

**MINUTES
OF THE BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
September 28, 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 Kennedy

ROLL CALL:

Present: 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
Councilmember Mike Boyett, Ward 5
Councilmember Tony O'Donnell, Ward 5 (via Zoom)
Mayor Mike Nelson

Absent/

Excused: Councilmember Kendra Shaw, Ward 1

Staff Present: Kevin Iffland, Interim City Administrator
Gavin Woltjer, Parks, Recreation and Public Lands Director
Gina Dahl, City Attorney
Denise Bohlman, City Clerk
Andy Zoeller, Finance Director
Kelsie Rubich, Library Director
Fire Chief, Kevin Bentz
Interim Police Chief, Shawn Mayo
Jessica Fust, Building Official
Tina Hoeger, Code Enforcement Manager
Jennifer Duray, Deputy Public Works Director
Rusty Logan, Transit Manager
Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director (via Zoom)
Mac Fogelson, City Engineer
Tyler Westrope, Staff Engineer

MINUTES:

- September 14, 2026

Moved by Councilmember Boyett

Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

COURTESIES:

Dr. Ervin Garcia, Superintendent of Billings Public Schools, thanked the City for its ongoing partnership with School District 2 and addressed the recent vehicle/bicycle incident involving a Will James Middle School student. He expressed concern for the student and family and appreciation for the first responders and others who assisted. He emphasized that safe travel to school requires a coordinated community response, rather than assigning responsibility to one group of road users.

Dr. Garcia reported difficulty staffing the district's 48 crossing-guard positions, with approximately 40 filled. He described motorists speeding in school areas, disregarding stopped school buses, and entering intersections while crossing guards were assisting students. He also identified unsafe drop-off practices, distracted driving, and risks involving scooters and motorized bicycles. He urged cooperation among the City, schools, families, law enforcement, and the public on enforcement, infrastructure, education, and awareness, and offered to participate in further planning.

PROCLAMATIONS:

Mayor Nelson proclaimed October 1, 2026, as the 125th Anniversary of the Billings Public Library, having opened its doors on October 1, 1901, and noting its impacts on the citizens of Billings and surrounding communities. Kelsie Rubich, Library Director, voiced her appreciation for the proclamation, to the staff, Friends of the Library, the Foundation, and community partners.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Councilmember Kennedy reported upcoming Legislative and Local Affairs Committee meetings on October 14 and 21, from 3:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. He announced that the City would host a breakfast with legislators and legislative candidates on October 13, and an additional legislative gathering on the evening of November 5 was scheduled. These meetings were described as opportunities to discuss the City's priorities for the 2027 Montana Legislative Session.

INTERIM CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT – KEVIN IFFLAND

Mr. Iffland advised Council that:

- For Consent Agenda Item 1C, the City Attorney forwarded via email, an MOU, approved by the Airport's insurance broker, and the City's Legal Department, determining adequate insurance coverages to protect the City. The MOU replaced the agreement contained in the agenda packet. A copy was placed in the exparte communications notebook for public viewing.
- The new Public Works Director, Jennifer Robinett, first day was October 1st.
- Chief St. John's retirement gathering was Tuesday, September 29th, from 2:30-4:00 P.M. at the Northern Hotel.

- Strategic Planning work sessions with Bridge Group were scheduled for September 30th, at 8:00 A.M. for staff only and would continue to October 1st with Council and staff present. The sessions would be held in Council Chambers.
- 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 11 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 individual provided public comment:

- **Jack Hanson**, urged Council to reject the grant associated with Consent Agenda Item 1H. He expressed concern about federal grant conditions involving immigration information sharing and nondiscrimination requirements, arguing that accepting the approximately \$59,000 grant could undermine community confidence in local law enforcement.
- **Maggie Roberts**, described sidewalk work performed near her home despite her objections. She said the improvements had not addressed drivers using her street to bypass traffic controls at Broadwater Avenue and expressed concern about the financial burden of the assessment.
- **Brittany Brester**, described near misses at 25th Street and Wyoming Avenue, questioned whether the improvements had improved safety, and asked Council to reconsider the cost imposed on the Roberts household and the traffic conditions in the neighborhood.
- **Jeff Ketelsen**, Ward 5, opposed Consent Agenda Item 1E, the contract for soccer-field lighting at Amend Park. He questioned the use of approximately \$560,000 in tax-increment financing funds for the project and argued that school safety and crossing-guard needs should receive greater attention.
- **Katy Schriener, CEO, Downtown Billings Association**, spoke against approving Regular Agenda Item 11. She said the existing district-specific committees had developed specialized knowledge and strong volunteer participation, and that reducing representation to two members from each district could weaken project review and understanding of individual district needs. She urged Council to retain the separate committees.

