

Billings City Administrator Weekly Report

December 2, 2021

1. **Communication between the City Council and Staff** – the attached memo has been added to the City Council Handbook this year. There is a new approach (or a few will recognize it as back to the old approach) to communicate between Council and staff. Please review the memo and share any feedback with me.
2. **Road Dog Toy Run** – This year’s Road Dog Toy Run is schedule from 12:00 – 1:00 PM on December 5, 2021. All required permitting and signatures are in place and the Police Department will assist with 10 officers for traffic control. We are anticipating hundreds of motorcycles and support vehicles and are putting out a media announcement alerting people of the route and of possible delays. Despite some contentious social media exchanges between parties, we do not anticipate problems.
3. **Economic Development Leadership – Joint Planning Session Year-End Follow-up Session – “Making Progress”** – Meeting will be held December 15, 2021, from 3:00 – 5:00 PM with a Holiday Reception to Follow, location MSUB Glacier Room. RSVPs are greatly appreciated.
Draft Agenda:
 1. Welcome and Intros (new Council members and thank outgoing Council members)—5 minutes
 2. Overview of May 2021 “Thriving-Community Essentials” and Successes—10 minutes
 3. What’s Next Panel w/ Q&A (Chris, John, Steve, Katy, County)—40 minutes
Essentials Areas
 - a. Public Safety
 - b. Quality of Place
 - c. Infrastructure
 - d. Workforce
 4. Tabletop Dialogue - #1 Imperatives/Report Out—40 minutes
 5. Set Next Meeting Timeline and Objectives—5 minutes
 6. Closing Comments—5 minutes (reception to follow)
4. **Billings PCE Superfund Site Update – NOVEMBER 2021** – The Billings PCE site was added to the EPA National Priorities List in 2021. The site encompasses approximately 855 acres (map attached) contaminated by historical chlorinated solvent spills from area laundry businesses, mainly tetrachloroethylene (PCE). Attached is a pamphlet drafted and mailed by EPA providing information to impacted properties within the Billings PCE Superfund site. The pamphlet also includes information about an online community meeting notice scheduled for December 15th at 6:00pm. (Pamphlet and map attached.)
5. **Leadership Billings** – Mayor Cole and I presented to this year’s Leadership Billings class Wednesday morning. We hit the high points of how our Council/Manager form of government works, discussed critical projects and strategies to make Billings a great city and left plenty of time for Q&A. We will be presenting to the other Leadership Billings class this Wednesday.

6. **Leroy Axtell** – If you know or see Leroy in town, thank him for his 48 ½ years of service! Leroy always has a great attitude and is a first-class human being who started his career with the city in July 1973. Leroy spent his last few decades working in the Solid Waste Division.
7. **Questions and Answers Section** – This new section of the Weekly is to compile the questions our staff receives from council members. City staff is including responses to emails received this week, so other city council members have the information.

Question 1 (CM Elect Rupsis):

I received a call this weekend from Leroy Knotte, a homeowner in the Rosebud Townhouses on the 3100 block of Henesta Dr. (map attached). Their neighborhood has been significantly impacted by the changes to 32nd Street West.

People going southbound on 32nd used to turn onto Henesta to access Pie Guys, the laundromat, Western Empire Emporium, etc. Now that we have put the median in, people have to turn left onto Rosebud and are short-cutting through the townhome driveways instead of driving down to 31st. The HOA has put up signs saying, “not a thru road”, but this has no impact.

Can you please help me understand what options are available to reduce the impact of the changes to 32nd? Speed bumps? Blocking one side of the driveways to prevent driving through? Anything else? Also, what is the city’s responsibility, if any, to help alleviate problems caused by changes like this that impact existing neighborhoods?

Question 1 Responses:

Thank you for forwarding the information. We have had one call from a concerned property owner (not Mr. Knotte), and we scheduled our traffic technician to observe the situation over the next week or so at multiple times during the day. Depending on what we observe, we will look into options that may be needed.

