

From: [Darcy Dea](#)
To: [Cory Reeves](#); [Joe McKenney](#); [Rick Tryon](#); [Shannon Wilson](#); [Susan Wolff](#)
Cc: [Greg Doyon](#); [Charles Anderson](#); [Krista Artis](#); [Lisa C. Kunz](#)
Subject: FW: Jan 2 work session comment
Date: Tuesday, January 2, 2024 8:55:58 AM

Good Morning - see comments from Terry Bjork.

Thank you,

Darcy Dea
Deputy City Clerk
P. O. Box 5021
Great Falls, MT 59403
406-455-8479

-----Original Message-----

From: Darcy Dea
Sent: Tuesday, January 2, 2024 8:54 AM
To: 'Terry Bjork' <tlbjork@hotmail.com>
Subject: RE: Jan 2 work session comment

Good Morning Terry - thank you for your comments. Your comments will be shared with members of the Commission for consideration.

Thank you,

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-----Original Message-----

From: Terry Bjork <tlbjork@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 2, 2024 8:45 AM
To: commission <commission@greatfallsmt.net>
Subject: Jan 2 work session comment

Commissioners

As this new commission gets back to work for 2024, I expect/hope that you will revisit the subject of public safety sooner rather than later.

When you do that please consider the following:

1) Before crafting a new safety levy, possibly talk to and ask the taxpayers what they want and can afford, instead of the commission simply dictating to them "This is what the department heads want, and you need to vote for it". Maybe offer some choices or options. For instance many people strongly supported the extra fire department resources and were sold on their necessity due to insurance ratings. That might have passed as a standalone.

2) When you do decide on a new levy, explore options for making it a "truth-in-taxation" ask. The failed mill levy

was going to cost taxpayers 30% more than we were being told was needed for the requested resources even before we voted, due to property value inflation.

Property values and thus taxable values in Great Falls are likely to continue to balloon in coming years, if nothing else because of the Air Force activity. But taxpayer incomes are more likely to roughly track inflation. An unrestricted mill levy like what was defeated represents an ever increasing percentage of a taxpayer's income if property values go up 10% a year but incomes only 3%. There should be some way to structure a levy to represent the original asking price plus some factor to track general inflation instead of the faster growing property values. Then if additional public safety resources are needed in the future then taxpayers should be asked/consulted again. A levy structured as a mill levy that tracks property values instead of the cost of what the levy is supposedly for is a sneaky roundabout way to fatten the public purse (and taxpayer burden) beyond inflation without actually asking for those future increases. No taxpayer believes the mantra "We don't necessarily have to take all the mills". Especially considering that the department heads all originally wanted substantially more than the \$10.7 million in the form of the "best" option and a couple continuing commissioners felt the best/highest ask was "the absolute minimum".

3) Revisit the Crime Task Force recommendations. There were something like 61 total recommendations, while the failed public safety levy addressed only 7 or 8 of them. City staff reassigned many of the recommendations to city staff, and all the rest that would have required commission action (save 1) were shelved by the previous commission.

There's been no report of what became of the "city staff" recommendations despite two requests from a commissioner, and from the viewpoint of the public there's been no obvious implementation of any of them. If all those 61 CTF recommendations had any intrinsic value to begin with aside from providing "whereas" pretext for predetermined public safety levy motions, maybe take a 2nd look at all those recommendations to see if there's anything in them that would improve public safety or citizen awareness of public safety issues, without costing taxpayers an arm and a leg.

Thank you for your consideration and Happy New Year.

Terry Bjork

Great Falls