There was no further public comment.

Councilmember Aspenlieder separated Items 1A1, 1L and 1Q2 because of business-related involvement and abstained from those votes. Councilmember Aguirre separated Item 1N for discussion. The Interim City Administrator and City Attorney clarified that approval of Item 1C would incorporate the revised agreement identified in the administrator's report.

Motion: I move to approve the Consent Agenda, with the exception of Items 1A1, 1L, 1N, and 1Q2, moved for separation.

Moved by Councilmember Boyett

Seconded by Councilmember Lindley

APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

1. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Bid Awards:**

1. **W.O. 26-25: 44th Street West and Broadwater Avenue Storm Trunk Main.** (Opened 9/15/26) Recommend COP Construction.

Motion: I move to approve Consent Agenda Item 1A1, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Kennedy

Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

APPROVED 9-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

2. **W.O. 26-34: Zimmerman Rock Underpinning.** (Opened 9/15/26) Recommend Global Rock Works.

- B. **Agreement** with Martel Construction, First Western Trust Bank, and Billings Logan International Airport for funding retainage.
- C. **Agreement** with the National Intercollegiate Flying Association.
- D. **Purchase** replacement parts for the UV Disinfection System at the Water Reclamation Facility from Trojan Technologies.
- E. **Contract** with Musco Lighting for lighting at the soccer fields at Amend Park.
- F. **Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) 2027-2031 Transportation Improvement Program.**
- G. **2027 Domestic Violence Grant** for Police Department.
- H. **2025 Federal Homeland Security Grant** for Police Department.
- I. **State Highway Traffic Safety DUI Grant** for Police Department.
- J. **Donation** from Partners for Parks to Parks Department for a Thank You Wall at Amend Recreation Center (ARC).
- K. **Quitclaim Deed** for Public Right-of-Way from HAB Development Corporation.
- L. **Final Plat** of Fifty-Four West Subdivision. *Quasi-Judicial

Motion: I move to approve Consent Agenda Item 1L, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Kennedy

Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

APPROVED 9-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

- M. **Resolution 26-11376** authorizing the issuance and sale of the Series 2026AB Special Sidewalk, Curb, Gutter, and Alley Approach Bonds for W.O. 24-02 and W.O. 25-02.

N. Resolution 26-11377 repealing and dissolving the Citizen Police Advisory Board.

Councilmember Aguirre spoke in favor of retaining the Citizen Police Advisory Board, describing public participation and police accountability as important reasons to continue the advisory body.

Motion: I move to continue the Citizen Police Advisory Board.

Moved by Councilmember Aguirre
Seconded by Councilmember Nicholson

Substitute Motion: I move to approve a resolution repealing and dissolving the Citizen Police Advisory Board, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Aspenlieder
Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy

Councilmember Boyett indicated the resolution that created the board did not function as Councilmember Aguirre described. The board's function had served its purpose per the resolution creating it. If Council found it necessary to function in a way other than that which was included in the establishing resolution, then a resolution to revise the parameters was needed.

Councilmember Kennedy supported repealing, citing disagreement with a recommendation he attributed to the board's chair concerning use of police vacancy savings for community service officers rather than additional sworn officers. He also said an incoming police chief should have flexibility to establish an appropriate advisory structure.

Councilmember Aguirre supported her motion to retain the advisory board to receive public input.

Councilmember O'Donnell supported repealing of the existing board, noting that it was intended as an advisory body rather than a forum for hearing individual complaints and that other opportunities for community input remained.

Councilmember Lindley favored retaining the board, although he acknowledged concerns about its present structure, and encouraged revisiting community input mechanisms when a new police chief was in place.

Substitute Motion APPROVED 7-3, Councilmembers Nicholson, Aguirre and Lindley opposed; Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

O. Resolution 26-11378 to set City priorities for the 2027 Montana Legislative Session.

P. Resolution 26-11379 adopting Airport Rules and Regulations.

Q. Bills for the Weeks of:

1. August 24, 2026
2. August 31, 2026

Motion: I move to approve Consent Agenda Item 1Q2, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Kennedy

Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

APPROVED 9-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

REGULAR AGENDA:

- 2. PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11380** adopting collection, disposal, and landfill fees. Staff recommends approval.

Jennifer Duray, Deputy Public Works Director, presented three adjustments to the solid-waste fee resolution: an optional \$4.50 return-trip fee when a collection is missed or refused; authority to accept clean soil without charge only when landfill operational needs justify doing so, rather than at all times; and a per-tire fee for small quantities while retaining the bulk per-ton rate for larger loads. She explained that the landfill had excess soil during cell excavation and that individual tires are difficult to manage and bury.

