



# The CityLink

Official News and Information  
from the City of Billings



Summer 2014

## Water and Wastewater Rate Changes

The Public Works Department annually reviews the water and wastewater rates to ensure the utility can continue to provide high-quality service to customers. On May 27, the City Council approved water and wastewater rates for Billings' customers. The increase in rates and fees will provide necessary funding for capital and for the operation and maintenance of the City's water and wastewater treatment and distribution system. The largest component of the increase is for \$58 million of wastewater treatment plant improvements required to meet new state and federal regulations. The average residential water and wastewater bill will increase by approximately \$3.69 per month effective July 1, 2014, and reflected beginning with the August 2014 utility bills.

The residential water rate tier structure will also be adjusted effective July 1, 2014. The changes in the tier structure are shown below and will expand the range of the lower tiers to accommodate prudent lawn watering and implement a fourth tier for excessive use of water.

A Ccf is 100 cubic feet and the equivalent of 748 gallons of water, so those customers falling into tier 4 would have to use more than 75,000 gallons of water in a month! By becoming waste conscious, residents can easily reduce water consumption, thus saving money. The following are some relatively easy ways to save water:

### Indoors

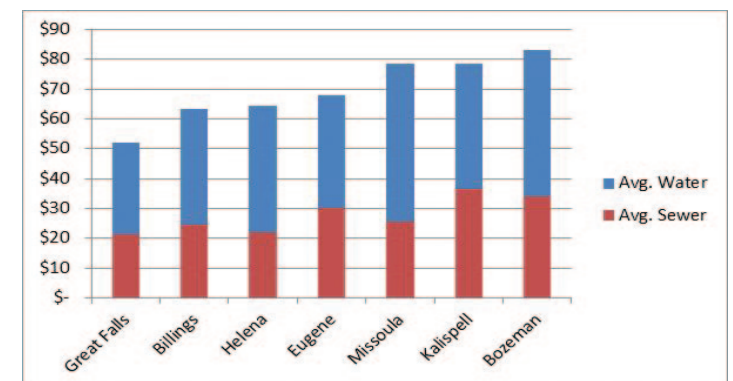
- Run dishwashers and clothes washers with only full loads.
- Don't run water continuously when doing dishes by hand.
- Install water-saving aerators on bathroom faucets and water-saving showerheads that use 2.5 gallons per minute or less.
- Replace older toilets with high-efficiency models that use only 1.28 gallons per flush.
- Turn off the water while shaving or brushing teeth. With a full running tap, shaving takes 20 gallons of water, teeth brushing takes 10 gallons, and washing hands takes 2 gallons!
- Fix leaky faucets and toilets promptly. A dripping faucet can waste over six gallons a day.

### Outdoors

- Water lawns in the evenings or early mornings to reduce evaporation. When watering, water long enough for the moisture to reach the roots.
- Thoroughly check sprinkler systems each year and repair any leaks as soon as possible. Adjust sprinklers so that only the lawn is being watered.
- Plan before you plant. Choose drought-tolerant plants when landscaping.
- Add compost or mulch around trees and plants. Mulch will reduce water needs and also acts as a weed inhibitor.
- Clean driveways and sidewalks with a broom, not a hose.

Conserving water not only saves residents money on the monthly utility bill now, but also helps defer utility infrastructure improvements, saving money in the future and allowing the City of Billings to continue to boast one of the lowest overall utility bills in the region.

Tier	Existing		New	
	Tier Range	Rate/CCF	Tier Range	Rate/CCF
1	0-4 Ccfs	\$1.95	0-14 Ccfs	\$2.21
2	5-16 Ccfs	\$2.10	15-43 Ccfs	\$2.65
3	>16	\$2.75	44-100 Ccfs	\$3.45
4	N/A		>100Ccfs	\$5.18



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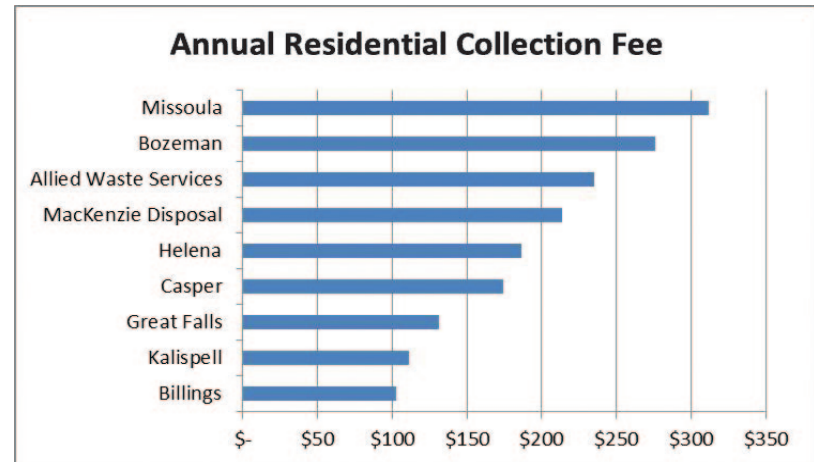
Visit the City's website: <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us>

