

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS**  
**April 15, 2025 -- Regular City Commission Meeting**  
**Civic Center Commission Chambers, Room 206 -- Mayor Reeves Presiding**

**CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL/STAFF INTRODUCTIONS:**

City Commission members present: Cory Reeves, Joe McKenney, Rick Tryon, Shannon Wilson, and Susan Wolff.

Also present were City Manager Greg Doyon, Public Works Director Chris Gaub, Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry, Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, City Attorney David Dennis, Fire Chief Jeremy Jones, Police Captain Doug Otto, and City Clerk Lisa Kunz.

**AGENDA APPROVAL:**

City Manager Greg Doyon pulled item 19 from the agenda for Commission consideration at a later time. There were no proposed changes to the agenda by the City Commission. The Commission approved the Agenda as amended.

**CONFLICT DISCLOSURE/EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

**COMMUNITY INITIATIVES**

1. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM SHERIFF JESSE SLAUGHTER.

None.

**PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

2. None.

**NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS**

3. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**  
**April 15, 2025**

None.

**BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

**4. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

None.

**CITY MANAGER**

**5. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that collective bargaining discussions with the City's respective bargaining unions are underway. The contracts will come before the Commission for ratification. About 75% of the City's workforce is under a collective bargaining agreement.

He continues to work on legislative activities. He has heard the legislators are hoping to wrap up sooner than later which means the next week and a half will move very fast. He is working with the lobbyist on the information received that affects local government. There are some very impactful legislative proposals before both houses that will impact the City's budget.

Commissioner McKenney explained that, when it gets towards the end of the legislative session, the legislators could take a vote to suspend the rules. It is important that the City have a lobbyist there and they are doing a great job.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

6. Minutes, April 1, 2025, Special City Commission Meeting.
7. Minutes, April 1, 2025, City Commission Meeting.
8. Total Expenditures of \$2,584,152 for the period of March 13, 2025 through March 26, 2025, to include claims over \$25,000, in the amount of \$1,941,300.
9. Contracts List.
10. Approve a Final Payments for the Sanitary Sewer Trenchless Rehabilitation Phase 26 in the amounts of \$37,839.34 to Insituform Technologies, LLC. and \$382.22 to the State Miscellaneous Tax Fund totaling \$38,221.56, and authorize the City Manager to make the payments. OF 1675.9
11. Accept the low bid from Thatcher Company of Montana, Inc. and authorize staff to purchase liquid aluminum sulfate in the amount of \$675.00 per ton, up to the

## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

maximum amount of 1,250 dry tons for the period of July 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026.

12. Accept the low bid from Brenntag Southwest, and authorize staff to purchase liquid ammonium sulfate in the amount of \$660.00 per ton, up to the maximum amount of 150 tons for the period of July 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026.
13. Accept the low bid from Hawkins Inc. and authorize staff to purchase liquid chlorine in the amount of \$2450.00 per ton, up to the maximum amount of 130 tons, for the period of July 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026.
14. Approve the OpenGov Agreement Q-06226 for Asset Management Software Subscription and Support Service in the amount of \$304,445.79 over a 3-year term (\$8,320.00 Current to August 2025, \$93,933.63 Year 1, \$98,630.33 Year 2, and \$103,561.83 Year 3) and authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement documents.
15. Set a public hearing for May 6, 2025 on Resolution 10572, to adjust the Commercial Plan Review fee from 65% to 25% and Residential Plan Review fees from 50% to 25% on identical structures.

**Commissioner Wolff moved, seconded by Commissioner Tryon, that the City Commission approve the Consent Agenda as presented.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public or discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Wolff noted the reductions on several items and expressed appreciation for Department Directors being fiscally prudent.

Commissioner McKenney referred to agenda items 11, 12 and 13 and noted bids from three different companies. In the past, he remembers the award to one company.

Director Gaub responded that the water plant manager extended the time period from 12 months to 18 months. That helped with the bidding and acquisition of the chlorines off cycle from the City's high volume season and equates to lower risk for the City. The longer period incentivized more companies to participate.