No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution adopting collection, disposal, and landfill fees, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Pitman

Seconded by Councilmember Boyett

APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

- 3. PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11381** assessing false alarm responses. Staff recommends approval.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, described the annual process for assessing unpaid police and fire false-alarm charges, many of which were more than a year old. Two property owners had paid after publication, and he recommended excluding those properties from the final assessments. Mr. Zoeller also explained the current Fire Marshal's interpretation of a false alarm: an equipment malfunction could constitute a violation, while an alarm activated by actual smoke from ordinary cooking would not necessarily be treated as a malfunction.

No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution assessing false alarm responses, with the two paid accounts removed, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Aguirre

Seconded by Councilmember Boyett

Councilmember Boyett seconded. Councilmember Boyett commented that the false-alarm program had encouraged maintenance of faulty equipment, reduced unnecessary emergency responses, and improved the system over time.

APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

4. **PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11382** assessing weed abatements. Staff recommends approval.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, reported 30 parcels with unpaid weed-abatement charges. Property owners had been notified of violations, and the City performed abatement where owners did not complete the required work. He recommended removing two accounts paid after publication and correcting a tax-code error for one parcel; he stated that the affected owner had received notice at the correct address.

No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution assessing weed abatements, removing two paid accounts, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember O'Donnell

Seconded by Councilmember Boyett

APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

5. **PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11383** allocating assessments for SID 1428. Staff recommends approval.

Councilmember Aspenlieder disclosed that his company had been involved in the development and recused himself.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, presented the allocation of approximately \$230,000 in assessments for SID 1428, with a 6 percent interest rate and the option for property owners to pay remaining principal early to avoid future interest.

Councilmember O'Donnell asked about interest-rate differences among the SID items. Mr. Zoeller explained that most were tax-exempt at 6 percent, while one later sidewalk assessment carried a taxable rate because the applicable construction had been completed more than 18 months earlier.

No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution allocating assessments for SID 1428, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Boyett

Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

APPROVED 9-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained; Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

6. PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11384 allocating assessments for SID 1429. Staff recommends approval.

Councilmember Aspenlieder recused himself because of involvement in the development.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, described SID 1429 as street-light installation in the Clearwater Estates Second Filing area of the 44 West Subdivision. The assessment total exceeded \$1 million, with a 15-year term and 6 percent interest. Property owners may pay their assessments early to reduce interest. He noted that supporting materials documented the earlier procedural steps. No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution allocating assessments for SID 1429, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Boyett

Seconded by Councilmember Pitman

APPROVED 9-0, Councilmember Aspenlieder abstained; Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

7. PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11385 allocating assessments for SID 1430. Staff recommends approval.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, presented the allocation of approximately \$1.5 million for streetlight and park improvements in the sixth and seventh filings of the Annafeld Subdivision. The proposed assessments carried a 15-year term and 6 percent interest.

The following individuals provided public testimony during the public hearing.

- **David Roberts**, asked Council to oppose the assessment, describing a resident who received a bill exceeding \$11,000 and asserted that many homeowners had not understood they would be assessed for the improvements.
- **Michelle Whiting**, accompanied by her husband, Craig, described similar concerns, including reports of assessments in the \$7,000 to \$11,000 range and uncertainty about their own property. They questioned the transparency of the process and said the costs came as a surprise.

No further public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution allocating assessments for SID 1430, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Lindley

Seconded by Councilmember Nicholson

Councilmember Aguirre acknowledged the significant financial effect on homeowners and thanked residents for their testimony, while expressing support for street lighting as a public-safety improvement. Councilmember Lindley said disclosure of potential assessments should occur during property sales and stressed the importance of clear communication to purchasers; he also noted that the allocation was a late step in an established development process.

At Councilmember Pitman's request, Mr. Zoeller outlined the SID procedure: the developer works with engineering staff; Council considers a resolution of intent and a public hearing; notice goes to owners of record at that stage; Council subsequently creates the district, authorizes construction

financing, and ultimately allocates assessments. He explained that the developer owned the parcels when the original SID notices were sent, and that some properties had since been sold. He also observed that some residents describing five years of ownership might live outside the particular SID 1430 boundaries, although other Annafeld districts existed.

Councilmember O'Donnell expressed concern that homeowners could face substantial unexpected bills and urged improvements in disclosure by developers. Nevertheless, he supported the resolution because rejecting the assessments would leave the City's General Fund responsible for approximately \$1.5 million in improvement costs.

