

BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2024
Conference Room, First Floor, City Hall

CM: Gulick, Rupsis, Aspenlieder, Kennedy
Staff: Zoeller, Catarino, Pigg, Thompson, McQuillan, Valdez
Public/Guest: Dan Brooks, Kristi Drake (@9:38am)

Call to Order (9:00:00)

Approval of March Meeting Minutes (0:00:00)

Discussion: Minutes reviewed

Motion / Second: Aspenlieder / Kennedy
Vote: All in favor

Public Comment (0:00:40)

No public comment

Topic #1 – Update on City Hall Renovations (0:01:00)

Discussion: Working through conditions for tax credit approval. Federal EEC grant (\$160k) is not going to be able to be used for City Hall. Will be reallocated to parks irrigation projects. Question on total budget cost and what additional amendments may be required.

Topic #2 – Budget Amendment Process (0:09:15)

Discussion: Proposing to use the same budget amendment request form that has been used in recent years so that CMs can educate staff and other CMs about their preferred budget changes. Amendments still need to be introduced by CMs during budget debate; just filling out the form is not sufficient to introduce the budget amendment.

Topic #3 – Budget Presentations (Fire, Parks & Rec) (0:15:00)

Fire: Have been discussing overtime costs which continue to increase every year. Product of contractual agreements. Have been studying for about 18 months and believe the only way to curb it is to increase FTE. Biggest factor is truck staffing. Need 2 more FTE per shift (across 3 shifts) to cover gaps in existing coverage, not to increase average staffing level. Would like to move funds from overtime to fund the new FTEs. Request is to decrease overtime by about \$400k and increase budget by \$200k to fund 6 new FTEs. Looking to increase MRT coverage by 1 FTE to get better 24 hour coverage. Proposed budget does not include 3 additional FTE (2 truck, 1 MRT). Budget does include 1 new FTE for a Fire Protection Engineer (described under last PSML) to do building plan review. Funded ongoing through existing fees instead of paying those fees to external consultant. Can also offer building plan review services to other cities in MT (e.g., Missoula, Bozeman). \$1.5M increase in Personal Services expenses is driven by costs related to new CBA. About \$800k in capital expenses include station alerting equipment, Lifepak defibrillators (9), and station repairs. Looking at AFG grant to cover some or all cost of defibrillators. Discussion of new building maintenance model using Facilities department instead of BFD resources.

Parks: 5-year plan would add 4 new FTEs (equipment operators, supervisor) and assumes fully funded CIP currently described. Adds some field maintenance funds for high school baseball that would be offset through fees to SD2. Budget does not include almost all of that. Rec looking for wage adjustments for seasonals, some equipment to increase operational efficiency, expanding some programming (e.g., Rec2U). Parks maintenance looking at inflationary increase for costs. Finance is shifting parks to funding exclusively from a Parks fund via a funds transfer (like the public safety fund works). Approved FY25 CIP has been cut by \$490k to fit Stagecoach Trail in balanced budget proposal.

Committee Discussion (1:36:30)

Discussion of upcoming work session agendas. Request to get salary information for supervisory staff and above to understand COLA.

Future Agenda Items & Meeting Schedule (1:42:15)

Next meeting on May 15 @ 9am. Will talk more about budget amendment process. Budget presentations from Public Works (including stormwater rates). Discussion of South Park Pool funding strategy.

Adjourned at 10:53 AM (1:53:00)