

NORTH PARK TASK FORCE MEETING - APRIL

North Park Community Center
April 3, 2024

Attendees: Justin King, Pat Wright, Brian Epley, Erica Doornek, Thom Greenwood, Gary and Colleen Wichman, Kirk Menge, Melissa Zimmermann, Kiely Lammers, Colin Pederson, Janna and Randy Hafer.

\$4215.16 in treasury

1. Suggested purchase of small HD projector for meeting room. Brian volunteered to explore/price out. Thom moved, Brian second. Motion approved.
2. School Safety Levy presentation - Keily Lammers (**Handout appears below**)
 - a. New superintendent is very interested in collaborating with local groups and nonprofits. Safety audit in November yielded 58 recommendations (Available at billingsschools.org.)
 - b. \$5M Safety Levy proposed - most important/effective ideas to implement are prevention, intervention & communication, and resources. Buildings, personnel, nurses, counselors, psychologists, SROs, gang prevention, dropout prevention, smoking/vape prevention
 - c. Safety is not just physical security, but also prevention. Meet kids' needs before problems arise and train all staff to have specialty skills. Want to hire 2 more safety specialists to assist safety coordinator. Build relationships and connect with kids, help kids be successful before they join a gang or drop out.
 - d. Improve hard security measures: better cameras, intercoms, etc.
 - e. Levy is split into 2 parts: elementary district \$2.5M, high school district \$2.5M. This levy would cost roughly \$5/month for every \$300,000 in home value and is the only way for schools to get more funding. Ballots will be mailed out April 17, due May 7.
3. North Park renovations progress - BIRD (Billings Industrial Revitalization District) mission to promote commercial and residential progress in TIF district. They are spearheading many of the park improvement projects.
 - a. Playground, adult exercise area, shade structure in progress
 - b. Bathrooms - plumbing going in
 - c. Dog park - fundraising should be known by April 10, groundbreaking should be soon after. Still need last 5%/\$20k to meet goal.
 - d. Disc golf course - more oriented to beginners. Timeline for pads and baskets should be summer. Sawyer of Top Tier Disc Golf has donated 6 baskets.
 - e. Future: better lighting for center of park, resurface ball courts (tennis/pickleball and bball), upgrade baseball field lighting and fencing.

- f. Native American art installation on traffic calming concrete bulbouts at 7th Ave./N. 22nd is waiting on welder to affix metal sculptures and will have curb cuts for a street crossing.

4. More news

- a. Park grand re-opening - June 22
- b. Community Center paint party - April 13 - mural on side of building honoring history of the area.
- c. Veterans' Memorial at Dehler Park to commemorate 39 MT soldiers killed in armed conflicts this century. Ken Calahan and Rick Baker veterans spearheading. City and parks have tentatively ok'd placement. Memorial tied to stadium under MOU.
- d. Street concerns - Radius of traffic circles on N. 22nd St. makes it hard to navigate in narrow space. Turning moves cars into crosswalks. Stop signs not being heeded at roundabouts. Traffic calming poles on corner at 8th Ave. and 19th also narrow. Is it possible to do another radar/speed study to see if this pilot project has helped reduce speeds? Thom will make contact with city traffic engineering dept. to address concerns. Questions or suggestions can be [submitted to the city here](#) or by calling 406-657-8231.

5. Next task force meeting is **May 1**



VOTE ON
OR BEFORE
MAY 7

- Violence is devastating and expensive, and this levy reduces out-of-pocket costs borne by taxpayers by investing in both prevention and violence response.
- This levy improves our local economy by creating a safer community and school climate which will improve home values.
- Public schools are naturally a community's greatest exposure to the most vulnerable people.



This levy would
cost roughly
\$5 per month for
every \$300,000 in
home value.

• The time is now.

Billings is grappling with a surge in both violent crime and mental health challenges. We have a responsibility to make our schools safer to protect our kids and community.

- The entire Billings community, even those without children in school, is impacted by Billings Public Schools' ability to provide a safe learning environment.
- The proposed levy benefits all students by providing safe environments where children are free to learn.
- This levy provides a means for our school district to carry out its immediate and long-term action plans focused on the results of a professional, comprehensive safety audit conducted in November 2023 of all 37 buildings and administrative sites.
- Action has already been taken on some of the safety audit findings. Others require more resources.
- The district has heard the collective voice of the community. There is a compelling need to improve safety measures within our schools.



The levy will raise approx.
\$5 million. It will keep our kids
safer through investments in:

PREVENTION

Gang prevention specialists (3)

Professional development
(CPR, First Aid, de-escalation, incident command training, critical incidence response training, AED)

Mental health specialists (3)

Nurses (3) & Counselors (5)

Drop-out prevention specialists (3)

Character development programs

Drug & vaping prevention programs

INTERVENTION & COMMUNICATION

Add'l school resource officers (4)

Parent Square communication platform

Safety coordinator per school (stipend)

Safety specialists (2)

RESOURCES

Camera systems, monitors, & infrastructure (servers, clouds)

Intercom systems

Key card accessibility systems

AED systems (elementary schools)

Lockdown emergency button

Visitor management system

Install public announcement systems (internal & external)

Visual notification system

Radio system & phone amplifier

Protective window film (install & repair)

 **SafeSchoolsBillings.org**

Paid for by Yes for Safe Schools Billings

Treasurer: Steven Lybbert

Box 20121, Billings, MT 59104

SAFETY AUDIT GENERAL FINDINGS

Conducted November 2023

- Additional funding is needed to address the "significant" safety needs of the district.
- A majority of our schools lack camera systems. The few that do have cameras often deal with old equipment, servers that are incapable of supporting the footage, insufficient monitors, or poor video quality and freezing issues.
- Gang issues are on the rise in the area and impact our school communities.
- Our schools lack a multidisciplinary threat management team. Additional staff are needed to provide the comprehensive skill set required for effective teams.
- Many schools lack external intercom systems.
- Internal intercom systems do not function properly or function at too low a volume in certain places of some school buildings, making it very difficult or impossible to hear emergency alerts.
- Our schools have a high mental health counseling staff to student ratio. The recommended ratio is 1/500. Our district has two dedicated school psychologists, causing the vast majority of the counseling staff to be focused on other school related matters.
- Many schools lack visual indicators to alert people of an emergency other than a fire.
- Schools lack general lockdown buttons.
- Most schools have a protective window film near front offices, however, the sealing is insufficient, causing the film to be much less effective. Additionally, it was recommended that other high risk areas receive protective window film installation.
- We have a nurse to student ratio of 1 nurse for every 950 students, however, the recommendation is 1 nurse for every 750 students.
- Our visitor management system is outdated, relying on paper logs.
- Our School Resource Officers (SROs) cover so many schools that they are unable to regularly visit them all.
- Nearly all elementary schools lack life-saving Automated Electronic Defibrillators (AED) devices for cardiac emergencies.