Commissioner Wilson commented that the increases and decreases in the chemical bids still resulted in an increase. Costs are still going up on the water coming out of the tap to drink.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

# **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**16. RESOLUTION 10565, CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A “CONTRACTOR YARD, TYPE I” LAND USE WITH AN ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE OF UP TO 2,500 SQUARE FEET OF TEMPORARY STORAGE CONTAINERS, UPON THE PROPERTY ADDRESSED AS 3104 UPPER RIVER ROAD.**

Mayor Reeves declared the public hearing open and asked for presentation of the staff report.

Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry reported that Resolution 10565 is a request to approve a CUP to allow a “Contractor Yard, Type I” land use, with an additional allowance of up to 2,500 square feet of temporary storage containers at the property located at 3104 Upper River Road. The property is zoned R-1 Single-Family Suburban, is approximately five acres in size, and currently consists of a single-family residence and a detached garage. This request was initiated after the City received a code enforcement complaint in April 2024 regarding unpermitted business activity on the site. The applicant met with staff and agreed to pursue a CUP to bring the property into conformance with City Code.

The applicant, Matthew McDonald, is requesting to establish a contractor yard with the understanding that temporary storage containers will be removed either upon completion of a permanent building or within 48 months. Neighborhood Council #6 reviewed the application on February 5, 2025, and voted 4-0 in support. The Zoning Commission held a public hearing on February 25, 2025, where the applicant confirmed that an earlier concern regarding a proposed new driveway had been resolved in collaboration with a neighboring property owner. The Zoning Commission unanimously recommended approval with a condition that no new vehicle access be created and that only the existing access from Upper River Road be used.

When considering this request, it is important to recognize this portion of Upper River Road is unusually mixed in character — with residential, mixed-use, and industrial zoning districts in close proximity, and a pattern of intensive business and industrial uses directly adjacent to single-family homes. This creates unique land use pressures not typically seen in more uniformly zoned areas of the community. The conditional use process, as outlined in Title 17, allows the City to apply specific conditions to ensure compatibility in these complex transitional areas.

Staff finds that the request supports the 2013 Growth Policy Update, including:

- Economic Goal #1: “Promote a business-friendly attitude” (p. 157), and

## JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING

April 15, 2025

- Physical Goals #4 and #5: which encourage infill and adaptive reuse of underutilized properties in a manner that complements established neighborhoods and leverages existing infrastructure (p. 165).

The proposed conditions of approval, including buffering and screening, are intended to mitigate off-site impacts and ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

Representatives from Public Works, Fire Rescue, and the Building Division have reviewed the request and have no objections. Staff respectfully recommends approval of Resolution 10565, subject to the Conditions of Approval.

Mayor Reeves asked if the Commissioners had any questions of Director Cherry or the applicant.

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in support of or in opposition to Resolution 10565.

**Cherry Loney**, City resident, commented that her property borders the applicant's property. She and her husband have lived there for more than 40 years. Her husband had his business there too. She understands the applicant's interest in wanting to obtain a CUP and rezone the property so it better meets the needs of his business. She does not have an issue with it one way or the other as long as the conditions and requirements are met. She inquired the process to monitor compliance and what happens if the applicant does not follow through with the conditions as intended.

Director Cherry responded that staff has worked diligently with the applicant the past year to secure a path towards compliance, so that he could continue to work his business and be a good neighbor to all. Staff is confident that the conditions of approval will make all parties happy. If reported that the applicant failed to meet the conditions, staff can take action that could result in the applicant potentially losing his ability to operate his business.

The Contractor Yard – Type 1 designation allows for some light storage of material. The containers would be allowed on a temporary basis to reduce the materials being seen by the neighbors' public right of way.

Mayor Reeves closed the public hearing and asked the will of the Commission.

**Commissioner Wolff moved, seconded by Commissioner Wilson, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 10565, subject to the Conditions of Approval being fulfilled by the applicant.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

## JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING

April 15, 2025

Commissioner Wolff inquired the plan for the existing house and other buildings on the property.

Applicant, Matthew McDonald, 3104 Upper River Road, commented that the little garage would be torn down and replaced with the 3,000 square foot building being proposed.

Commissioner Wolff commented that it was refreshing to read that the neighbor and the applicant agreed to further discussions to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

Commissioner McKenney noted that in April, 2024 the City received a complaint regarding the activities of the subject property. It is now a year later. He inquired if there was a way to do this CUP process faster or if there were roadblocks.

