

City Council Work Session

November 3, 2008

5:30 PM

Community Center

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Tussing, Ronquillo, Gaghen, Vacant, Pitman, Veis, Ruegamer, Ulledalen, McCall, Astle, Clark.

ADJOURN TIME: 7:10 p.m.

Agenda

TOPIC #1	<i>Public Comment</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Maxey Megrue, 603 Beverly Hills Blvd.**, spoke regarding public transportation and the need for a better system.
- **Angela Cimmino, 1745 Sylvan Lane**, asked for feedback regarding the denial of her application to fill the vacant Ward II Council position. She noted that the cost of a special election would be \$20,000 and the continued vacancy meant that Ward II would only have one representative until the special election was held.

TOPIC #2	<i>Community Library Committee</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Library Director Bill Cochran explained that the project started more than four years ago and for more than a year, a joint committee, appointed by the City and MSU-Billings, had worked together. He introduced Eakle Barfield, Director of Facilities for MSU-B, who was his co-chair of the committee, along with Tony Hines, Chair of the Library Board; and Dan Carter, who was a member of the Library Board and associated with Community and Public Affairs for MSU-B. Mr. Cochran advised that additional information would be provided in the CIP process because the Library Board had a facilities committee that had been meeting during the past year and would have information regarding services across all parts of the city.

Mr. Cochran's PowerPoint presentation began with a speculation map of the locations of a library or branches. He pointed to the area that fell within a 15-minute drive time from the current Library building. He said locating a library at the College of Technology would be wise because the site was already in place, was acquired, and the City would be partnered with someone who owned the site. He reviewed that area, the existing buildings, and potential locations of the community library.

Mr. Cochran reviewed the committee's presentation history. He advised that the steering committee had five subcommittees that met on a regular basis. He noted that the Memorandum of Agreement was approved by Council a few weeks ago which authorized a contribution of \$75,000 from the Library's unobligated cash reserves to match the \$75,000 approved by the University. He said Mr. Barfield could answer questions about the selection of architectural and building firms for work on conceptual plans. He noted that the total project cost was estimated at \$14.8 million and it was anticipated to be split evenly between the City and the University. He advised that the project was in the CIP process and the University's long-range building plan.

Mr. Cochran reviewed comparable sites visited by committee members. He said the visits helped understand the entire range of details that came up in a project of that size.

Mr. Cochran reviewed the project timeline. He said the Library Board held a special meeting at the end of the previous month after it met with the Chancellor and got current information on where the appropriation process was with the legislature. Mr. Cochran advised that the Library Board recommended a language change for the project in the CIP to include contingency language so the project would be triggered by the City Council when the University secured funding for its half of the project. He explained that each step of the process would be contingent upon the funding. Mr. Cochran advised that the University had the potential of securing all or part of the funding in the coming session.

Councilmember Ronquillo asked how many people were served at the downtown library site. Mr. Cochran responded that 35,000 active cardholders had used the Library within the last three years. He added there were about 350,000 visitors each year; 1,100-1,200 each day. Mr. Cochran noted that the Infomobile served rural residents, homebound individuals and assisted living facilities. Councilmember Ronquillo asked what would happen to the downtown library if the community library was built. Mr. Cochran explained that for a city the size of Billings, the Library should have about 100,000 square feet of space. He noted that the long-range program called for more usable space in the existing building, about 25,000 square feet at the community library site, and a future 15,000 square foot branch in the Heights which would total about 100,000 square feet. He noted that all the facilities would be open to the public.

Councilmember McCall asked when marketing would begin for the bond issue passage anticipated for Summer 2011. Mr. Cochran said it would probably start about the same time as the selection of the architect for the conceptual drawings. Mr. Barfield advised that the request for architects closed October 30, and selection should occur soon. Mr. Cochran advised that the level of state funding should be known about mid-November, when the Governor's budget came out.

Councilmember Ruegamer said he was a little concerned about the location. He said he did not know how they would know if it was available and visible to the public. He asked if people would go to the college campus to use it. Mr. Cochran said that point was raised by every member of the Library side of the committee. He said the landscape architects that worked with the University developed a movie that was a fly-over that showed the rendering, landscaping, scoreboards, berming and the building. He said the building would be almost the same size and shape as the COT's health sciences building and would be located to the southeast of it near the newest entrance. Councilmember Ruegamer asked about parking at that facility. Mr. Cochran explained that parking would be available and shared parking was

negotiated with Faith Chapel for additional parking. Councilmember Ruegamer commented that he hoped they could ensure that it benefitted the public as much as it did the COT.

