

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION

March 18, 2025

City Commission Work Session
Civic Center, Gibson Room 212

Mayor Reeves presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:33 PM

CITY COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Cory Reeves, Susan Wolff, Joe McKenney, Rick Tryon and Shannon Wilson.

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Greg Doyon; City Attorney David Dennis; Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, Grant Administrator Tom Hazen and ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman; Fire Chief Jeremy Jones; Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry and Historic Preservation Officer Samantha Long; Police Chief Jeff Newton; and, Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ben Forsyth, City resident, commented that there is documented evidence of the harms of marijuana and increased violent felonies due to drug use. A Hospitalization Discharge Data System that keeps track of all hospitalizations in the State of Montana indicated that hospitalizations due to marijuana harms has increased from 4,600 to 5,200 people. Mr. Forsyth provided and discussed Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 16-12-101 and 76-2-304 handouts. He opined that the Commission is not protecting the health, safety and welfare of the people by not controlling marijuana within the laws of the MCA.

Jake Clark, Great Falls Development Alliance Vice President, provided and discussed a March 16, 2025 letter that was signed by NeighborWorks Great Falls Executive Director Sherrie Arey; Great Falls Association of Realtors CEO Zac Griffin; and, Home Builders Association of Great Falls Executive Officer Katie Hanning.

Sherrie Arey, NeighborWorks Great Falls Executive Director, explained that Special Improvement Districts (SID) could take the burden of extension costs off the City and attract the kind of developers needed to create affordable housing.

1. STATE AND LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIP ACT (SLIPA) UPDATE

Finance Grant Administrator Tom Hazen and ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman reviewed and discussed the following PowerPoint slides:

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STATE AND LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIP ACT (SLIPA) UPDATE



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SLIPA Basic Information



- The City of Great Falls Received \$755,461.00 in SLIPA from the State of Montana.
- Each project requires a minimum 25% local contribution to the final total project cost.
- City Staff collected proposals from Internal Departments and selected five projects for funding.
- Commission Approval – March 5th, 2024.
- State of Montana Notice of Award Issued on April 17th, 2024.

SLIPA Projects In Process



- Five SLIPA projects submitted to State.
 - Great Falls Police Department Front Lobby Improvements
 - Original Budget - \$63,750.00 SLIPA - \$21,250.00 Local Contribution - \$85,000.00 Total.
 - Total Awarded Contract to Date - \$67,042.50.
 - Great Falls Animal Shelter Improvements
 - Original Budget \$85,987.50 SLIPA - \$28,662.50 Local Contribution - \$114,650.00 Total.
 - Total Awarded Contract to Date - \$152,808.00.
 - Great Falls Civic Center Elevator Project
 - Original Budget - \$90,000.00 SLIPA - \$30,000.00 Local Contribution - \$120,000.00 Total.
 - Total Awarded Contract to Date - \$143,296.75.

SLIPA Projects Summary (Cont.)

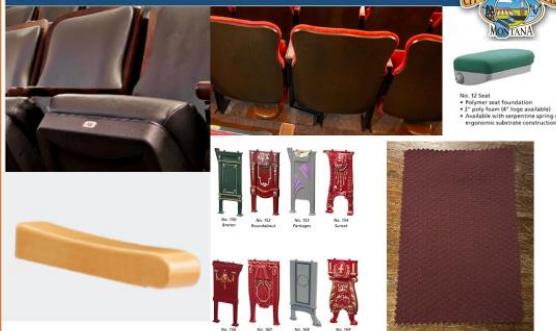
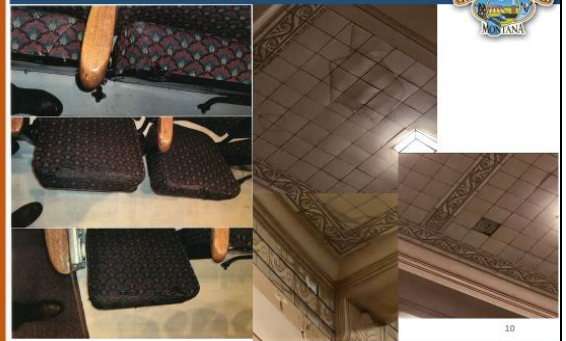


- Mansfield Theater
 - Seats
 - Original Budget - \$487,500.00 SLIPA - \$162,500.00 Local Contribution - \$650,000.00 Total.
 - Total Approved Contract to Date - \$995,190.00.
 - Ceiling
 - Original Budget - \$250,000.00 Montana State Historic Preservation Grant, \$147,300.00 – Local Match, \$397,300.00 Total.
 - Most Recent Estimate - \$430,000.00.