# Solid Waste Fees

In April, the City Council approved Solid Waste collection and landfill fee increases effective July 1, 2014. These increases will cover higher operations and maintenance costs, as well as upcoming investments at the landfill.

Solid Waste collection fees are billed monthly, and the current monthly rate for residential trash pickup is \$7.77. This charge will increase by \$.78 to \$8.55. The increase is the first of a three-year, phased-in increase, and accordingly, Solid Waste customers can expect to see similar increases for the following two years.

City staff has worked diligently to keep costs down and keep rates as low as possible, while still maintaining the ability to provide great service. Consequently, even with the rate increase, the City of Billings will continue to have the lowest fees in the region, as outlined in the chart to the right:



## 2014 Solid Waste Residential Customer Holiday Pick-Up Schedule

Holiday	Date	Collection	Landfill
Independence Day	Friday, July 4	Delayed one day	Closed
Labor Day	Monday, September 1	Delayed one day	Closed
Columbus Day	Monday, October 13	On Schedule	Open
Veteran's Day	Tuesday, November 11	On Schedule	Open
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 27	Delayed one day	Closed
Christmas	Thursday, December 25	Delayed one day	Closed

## City Construction Projects – Standards, Punchlists and Warranties

City Staff has recently received many questions about construction projects and how staff ensures the taxpayers receive quality work for their money. City staff is very conscientious about the quality of work that is done and has many measures in place to make sure superior projects are completed.

When the City hires a contractor to do a project in the right-of-way, the contractor is required to meet a strict set of standards and criteria. The City has inspectors and testing firms who observe and provide quality assurance testing for all of the work being done. If work is found to be deficient, the work is not accepted by the City and the contractor is required to bring the work up to standards at their expense. Realistically, all projects have some deficiencies; it's just a matter of how extensive they are on each project. Some projects end up with a very short

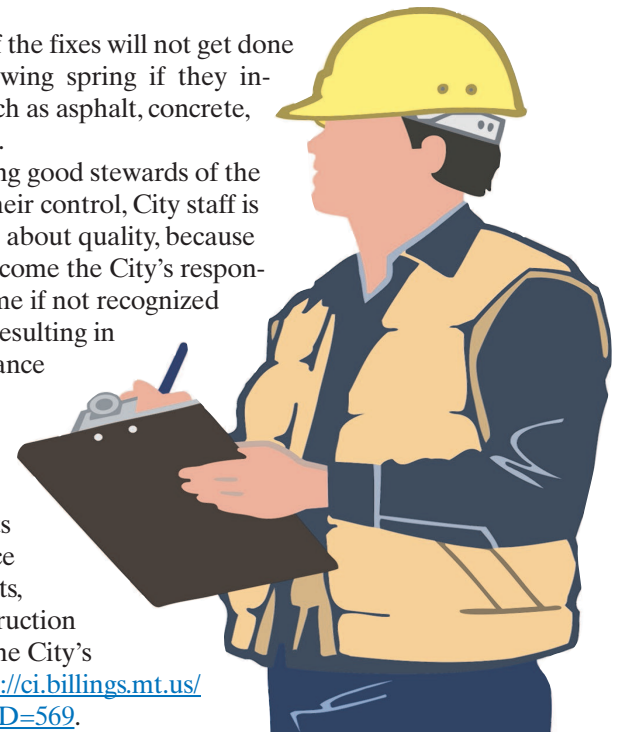
list of items that need to be redone, while other projects have extensive deficient work. In many cases, weather is a factor in why some work items fail; in other cases, it can be material failure or workmanship.

In addition to inspection and testing while the project is on-going, all projects have a final walkthrough at which time any work needing attention is added to a "punchlist," which is generally a to-do list for the contractor to make the project acceptable to the City. After the project and the punchlist are complete, the City also has a one year warranty on work items to ensure that any failures during that time will be repaired. Unfortunately, due to the short construction season in Billings, and the fact that there is a great deal of infrastructure to maintain in that short period, some projects are not completed until very late in the season. This

means some of the fixes will not get done until the following spring if they include items such as asphalt, concrete, or landscaping.

