MINUTES
OF THE BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
July 13, 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
Councilmember Andrew Lindley, Ward 4 (Via Zoom)
Councilmember Mike Boyett, Ward 5
Councilmember Tony O'Donnell, Ward 5
Mayor Mike Nelson

Staff Present:
Kevin Iffland, Interim City Administrator
Gavin Woltjer, Parks and Recreation Director
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Jessica McKee, Deputy City Attorney
Toni Keehner, Deputy City Clerk
Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director
Anna Vickers, Planning Manager
Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator
Brenda Beckett, Community Services Manager
Tina Hoeger, Code Enforcement Manager
Jeff Roach, Aviation and Transit Director
Rusty Logan, MET Transit Assistant Director
Jennifer Duray, Public Works Deputy Director
Rich St. John, Police Chief
Matt Hoppel, Fire Chief

MINUTES:

- June 22, 2026

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

COURTESIES:

Councilmember O'Donnell expressed remorse for any offensive remarks previously made and offered an explanation on why they were made. Mayor Nelson spoke of his role in maintaining decorum and Council accountability.

Councilmember Aguirre reminded everyone of the 72nd annual Mexican Fiesta at South Park on July 18, 2026.

Councilmember Boyett welcomed Myrna Lastusky, Beartooth RC&D Project Manager. She gave an overview of the work being done by Beartooth RC&D.

Councilmember Kennedy thanked Senator Yakawich for his role in the March Against Drugs and Violence event. He also invited the community to attend the South Park carnival on August 1, 2026. He indicated it would be an opportunity to provide backpacks and other ways to help kids get ready to go back to school.

PROCLAMATIONS:

There were no Proclamations.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

There were no Council reports.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS - KEVIN IFFLAND

Mr. Iffland advised Council that:

- The Council photo was scheduled for September 28, 2026.
- Police Chief, Rich St. John had announced he would be retiring on September 30, 2026.
- There were no exparte communications received after 3 pm to the Mayor and Council concerning items on the Agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT on "NON-PUBLIC HEARING" Agenda Items: 1 and 2 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 gave public comment:

- Jeff Ketelsen, in reference to Consent Agenda Item 1N, spoke how impact fees could help offset the amount citizens paid for growth in the City.

- Kris Glenn, in reference to Consent Agenda Item 1G, spoke in support of the affordable housing development.
- Paul Clark, in reference to Consent Agenda 1R, spoke of the need for improvements at the South Park Pool.
- Mike Jordan Gomez, spoke of racism occurring in the City and an incident with a School Resource Officer (SRO) at a local school.

There was no further public comment.

Councilmember Aspenlieder separated Consent Agenda Items 1T1, 1T2, and 1T3 to abstain as his business received payment.

Councilmember Neese separated Consent Agenda Item 1N for discussion.

Councilmember Kennedy separated Consent Agenda Item 1D for discussion.

Motion: I move to approve the Consent Agenda, with the exception of Items 1D, 1N, 1T1, 1T2, and 1T3 moved for separation.

Moved by Councilmember Boyett
Seconded by Councilmember O'Donnell
APPROVED 11-0

1. <u>CONSENT AGENDA</u>

A. <u>Bid Awards:</u>

   1. **W.O. 22-44: Zone 1 Water Storage Improvements, Schedule 1.** (Opened 6/16/26) Recommend Askin Construction.

   2. **W.O. 22-44: Zone 1 Water Storage Improvements, Schedule 2.** (Opened 6/16/26) Recommend COP Construction.

B. **Annexation Agreement** with JTL Group, Inc.

C. **Agreement** with Yellowstone County DUI Center for blood draw services.

D. **Contract** with Thorn Run Partners for Federal Lobbying Services.

Councilmember Kennedy spoke of the need to allow a 30-day notice for termination. Kevin Iffland, Interim City Administrator gave an explanation of the terms of the contract.

Motion: I move to approve Consent Agenda Item 1D.

Moved by Councilmember Kennedy
Seconded by Councilmember Neese
APPROVED 11-0

E. **Addendum** to the Solid Waste Division's Route Management System agreement with Routeware, Inc.

F. **Amendment** to the Air Service Consulting Agreement with Mead & Hunt.

G. **Amendment** to the LB Lofts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Development Agreement.

H. **Amendment** to the Sage Tower Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Development Agreement.

I. **Purchase** 2026 John Deere 710P Backhoe from RDO Equipment Co.

J. **Purchase** 2026 Vactor 2100i PD Combination Sewer Cleaner from Joe Johnson Equipment.

K. **Purchase** Caterpillar compact excavator from Tractor and Equipment Co.

L. **Purchase** new playground equipment for Stewart Park from Grondahl Recreation.

M. **General Services Administration (GSA) Lease Amendments** for the Airport.

N. **MET Transit Financial Sustainability and Governance Study.**

Motion: I move to approve Consent Agenda Item 1N, with the condition that before any action, planning or staff time spent on any of the findings of this report, staff will submit it to a council committee for review for a recommended action to City Council.

Moved by Councilmember Neese
Seconded by Councilmember Aspenlieder
APPROVED 11-0

O. **FY27 Billings MPO Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)** recommendation to the Policy Coordinating Committee.

P. **Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP) Grants** 90 and 91 for funding of the Airport Ticket Counter and Baggage Claim Project.

