINUTES
OF THE BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
January 26, 2026**

The Billings City Council met in regular session in the City Council Chambers, located at 316 N. 26th Street, 5th Floor, Billings, Montana, at 5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Nelson

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Nelson

INVOCATION: Councilmember Shaw

ROLL CALL:

Present: Councilmember Kendra Shaw, Ward 1
Councilmember Mark Nicholson, Ward 1
Councilmember Roy Neese, Ward 2
Councilmember Denis Pitman, Ward 2
Councilmember Amy Aguirre, Ward 3
Councilmember Bill Kennedy, Ward 3
Councilmember Scott Aspenlieder, Ward 4 (Via Zoom)
Councilmember Andrew Lindley, Ward 4
Councilmember Mike Boyett, Ward 5
Councilmember Tony O'Donnell, Ward 5
Mayor Mike Nelson

Staff

Present: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Denise Bohlman, City Clerk
Gavin Woltjer, Interim Parks, Recreation and Public Lands Director
Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent
Paul Khera, Assistant Aviation Director
Debi Meling, Public Works Director
Matt Hoppel, Fire Chief
Cameron McCamley, Fire Captain
Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Development Director

MINUTES:

- November 24, 2025
- January 12, 2026

Moved by Councilmember Boyett

Seconded by Councilmember Neese

APPROVED 11-0

COURTESIES:

There were no courtesies.

PROCLAMATIONS:

There were no Proclamations.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

There were no Council reports.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS - CHRIS KUKULSKI

Mr. Kukulski advised Council that:

- The Code Enforcement Division gave its Council orientation presentation for current and incoming Mayor and Councilmembers. Extra copies of the presentation materials for non-attending Councilmembers were placed at their desks.
- The Feb. 2nd Work Session would be local governance training with Dan Clark from the Local Government Center.
- The Chamber Board voted unanimously to create a collection committee in support of the Yellowstone County’s jail and operations levies.
- Council may choose to remove Regular Agenda Item 3 to a future Work Session by an approved motion.
- There were no exparte communications to Mayor and Council received after 3 P.M. concerning items on the agenda.

Motion: I move to remove Regular Agenda Item 3 from the agenda and have the matter brought to a future Work Session.

Moved by Councilmember Aspenlieder

Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy

APPROVED 11-0

PUBLIC COMMENT on "NON-PUBLIC HEARING" Agenda Items: 1 and 3-ONLY. Speaker sign-in required. (Comments are limited to three (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. Comments on items listed as public hearing items will be heard ONLY during the designated public hearing time for each respective item. For items not on this agenda, public comment will be taken at the end of the agenda.)

The following individuals provided public comment:

- **Michael Mayott, Executive Director of Amend Park Development Council (APDC),** introduced Terry Stapleton, as General Manager of the park with the intention she would replace Mr. Mayott as Executive Director in the future when he retires. He supported the approval of the proposed budget in Consent Agenda Item 1H.
- **Adam Combs, Billings, Montana,** spoke about the Police Union Contract and the serious crime rates in Billings. He noted that had the union members gone through with arbitration, they would not have prevailed in getting more compensation than the 3% increase each year for the next 3 years. He urged Council to begin preparations now to offer appropriate compensation to its police force in 2028.

Councilmember Boyett called point of order stating at this point in the agenda, only comments concerning the Consent Agenda or Regular Agenda Item 3 should be heard.

- **Paul Clark, Billings, Montana**, spoke in favor of Consent Agenda Item 1H.
- **Leona Price, Billings, Montana**, thanked Council for supporting its police department.

There was no further public comment.

Councilmember O'Donnell separated Consent Agenda Item 1J for discussion. Councilmember Aspenlieder noted he would abstain from the vote due to his business's involvement with the developer.

Motion: I move to approve all items on the Consent Agenda, except for Item 1J moved for separation.

Moved by Councilmember Shaw

Seconded by Councilmember Lindley

APPROVED 11-0

1. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Mayor Nelson recommends that Council confirm the following appointments:**

1.