Mansfield Summary



- Funds Received
 - SLIPA - \$487,500.00
 - MHPG - \$250,000.00
 - TIF - \$309,800.00
 - Total - \$1,047,300.00
- Total Expenses
 - Seats - \$1,007,190.00
 - Ceiling - \$430,000.00
 - Total - \$1,437,190.00
- Difference - \$389,890.00



Next Steps



- Request Participation From Mansfield Advisory Board.
- Direct Requests from Local Partners.
 - Face to Face Request Presented by City Staff and Advisory Board Member.
 - Tiered Donation Levels
- Direct Asks to Identified Donors
- Mailing Campaign
- TIF Request

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Mayor Reeves received clarification that the process for the Mansfield Theater Improvements projects would be requests from local partners, identified donors and TIF requests.

Commissioner Wolff received clarification that the \$1,007,190 included seats for both floors of the Mansfield Theater and six months is the timeline to complete the ceiling and floor. Commissioner Wolff commented that it is clear the Mansfield Theater is a well-loved community asset and needs some tender loving care given back to it.

Commissioner McKenney expressed appreciation to Grant Administrator Hazen and staff for thinking differently and trying something different with regard to doing a capital campaign to finish off the projects.

It was the consensus of the Commission that Grant Administrator Hazen move forward with the capital campaign effort.

2. ANNUAL CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT APPLICATION FROM MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND UPDATE ON GRANT FOR UNION BETHEL AFRICAN AMERICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Finance Grant Administrator Tom Hazen reported that on November 19, 2024, the Commission considered a proposal from the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that suggested that the City act as the administrator for a \$497,712.00 Grant that would fund improvements to the Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Union Bethel). Several areas of concern were identified in connection with that award:

- Precedent – Generally, the City does not voluntarily act as a pass-through administrative entity.
- Oversight Requirements – The City would be reimbursing construction costs with federal funds, which would trigger documented compliance with Davis Bacon wage requirements, Build America Buy America (BABA) purchasing, and other federal restrictions.
- Funding Structure – The City would reimburse expenses, submit a request to the State, the State would submit a request to the Federal Government, the Federal Government would pay the State, and the State would pay the City. This might take up to 30 days and could cause cash shortages.
- Potential Liability Exposure – The nature and size of the grant exposed the City to significant financial losses and future eligibility concerns.
- Length of the Award – The project could last up to three years.

No formal decision was made at that time and the Commission requested contractual safeguards be implemented so the City would not face any of these liabilities. Before that could happen, SHPO did a counter proposal with another item and would advance \$20,000.00 of the amount it receives from the Park Service Historic Preservation Fund to the City to be distributed as reimbursements for only the design costs related to the Union Bethel project. The new proposal addresses all of the concerns listed above. It does fail to address that the City is still establishing a precedent by accepting this award. The City would not be bound to the project; it would be voluntarily accepting an administrative role in this award.

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However, this precedent is distinguished and limited compared to the previous award by several factors:

- Oversight Requirements – This project would not require the same level of compliance monitoring from BABA or Davis Bacon, as would an activity funding construction.
- Funding Structure - The City would receive the dollars up front and would not have to worry about a delayed reimbursement from the Federal Government through the State.
- Liability Exposure - extremely limited because of the amount; however, the designers would need to design Union Bethel only.
- Length of the Contract - \$20,000 for professional services will not take long to spend and within one or two claims, it could potentially be out the door.

If there is a precedent that is established by moving forward with this award, the City could request that it be limited specifically to those boundaries. This would be more favorable to the City than accepting a six-figure grant that has a wide range of responsibilities on the City.

Commissioner Wolff commented that the Montana Legislature has cut several SHPO projects. There seems to be limited liabilities for the City with the \$20,000 design only and the City would be a step further if they seek further funding, that part would be done.

Mayor Reeves commented that he supports the project; however, he fundamentally disagrees with the government being involved in these types of projects and the precedent it would set. He explained that if this project were approved, other requests would be on a case-by-case basis.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that there could be more requests, if this project was approved.

Grant Administrator Hazen added that he is convinced that the \$20,000 would be it for this project because the contract would specifically be limited to the \$20,000 design only.

Commissioner Tryon commented that he is skeptical about the City getting involved in something like this because it looks like a Historical Preservation project and others could see it as City Government supporting a non-denominational or religious activity.

Mayor Reeves inquired if he and Commissioner Tryon are missing something with regard to why they are uncomfortable with the project.