Q. **Resolution 26-11357** establishing compliance with reimbursement for proposed landfill improvements.

R. **Resolution 26-11358** establishing compliance with reimbursement for improvements to South Park Pool.

S. **Second/Final Reading Ordinance 26-5934** expanding the boundaries of Ward 5 - Annexation 26-02.

T. **Bills for the Weeks of:**

1. June 9, 2026
2. June 15, 2026
3. June 22, 2026

Motion: I move to approve Consent Agenda Items 1T1, 1T2, and 1T3.

Moved by Councilmember Pitman
Seconded by Councilmember Neese
APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

- **Air Show**

Jake Pinfield and Matthew McDonald, co-chairs of the Billings Air Show, presented an overview of preparations for the 2026 Air Show and requested that the City consider partnering in the cost of public safety overtime associated with the event. Presenters explained that the event requires approximately two and one-half years of planning, relies entirely on volunteers, and is expected to attract approximately 30,000 attendees from Montana and neighboring states. They estimated the economic impact to the Billings area at approximately $15 million and emphasized the value of the event in promoting tourism, showcasing the community, and inspiring youth through aviation.

They described the significant coordination required with the Airport, Police Department, Fire Department, Yellowstone County Sheriff's Office, and Montana Highway Patrol to safely manage traffic, emergency response, and airport operations. They noted that approximately $146,000 in overtime expenses were incurred during the previous Air Show and explained that many communities treat these costs as a public partnership rather than requiring the event organizers to reimburse them entirely.

Mayor Nelson recused himself from discussion due to his business being involved.

Councilmembers expressed appreciation for the volunteer effort required to organize the event and acknowledged the positive economic benefits generated for local businesses. Discussion centered on balancing community support for the event with the City's responsibility to manage taxpayer resources. Several Councilmembers encouraged organizers to seek additional financial participation from organizations such as Visit Billings, the Billings Chamber of Commerce, Big Sky Economic Development, restaurant and lodging associations, and other business groups that directly benefit from increased tourism.

Councilmembers also discussed the possibility of adding a surcharge to event tickets to offset public safety expenses, although presenters expressed concern that additional ticket costs could reduce attendance. Interim City Administrator, Kevin Iffland, was asked to continue discussions with Air Show organizers, Police and Fire leadership, and Finance staff to evaluate potential partnership options and identify possible funding strategies. No formal action was taken.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. BILLINGS 2045 DRAFT OPERATIONAL PLAN AND UPDATES. No Action Necessary.

Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director, and Anna Vickers, Planning Manager, presented proposed amendments to the Billings 2045 Operational Plan, emphasizing that the presentation was informational only and that no action was requested at the meeting. Ms. Vickers explained that the amendments primarily reorganize the adopted plan while adding implementation strategies that resulted from public outreach and stakeholder discussions completed during development of the comprehensive plan.

They reviewed each implementation theme, including neighborhood planning, infrastructure coordination, transportation, housing, parks, gateway beautification, lighting standards, and neighborhood engagement. Discussion included integrating future land use planning with water and sewer master plans, evaluating complete streets and multimodal transportation, expanding neighborhood planning efforts, improving communication with neighborhood task forces, updating park and recreation plans, preserving tree canopy, and considering future gateway beautification and outdoor lighting standards.

Several Councilmembers supported beginning work on an infill policy, emphasizing the importance of encouraging redevelopment while considering economic incentives, tax abatements, and redevelopment tools. Discussion included the need for Councilmembers to participate directly in development of the policy rather than relying solely on staff recommendations.

Discussion also focused on proposed lighting standards. Several Councilmembers questioned whether mandatory street lighting requirements increase housing costs and suggested exploring alternative approaches such as privately maintained yard lighting rather than traditional streetlights. Councilmembers emphasized public safety benefits associated with improved lighting and encouraged staff to continue evaluating community needs before developing recommendations.

Councilmembers discussed complete streets and multimodal transportation improvements, with differing opinions regarding the appropriate level of investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Councilmembers cited public support for improved connectivity and safer transportation options, while others expressed concern regarding project costs and utilization. Ms. Vickers advised that a fiscal analysis of the City's complete streets program would be presented during a future work session.

Additional discussion addressed neighborhood identity, gateway enhancements, multilingual communication strategies, housing affordability, park planning, capital improvement prioritization, and long-term implementation of the adopted comprehensive plan.

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:

- Paul Clark, spoke of the success of the March Against Drugs and Violence and encouraged attendance at the upcoming Mexican Fiesta. He indicated there needed to be a bus stop in front of Family Services.
- Laiekawai Black, spoke about remarks made by Councilmember O'Donnell.
- Jeff Ketelsen, spoke of School District 2 funding high school baseball teams and how the tax increment finance districts could fund the teams.

No further public comment was made.

<u>COUNCIL INITIATIVES:</u>

Motion: I move to direct staff to bring forward an initiative restructuring the governance of the City's Tax Increment Financing districts by consolidating the three existing statutory advisory committees (South Billings Urban Renewal Association, East Billings Urban Renewal District and Downtown Business Association) into a single unified statutory board.

Moved by Councilmember Boyett
Seconded by Councilmember Aspenlieder

Council discussed meeting frequency and representative appointments.

APPROVED 10-1, Councilmember Aguirre opposed

ADJOURN: 7:37 PM

CITY OF BILLINGS

BY:______________________________

Mike Nelson, Mayor

ATTEST:

BY:______________________________

Denise R. Bohman, City Clerk