Director Cherry responded that if the applicant would have had the proper knowledge of the zoning and permissions needed prior to purchasing the property, it would not have been an issue. This demonstrates staff's solution oriented paradigm to not shut down businesses but find a way to make it work. The timeline included staff educating the applicant about processes that were not anticipated and helping the applicant have the understanding to ultimately make the best decision for him and his business.

Commissioner Tryon commented that the neighborhood is an alphabet soup of zoning. He appreciates staff finding a way to say yes, how can we help you do that, rather than you cannot do that. He thanked Director Cherry and Manager Doyon for getting the department to a new culture of how to do things.

Commissioner Tryon referred Ms. Loney to the agenda packet online and the 14 conditions of approval. He concluded that the Neighborhood Council and Zoning Commission voted to approve this CUP.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

**17. RESOLUTION 10576, A REQUEST FROM THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS TO USE DOWNTOWN URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) FUNDS FOR SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR THE NORTH PARKING GARAGE LOCATED AT 17 4TH STREET NORTH.**

Mayor Reeves declared the public hearing open and asked for presentation of the staff report.

## JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING

April 15, 2025

Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry reported that Resolution 10576 is a request to use up to \$50,000 in Downtown Urban Renewal District Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds for new signage at the North Parking Garage, located at 17 4th Street North. This garage provides nearly 500 parking spaces in the heart of Downtown. Feedback from residents, business owners, and visitors continues to highlight a lack of visibility and signage as a barrier to effective use. The garage was built to serve as a critical piece of downtown infrastructure, but without clear wayfinding, it is often overlooked. This project aims to change that by helping people find, access, and feel more comfortable using the garage.

This request was unanimously supported by both the Parking Advisory Commission on February 20, 2025, and the Downtown Development Partnership on March 19, 2025. The proposed signage package includes a new entrance sign, two large wall-mounted signs visible from Central and 1st Avenue North, directional signage from 1st Avenue, a flag-mounted sign off 4th Street, and permanent stairwell signage. These improvements are consistent with the goals and eligibility requirements outlined in the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan adopted in 2012, and meet several of the evaluation criteria in the City's TIF Application Review Guidelines, including public infrastructure improvements, economic stimulus, and elimination of blight.

This proposal is also consistent with Montana Code, which governs the use of TIF funds for public improvements that benefit the district. Under City Code, Title 17, Chapter 16, the City is authorized to hold a public hearing and consider these types of funding decisions. This project supports the broader goal of making Downtown more accessible and welcoming, especially to visitors who may not be familiar with where to park. Staff has confirmed that funding is available and appropriate for this use, and recommends approval of Resolution 10576.

Mayor Reeves asked if the Commissioners had any questions of Director Cherry.

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in support of Resolution 10576.

**Kellie Pierce**, Director of the Business Improvement District (BID), commented that the improvements to the North Parking Garage would continue to be an asset for downtown. It will enhance wayfinding efforts that the BID has worked on for 10 years to bring to downtown. The Downtown Parking Commission has been talking about how to get more utilization out of City assets for over 10 years. The BID is in full support of the extra advertising to help alleviate on-street parking and move them into the garage.

**Ron Pollock**, City resident, commented he uses the parking garage and likes it. He inquired the cost of the signage.

## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in opposition to Resolution 10576. Hearing none, Mayor Reeves closed the public hearing and asked the will of the Commission.

**Commissioner McKenney moved, seconded by Commissioner Tryon, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 10576, to allow the use of up to \$50,000 in Downtown Urban Renewal District Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds for signage improvements needed for the North Parking Garage.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner McKenney commented that when he parks downtown he is closer to his destination than if he parks at a big box store. From time to time, the Newberry holds events during the day that go longer than two hours. He used the parking garage for the first time recently and found everything about it unfriendly. He is in favor of the signage.

Commissioner Wilson commented that she is particularly sensitive about TIF funding projects because she would like to see it used for public infrastructure. However, she does agree the signage will help direct parking to the City.

Commissioner Wolff asked if the signage would be provided by both Cat Graphics and Allstate Signage.

Director Cherry responded that staff reached out to both companies. It will be the City's prerogative to get the very best deal for the best service and product possible.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

### **18. RESOLUTION 10569, FEE SCHEDULE FOR GREAT FALLS FIRE RESCUE.**

Mayor Reeves declared the public hearing open and asked for presentation of the staff report.