In the past, there have been a few situations where we have installed some type of traffic calming or signing to mitigate for an issue that was a result of a project but is rare – a few times in the last 15 years I would say. Oftentimes we see a temporary impact that diminishes over time as people get used to the change.

We will do our review and communicate with the concerned citizen who contacted us when we have the results. If you would like for us to include Mr. Knotte in our communication, we can certainly do that. If you prefer to continue to communication with Mr. Knotte, we can send the information to you to forward.



Communication between the City Council and staff

November 22, 2021

From: Chris Kukulski, City Administrator

All communications need to flow through the City Administrators' office. City Administrator, Chris Kukulski, Assistant City Administrator Kevin Iffland, Executive Assistant Wynnette Maddox, City Clerk, Denise Bohlman and Deputy Clerk Toni Keener are your primary points of contact. All questions regarding departments Kevin directly oversees, need to be sent TO: maddoxw@billingsmt.gov and ifflandk@billingsmt.gov and CC: Kukulskic@billingsmt.gov. All questions regarding departments I directly oversee need to be sent TO: Wynnette and me and CC: Kevin. Communications specifically pertaining to council meetings and work session agenda packets, meeting time, location and technology should be sent TO: bohlmand@billingsmt.gov and Keehnert@billingsmt.gov CC: Kevin and myself. All questions and answers will be shared with the entire council so that everyone can benefit from the information.

All department directors report directly to either the City Administrator, Chris Kukulski or Assistant City Administrator, Kevin Iffland as follows:

City Administrator – Chris Kukulski

- Assistant City Administrator – Kevin Iffland
- Finance Director – Andy Zoeller
- City Attorney – Gina Dahl
- Human Resources Director – Karla Stanton
- Public Works Director – Debi Meling
- Planning and Community Services Director – Wyeth Friday
- City Clerk – Denise Bohlman
- Public Information Officer – TBD
- Administrative Assistant – Wynnette Maddox

Assistant City Administrator – Kevin Iffland

- Fire Chief – Pepper Valdez
- Police Chief – Rich St. John
- Aviation and Transit Director – Kevin Ploehn
- Information Technology Director – David Watterson

- Parks, Recreation and Public Lands Director – Mike Whitaker
- City-County Library Director – Gavin Woltjer
- Chief Building and Facilities Manager – Jessica Iverson
- Parking Division Manager – Tracy Scott
- Fleet Services Division Manager – Mark Balter

All questions and answers that do not directly pertain to council meetings or work sessions will be shared through the City Administrator’s Weekly Report. This will allow everyone to benefit from the information and to avoid asking and answering duplicate questions.

Unless it is urgent – I ask that you not email department directors directly. When doing so, include Kevin and I in the TO: line.

Please do not email staff below department directors. The administration and director will determine which staff is best suited to respond to inquiries. Employees typically drop what they are doing to be responsive to City Council requests. The practice of sending inquiries to anyone other than department directors cause difficulties and inefficiencies throughout the organization and complicates supervisors’ responsibilities to manage staff workloads and duties.

Questions critical to agenda item decisions – We will work diligently to provide responses as soon as possible. Questions received over the weekend will be responded to on Monday or during the council meeting.

Urgent questions – We will do our best to answer urgent questions as soon as possible.

Questions from constituents - Please be clear regarding who will be communicating with the citizen. We can provide the answer to you or directly to the citizen. Please avoid looping citizens, council, and staff into email strings. Often staff members will need to coordinate with one another and this is made more difficult when citizens are included in the email thread.

Operational questions – Before asking operational questions, please consider how the question ties to your policy responsibilities. We run a lean organization. The administration and leadership team are extremely busy carrying out their responsibilities to provide city services effectively and efficiently to our citizens and the tens of thousands of visitors the city hosts daily.

