

CITY OF BILLINGS
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION SUMMARY
June 15, 2026 – 5:30 PM
Council Chambers – City Hall, 316 N. 26th St., Billings, Montana

Council Present

Mayor Nelson
Councilmember Shaw
Councilmember Nicholson
Councilmember Neese
Councilmember Aguirre
Councilmember Kennedy
Councilmember Aspenlieder
Councilmember Lindley
Councilmember Boyett
Councilmember O'Donnell
Councilmember Pitman

Staff Present

Kevin Iffland, Interim City Administrator
Jessica Fust, Building Official
Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner
Matt Hoppel, Fire Chief
Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director
Andy Zoeller, Finance Director
Karla Stanton, Human Resources Director

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda and Non-Agenda Items)

No public comment was received.

AGENDA ITEM #1 – 21st Street Underpass Study

Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner presented the completed 21st Street Underpass Study, which evaluated safety concerns, emergency access, roadway conditions, pedestrian accommodations, and potential improvements to the underpass. Staff reviewed existing conditions, crash history, public outreach results, and four alternatives ranging from maintaining current conditions to reconstructing the underpass to accommodate emergency vehicles.

She explained that the study was conducted through the Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation planning process and that adoption of the study would not commit the City to construction of any specific alternative. She reviewed estimated costs, funding opportunities, environmental considerations, and coordination requirements with BNSF Railway.

Council discussed emergency vehicle access to the south side of Billings, underpass clearance limitations, crash history, pedestrian safety, drainage issues, and the

feasibility of future improvements. Councilmembers discussed the likelihood of securing grant funding, the potential value of lower-cost safety improvements such as over-height warning systems and lighting, and concerns regarding the cost of major reconstruction alternatives.

Staff indicated the study would return to Council on June 22 for consideration of a recommendation to the MPO Policy Coordinating Committee.

AGENDA ITEM #2 – Nurse Navigation Program

Matt Hoppel, Fire Chief and Steve Moffatt, Global Medical Response, presented information regarding a proposed Nurse Navigation Program designed to provide alternative responses to certain low-acuity 911 calls.

Mr. Moffatt explained that eligible callers would be transferred from the 911 dispatch center to registered nurses trained to assess medical needs and connect callers with appropriate resources, including telehealth providers, urgent care clinics, behavioral health services, community resources, transportation assistance, or self-care options. He stated the program is intended to reduce unnecessary ambulance utilization, improve resource availability for higher-acuity emergencies, and connect residents with more appropriate levels of care.

Council discussed implementation procedures, liability considerations, patient safety safeguards, mental health crisis response protocols, community education needs, performance metrics, cost impacts, and potential operational benefits. Councilmembers requested ongoing reporting regarding program outcomes, financial impacts, and service levels if implementation proceeds.

Council provided direction to staff to continue development of the program, evaluate implementation requirements, and return with a formal agreement for future Council consideration.

Public Comment:

None

Recess at 7:00 PM. Reconvene at 7:10 PM.

AGENDA ITEM #3 – Opportunity Zones 2.0 Designation

Andy Zoeller, Finance Director, presented information regarding the federal Opportunity Zones 2.0 program and reviewed eight Billings census tracts identified by the federal government as eligible for designation. Staff explained that Opportunity Zone designation provides federal tax incentives intended to encourage private capital investment within designated areas.

Staff reviewed the state application process, selection criteria, and timelines. Discussion focused on development readiness, redevelopment opportunities, available commercial

property, community support, and the likelihood of attracting investment within eligible census tracts.

Public Comment:

Bill Honaker spoke of his experience utilizing the existing Opportunity Zone designation for downtown development projects. He discussed factors influencing private investment decisions and emphasized the importance of selecting areas with available development opportunities and strong redevelopment potential.

Council discussed several eligible census tracts, including the downtown corridor, the EBURD area, portions of South Billings, and areas within the Heights. Councilmembers discussed redevelopment opportunities, economic development potential, available land, housing impacts, and the likelihood of receiving state approval.

Council reached consensus directing staff to pursue Opportunity Zone applications for Census Tracts 4.02, 2, and 3, in that priority order.

AGENDA ITEM #4 – City Administrator Job Description Review and Recruiter Selection

Council discussed the timeline for recruiting a permanent City Administrator and reviewed the current interim administrative structure.

Councilmembers expressed support for allowing additional time (60 - 90 days) to evaluate the interim management arrangement before initiating a national recruitment process. Discussion included potential recruitment timelines, organizational needs, evaluation criteria, and refinement of the City Administrator job description.

Karla Stanton, Human Resources Director, reviewed the job recruitment process and indicated support for the delay. She spoke of the need for an assistant City Administrator to support Mr. Iffland.

Council discussed utilizing the Operations Committee to review proposed job description revisions and develop recommendations for Council consideration. Councilmembers also discussed whether future recruitment efforts should focus on local candidates, regional candidates, or a broader national search.

Council reached consensus to delay initiation of recruiter selection for approximately sixty days and directed Councilmembers to submit job description comments to the Operations Committee for further review.

Highlight Upcoming Agenda Items of Council Interest

Interim City Administrator Kevin Iffland reviewed upcoming agenda items, including FY2027 wholesale water and wastewater rates, right-of-way fees, BID assessments, development-related public hearings, and consideration of the 21st Street Underpass Study.

Mr. Iffland also highlighted upcoming July work session topics, including financial updates, the Billings Logan International Airport construction project, South Park Pool information, and a special work session scheduled for July 8.

Council Discussion

Councilmember Kennedy announced Legislative Committee meetings scheduled for June 18 and June 24 and encouraged Councilmembers and department heads to submit legislative priorities for consideration.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No public comment was received.

ADJOURN

7:52 P.M.