

CITY OF BILLINGS
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION SUMMARY

May 18, 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
Councilmember Kennedy
Councilmember Aspenlieder
Councilmember Lindley
Councilmember Boyett
Councilmember O'Donnell
Mayor Nelson

Staff Present:

Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator
Karla Stanton, HR Director
Jeff Sprock, IT Director
Jennifer Duray, Public Works Deputy Director
Andy Zoeller, Finance Director

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda and Non-Agenda Items)

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- Katie Harrison, Billings, MT, commented regarding the pause on boards and commissions, emphasizing the importance of the Citizens Police Advisory Board and Human Relations Commission and expressing concerns about transparency and accountability.
- Jonathan Mauger, Billings, MT, provided information regarding the upcoming Downtown Billings Rotary Memorial Day Parade and invited Council and the public to participate.
- Jeff Ketelsen, Billings, MT, expressed concerns regarding the Downtown Business Improvement District budget and requested additional audit information before further funding approval.
- Blake Wahrlich, Downtown BID Board member, spoke in support of the BID budget and downtown beautification efforts.
- Senator Mike Yakawich thanked outgoing City Administrator Chris Kukulski for his years of service and highlighted several accomplishments during his tenure.

AGENDA ITEM #1 – FY2027 Departmental Budget Presentations

Human Resources

Karla Stanton, HR Director, presented the proposed FY2027 Human Resources budget, including a request for an additional Human Resources position and implementation of a new payroll and human resources information system.

Discussion focused on staffing workload, payroll system limitations, employee communication tools, implementation costs, and long-term operational savings.

Council discussed salary ranges, succession planning, training opportunities, and the importance of improving internal systems and employee support.

Information Technology

Jeff Sprock, IT Director, provided an overview of the FY2027 Information Technology and Central Telephone budgets, including infrastructure replacement, cybersecurity efforts, and software modernization projects.

Discussion included technology lifecycle planning, phone system replacement, cybersecurity training improvements, staffing levels and the additional FTE being requested, and software procurement oversight.

Council discussed long-term infrastructure planning, support for public safety technology systems, and opportunities for increased transparency regarding technology costs.

Recess at 6:50 P.M. Reconvene at 7:00 P.M.

Public Works

Jennifer Duray, Public Works Deputy Director, presented the proposed FY2027 Public Works budget and recommended utility and maintenance district rate adjustments.

Presentation topics included capital infrastructure investments, roadway maintenance, stormwater improvements, landfill operations, solid waste collection, and the West End Water Treatment Plant project.

Council discussed cardboard recycling program options, stormwater fee structure, water and wastewater rate methodology, landfill operations, and long-term infrastructure replacement cycles.

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, indicated Moody had upgraded the City's bond rating from A3 to A2 for water system financing. He spoke of the process of selling bonds.

Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) and Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID)

Katie Schreiner, Downtown Billings CEO, presented the Downtown Business Improvement District budget and overview of services provided within the BID boundaries.

She reviewed downtown clean zone services, cooperative safety programs, graffiti removal, outreach efforts, flower basket maintenance, and downtown event programming.

Council discussed BID boundaries, service levels south of the railroad tracks, downtown activation efforts, and economic impacts associated with downtown events and business growth.

Aly Eggart, Executive Director TBID, presented the TBID budget and overview of services provided.

Council discussed the hotel industry, tourism numbers, short term rentals and ways to partner with the City.

Highlight Upcoming Agenda Items of Council Interest.

Council Discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT – “NON-AGENDA ITEMS”

None

ADJOURN: 8:35 P.M.