Everyone on staff wants to help you be successful. To minimize these general questions from interfering with other priorities, we will be answering them with my Weekly Report. This will allow everyone to benefit from the information and help remove the sense of urgency that is not necessarily tied to the questions.

Weekly Report – With few exceptions, the staff and I develop a weekly written report. The Mayor and Council are the primary audience. It is brief and meant to cover highlights for the week and critical meetings that are coming in the next week. The Weekly Reports are posted on our website and are available to the public to read.

Billings PCE Superfund Site Update – NOVEMBER 2021

The Site

The Billings PCE Superfund Site (the Site) consists of shallow groundwater contamination, extending from Central Avenue approximately three miles, east-northeast, through several mixed-use neighborhoods and into downtown Billings. In addition to the contaminated groundwater, there are contaminated soils at the source areas and indoor air concerns. In September 2021, the EPA added the Site to the Superfund National Priorities List, making the Site eligible for additional study and cleanup resources under Superfund.

What is Superfund?

Superfund is EPA's program for cleaning up some of America's most contaminated land and responding to environmental emergencies, oil spills and natural disasters.

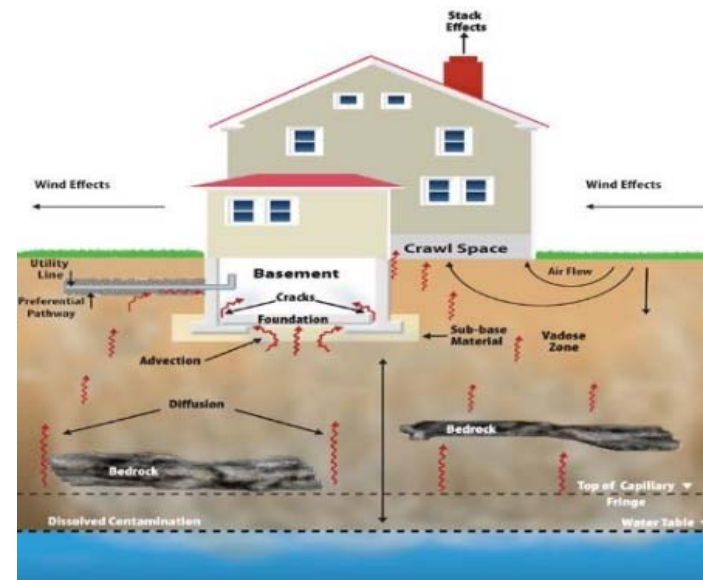
Contamination

The primary contaminants of concern at the Site are chlorinated, volatile organic chemicals including tetrachloroethene (PCE), trichloroethene (TCE), dichloroethene, and vinyl chloride as well as petroleum hydrocarbons. These contaminants can disperse as vapor from shallow groundwater and contaminated soils and enter the indoor air of buildings through a process commonly called vapor intrusion.

These vapors can be inhaled and may pose short- and long-term risks to public health. Contaminated groundwater may also pose a health concern if it is used for drinking water or residential uses. Contaminated soils may also pose a health concern to on-Site workers who contact the soils, which can continue to be a source of contamination for the groundwater plume if not addressed.

What is Vapor Intrusion?

Vapor intrusion is a way that volatile chemicals in soil or groundwater may enter buildings and contaminate air inside the structure (indoor air). Chlorinated volatile organic chemicals are liquids that can evaporate easily and become a vapor capable of moving through the air and soil. When a chemical is released, either from a spill above ground or leak underground, it has the potential to enter the groundwater and travel distances through the soil and water underground. If that chemical is volatile, it can become a vapor, and seep through openings, like cracks in basements, foundations, or sewer lines, into nearby buildings.



Why is Vapor Intrusion Important to Me?

When vapors intrude indoors, you can be exposed by breathing indoor air. This exposure may cause health effects, depending on the type and amount of chemical, as well as the frequency and duration of exposure.