Fire Chief Jeremy Jones reported that staff recommends the City Commission conduct a public hearing and adopt Resolution 10569 to update Great Falls Fire Rescue (GFFR) Fee Schedule as presented. These revisions reflect current costs of service delivery, provide consistency across permit and inspection charges, and ensure ongoing support for GFFR's operational and regulatory functions.

GFFR has conducted a comprehensive review of its existing fee schedule to evaluate whether current rates adequately reflect the resources required to deliver public safety



## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

services related to fire prevention, code enforcement, permitting, and fire protection systems.

As part of this review, GFFR benchmarked existing rates against regional and comparable municipal agencies, reviewed staff time commitments, equipment usage, administrative processing, and compliance-related demands. The last significant update to the fee structure occurred prior to the post-pandemic inflationary impacts on personnel, materials, and service delivery costs.

The proposed GFFR Fee Schedule update outlines a structured and transparent cost recovery model that includes, but is not limited to:

- Permit fees for fire alarm, sprinkler, and hood suppression systems, scaled by project valuation.
- Flat-rate fees for specific inspections and plan reviews, including underground fire line inspections, aboveground flammable liquid tank installations, and spray booth evaluations.
- Operational permit charges in alignment with the International Fire Code, with updated costs for events involving hazardous materials, open flames, or special assembly/events.
- Fire watch and standby services, based on staffing requirements and time commitment.
- A standardized hourly rate for re-inspections, after-hours services, or services not otherwise listed.

These fees reflect direct and indirect costs incurred by the department and are designed to provide cost equity between taxpayers and entities requiring specialized services. The fee schedule also introduces improved clarity in definitions, application requirements, and unit descriptions for greater ease of use by developers, business owners, and the general public.

There are three areas addressed in the fee schedule referenced for potential future use to allow GFFR not to have to amend the fee schedule if these areas are adopted. Another area is in regards to the apparatus and firefighter cost fees. These fees would be utilized if the department is requested for a stand-by event or on scene of a hazardous materials incident or other significant event. The final clarification is burn permits fees. This fee is for certain defined areas of the City to be able to apply for and conduct burning that is outside of the current backyard fire pit allowance. This fee is good for the calendar year and allows certain areas to burn yard debris in a controlled manner with proper safety mechanisms in place.

## JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING

April 15, 2025

The revised fee structure is anticipated to moderately increase cost recovery for GFFR regulatory and safety services. While the impact on individual applicants will vary based on the scope of the project or event, the proposed fees are within the reasonable range of regional comparisons and will help offset growing demands on general fund support.

The proposed fee schedule update supports GFFR's mission to safeguard the community while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Approval of the revised structure will enhance GFFR's ability to provide responsive, high-quality fire and life safety services without placing undue burden on general taxpayers.

Mayor Reeves asked if the Commissioners had any questions of Chief Jones.

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in support of or in opposition to Resolution 10569.

**Cherry Loney**, 3000 Upper River Road, spoke in favor of the proposed fee changes and particularly for burn permits.

No one spoke in opposition.

Mayor Reeves closed the public hearing and asked the will of the Commission.

**Commissioner Tryon moved, seconded by Commissioner Wilson, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 10569.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Tryon noted that the Commission has been briefed extensively about this subject over the last six months. The details of the resolution have been thoroughly vetted.

Commissioner Wilson is glad to see this resolution coming forward to charge fees for what services cost, rather than going in the hole.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

## OLD BUSINESS

## NEW BUSINESS

- ~~19. PURCHASE OF PROPERTY ADDRESSED AS 5200 2ND AVENUE NORTH IN BEEBE TRACTS, SECTION 10, TOWNSHIP 20 NORTH, RANGE 4 EAST, LOT 047, IN CASCADE COUNTY, MONTANA. OF 1841.0~~

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**  
**April 15, 2025**

**20. 4TH AVENUE NORTH STREET RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT. OF 1826.0**

Public Works Director Chris Gaub reported that this 4th Avenue North Street Reconstruction project would completely reconstruct five blocks of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North from 9<sup>th</sup> Street North, near Whittier Elementary School, to 14<sup>th</sup> Street North, just east of the CM Russell Museum.

