

Billings City Administrator Weekly Report

April 8, 2022

- 1. Criminal Justice Oversight Committee** – The Criminal Justice Oversight Committee (CIOC) invited Chief St. John and Assistant City Attorney Karen Tracy to present on the topic of sober living homes in Billings and the issues and impacts on our community.

You may view the CLOC meeting and the presentations using the following links.

[Montana Legislature \(sliq.net\)](#)

The link to the presentation materials is:

[Billings Sober Living Facilities \(mt.gov\)](#)

Following the presentation, Tennessee state legislator Michael G. Curcio presented on the approach taken by his state on regulating sober living houses.

You may view Representative Curcio's presentation using the following links.

The link to Representative Curcio's presentation is:

[Criminal Justice Oversight Council - Montana State Legislature \(mt.gov\)](#)

The links to Representative Curcio's presentation materials are:

[cjoc-hb215-mar-23-2022.pdf \(mt.gov\)](#)

[cjoc-hb215-summary-mar-23-2022.pdf \(mt.gov\)](#)

- 2. BUILD Grant March 2022 Update** – The City of Billings was awarded a BUILD grant in September of 2020. It's been eighteen months since the City was notified of a successful BUILD grant. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grants can be quite a process and although the City doesn't have anything on the ground yet, staff has been very busy behind the scenes. There are numerous steps and reviews that can take time, but staff is happy to announce that things are starting to move a bit more quickly. Below outlines some of the activities happening behind the scenes.

- The City completed the required NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) with a submittal and review by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Environmental Service Bureau. Using the NEPA process, the City evaluated over sixteen environmental and social/economic elements and how the proposed project could or would affect those elements. If any part of the project potentially could affect any one of the elements, the City would be required to identify mitigating measures. With the project occurring on vacant, undeveloped property, there were no mitigating construction projects for the City to undertake. The City was able to submit a Categorical Exclusion for this project, a much more streamlined process than that of a full environmental review. This review occurred throughout most of summer/fall of 2021. On October 27, 2021, the City received concurrence by MDT.

- Once the NEPA documentation was completed, this allowed the City to actively initiate right-of-way activities. It is a FHWA requirement to have final NEPA concurrence prior to being able to begin right-of-way activities. This included ensuring all appraisal and appraisal review was completed per FHWA requirements. Staff is actively engaged with the right-of-way process and landowners and is making progress. Staff anticipates completing right-of-way activities by late May.
- The City received approval on the White Paper on March 23, 2022. The White Paper was required by FHWA to update the project scope of work, schedule, budget.
- In addition to the above activities, the final construction engineering is complete, including the various park interpretive and directional signage along the Skyline Trail. With the final design information, the City and consultant were able to develop current project cost estimates.

All the procedures listed above are required prior to the City submitting a grant agreement for review by FHWA. Staff is preparing the draft grant agreement and is awaiting FHWA's request for agreement submittal. Staff anticipates submitting the draft grant agreement to FHWA around April 1, 2022. When the draft grant agreement and other supporting documents, including a construction budget and project cost estimates, FHWA has 60-90 days for review and edits. This will occur with the City until a grant agreement is agreed upon. The goal is to have the grant agreement executed in June 2022.

Once the draft grant agreement is submitted, staff will be working with City Legal and Finance for the review. Around this same time, staff will bring the draft agreement to the City Council for review and ask the Council to authorize the Mayor to sign the grant agreement when finalized. Staff anticipates bringing a draft agreement to Council the last meeting in May.

Staff is excited to be at this point, it has been an extensive process, but we are starting to rev things up with anticipation to bid this fall.

- 3. Budget Presentations** – We finished budget presentation meetings. Throughout April we will be balancing budgets and preparing presentations and documents for public review.
- 4. Core Values and Vision Discussions** – This week, airport, police, fire, and IT leadership teams provided feedback on the city's core values and vision statement. Meetings will continue over the next few months with leadership teams throughout the organization.
- 5. Water Treatment Plant Open House May 4th** – In celebration of Drinking Water Week, the Water Treatment Plant will be hosting an open house on Wednesday, May 4th from 4-7 PM. We would like to extend a special invitation to the Mayor and Council to attend. The event is open to the public so please share the invitation with interested citizens. Please save the date! Event information is attached.
- 6. Jeff Speck & Chuck Marohn** – Wednesday evening, a capacity crowd heard Jeff Speck at the Babcock Theater. Billings' residents, architects, and downtown leaders throughout Montana were in attendance. Jeff's assessment was simple and clear. The core of Billings has "good bones" for a walkable vibrant city, our biggest challenge is safety (this context is transportation safety). The solutions are also simple to

understand, “all” the one-way streets need to be converted back to two ways and we need more people living downtown. Consider this – a few other cities of comparable size have added thousands of housing units, within their core, without adding miles of streets, water, and sewer infrastructure, since they already exist. This strategy positively impacts our housing shortage, improves safety, primarily uses existing infrastructure, and improves economic opportunities for the private sector.

Yesterday a group of approximately 20 city representatives spent three (3) hours in conversation with Jeff and Chuck. We covered cost of services, annexation, walkability and much more. From time to time we all have opportunities to listen to experts like Jeff and Chuck speak but rarely do you get a chance to spend several hours debating and discussions issues and perspectives specifically pertaining to Billings. It was made even more productive by doing it with co-workers.

Have a good weekend!

You are Invited to the Water Week Open House



Back by popular demand, the **Annual Water Week Open House** returns to the Must Attend Calendar this year!

Save the Date 4 pm to 7 pm, Wednesday May 4th, 2022

Where Water Treatment Plant at 2251 Belknap Ave. Billings, MT

What A fun filled experience the whole family won't want to miss!

LEARN about how the water we drink comes to the tap ALLLLL THE WAY from the Yellowstone River

ASK questions and tap into the knowledge of our exceptional staff

WIN Awesome Prizes

No need to RSVP! We look forward to having you when you show up. Water Week celebration is to honor the water professionals who work hard every single day to ensure your water is there when you need it. Learn more about Water Week at awwa.org/Events-Education/Drinking-Water-Week