Councilmember Gaghen advised she had been sitting in on the meetings since the process began. She said the visibility of the proposed building and the lack of buildings to the north would provide easy access and it would not be difficult to identify it.

City Administrator Volek explained that the next step in the process was the CIP.

TOPIC #3	<i>Parking Advisory Board</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Assistant City Administrator Bruce McCandless introduced Brenda Burkhartsmeier, Chair of the Parking Advisory Board. Mr. McCandless said that it was brought up a few weeks ago when Boards and Commissions were reviewed that the Parking Advisory Board had asked for jurisdiction over parking in a wider area than just the downtown. He said Council was not quite ready to agree to that and wanted to discuss it with the advisory board.

Ms. Burkhartsmeier explained that the Parking Advisory Board requested the change because the downtown area was impacted by the hospitals, the college and Dehler Park. She said some enforcement was being done in those areas even though it was not in the parking enforcement jurisdiction. She said citizen input was received quite often and the Board wanted to provide that opportunity to allow people to address parking issues in all areas of the City. She said the Board's purpose was advisory and only wanted to help advise City administration so informed decisions could be made in regard to parking.

Councilmember Clark commented that was a better explanation than what Council heard previously and he agreed that an advisory role could be helpful.

Councilmember Veis asked if the makeup of the Board would change if the mission was expanded. Ms. Burkhartsmeier said it was considered and she felt it would be necessary. She said the change would allow people outside of the downtown area to serve on the Board.

Councilmember McCall asked if the Parking Advisory Board would be part of the planning process for a project. Ms. Burkhartsmeier responded that was how it was envisioned so potential problems could be identified during the planning process, not after the fact. Councilmember Ulledalen suggested that the Parking Advisory Board participate in the early part of the process as the East End TIF was developed.

Councilmember Veis referenced parking problems in the tree-streets area and asked if a group of neighbors could work through the process to try to develop a solution. Ms. Burkhartsmeier said task forces existed that focused on parking and served as a sounding board and liaison between the City and residents or businesses. She said the group felt that since they had constant involvement, they could help facilitate the parking issues of areas in addition to the downtown area.

Councilmember Gaghen advised that she felt it would be valuable for the Parking Advisory Board to help with the parking issues that existed in the hospital district, rather than a short-term task force.

Public Works Director Dave Mumford stated that the areas discussed were under the authority of Public Works and asked if they would work through the Parking Advisory Board if the change was made. Ms. Burkhartsmeier suggested representation by the Parking

Advisory Board members on other related boards to address similar issues. Councilmember Ulledalen stated he supported the idea of an ongoing body so someone had a working knowledge of what was going on, rather than reacting to problems.

TOPIC #4	<i>Growth Policy</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Planner Juliet Spalding stated she would talk about the process that had been followed to update the Growth Policy and the major changes in it since it was adopted in 2003. She said an important part of the policy was public input and she would also review that process.

Ms. Spalding explained that a growth policy was required by State law and its purpose was to establish goals and objectives, and strategies to achieve them.

Ms. Spalding reviewed the major changes since 2003 in:

- ✓ land use
- ✓ population
- ✓ housing
- ✓ economic conditions
- ✓ natural resources
- ✓ open space and recreation
- ✓ transportation
- ✓ public facilities and services
- ✓ central and historic resources
- ✓ community health

Ms. Spalding explained the 2003 Growth Policy implementation and noted that 235 strategies were developed to address the issue statements. She reviewed successes which included completion of neighborhood and community plans, adoption of the Heritage Trail Plan, subdivision regulations, multiple zoning code amendments, urban renewal plans, tax increment finance districts, along with increased communication among various entities.

Ms. Spalding reviewed the public outreach and input process which included public meetings, media coverage, and website information. She said a survey was posted to the website to obtain ratings of the strategies developed. She advised that 271 people completed the survey.

Ms. Spalding provided an overview of the draft document. She noted that the Planning Board would review each new strategy at a special meeting November 5, and would forward a recommendation to the City Council.

Ms. Spalding advised that the next steps included the Planning Board meeting, a review by the Board of County Commissioners and the Broadview City Council. She noted that adoption was tentatively scheduled in early December.

It was agreed to review the policy at another work session prior to the December adoption. Councilmember Ulledalen asked for an outline of the most drastic or controversial changes prior to the work session.

Mayor Tussing asked how widespread the public input opportunity was. Ms. Spalding responded that it was online for the last several weeks, a copy was provided to anyone who

requested one, a public hearing was held before the Planning Board and notification was sent to a link of about 250 people. She said anyone who wanted to read it, could.

City Administrator Volek advised that the item would be added to a work session agenda so it could be heard before the year's end.