Beyond being good stewards of the funds within their control, City staff is very particular about quality, because any failures become the City's responsibility over time if not recognized and repaired, resulting in more maintenance for City crews.

If you would like to see the general requirements that are in place for City projects, view the construction standards on the City's website at <http://ci.billings.mt.us/index.aspx?NID=569>.



# Summer Fire Safety

As we enter the summer months, backyard chefs everywhere are dusting off their grills, eager to spring into the long-awaited barbeque season. It is important to make sure your grill or barbeque is in good working order and to review safety tips on outdoor cooking.

Always use propane and charcoal grills outdoors and away from combustibles such as eaves, wood siding, shrubs or tree branches. Do not leave your grill unattended, and keep small children away to prevent burn injuries. Check the hoses on propane grills for cracks and leaks. You can spray soapy water on hose connections and regulators to check for leaks. If you see bubbles, turn off the propane and tighten the fitting or replace the part until the leak is stopped. Keep grills and barbeques clean. Excess grease build up will increase the potential of an unwanted fire. If using charcoal barbeques, keep lighter fluid away from the grill and out of reach of children. Always make sure the coals are completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

The use of an outdoor fireplace is a popular summertime activity that if conducted properly can be a safe and enjoyable pastime. Keep outdoor fireplaces away from buildings and off wood decks and porches. Never operate one under an overhang or an eave. Do not leave them unattended, and make sure children are properly supervised. Always extinguish the fire completely when finished. Burn firewood and never burn plastic, trash or chemicals. Be aware of weather conditions, and extinguish the fire immediately if gusty winds begin to blow. Lastly, follow the manufacturer's instructions and use a spark arrestor if one is provided.

The use, sale, and possession of fireworks is illegal inside the Billings city limits. Fines can be up to \$500 for violators caught using them in the city. Fireworks can be enjoyed safely by attending one of the supervised public displays. If you must celebrate Independence Day by using fireworks, do so in a responsible, safe manner. Have a hose or bucket of water handy to douse any fires that may occur. Children should be properly supervised and kept at a safe distance to prevent injuries. Use fireworks that are legal in the State of Montana. Fireworks such as sky rockets, roman candles, and bottle rockets are illegal throughout the state. When using fireworks outside the city limits make sure you have permission from the property owner and that you are away from dry fields and wooded areas. Never alter or use a firework in a manner not intended by the manufacturer.

Summer is a great time to enjoy the outdoors with family and friends. A little precaution and some forethought can make it a safe and pleasurable experience.

# Assistant Fire Chief Named

Lockwood Fire Chief Bill Rash has accepted the Assistant Fire Chief position with the Billings Fire Department and will begin his duties on June 2. Chief Rash has an extensive public service background in both law enforcement and fire service. Chief Rash has stated he is very excited about this opportunity and believes his past interactions with the City of Billings and other fire departments in Yellowstone County will aid in his transition to the Assistant Chief position.

Fire Chief Paul Dextras expressed that having the opportunity to attract such a qualified candidate, who has distinguished himself in fire service and has hands-on experience in the responsibilities associated with the position, is a significant benefit to the Billings Fire Department and the community the department serves.



Larry Mayer\Billings Gazette

## We Want to Hear From You

### What did you like most about the newsletter?

### What would you like to see in upcoming newsletters?

[illegible][illegible]

**Mail or e-mail comments to:**

[citylink@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:citylink@ci.billings.mt.us)

## The City Link

P.O. Box 1178

Billings, MT 59103



# News from the Library

This summer, the Library is getting all scientific! The Summer Reading program is for all ages. We have “Fizz, Boom! Read!” for children, “Spark a Reaction!” for teens and “Literary Elements” for adults. Sign up online and start reading on May 12.

In addition to the Summer Reading Program, there is something for everyone at the Library this summer! Registration is required for some programs and may be completed by calling (406) 657-8258. All information is also available on the Library’s website at [www.billings.lib.mt.us](http://www.billings.lib.mt.us).

## Children’s Programs

Summer Reading Kick-Off:

- Tuesday, June 10 at 7 pm - Night of Magic – a family magic show by the Billings Magic Society. ALL are welcome in the Library Community Room.

## Fizz, Boom! Read!



This year, the Summer Reading Program will feature a science-based program called “Fizz, Boom! Read!” for children. Kids will keep their reading skills sharp, and everyone will have fun. You may even win a prize!