The health effects associated with exposure to chemicals such as TCE and PCE are primarily related to exposure and dose. A person exposed to high doses of these chemical vapors for a short amount of time might experience dizziness, headaches, nausea, and poor coordination.

A person exposed to low doses of these chemicals over a longer period of time might experience adverse health effects including neurological symptoms, immune effects, liver or kidney effects, or certain cancers.

While groundwater is not used for potable water, a person may be exposed to these chemicals if they drink water from a contaminated irrigation well or use contaminated irrigation water for recreational purposes such as filling a pool, or kids playing in sprinklers.

If you would like to have your house or business tested for vapor intrusion contamination, email or call: Roger Hoogerheide, EPA Remedial Project Manager, (406) 422-9725, hoogerheide.roger@epa.gov

Locate Your Property

Wondering whether your property is located within the Billings PCE study area? Use this web link to find out.

<https://arcg.is/0KyfvL1>

What has been done at the Site?

Between 1999 and 2001, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) conducted a site investigation and determined that indoor air contaminant concentrations within structures overlying the plume could potentially cause a health risk for building occupants following long-term exposures.

In 2007, EPA conducted a removal action that included removing and disposing of contaminated soil around 7th Street and Central Avenue, injecting chemicals into the subsurface to help reduce groundwater contamination and installing a barrier wall around the most contaminated groundwater. EPA also installed vapor mitigation systems at seven structures overlying the groundwater plume. Since that time, EPA and MDEQ have been documenting plume characteristics and evaluating health risks due to vapor intrusion into structures overlying the plume.

In 2019, MDEQ issued a remedial investigation report that characterizes the current nature and extent of soil and groundwater contamination, determines whether other sources are contributing to contamination, and shows whether vapor intrusion is continuing to occur. Results indicate multiple sources of contaminated soil, and that subsurface soils, and possibly surface soils, at these source locations are continuing to contaminate groundwater. Further, while groundwater contamination has decreased since EPA's removal work, vapor intrusion is still occurring, and the shallow groundwater plume remains contaminated above Montana's human health standards for drinking water.

EPA and MDEQ completed groundwater sampling in November 2021.

Upcoming Activities

January/February 2022 - collect up to 150 soil gas samples to delineate the extent of soil gas in the subsurface. Will also collect up to 60 samples in the sewer pipes to determine if these pipes act as a pathway for vapors to enter homes and businesses.

February/March 2022 – Evaluate indoor air at up to 50 homes and businesses.

Community Meeting

EPA and MDEQ will host an online informational meeting on the Billings PCE Superfund site. The meeting can be accessed with a computer or by phone.

Time: Dec 15, 2021, at 6:00 PM.

To the meeting with Zoom visit:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 883 8273 1591
Password: 095995

To join meeting by telephone dial:
(406) 444-9999

Meeting ID: 883 8273 1591
Password: 095995

Contact Information

U.S. EPA Region 8

Christin Russell, Remedial Project Manager
303-854-7541; russell.christin@epa.gov

Roger Hoogerheide, Remedial Project Manager
406-422-9725; hoogerheide.roger@epa.gov

Montana DEQ Waste Management & Remediation Division Office

Jason Rappe, Remedial Project Officer
406-444-6442; 800-246-8198; jason.rappe@mt.gov

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)

Dawn Nelson, State Toxicologist
406-444-6910; dawn.nelson@mt.gov

Web Links

EPA website to learn more about the Superfund program
www.epa.gov/superfund

EPA website for more information about Billings PCE site:
www.epa.gov/superfund/billings-pce

Find Information About:

- ✓ *The Billings PCE Superfund Site*
- ✓ *Upcoming soil vapor, sewer pipe and indoor air investigations*
- ✓ *Project contacts for EPA, DEQ, and DPHHS*
- ✓ *Web links on Superfund, vapor intrusion and chemicals of concern*
- ✓ *The December 2021 public meeting*



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