	Name	Board/Commission	Term	
			Begins	Ends
1	Hannah Harsha	Public Art Committee - Artist	01/26/26	TBD*
2	Thom MacLean	Public Art Committee - Economic/Comm Dev.	01/26/26	TBD*
3	Linda Hewett	Public Art Committee - Billings Art Assoc Rep.	01/26/26	TBD*
4	Logan Hendricks	Public Art Committee - Architecture	01/26/26	TBD*
5	Zack Terakedis	Public Art Committee - Interest in Art	01/26/26	TBD*
6	Sunny Day Real Bird	Public Art Committee - Interest in Art	01/26/26	TBD*
7	No Applications	Public Art Committee - NADC Rep.	01/26/26	TBD*
8	Derek Stenner	EBURD Advisory Committee	01/26/26	TBD
9	Kari Boiter	SBBURD Elysian School District 23 Rep	01/26/26	12/31/28

TBD* -- Three of the founding members of this committee will be assigned three-year terms; the other four will be assigned four-year terms.

B. **Bid Awards:** None

C. **Amendment No. 33**, Airport drainage Pond E design and construction management; Morrison-Mairerle.

- D. **Professional Engineering Services Contract** for W.O. 26-01, Contract 1: 2026 Water Main Replacement, to Morrison-Maierle.
- E. **Grant Funding** from Phillips 66, Walmart West End and Walmart Heights to the Fire Department to support the Safety Squad Program.

Councilmember Boyett and Mayor Nelson acknowledged and thanked these businesses for their generous contributions to the City's Fire Department.

- F. **Resuscitation Quality Improvement (RQI) Program** for Billings Fire Department.

Councilmember Neese acknowledged the training would be advantageous for the fire department and reduce the amount of overtime. Fire Chief Matt Hoppel introduced Fire Captain Cameron McCamley who address questions about cost savings for training and the anticipated impacts of the preparedness training.

- G. **Exchange City Golf Club 2026 Budget** for Par 3 Golf Course.
- H. **Amend Park Development Council (APDC) 2026 Budget** for Amend Park.
- I. **Billings American Legion Baseball Association 2026 Budget** for Dehler Park.

Councilmember Neese requested there be standardization in the budget reporting in future years for Consent Agenda Items 1G, 1H and 1I.

- J. **Preliminary Major Plat** for Copper Farms Subdivision. *Quasi-Judicial

Motion: I move to approve Consent Agenda Item 1J, as recommended by staff.
 Moved by Councilmember Neese
 Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

Councilmember Shaw called point of order noting that Councilmember O'Donnell had separated the item and generally the conversation would start with the Councilmember that separated the item.

Councilmember O'Donnell indicated he would vote in opposition because he had reservations concerning west end developments and annexations into the City. He preferred City in-fill to urban sprawl.

APPROVED 9-1, Councilmember O'Donnell opposed, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained

- K. **Bills for the Weeks of:**

- 1. December 22, 2025
- 2. December 29, 2025

REGULAR AGENDA:

- 2. **PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11313** setting Parks, Recreation and Public Lands fees. Staff recommends approval.

Gavin Woltjer, Interim Parks, Recreation and Public Lands (PRPL) Director, presented and announced the PRPL Board had unanimously approved the changes to the fee schedule outlined. He provided historical information about past fee increases and State statute and City code that required fee adjustments be brought before Council for approval. He advised the resolution was for a period of

one year and over that year more data would be collected for future recommendations to fee adjustments. He continued to explain the increases to wages, pool chemicals, etc. since 2002 and he provided fees charged by other municipalities. He explained that 57 parks are geo-fenced to provide data about what amenities were utilized by how many and how often. He noted the more active the parks, the more maintenance was required and that was a good problem. Mr. Woltjer noted that 219 scholarships were given to families who applied for financial assistance. He added that Partners for Parks would provide scholarships. Councilmember Pitman noted he would contact other civic organizations for scholarship assistance.

Councilmember Aspenlieder advised that setting fees for shelter rentals, etc., should be handled by the Parks Director and City Administrator, not the Council. He suggested staff find a way to independently manage the fee structure. He voiced his support for the fee schedule as proposed.

Councilmember Neese spoke about offering senior citizen discounts of 10% to pool fees and charging non-residents 140% more than a resident rate. He inquired about the financial impacts should those changes occur. Mr. Woltjer explained the proposed fees for non-residents were increased but it was a challenge determining who was a City resident and who was a County resident because data was gathered for zip codes and not specific areas. Many zip codes contained City and County residences, and it would be difficult to separate the data.