Grant Administrator Hazen responded this is the first time he has seen a request like this in the three years he has been with the City. To expand that into future activity would be potentially unreasonable; however, the worst-case analysis is always going to be the most responsible and safest analysis. If there is a concern about this potentially spiraling out, that is not a negative either. The City would not be funding religious activities within Union Bethel; the award is related to the preservation of an African-American cultural rights struggle from the past.

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City Manager Greg Doyon added that the reason the City received the application to begin with was to help the applicant get more out of the grant. The State modified and split it into two processes and the initial grant was for design. He inquired about the likelihood of them coming back to do the second part of the grant.

Grant Administrator Hazen responded that the City would not be taking part in the second part of the grant and construction awards would be issued directly to Union Bethel. All they are asking the City to do at this time is to oversee the administration of funds related to the design. Based on conversations he had with the Planning and Community Development Department and State, the likelihood of this particular project expanding beyond that is limited.

Commissioner McKenney commented that even though there seems to be limited liability to the City with this project, he is concerned about the precedent it would set. He added that he is saying no tonight and needs more information before agreeing to this project.

City Manager Doyon inquired if the Commission wants to hear from the representative from the State to explain the details, because Grant Administrator Hazen does not have any further information to offer.

Mayor Reeves responded that he has enough information.

Commissioner Wolff added that there would be limited liability to the City and the project has a limited scope of design to preserve a cultural piece of property in the community. She further added that she is comfortable with funding only the design costs and anything beyond that would be the responsibility of Union Bethel.

Mayor Reeves received clarification that if the City does not to move forward with this, the project would still go forward.

Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry reported that the Planning and Community Development Historic Preservation Officer has previously facilitated similar projects. He clarified that it is the first time Grant Administrator Hazen has seen a request like this since he has been with the City.

Historic Preservation Officer Samantha Long stated that the City has previously participated in SHPO Grants. A program that funded assistance grants to provide feasibility studies for Downtown businesses was one of the most successful ones. The reason the new proposal is broken out in the \$20,000 amount is because it is a separate pot of funding that SHPO received from the National Park Service, is earmarked to be passed through Certified Local Government communities and that money has to be passed within a few years. If the City does not approve this, the \$20,000 would go to another community in Montana.

Mayor Reeves inquired if the rules and liabilities were the same with grants done in the past.

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Historic Preservation Officer Long responded that she would have to look at the specific details; however, the liabilities were acceptable at that time.

Commissioner McKenney commented that after hearing that other similar Grants have been done in the past, it seems like this would not be setting a precedent.

Commissioner Tryon inquired if Union Bethel would be able to go forward with the project if the City does not do the \$20,000 Grant guarantee.

Planning and Community Development Director Cherry responded that some form of the project would be implemented; however, it is a matter of how much would be accomplished with the money that is available. The reason they did this was to ensure as much dollars as possible would go towards the construction and not the administration of the grant.

Mayor Reeves commented that based off the new information, he will support this if it is the consensus of the Commission. He requested that guidelines and parameters be put in place, so when this comes up in the future, it would be done on a case-by-case basis.

Grant Administrator Hazen responded that the Finance Department is working on Grant policies and strict guidelines regarding what could be considered. He commented that even with those guidelines in place, it would still require Commission approval.

Commissioner Wolff suggested holding off until City staff provides the Commission with more information.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that Sievert and Sievert is the design firm and bids for construction were opened recently; however, a firm has not been selected yet.

Mayor Reeves inquired when City staff needs an answer.

Historic Preservation Officer Long responded that there is some flexibility with regard to a timeline for the grant and funds have to be spent within the next two years. Design costs will be coming up soon; however, there is not a firm deadline as to when the City needs to make this request.

It was the consensus of the Commission that City staff provide more information to the Commission before it makes a decision.

3. TITLE 5 CITY CODE CHANGES AND FEE UPDATES

City Manager Greg Doyon explained that this presentation is a refresher because it is multi-faceted with different fees and introduction of a cannabis license that was not previously discussed.