## Thursday Morning Programs:

- June 12, 10:30 am — Moss Mansion Program — Moss Mansion
- June 19, 10:30 am — A Story Time to Remember — Library Community Room
- June 26, 10:30 am — Master Gardeners and Your Senses — Library Community Room
- July 3 – NO PROGRAM FOR HOLIDAY
- July 10, 10:30 am — Pictograph Caves — Geology Library Community Room
- July 17, 10:30 am — Story Time — Library Story Tower
- July 24, 10:30 am — ABC Band — Library Community Room

## Friday Afternoon Crafts & Activities:

Cosmic Café crafts and activities will take place at 4 pm in the Library Craft Corner on June 13, June 20, June 27, July 11, July 18 and July 25.

## Saturday Science Programs in Partnership with Wise Wonders:

Enjoy some hands-on science activities with Wise Wonders Children’s Museum — a project of the Junior League of Billings. All programs begin at 11 am.

- June 21 — Explore Geology — Library Craft Area
- June 28 — Explore Magnets — Library Community Room
- July 12 — Explore Nature — Library Craft Area
- July 19 — Explore Senses — Library Community Room

## Community Library Activities:

Story times will take place on the campus of City College in the Community Library at 2 pm on Wednesdays — June 18, June 25, July 9, July 16 and July 23.

## Teen Programs:

Registration is required. Wednesdays in the Library Community Room, unless otherwise noted:

- June 11 — “The Power of Grains” presented by Stella Fong — 2 - 3 pm
- June 18 — Introduction to Zumba presented by YMCA — 2 - 3 pm
- June 25 — Tech Class presented by Andy Wildenberg, Rocky Mountain College Associate Professor of Computer Science, Library Learning Lab — 2 - 3 pm
- July 9 — Nail Tips & Tricks presented by the Academy of Nail, Skin & Hair — 2 - 3 pm
- July 16 — Steampunk Craft with Tammie Peterson & Liz Thompson, Library 2nd Floor — Large Conference Room — 2 - 4 pm
- July 23 — Teen Book Discussion, Library Teen Study 2 (Green Room) — 2 - 3 pm

## Adult Programs:

(Library Community Room)

- Tuesday, June 17 — Upcycle Craft Program — 6:30 - 8:30 pm
- Tuesday, June 24 — Art of Dressing on a Dime — 4 - 5 pm
- Tuesday, July 8 — Gardening program — 4 - 5 pm
- Tuesday, July 15 — Nutritional notes — 4 - 5 pm
- Tuesday, July 22 — Book Group – The Orchid Thief — 7 - 8:30 pm — registration required
- Wednesday, July 23 — Book Group – Ender’s Game — 7 - 8:30 pm — registration required
- Saturday, July 26 — movies that tie-in with Book Group selections  
Morning movie Adaptation — 10:30 am  
Afternoon movie Ender’s Game — 2 pm

## E-reader Tips and Tricks:

On Thursdays in the Library Computer Classroom — 4-5 pm — June 12, June 26, July 10 and July 24— registration required

## Literary Elements Film Series:

On Thursdays from 7-9 pm, in the Library Community Room:

- June 19 — Creation
- July 17 — Moon
- July 31 — October Sky
- August 7 — Gattaca
- August 21 — The Dish



# FROM OUR READERS

## Comments from an anonymous Billings reader:

I liked the in-depth stories about the City in this newsletter. I also liked that the names, phone numbers and email addresses of the Mayor and City Council members are made available, should we need to get a hold of them. I saved it and put it in my telephone book. I also really like the Service Directory on the back page. Thank you for making it in larger print, not like the phone book where you need a magnifying glass to see a phone number. You seem to pick some good topics that are interesting to us, so keep up the good work. Thank you.

## Questions and comments from an anonymous Billings reader:

When I cut this out to mail my ideas in to you, it ruins the phone numbers on the back page. Please try to print this somewhere else so the information on the opposite page is not disturbed.

Why are the storm drains in Billings always full of weeds, rocks and paper? When it rains heavily, streets flood and no one is accountable for checking up on these things or the cleanliness in Billings.

Why are the roundabouts not painted more often? I see so many out-of-towners using both lanes at once and not staying in their proper lane. I live here and can see the confusion. Paint on the road is needed, especially at the airport and more often than once a year.

## Answers:

Thank you for the suggestion. We will try to be mindful of the placement of the "We Want to Hear from You" in the future. Readers may also submit their comments and questions via email at [Citylink@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:Citylink@ci.billings.mt.us).