APPROVED 9-1, Councilmember Kennedy opposed; Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

8. PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11386 assessing sidewalk construction costs for SID 2928 (W.O. 24-02). Staff recommends approval.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, explained that the resolution allocated costs for missing sidewalk improvements completed under Work Order 24-02. Council had approved the related bond financing on the Consent Agenda. These sidewalk assessments have a 12-year repayment term rather than the 15-year term used for the street-light districts; this particular financing carried a taxable 6.75 percent interest rate.

No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution assessing sidewalk construction costs for SID 2928 (W.O. 24-02), as recommended by staff.

Councilmember O'Donnell referred to residents' earlier concerns about the cost of City-installed sidewalks and asked whether property owners could choose their own contractors. The Mayor ruled the question out of order at that point because the meeting had moved from questions to debate on the pending motion.

Moved by Councilmember Aspenlieder

Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy

APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

9. PUBLIC HEARING AND RESOLUTION 26-11387 assessing sidewalk construction costs for SID 2929 (W.O. 25-02). Staff recommends approval.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, described the allocation of costs for additional missing-sidewalk improvements under Work Order 25-02, using a process similar to Item 8. Councilmember Boyett followed up on the question of homeowner choice. Mac Fogelsong, City Engineer, explained that initial project notices and subsequent 30-day letters inform owners that they may arrange qualified sidewalk work through their own contractors, with some flexibility for owners making such arrangements.

No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve a resolution assessing sidewalk construction costs for SID 2929 (W.O. 25-02), as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Aguirre

Seconded by Councilmember Lindley

APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

10. PUBLIC HEARING AND FIRST READING ORDINANCE repealing the Animal Control Advisory Board. Staff recommends approval.

Kevin Iffland, Interim City Administrator, explained that Council had previously considered the future of the Animal Control Advisory Board in July 2026 and that repeal required an ordinance because the board had been created by ordinance. He provided both marked and clean versions of the proposed ordinance.

No public testimony was given during the public hearing.

Motion: Having conducted a public hearing, considered written and spoken public testimony, I move to approve first reading ordinance repealing the Animal Control Advisory Board, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Boyett

Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy

Councilmember Boyett explained that, during a broader review of advisory boards, the animal control officer responsible for the program reported infrequent meetings, difficulty obtaining participation, and little operational benefit from the board. Based on that feedback, Councilmember Boyett considered the board unnecessary.

APPROVED 9-1, Councilmember Aguirre opposed; Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

11. RESOLUTION 26-11388 creating a single advisory committee for the three Urban Renewal Districts. Staff recommends approval.

Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director, participating remotely, presented the proposal to combine the three statutory urban renewal district advisory committees into one committee. He explained that Council had previously considered consolidation and had directed staff to prepare the resolution. The proposed 11-member committee would include two representatives from each of the three districts, one representative each from Yellowstone County and School District 2, a Big Sky Economic Development representative, and a City representative. The criteria for district representatives would continue to emphasize property, business, organizational, or other significant ties to their districts.

Councilmember O'Donnell questioned whether a consolidated committee could preserve the detailed knowledge and commitment of members serving individual districts. Mr. Friday responded that each district would retain two dedicated representatives and that members would also gain broader knowledge of the other districts. In response to Councilmember Nicholson, he clarified that Council could act on projects regardless of the advisory committee's recommendation. He further explained that the separate nonprofit organizations contracted to work in the districts could continue

to operate their own boards; the proposed change applied to the City's statutory advisory committees, not those organizations.

Councilmember Aspenlieder initially moved to approve a single advisory committee, then withdrew that motion so the wording could specify a single statutory advisory committee.

Motion: I move to approve a resolution creating a single statutory advisory committee for the three Urban Renewal Districts, as recommended by staff.

Moved by Councilmember Boyett

Seconded by Councilmember Nicholson

Councilmember Boyett said other cities he contacted had found consolidated committees effective and that one committee, supported by a tax-increment-financing coordinator, would simplify and standardize review. Councilmember Nicholson supported avoiding duplicative statutory bodies, and Mayor Nelson observed that each district's separate operating organization could continue while a single statutory body would make recommendations to Council.

Councilmember Aguirre opposed consolidation, arguing that it would dilute district-specific knowledge, historical understanding, and local commitment. Councilmember O'Donnell also questioned the value and anticipated savings if district organizations continued to operate their own boards.