The project will replace the entire road, to include curb, gutter, all handicap ramps and storm drain inlets. Portions of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North will be closed while the roadway is being reconstructed. The contractor will be responsible for traffic control, road closures, and access to the project area.

It is also anticipated that one tree will be removed to accommodate handicap ramps that meet ADA standards. The City forester will assist with selecting two new trees and determining planting locations.

The project is scheduled for this summer and will take around four months to complete. The contractor may be able to start right away and complete the project in July.

United Materials submitted the single bid for this project, at just over \$2 million dollars, which is less than the City Engineer's estimate. United Materials is an established, responsible local contractor and has completed other projects with the City.

The project would be funded in accordance with the Capital Improvement Plan, with 85% coming from Street Assessments and 15% coming from the Storm Drain Enterprise Fund.

**Commissioner Wilson moved, seconded by Commissioner Wolff, that the City Commission award a contract in the amount of \$2,063,650 to United Materials of Great Falls, Inc., for the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Street Reconstruction project, and authorize the City Manager to execute the contract documents.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public or discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Wolff noted that she has followed United Materials' projects in her neighborhood and they do very efficient work.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

### **21. FINANCING FOR THE FIRE TRAINING CENTER RENOVATIONS.**

Fire Chief Jeremy Jones reported that staff recommends Commission authorization to pursue financing for the renovation of the Great Falls Fire Rescue (GFFR) Training Center in an amount not to exceed \$2,500,000. The proposed financing would be secured through a loan application to the Montana Board of Investments (MBOI) INTERCAP loan program. Funding for annual debt service is proposed to be supported through the reallocation of funds from the 3.5 mills previously released from the former City/Great Falls Public Library management agreement.

The existing training tower at the GFFR Training Center has been deemed unsuitable and unsafe for use. An engineering assessment conducted in November, 2022 estimated repair costs, including additions, at \$675,000—an amount that exceeds the structure’s practical value. The five-story tower fails to meet current OSHA standards, while the surrounding grounds have deteriorated to the point of impeding training operations, particularly in wet conditions where fire apparatus regularly become immobilized due to failed pavement surfaces.

The proposed renovation project includes the demolition and removal of the current tower (\$65,000), construction of a new multi-story live fire/high-rise training prop (\$1,212,000), and full removal and replacement of all concrete and asphalt surfaces on site (\$553,500). A contingency of \$669,500 has been included to account for cost fluctuations and unforeseen site conditions, bringing the total project estimate to \$2,500,000.

This project is essential to GFFR’s mission of protecting the community through a highly trained and well-prepared fire service. The new facility will support realistic, scenario-based training in live fire conditions, high-angle technical rescue, aerial operations, and high-rise firefighting. Training in context—replicating actual emergency conditions—is critical not only for the safety and proficiency of GFFR personnel, but for the safety of the public they serve.

Fiscal impact analysis indicates a 15-year MBOI loan at an interest rate of 5% would require an estimated annual payment of \$238,888.20. The City’s total non-voted debt capacity is \$3,616,201, with a projected annual repayment capacity of \$593,853. Based on FY26 projections, the 3.5 mills are expected to generate \$471,413, which is sufficient to cover the debt service without requiring additional general fund commitments.

Should the Commission choose not to approve this financing option, alternatives include seeking voter approval for a bond measure or incorporating the project into a future Public Safety Levy. However, these alternatives could delay a much-needed project that directly impacts firefighter readiness and public safety.

## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

Staff from the Fire Department, Finance Department, and City Manager's Office have collaborated extensively to develop this proposal and recommend its approval in order to move forward with the financing and execution of this critical public safety infrastructure project.

**Commissioner Wolff moved, seconded by Commissioner Wilson, that the City Commission approve staff to secure financing for the Fire Training Center renovations for up to \$2,500,000 through a loan application with the Montana Board of Investments INTERCAP Loan Program, and authorize the City Manager/Finance Director to execute the required documents.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public. Hearing none, Mayor Reeves asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Mayor Reeves noted that this is also a topic that has been thoroughly discussed and is needed.

Commissioner McKenney commented that the State Legislature has been defunding public safety since 1999 when property taxes were not permitted to keep up with the rate of inflation. Since then, local governments have been on a starvation diet, unable to fund public safety and other services. Recent examples include SB 117 and HB 20. Local governments have no control over its income and the Legislature continues to starve local governments out of existence. With regard to the bond request, he commented that it is highly likely that the City's general fund will remain under attack from the Legislature. He does not want to take on debt knowing the ongoing financial challenges are getting worse. He thinks approval of this item is a disservice to the community and future Commission members.

