

CITY OF BILLINGS
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION SUMMARY

October 5, 2026 - 5:30 PM

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

Council Present

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

Absent/Excused

Councilmember Kennedy

Staff Present

Kevin Iffland, Interim City Administrator
Jessica Fust, Building Official
Jennifer Duray, Deputy Public Works Director
Tyler Westrope, Engineer
Tracy Scott, Parking Manager
Gavin Woltjer, Parks and Recreation Director
Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda and Non-Agenda Items)

None.

1. Stormwater System Development Fee.

Tyler Westrope, Engineer presented a proposed stormwater system development fee (SDF), a one-time charge to new development intended to help fund infrastructure capacity needed for growth rather than operations or maintenance. The proposed base charge was \$967 per equivalent residential unit (ERU), developed from existing system assets attributable to growth and a ten-year capital improvement program. He explained that

residential and commercial developments are subject to different stormwater design requirements. Based on an analysis of 29 commercial sites, the advisory committee recommended a 47 percent design credit for commercial developments connected to the stormwater system, resulting in a proposed \$513 per ERU rate. Commercial developments disconnected from the system would receive a larger credit, resulting in a proposed \$329 per ERU rate. He also proposed flexibility for unusual properties or site-specific conditions.

Estimated the fee could generate approximately \$950,000 annually, compared with approximately \$10.7 million in existing stormwater rate revenue, and help accelerate infrastructure construction in underserved growth areas. If Council later adopts the fee at the October 26 regular meeting, staff anticipated builder outreach in November and December and a January 1, 2027 implementation date.

Councilmembers asked how the residential fee was calculated, how staff would explain it to homebuilders, and whether the added cost could affect housing affordability. Staff discussed analysis of developable vacant land, existing system capacity, stormwater drainage basins and future capital projects. Council also asked how the fee would apply to existing homes, accessory dwelling units, deed-restricted affordable housing and small infill projects. Staff clarified that existing homes would not be charged retroactively and that the current proposal did not exempt affordable housing or establish a reduced rate for infill.

Public Comment:

- Jeff Ketelsen supported the proposed fee, saying it would shift some infrastructure costs from existing residents and businesses to new development and help reduce pressure on current taxpayers.

Councilmember Neese moved to direct staff to present the proposed stormwater system development fee at the soonest available regular business meeting for Council consideration. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Aspenlieder. The motion passed 10-0, Kennedy absent/excused

2. Proposed Amendments to Article 24, Division 3 and Article 24-1000, BMCC, Accessible Parking and Enforcement.

Tracy Scott, Parking Manager outlined proposed amendments to update the City Code to current state and federal accessible parking requirements, including replacing outdated terminology, clarifying signage and access-aisle restrictions, and addressing the use of accessible parking permits in City-owned metered spaces, parking garages and lots. She explained that qualified permit holders remain eligible for parking accommodations, including applicable time-limit and payment exemptions, and that automated garage systems have methods for verifying those permissions.

She recommended a uniform \$250 accessible-parking violation fine rather than increasing penalties for repeat offenses, citing limitations when citations are issued manually by different agencies and the operational simplicity of a flat penalty. Other changes would increase the threshold for certain unpaid parking citation enforcement procedures from \$50 to \$200. Councilmembers asked why state terminology favors “accessible” over “handicapped” and how the three-business-day period to show a valid permit relates to a longer citation appeal period. Ms. Scott explained that timely presentation of valid authorization could void a ticket automatically, while the longer appeal process provides an opportunity to address expired or improperly displayed credentials.

Council discussion included concern that a flat \$250 penalty would not deter habitual violators as effectively as a higher repeat-offense fine. They also recommended allowing Council to adjust fee amounts by resolution rather than requiring future ordinance amendments. They acknowledged that the ordinance needed updates to comply with state law.

Public Comment:

None.

Councilmember Boyett moved to direct staff to bring the proposed amendments to a future regular business meeting for consideration. Councilmember Pitman seconded.

Councilmember Neese stated opposition that handicapped parking should be a maximum fine and ordinances need to be more flexible as to not need changes regularly. The motion passed 9-1, Neese opposed, Kennedy absent/excused.

3. School Zone Policy Review and Aggressive Driving Initiative.

Gavin Woltjer, Parks and Recreation Director presented a multidisciplinary, three-phase approach combining the school zone policy review with related aggressive-driving and safe-streets initiatives. Phase one, targeted within approximately 30 days, would focus on immediate school-zone concerns, including the Will James Middle School area and Grand Avenue. Phase two, approximately 60–90 days, would review and update school-zone policies more broadly for elementary, middle and high schools, establish consistent standards, and prioritize locations. Phase three would address wider issues such as speeding and aggressive driving, vehicle noise, downtown bicycle routes, e-bikes and e-scooters, enforcement, fines, and street design. Existing Safe Routes to School and law enforcement activities would continue while coordinating with the effort.

He said the multidisciplinary group would hold its first meeting the following morning and would determine meeting frequency, specific assignments, community partner participation and the method for reporting progress to Council. Councilmember Lindley

supported the combined approach and described inconsistent school-zone signs, flashing beacons, speed humps and speed management observed around local schools. Members stressed that updating policy might be as urgent as site-specific actions, particularly where speed-limit changes on state-controlled urban routes require coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation. Council discussion noted that an updated, consistent policy could allow a more efficient state review than a standard speed study, which could take six to eight months.

Councilmembers discussed the City's previous transportation safety planning and the state's Vision Zero goals. Mr. Woltjer indicated that the City has discussed and aspired toward those goals through transportation plans, but had not formally adopted its own Vision Zero policy. Possible school district and state agency involvement was identified for the group's initial discussion.

Public Comment:

- Mariah Lantz, spoke of her son Chase's death and expressed appreciation for Council's efforts to improve safety for children at all school levels.
- J-Nell Bermes, Safe Routes to School Committee and RiverStone Health supported extending designated school-zone speed limits to middle schools, emphasizing student walking and biking distances, traffic exposure, driver awareness and crash severity.

Councilmember Lindley moved to direct staff to proceed with the three-track approach presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Aguirre. The motion passed 10-0, Kennedy absent/excused.

Highlight Upcoming Agenda Items of Council Interest.

Interim City Administrator Kevin Iffland highlighted Council training in the Council Chambers at 4:00 P.M. the following Monday, followed by Council photographs. He also noted upcoming land disposition items involving Wilson Park and Beartooth, and an enterprise resource planning (ERP) item at the following work session.

Council Discussion.

None.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items.

None.

Adjourn: 6:31 P.M.