APPROVED 8-2, Councilmembers Aguirre and O'Donnell opposed, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

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 provided public comment:

- **Leslie Cook**, a Rimrock Road resident and participant in the Rimrock Task Force, called for a thorough review of the City's school-zone traffic control policy in light of growth, traffic volumes, and the needs of children, people with disabilities, and older pedestrians. She described personal experience with the consequences of a vehicle-pedestrian crash and expressed concern about the safety of routes to Will James Middle School and other schools.
- **Ben Dorman**, asked for safety improvements near the recent Will James Middle School crash location and identified additional concerns at Lewis Avenue and 24th Street, where turning vehicles had reportedly come close to striking a crossing guard.
- **John Halverson**, who identified himself as a planner involved in the 2024 Billings Safe Routes to School work, urged Council to consider street design as well as enforcement and driver education. He said the width and geometry of roads such as Grand Avenue can encourage high speeds and recommended reconsideration of school traffic control and access-management policies, including opportunities for safe pedestrian crossings in west Billings.

- **Tanya Ludwig**, a Billings Public Schools trustee, speaking as a parent, described the dangers she observed on Grand Avenue, including speeding and distracted driving. She shared her family's experience with a traffic-related loss and urged the City and school community to collaborate on practical steps to protect students and other vulnerable road users.

No further public comment was given.

COUNCIL INITIATIVES:

Councilmember Aspenlieder — Council Meeting Operations and Duration

Councilmember Aspenlieder introduced a proposal for a three-month trial of meeting-duration limits and changes to Council operations rules. He described the proposal as a means to improve efficiency, encourage preparation and advance questions to staff before meetings, reduce repetitive debate, and make public participation more practical by avoiding late-night proceedings. He preferred consideration at a regular business meeting but asked the Council Operations Committee to determine whether the initiative should be scheduled for a work session or regular business meeting.

Councilmember O'Donnell cautioned that firm limits could impair thoughtful consideration of new information and public testimony. Councilmember Aguirre agreed that members should prepare and exercise restraint but was concerned that a strict limit could compromise deliberation. Councilmember Boyett supported efforts to reduce lengthy meetings but suggested evaluating whether the procedural rules applied that evening would improve efficiency before adopting further restrictions. Aspenlieder clarified that Council was being asked only to advance the initiative for a future noticed discussion, not to adopt the proposed time limits that evening.

Motion: I move to place this item on a future agenda, with the Council Operations Committee determining appropriate meeting placement and format.

Moved by Councilmember Aspenlieder

Seconded by Councilmember Kennedy

APPROVED 7-3, Councilmembers Neese, Pitman and Nicholson opposed, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

Councilmember Lindley — School Zone Traffic Control Policy Review

Councilmember Lindley introduced an initiative prompted by the recent crash near Will James Middle School. He requested a rapid review of the City's school-zone policy, including the 1989 decision to exclude middle and high schools from reduced-speed school zones. The proposal described two phases: within 30 days, engineering and traffic investigation and a recommendation for school-zone boundaries and speed limits at Will James Middle School, including the Grand Avenue/Rehberg Lane crossing; and within 60 days, a proposed policy amendment addressing reduced-speed zones at middle and high schools, a prioritized list of locations, cost estimates, and an implementation timeline.

Councilmember Lindley said school safety should not depend on whether students attend elementary, middle, or high school, and acknowledged that traffic safety involves street design, driver behavior, enforcement, and multiple potential solutions. Councilmember Boyett asked

whether staff could begin the work immediately rather than waiting for a later formal Council action. Interim City Administrator Iffland explained that some review could potentially begin under existing staff authority, while specific Council direction would need to be placed on a noticed agenda. Councilmember Nicholson asked how speed limits are established. Mac Fogelson, City Engineer, described the use of speed studies, road classifications, jurisdictional considerations, and the City's authority regarding school zones.

Councilmember Aspenlieder cautioned against setting arbitrary speed limits without considering traffic engineering, roadway geometry, and possible unintended safety consequences. Councilmember O'Donnell asked about the age of the existing policy and the history of school-zone decisions. Councilmember Kennedy requested that staff identify what work could begin promptly and what direction would require Council action. Staff indicated that the October 5 work session could provide an opportunity to discuss options and clarify the next steps. Members also raised the need for proper public notice before substantive action on the initiative.

Motion: I move to place the topic of school-zone policy review initiative on the October 5 work session agenda, with information from staff on available options.

Moved by Councilmember Lindley
Seconded by Councilmember Neese
APPROVED 10-0, Councilmember Shaw absent/excused

ADJOURN: 7:54 P.M.



CITY OF BILLINGS

BY: _____

Mike Nelson, Mayor

ATTEST:

BY: _____

Denise R. Bohlman, City Clerk