Another option is the Public Safety Advocacy Ad Hoc Committee that has been organized. Its first meeting was well attended. The primary goals of the committee is a public safety levy for some time in the future, and thinking outside the box for the buildings, rather than a bond. A solution is to sell a City asset; another is a capital campaign. He knows the Fire Training Center is a high priority. He thinks this community can get it done. He concluded that a new debt is a wrong approach and will aggravate the fiscal challenges going forward.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 4-1 (Commissioner McKenney dissenting).

## **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS**

- 22. ORDINANCE 3272, AMENDING TITLE 5, CHAPTERS 1-3, TITLE 6, CHAPTER 1, TITLE 8, CHAPTER 14, AND TITLE 17, CHAPTER 20 OF THE OFFICIAL CODE OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS (OCCGF)**

## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

### **PERTAINING TO BUSINESS LICENSES, PERMITS, AND SAFETY INSPECTION CERTIFICATES PROVISIONS.**

Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry reported that consideration of Ordinance 3272 represents the final piece in a coordinated effort to update how the City of Great Falls administers its business licensing and life safety inspection framework. This effort has been over a year in the making and involved close collaboration between Great Falls Fire Rescue, the Planning and Community Development Department, and Deputy City Attorney Rachel Taylor.

Throughout this process, there have been multiple work sessions with the City Commission to walk through the background and outline the necessary changes.

At the heart of Ordinance 3272 is the shift from the term “Safety Inspection Certificate” to “Business License” across Titles 5, 6, 8, and 17 of the City Code. By using terminology that is familiar and widely recognized by business owners, it would improve clarity, reinforce the importance of life safety inspections, and make it easier for businesses to understand and meet their obligations. The updated terminology also provides businesses with the language often required to secure financing, insurance coverage, and other essential services, ensuring they can operate with confidence and legitimacy.

The ordinance also introduces updated and expanded definitions, such as “Mobile Food Vendor,” which, while not providing a comprehensive set of rules or regulations for food trucks at this time, represents an important first step. Simply by defining the use and ensuring these businesses are required to obtain a business license, the City now has the essential tools to effectively administer and support mobile food vendors within the current framework. This update establishes a clear foundation for future policy development, while allowing staff to better manage these businesses in the interim with improved consistency and clarity.

This update also brings the City into compliance with Senate Bill 262, passed during the 2023 Legislative Session, which amended MCA §7-1-111 to prohibit cities from requiring local licenses for trades already licensed by the State. In response, Ordinance 3272 removes outdated City-issued license requirements for plumbers, electricians, and similar trades.

However, the City retains a critical responsibility—one that speaks to the greatest obligation of local government: protecting public safety, property, and investment. Through the permitting and inspection processes, staff continues to verify that work is performed by properly licensed, bonded, and insured professionals. This protects homeowners, tenants, and business owners alike, reduces the risk of life safety hazards, and builds confidence for those investing in Great Falls. These safeguards

## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

are essential to ensuring that all development—whether residential, commercial, or industrial—occurs in a way that is both safe and responsible.

Ordinance 3272 also includes necessary code maintenance. Outdated or no longer used provisions, such as the Teen Night License, are removed, and the language pertaining to violation penalties, revocations, and appeals has been cleaned up and made more enforceable.

To fully implement this transition, the City Commission already adopted Resolution 10563 in October 2024, which removed Safety Inspection Certificate fees from the Planning and Community Development fee schedule. That resolution set the stage for shifting inspection-related responsibilities to Great Falls Fire Rescue, which is now designated as the issuing authority for licenses requiring annual safety inspections.

Ordinance 3272 is the legal mechanism that amends City Code to reflect that shift in terminology and departmental responsibility. In tandem, Resolution 10569, which is also on tonight's agenda, updates Fire Rescue's fee schedule to support their inspection workload and cost recovery needs. When taken together, Ordinance 3272, Resolution 10563, and Resolution 10569 form a fully aligned and sensible regulatory structure.

