

**CITY OF BILLINGS**  
**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION SUMMARY**

April 6, 2026 – 5:30 PM

Council Chambers – City Hall, 316 N. 26th St., Billings, Montana

**Council Present:**

Councilmember Shaw  
Councilmember Nicholson  
Councilmember Neese  
Councilmember Pitman  
Councilmember Aguirre (Via Zoom)  
Councilmember Kennedy  
Councilmember Aspenlieder  
Councilmember Lindley  
Councilmember Boyett  
Councilmember O'Donnell  
Mayor Nelson

**Staff Present:**

Chris Kukulski, City Administrator; Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator; Gina Dahl, City Attorney; Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director, Anna Vickers, Planning Manager, Jeff Sprock, IT Director

**PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda and Non-Agenda Items)**

- Kay Foster, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Jeff Ketelsen, Billings, MT, spoke of mismanagement issues with the Downtown District.
- Paul Clark, Billings, MT, spoke of AI data centers, and the South Park Easter Egg Hunt.
- Bob Struckmen, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Danny Choriki, Billings, MT, spoke in favor of community engagement in Boards and Commissions.
- Shay Reiser, Billings, MT, spoke in favor of community engagement in Boards and Commissions.
- Charlie Yeagen, Park City, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Katie Harrison, Billings, MT, spoke in favor of community engagement in Boards and Commissions.
- Lindsay Richardson, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Dustin Ogdin, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Jessica Ogdin, Billings, MT, Yellowstone Art Museum, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Tawnya Schoolitz, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Eric Simonsen, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Katie Bennet, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Rick Leuthold, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Ashley Holeman, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Cecelia Gavinsky, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Linda Brooks, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Kari Boiter, Billings, MT, spoke in favor of community engagement in Boards and Commissions.
- Rick Baker, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.

- Jana Marcette, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Denise Joy, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.
- Lee Humphrey, Billings, MT, encouraged support of the Urban Renewal Districts.

Council changed the order of the agenda to allow Billings 2045 Land Use Plan & Future Land Use Map to move to #1.

---

### **AGENDA ITEM #3 #1 – Billings 2045 Land Use Plan & Future Land Use Map**

Presenter: Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director and Alison Mouch, Orion Planning Design

**Overview:**

Presentation of draft land use plan and future land use map.

**Key Points:**

- Based on extensive public engagement
- Draft plan to be released for 30-day public comment period
- Legal adoption deadline approaching

**Council Discussion:**

- Questions on:
  - Public input thresholds
  - Timeline constraints
  - Clarity of land use categories

**Council Direction:**

- Continue public engagement and refinement

---

### **AGENDA ITEM #4 #2 – Urban Renewal Districts: Consolidation of Consultants**

Presenter: Councilmember Boyett and Wyeth Friday

Katy Schreiner, Downtown Billings Alliance, Heather Doty, EBURD and Tim Goodridge, SBURA: spoke of the roles of their district. Mehmet Casey, Downtown Urban Renewal District, addresses Council questions.

**Overview:**

Councilmember Boyett introduced an initiative evaluating URD administration costs (~\$665,000 annually) and presented potential restructuring options.

**Options Presented:**

1. Maintain current structure
2. Issue RFP for consolidated management
3. Reduce operating budgets and revise agreements
4. Bring management in-house with City staff

Staff noted:

- Existing agreements expire June 30, 2026
- City staff support costs - total approximately \$298,000 annually

**URD Presentations:**

Representatives from Downtown, East, and South URDs emphasized:

- Each district has distinct goals and needs
- Work extends beyond TIF applications to:
  - Relationship-building
  - Economic development
  - Strategic planning
- Consolidation risks:
  - Reduced effectiveness
  - Loss of specialization
  - Slower implementation

**Council Discussion:**

- Reviewed:
  - Tax revenue trends
  - Administrative cost differences
  - Potential efficiencies
- Noted challenges such as centrally assessed properties affecting valuation data
- Interest expressed in a hybrid approach (maintain structure + improve efficiency)

**Public Comment:**

- Alan Hodges, Billings, MT, spoke in support of the existing process for urban renewal districts and TIF funding.
- Danny Choriki, Billings, MT, encouraged Council to proceed cautiously in plans to consolidate.
- Steve Warlich, Billings, MT, spoke of the importance of urban renewal districts and how they helped development.
- Kevin Nelson, Billings, MT, spoke of failed projects from the urban renewal districts.
- Randy Hafer, Billings, MT, spoke of the benefits of the downtown urban renewal districts and in opposition of centrally assessed values.
- Jana Hafer, Billings, MT, spoke in favor of the downtown urban renewal district and against consolidating the districts.
- Megan Zimmerman, Billings, MT, spoke against consolidating the districts.
- Brandon Berger, Big Sky Economic Development, Billings, MT, encouraged Council to take time to thoroughly review the districts.
- Lucy Aspinwall, Billings, MT, read a letter from her husband regarding the lack of a thriving community in the downtown area.
- Blake Warlich, Billings, MT, spoke of the importance of urban renewals districts and against consolidation.