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Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry and Fire Chief Jeremy Jones reviewed and discussed the following PowerPoint slides:

<p>Summary of Title 5 & Fee Proposal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Proposed Title 5 Amendments2. Updating GFFR Fees  <p>1</p>	<p>“Business License” Replaces “Safety Inspection Certificate”</p> <p>Current: Annual inspections of businesses for life & fire safety and zoning compliance are currently completed as a “Safety Inspection Certificate” (SIC).</p> <p>Proposed: A “Safety Inspection Certificate” will now be known as a “Business License”.</p> <p>Justification: Annual inspections play a crucial role beyond just life safety compliance. Many businesses and commercial entities do not fully grasp the importance or urgency of obtaining a “Safety Inspection Certificate.” As a result, a “Business License” is often perceived as a more significant and essential requirement.</p>  <p>2</p>
<p>Creation of a “Mobile Food Vendor” definition</p> <p>Current: The current City Ordinance does not address “Mobile Food Vendors” (food trucks).</p> <p>Proposed: Add a Mobile Food Vendor Definition.</p> <p>Justification: Defining “Mobile Food Vendors” will include those individuals who must obtain a “Business License” to ensure compliance with regulations. Additionally, establishing this definition will facilitate the possible creation of an ordinance for “Mobile Food Vendors” in the future, should the City Commission choose to pursue it.</p>  <p>3</p>	<p>Requires Cannabis Businesses to obtain a Business License</p> <p>Current: Current Cannabis Businesses are required to obtain a “Safety Inspection Certificate”. Currently Cannabis Businesses are not charged an additional fee as are businesses that sell alcohol and liquor.</p> <p>Proposed: Cannabis Businesses will explicitly be required to obtain a Business License and to possibly pay an additional fee similar to alcohol and liquor.</p> <p>Justification: Ensures that all cannabis businesses comply with local regulations and rules. An additional fee may be required, similar to alcohol and liquor businesses, if deemed appropriate by the City Commission.</p>  <p>4</p>
<p>“Violation Penalty” Language Cleaned Up</p> <p>Current: The current City Ordinance’s “Violation Penalty” is not straight forward.</p> <p>Proposed: There is a prescribed and explicit violation penalty for those operating a business without a business license, which consists of a violation being deemed a misdemeanor, or for those businesses who fail to renew their business licenses within the time frame listed in the Title.</p> <p>Justification: This new language cleans up existing language for those businesses who do not obtain a business license, and for those businesses that fail to renew their business license in a timely manner.</p>  <p>5</p>	<p>Elimination of Antiquated or Unenforceable Requirements</p> <p>Current: The current City Ordinance includes special requirements for specific business types, including mechanically operated devices depicting sexual activities, Teen Night Licenses, Plumbing Contractor Licenses, Plumber Licenses, and Electrical Contracting.</p> <p>Proposed: Eliminate the following special licenses and associated special requirements for: Mechanically Operated Devices Depicting Sexual Activities, Teen Night Licenses, Plumbing Contractors Licenses, Plumber Licenses, and Electrical Contracting.</p> <p>Justification: The City either does not currently administer Mechanically Operated Devices Depicting Sexual Activities or Teen Night Licenses. The State of Montana does not allow the City to provide duplicative development contractor licensing, such as Plumbing Contractors Licenses, Plumber Licenses, and Electrical Contracting.</p>  <p>6</p>

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Codifying “License Verification” Prior to the Issuance of Specialty Building Permits

Current:

The State of Montana no longer allows for municipalities to require duplicative licensing for licenses administered at State level, in particular Plumbing Contractors Licenses, Plumber Licenses, and Electrical Contracting.

Proposed:

Require an annual “License Verification” of specialty development contractors. A fee was passed for this requirement previously.

Justification:

Verifying that specialty contractors, such as plumbers and electricians, hold valid state-issued licenses is crucial for the City. This responsibility ensures that qualified individuals are performing work that directly impacts the health, safety, and well-being of residents. To fulfill this obligation, the City must review the annual state database, as well as check the required insurance and bonding information.



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GFFR Fee Resolution Updates

Current:

Fees were most recently updated as part of Resolution 10436 in 2022

Proposed:

GFFR Staff recommends increased fees listed within Fire Department Fee Schedule

Justification:

GFFR Staff determined the fees needed to be updated to reflect the current fully burdened cost of required staff time to administer each type of activity. The increases are based on the change in Western Consumer Price Index (CPI) provided by the Finance Department. See Attached fee schedule for reference.