The City's Street/Traffic Division does have crews who clean and maintain the storm drain inlets. However, with approximately 8,000 inlets, it is not possible to always have every inlet cleaned out before every storm. The crews can clean an inlet one day, and a wind or rain event can occur the next day and cover it again. If you have a specific area of concern, please contact the Street/Traffic Division at (406) 657-8250 for maintenance.

All striping is repainted on a regular schedule. The roundabouts are on a three-year cycle and they are at the end of that period, so they will be repainted this season. Due to the heavy turning movement, the roundabout striping does have more traffic on it, so staff is investigating other striping options that will have a longer life.

Thanks for reading the CityLink and for sending in your great questions, suggestions and comments!  
Please see page 3 for a clippable suggestion form

## Comments from William Cronoble of Billings:

I like everything about the newsletter! I'd like you to print an annual schedule for any changes in the trash collection days, so I can place it on my bulletin board.

## Answer:

The remainder of the 2014 residential collection schedule is included in this issue and the 2015 schedule will be inserted in the next issue. For the record, though, collection is always one day later on the following holiday weeks:

New Year's Day  
Memorial Day  
4th of July  
Labor Day  
Thanksgiving  
Christmas

## Question from Norma Peterson of Billings:

I would like to know how much money is collected from the new park tax, exactly how it has been used and the price for each use.

## Answer:

That type of detailed information would be far too lengthy to include in our newsletter, but may be obtained by contacting the Parks and Recreation office directly at (406) 657-8371. Updated information regarding the budget, projects and fees is also available on the website at [www.billingsparks.org](http://www.billingsparks.org).



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**Summer 2014**

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## NEWS FROM THE CITY OF BILLINGS PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS DEPARTMENT

### Trees are not just nice to look at, they are good for us too!

**Value of our Urban Forest:** The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for managing 8,400 trees in City parks. These trees have an appraised value at over \$28 million. Area residents receive over \$1 million in environmental benefits from City park trees each year. These benefits come in the form of energy savings from heating and cooling, air quality, CO<sub>2</sub>, storm water retention and aesthetics.

**Turn Trash into Trees:** Since the inception of this program in 1980, 3.9 million pounds of newspapers and 68 tons of aluminum cans have been collected. \$112,060 has been earned to purchase and plant 2,152 trees. In the last 3 years, 172,700 pounds of cardboard has also been recycled, for a total of \$1,708. There are currently four recycling bins placed around Billings for your convenience. They are located at Rose Park, Castlerock Park, Veterans Park, and Lowe's Home Improvement store.

**Mulching Trees:** Mulch has been proven to be great for trees, reducing water evaporation, providing organic material and much more. Whenever trees are pruned or removed in Billings parks, limbs and tree tops are chipped and used as mulch for newly planted trees.

### City Departments Come Together to Bring Community Garden to Fruition

April 30th was a milestone for the first Parks and Recreation Department Community Garden. Staff and volunteers from Municipal Court teamed up with Parks and Recreation employees to transform the community garden at Amend Park from an undeveloped rocky patch to rows of garden plots. The morning started with some good, old-fashioned rock picking, as workers divided into teams removing the rocks from the soil. As the soil was cleared, Parks staff hauled compost to the plots, which was then tilled into the earth by Municipal Court volunteers. While the plots took shape, woodchips were spread between the plots creating interwoven paths throughout the garden. The final part of the work day included the construction of compost bins. This interdepartmental collaboration was a great step forward in making the Amend Park Community Garden a place of learning and growing for citizens of Billings.

Once the Community Garden is fully developed, it will feature 80 plots in various sizes. These plots can be rented by community members, families, or groups from May – October. For those with little gardening experience, there is a mentorship program that helps teach new gardeners how to plant, care for, and harvest produce. Two educational plots are reserved for Parks and Recreation summer camp attendees that will take turns visiting and gaining hands-on experience with plants and soils. Citizens are encouraged to come join in the summer workshops or lend a hand as a volunteer at the garden during the summer of 2014.