**Council Direction:**

## Options:

- a. Leave management as it is and extend the current agreements for a time TBD?
- b. Issue an RFP for consolidated services?
  - If an RFP is issued, would it consider responses that only administer 1 or 2 districts, or must it be all or nothing?
- c. Reduce the annual operating budgets for the three district entities, update agreements, add City FTE to support core operations?
- d. Bring all District management into City operations and add City FTE(s) to support operations?

Council consensus - renew agreements with URD's, request they bring preliminary budgets with reductions or efficiencies to Budget and Finance Committee

---

**AGENDA ITEM #2 #3 – City Annexation Policy and Map Recommendations**

**Presenter:** Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director

**Overview:**

Discussion of annexation boundaries and long-term planning strategy.

**Key Points:**

- Consideration of removing certain areas from annexation
- Importance of aligning growth with infrastructure investment

**Council Discussion:**

- Focus on long-term planning and cost recovery

**Public Comment:**

- Kolton Knatterud, IMEG, property owner agent, indicate he was available for questions.
- Kevin Nelson, Billings, MT, spoke of the potential for a reimbursement agreement.
- Jeff Ketelsen, Billings, MT, spoke of the importance of impact fees.
- Development community encouraged maintaining growth opportunities

**Council Direction:**

- Continue evaluation and refinement
-

## **AGENDA ITEM #4 – Cybersecurity Awareness**

**Presenter:** Jeff Sprock, IT Director

### **Overview:**

Staff presented cybersecurity risks and emphasized awareness as the primary defense against attacks.

### **Key Points:**

- Most cybersecurity incidents begin with phishing emails
- Attackers may:
  - Gain access to accounts
  - Impersonate officials
  - Request fraudulent transactions
- Cybersecurity impacts:
  - Operations
  - Public trust
  - Legal risk
- Councilmembers are high-value targets due to:
  - Public visibility
  - Flexible work environments
- Common threats:
  - Phishing
  - Credential attacks
  - Social engineering
- Over 90% of breaches originate from phishing

### **Demonstration:**

- Example phishing email reviewed:
  - Slight domain differences
  - Urgency tactics
  - Malicious links
- Explanation of multi-factor fatigue attacks

### **Training Initiative:**

- Introduction of KnowBe4 training platform
  - Launch: May 1
  - Includes simulations and short modules
  - Non-punitive awareness tool
  - Tracks completion rates

### **Key Guidance:**

- Report suspicious emails
- Use City email for official business
- Verify before acting
- Contact IT if uncertain

### **Council Discussion:**

- Questions on:
  - Employee training frequency
  - Email filtering systems (Mimecast)
  - Reporting procedures
- Emphasis on:
  - Avoiding attachments
  - Timely reporting
  - User responsibility

### **Council Direction:**

- Informational only
- Encouragement to participate in training

### **Public Comment:**

- None
-

## **AGENDA ITEM #5 – Interim City Administrator Appointment Process**

### **Overview:**

Mayor outlined process for selecting an Interim City Administrator.

### **Key Points:**

- Recruitment will be internal
- Process includes:
  - 5-day internal posting
  - Council committee (up to five members)
  - HR participation for policy compliance
- Committee will:
  - Review and rate candidates
  - Recommend finalist to Council
- Council will make final selection
- Permanent recruitment process to be discussed later

### **Council Discussion:**

- Questions regarding:
  - Timeline and posting
  - Eligibility (confirmed open to all City employees)
- Discussion included:
  - Reviewing job description
  - Distinction between interim and permanent roles

### **Council Direction:**

- Proceed with internal recruitment
- Continue discussion on permanent position

### **Public Comment:**

- None

---

## **HIGHLIGHT UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS OF COUNCIL INTEREST**

---

### **PUBLIC COMMENT – “NON-AGENDA ITEMS”**

- Jeff Ketelsen, Billings, MT, spoke of constituents paying property taxes for City services and the Business Improvement District.
- 

**ADJOURN: 10:10 PM**