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GFFR Proposed Fee Schedule

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing SIC Fee Schedule• Tier 1 \$132 (N) \$63 (R)• Tier 2 \$173 (N) \$98 (R)• Tier 3 \$230 (N) \$144 (R)• Tier 4 \$299 (N) \$207 (R)• Tier 5 \$443 (N) \$345 (R)• Tier 6 \$600 (N) \$500• Churches \$132 (N) \$63 (R) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposed Business License• Tier 1 \$170 (N) \$80 (R)• Tier 2 \$220 (N) \$125 (R)• Tier 3 \$295 (N) \$185 (R)• Tier 4 \$380 (N) \$265 (R)• Tier 5 \$565 (N) \$440 (R)• Tier 6 \$765 (N) \$640 (R)• Churches \$170 (N) \$80 (R) |
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*N = New Issuance

*R = Renewal



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GFFR Proposed Fee Schedule Continued

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing Fee's• \$11 Incident Report• \$100 Fire Investigation• \$200 2nd Re-Inspection (SIC)• \$300 3rd Re-Inspection (SIC)• \$100 3rd False Alarm• \$121 TC Classroom• \$286 TC Burn Prop/Tower• \$224 ALS Rescue Engine• \$188 Fire Engine• \$335 Aerial Apparatus• \$120 Command/Rescue• \$120 Haz-Mat Trailer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposed Fee's• \$15 Incident Report• \$100 Fire Investigation• \$100 1st Re-Inspection (N)• \$200 2nd Re-Inspection• \$300 3rd Re-Inspection• \$250 3rd False Alarm• \$140 TC Classroom• \$250 ALS Rescue Engine• \$220 Fire Engine• \$390 Aerial Apparatus• \$140 Command/Rescue• \$185 Haz-Mat Trailer |
|---|---|



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GFFR Proposed Fee Schedule Continued

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing• ALS Emergency \$1050• ALS 2 Emergency \$1250• ALS Treatment w/o Trans \$150• Oxygen \$65• I.V. Supplies \$68• ALS Supplies \$95• Intubation Supplies \$98• Defibrillation Supplies \$85• EKG Supplies \$14• Loaded Miles \$17.50 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposed• ALS Emergency \$1150• ALS 2 Emergency \$1250• ALS Treatment w/o Trans \$150• Oxygen \$65• I.V. Supplies \$75• ALS Supplies \$100• Intubation Supplies \$125• Defibrillation Supplies \$120• EKG Supplies \$20• Loaded Miles \$22 |
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GFFR Proposed Fee Schedule

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing SIC Fee Schedule• Tier 1 \$132 (N) \$63 (R)• Tier 2 \$173 (N) \$98 (R)• Tier 3 \$230 (N) \$144 (R)• Tier 4 \$299 (N) \$207 (R)• Tier 5 \$443 (N) \$345 (R)• Tier 6 \$600 (N) \$500• Churches \$132 (N) \$63 (R) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposed Business License• Tier 1 \$170 (N) \$80 (R)• Tier 2 \$220 (N) \$125 (R)• Tier 3 \$295 (N) \$185 (R)• Tier 4 \$380 (N) \$265 (R)• Tier 5 \$565 (N) \$440 (R)• Tier 6 \$765 (N) \$640 (R)• Churches \$170 (N) \$80 (R) |
|---|--|


*N = New Issuance

*R = Renewal



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NEW GFFR Fees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$75 Special event inspection (\$75 per inspection)• \$75 Open burn pit review and inspection• \$75 fire sprinkler acceptance (less than 100 heads)• \$100 fire sprinkler acceptance (Over 100 heads)• \$200 Per instance of contractor not ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$75 Fire Alarm acceptance (under 25,000')• \$100 Fire Alarm acceptance (over 25,001')• \$75 Hood acceptance• \$75 Fire suppressions system acceptance• \$75 Fire pump acceptance• \$75 Standpipe acceptance• \$75 After hours inspection (Minimum 1 hour)• \$50 Open burning violation
 13	

Mayor Reeves received clarification that GFFR fee updates are normally done every four to five years.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that first reading for the ordinance amending Title 5 of the Official Code of the City of Great Falls (OCCGF) would be on the April 1, 2025 City Commission Agenda.

Commissioner McKenney inquired if there might be push back from the business community.

Fire Chief Jones responded that GFFR sent mailers out to the business community and only received one negative comment. Years ago, there was a loophole in the law where legal firms were not recognized as a business and the name change was to ensure compliance with the same statute as everyone else.

Commissioner Tryon suggested making it clear that this is not adding more regulations and is streamlining what was in the past.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that sanitation and utility rates will be topics for the April 1, 2025 work session. A street OCI assessment review and Title 15 Code changes related to burn permits will be topics for the April 15, 2025 work session.

Commissioner Wolff requested City staff to provide the Commission information on up to a \$2.5 million non-voted general obligation bond to support the Fire Training Center. She further requested that addressing military fees at the Scheels Aim High Big Sky Aquatic and Recreation Center be brought back to the Commission.

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ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of March 18, 2025 at 6:42 p.m.