Continued on page 7



## Mayor and City Council City of Billings

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# Parks and Rec

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## Notes from Recreation

- Swim lessons begin June 23, with morning and evening opportunities available for each week-long session designed to educate a vast variety of skill sets. The last session begins August 11th. Swim instructors are certified with the American Red Cross.
- Adult lap swimming is available June 23 – July 21. Two hours of lane time is allotted for each week-long session.
- Lifeguard Olympics is July 26. This event is targeted for teams of certified lifeguards competing in various lifeguard duty-specific events.
- Be sure to check out the adventure camp, playhouse camp, sports camps and special interest youth camps that run all summer long!
- Interested in a group or individual white water rafting trip? Parks and Recreation is offering a family/group or individual white water rafting adventure on the Stillwater June 28 or August 9.
- The mountain bike instruction camp for 8-12 year olds will make beginners more confident on the trails. Register today for the camp running June 23-27.
- The Parks and Recreation department has excellent adult programs and adult fitness opportunities as well. Visit [www.Billing-sParks.org](http://www.Billing-sParks.org) for the most up-to-date schedule of events.

## Pool Party!



Pools and the Rose Park Waterslides open June 11. Pool party rentals are available for Rose or South Park Pools. Call (406) 657-8371, for more information.

## Do you own a mobile or manufactured home ...and need home repairs that you can't afford?

If you own your own mobile or manufactured home and have limited income, you may be eligible for a 0% interest, deferred loan that would help you make needed improvements to your home including: electrical, plumbing, roofing, heating, weatherization, and /or addressing handicap accessibility issues. Loans based on the unsecured value of your home are available for eligible repairs on a first-come, first-serve available funding basis.

- The mobile / manufactured home must be built after 1976.
- Applicant must have lived in and owned the home for at least one year, and the applicant's name must be on the title to the home.

- The home must be located within the city limits of Billings.
- Safety hazards and code issues must be addressed before other improvements can be made.
- The unit must be suitable for rehabilitation.
- Liquid assets (savings, stocks, bonds, etc.) must not exceed \$15,000.
- Other eligibility requirements and restrictions may apply

Racial and ethnic minorities, non-English speaking persons, female-headed households, and disabled homeowners are encouraged to apply.

Applications are available from the Community Development Division, in person at 2825 3rd Ave North, 6th Floor, by calling 657-8284 or by visiting [www.ci.billings.mt.us/homerepair](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/homerepair).

### Household gross income must fall below these guidelines:

Household Size	Household Income Limit
1	\$25,500
2	\$29,100
3	\$32,760
4	\$36,360
5	\$39,300
6	\$42,180
7	\$45,120
8+	\$48,000



# Noise Ordinance and Waivers

In May of 2013, the Billings City Council amended multiple provisions of the noise ordinance, which can be found in its entirety at <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/22949>. As a general rule, any lawn or grounds maintenance activities and construction/building activities are exempt between 7 am and 8 pm, and are not subject to any noise level limits. Council also authorized noise waivers where an event would fall outside of the exempt time period, such as construction activities before 7am, or outdoor music later than 8pm. The noise waiver application form may be downloaded at <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/documentcenter/view/23209>.

Any person wishing to obtain a waiver from the noise ordinance must complete an application and

submit it to the City. For construction activities on private property, the waiver request will be reviewed by the Building Department. For special events or construction activities in the public right-of-way, the waiver request will be reviewed by City Engineering. For events in public parks, the waiver request will be reviewed by the Parks Department. Any other event will be reviewed by the Police Department. The reviewing department will approve or deny the waiver request and may grant conditional approval based on certain requirements at their discretion. Applications must be submitted at least five (5) business days before the event or activity and are good only for the time period specified on the application.

For events or activities where a use or permit fee is already required (ROW Permits, Building Permits,

Park Use Permits), no application fee is required.

Otherwise, the applicant shall pay a \$20 application fee to the City. For events or activities where the City is partnering with another entity, the application fee may be waived at the discretion of the reviewing department.

Any noise waiver applicant denied a waiver by the City of Billings may appeal the denial to the City Council within five (5) days of the denial by filing a written notice of appeal for hearing with the City Clerk. The City Clerk will place the item on the City Council agenda for hearing at the next available City Council meeting. The City Council may reverse, affirm, or modify in any regard the denial of the waiver.

Any citizen noise complaint should be reported to the Billings Police Department at (406) 657-8200.

## My, oh my, how the times have changed.

### A Letter from the Editor

I have had the distinct pleasure of serving the City as the editor of this newsletter for over a decade. So, it was with great interest (and sometimes amusement) that I read this newsletter from 1944, found by an HR Associate. Especially amusing to me was the "Want-Ads" and the "Fisherman's Paradise." I truly hope that leaving the names of employees and servicemen doesn't cause any offense, and that you enjoy this piece of City history as much as I have.

Recognize any of the names or news from the articles? Feel free to email me at: [citylink@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:citylink@ci.billings.mt.us).

*Link*