TOPIC #5	<i>Traffic Speeds, Signs & Signals</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

City Engineer Debi Meling said her presentation was intended to try to take the mystery out of what was done when traffic questions were forwarded to the Engineering Department. She said the three most common issues were speed limits, stop signs, and signals. Ms. Meling introduced Staff Engineer Erin Claunch who was part of the traffic engineering group.

Mr. Claunch stated that the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) was the guide used by traffic engineers and was a national standard for signs, speed limits and signals.

Mr. Claunch explained the criteria used to determine speed limits on roads. He said most speed limit needs in Billings were to analyze existing streets and to determine speeds for new roads. He noted that speed limit signs were generally posted after the turn from a major road to another road.

Mr. Claunch advised that three factors were considered in regard to stop signs: road classification, safety and volume. He explained that 1,500 vehicles per day entering an intersection was the minimum number before a stop sign was warranted. He explained that MUTCD guidelines for four-way stop sign intersection were more rigid. He noted that a four-way stop could be used as an interim measure until a signal was constructed. He stated that the other criteria followed were safety and a volume of 500 vehicles per hour that entered the intersection. He noted that MUTCD was specific that stop signs were not to be used as speed control.

Mr. Claunch advised that it was very common for people to request traffic signals. He said engineers collected certain data to determine whether a signal was warranted, and even though an intersection warranted a signal, it did not mean one would be installed.

Mr. Claunch reviewed common misconceptions regarding whether speed limits set travel speeds; that signals reduced accidents and delays; and warrants meant automatic installation of a traffic signal. He explained that speed limits were determined by the type of road; signals did not always reduce accidents or delays and that warrants meant a signal was worth consideration, not necessarily installation.

Ms. Meling stated that traffic calming guidelines would be reviewed. She said local neighborhoods tended to ask for speed humps or other devices to reduce speed. She said Mr. Claunch was working on guidelines that showed different volumes on streets per day and the types of appropriate traffic calming devices for various streets. She advised that signal prioritization would also be completed and the priorities would be set based on specific criteria still being developed. She said there were a number of signals that could be installed but the cost was high. She said they were in the CIP to install one every other year.

Councilmember Pitman asked if the MUTCD had standards for speed limits, such as school areas and parks. Mr. Claunch explained that a state code established the school zone speed at 80% of the normal speed limit for that street. He noted that MUTCD left it to the engineer. Mr. Mumford commented that State Statute was clear about those speed limits.

Councilmember Ruegamer asked for clarification where speed bumps existed. Mr. Mumford explained there were speed platforms or humps, and bumps were only in parking lots. Mr. Mumford advised that speed platforms were on Lake Hills Drive. Mr. Mumford noted that speed platforms would not be installed on arterial roads to make sure emergency vehicles would not have troubles with them.

Councilmember McCall asked how a speed platform could be put in a residential area. She said neighborhood groups could contact her or Mr. Claunch. Ms. Meling added that they were paid for by the neighborhood and were not inexpensive.

Councilmember Veis asked what problems would result if a signal was installed where it was not warranted. Mr. Mumford explained that it would violate State law and could result in liability. City Attorney Brent Brooks suggested a professional study if there was a question of whether the intersection met the warrant criteria.

Councilmember Pitman said a future session would include red light cameras. He asked if there was more data available. Mr. Mumford responded that the data was collected from the police department. Councilmember Veis advised that numerous studies were available on the internet which indicated that the number of accidents was not decreased but the severity of them decreased due to the type of accidents.

TOPIC #6	<i>Strategic Planning</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Councilmember Ulledalen explained he tabulated the Council surveys and listed those items that received the most votes and items that received at least three votes. He pointed out interesting ones on growth and how it was funded, down to current costs and then to how to pay for services if the first two factors did not succeed.

Councilmember Ulledalen stated the goals could be handed off to the Council subcommittee and City Administrator Volek to work on specific goals to carry out the core issues. He noted that Ms. Volek would then work with staff on implementation.

Council agreed it was appropriate to change the Inner Belt Loop item since it was determined that state funding was not needed and it could be completed.

Ms. Volek distributed a letter sent to Maximus which cancelled the cost of services study due to lack of performance. She noted that staff would review materials that were provided to Maximus to try to determine costs of services, but would probably not have it completed by budget time.

Additional Information:

Councilmember Veis distributed an article from Governing magazine written by a Livingston man about TMDLs. Ms. Volek advised that she and Al Towlerton served on a State committee on that. She said the standards would be strict. Councilmember Veis noted that cost would not be a consideration to achieve whatever standard was set.

Councilmember Ronquillo announced that a turkey dinner would be held November 9 at the South Park Senior Center.