In short, Ordinance 3272, along with Resolution 10569 presented by Chief Jones, represents the final pieces of the puzzle in this important round of updates. Together, they bring City Code into alignment with state law, strengthens staffs' ability to protect public health and safety, and improves clarity, consistency, and communication for the businesses investing in Great Falls.

Staff respectfully recommends adoption of Ordinance 3272.

**Commissioner Wilson moved, seconded by Commissioners McKenney and Tryon, that the City Commission adopt Ordinance 3272.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public or discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner McKenney inquired the changes to home occupations.

Director Cherry clarified that there were no changes to the current framework for home occupation licenses.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

## JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING

April 15, 2025

### 23. **RESOLUTION 10577, APPOINTING AND ESTABLISHING A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND FISCAL AGENT FOR OPIOID LITIGATION SETTLEMENT FUNDS.**

City Attorney David Dennis reported that the City of Great Falls participates in an opioid settlement agreement with the State of Montana. The settlement agreement is memorialized in a November 26, 2021 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Attorney General and other participating Montana local government entities, including the City of Great Falls, and a January 26, 2022 Amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding. The City of Great Falls is a participating local government, pursuant to the MOUs, and is entitled to receive opioid litigation settlement funds in various amounts and distributed in various fashions.

Pursuant to the MOUs, any participating local government shall create a governance structure for the administration, management and use of opioid litigation settlement funds. The MOUs specifically require any participating local government to designate a fiscal agent to receive the settlement funds. Melissa Kinzler has been designated as the City's fiscal agent.

Proposed Resolution 10577 establishes the governing body for the administration, management and use of opioid litigation settlement funds allocated to the City. This governing body shall consist of two members of the City Commission and the Fiscal Agent. The Fiscal Agent is given the authority, on behalf of the governing board of the City Commission, to submit claims, requests for disbursements, accountings of spending and any other financial reports or matters as it relates to settlement funds under the terms of the MOUs.

Resolution 10577 only establishes the governing structure for funds to be received and does not allocate funding for specific programs.

**Mayor Reeves moved, seconded by Commissioner Tryon, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 10577, Establishing a Governance Structure and Fiscal Agent for Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds, that designates two members of the City Commission, Commissioner Tryon and Commissioner Wilson, and the Finance Director as the Fiscal Agent to be the Governing Board, as well as the authorized official for communicating with the National Opioid Settlement Administrator.**

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public. Hearing none, Mayor Reeves asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Wolff expressed concern about consistency due to the election turnover of Commission members.



## **JOURNAL OF COMMISSION PROCEEDING**

**April 15, 2025**

City Attorney Dennis commented that it is critical that the City get a governing body in place to move forward with establishing the second governing body that controls the regional funds. As Commission' terms expire, another governing body could be appointed for a specific term that will correspond with the term of the Commission members appointed to the governing board.

Commissioner Wilson noted that she and Commissioner Tryon would be serving for almost three more years.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

### **CITY COMMISSION**

#### **24. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

None.

#### **25. COMMISSION INITIATIVES.**

None.

#### **26. LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES.**

Commissioner Tryon commented that the Legislature has been starving the general fund of the City for quite a while. It is the property taxes that the Legislature always seems to hit at, and is the major source of funding for the City's general fund and public safety. The State's funding is about 80% income tax. The State is not dependent on the property tax. As much as the City has tried the last couple of years to get that message across to legislators, he still does not think they understand. As much as he would like to see some property tax reform, the City still gets the short end of the stick year after year, legislative session after legislative session.

Commissioner Wolff added that the State has a \$2.5 billion dollar surplus, while the City is struggling and having to borrow money for a Fire Training Center.

Manager Doyon commented that during his meeting today with legislators and the lobbyist he asked how the State sets its fund balance levels for its income tax revenues, and could not get a clear answer. The City is held to a standard to be accountable and transparent on its revenues and expenditures. State government should be as well, particularly if it is in excess of policy. The State is making policy and decisions that have significant impact on how the City does its jobs. It would be fair if the State was held to the same standard.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, **Commissioner Tryon moved, seconded by Mayor Reeves, to adjourn the regular meeting of April 15, 2025, at 8:14 p.m.**

Motion carried 5-0.

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Mayor Cory Reeves

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City Clerk Lisa Kunz

**Minutes Approved: May 6, 2025**