Councilmember Shaw expressed concerns about data lacking for individuals over age 65 that utilize the pools and discounting fees may negatively affect the Parks budget.

The following individuals spoke during the public hearing:

- **Paul Clark, Billings, Montana**, spoke about individual privacy concerns through geo-fencing technology.
- **Leona Price, Billings, Montana**, spoke about enjoying the parks, offering seniors 55+ discounts and reducing risks to individual privacy.
- **Jennifer Strong, Billings, Montana**, spoke about family pool passes and supported senior discounts for pools.
- **Jeff Kettleson, Billings, Montana**, voiced his concerns about geo-fencing and surveillance and saving that information for a year.

No further public testimony was given.

Gavin Woltjer, Interim Parks, Recreation and Public Lands (PRPL) Director, addressed Council for clarification that the geo-fencing technology was not gathering individual cell phone information and it was scrubbed.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution setting Parks, Recreation and Public Lands fees, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Shaw
Seconded by Councilmember Boyett
APPROVED 11-0

Councilmember Shaw noted that Partners for Parks would need to ratify the resolution but were truly working in partnership with non-profits to help offset fees that may be prohibitive to some.

Councilmember Neese agreed with Councilmember Aspenlieder about Council time spent on fees and rates.

Motion to Amend: I move to amend the motion to add a 10% discount for seniors 65 years and older on pool fees only rounding down to the nearest dollar.

Moved by Councilmember Neese
Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

Councilmember Shaw spoke in opposition because she wanted more data gathered to determine any potential impacts.

Councilmember O'Donnell clarified that the discount only applied to individuals and not group rates.

Councilmember Boyett voiced opposition because he wanted the Parks Department Director to have the opportunity to gather the data and present a recommendation next year.

APPROVED 6-5, Councilmembers Shaw, Nicholson, Aguirre, Lindley and Boyett opposed

Councilmember Neese spoke about collecting a fair fee from non-City residents that utilize our parks and amenities.

Motion to Amend: I move to amend the motion to add to the schedule of fees an increase of 140% to non-residents and round it up to the nearest dollar.

Moved by Councilmember Neese
Seconded by Councilmember Lindley

Council discussion continued about how 140% was calculated.

APPROVED 11-0

Amended Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution setting Parks, Recreation and Public Lands fees, adding a 10% discount for seniors 65 years and older on pool fees only rounding down to the nearest dollar and adding to the schedule of fees an increase of 140% to non-residents and rounding it up to the nearest dollar.

APPROVED 11-0

- ~~3. **AMENDMENT NO. 1,** Agreement with YWCA to provide funding for the Northern Lights Family Justice Center. Staff recommends approval. **REMOVED BY APPROVED MOTION 11-0 TO BRING TO A FUTURE WORK SESSION – NO LATER THAN LAST MEETING IN MARCH 2026, IF POSSIBLE.**~~

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.)*

The following individuals gave public comment:

- **Jordan Weber, Billings, Montana,** inquired whether elasticities were considered for the park fees and voiced concerns about "pricing out" nearby non-residents.
- **Tucker Colvin, Billings, Montana,** voiced his disappointment in the Energy Conservation Commission (ECC) not being extended. He supported their work and recommendations. He spoke about the breakdown of democracy violent actions by ICE officials.

- **Paul Clark, Billings, Montana**, noted that local law enforcement should aid federal ICE agents and Minnesota residents were not protesting effectively. He voiced concerns about: 1. Streetlights on the Southside; 2. Cleanup under the 6th Avenue overpass; 3. Disclosure of the South Park Pool design and parking issues there; 4. Potential leach pond leaks from Western Sugar Company to surrounding properties contaminating wells, soil and the Yellowstone River; and 5. Future bus stop in front of Family Services on First Avenue South.
- **Leona Price, Billings, Montana**, spoke about violence in Minnesota.

There were no further speakers.

COUNCIL INITIATIVES:

There were no Council initiatives.


ADJOURN: 6:47 P.M.



CITY OF BILLINGS

BY: 
Mike Nelson, Mayor

ATTEST:

BY: 
Denise R. Bohlman, City Clerk