

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

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

Mayor Reeves announced that the livestream is down, but the meeting is still being recorded and will be posted on the City's website tomorrow.

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 and Deputy City Manager Bryan Lockerby, Planning and Community Development Deputy Director Lonnie Hill, Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman, Human Resources Director Gaye McInerney, City Attorney David Dennis, Police Captain Brian Black, and City Clerk Lisa Kunz.

AGENDA APPROVAL:

There were no proposed changes to the agenda by the City Manager or City Commission. The Commission approved the agenda as presented.

CONFLICT DISCLOSURE/EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Jeni Dodd**, City resident, read from a prepared statement pertaining to her belief that the City failed to follow state law when it recently purchased land and when it increased the water, sewer and storm drain utility rates. For accountability and transparency, she suggested town hall meetings for major decisions inclusive of a process for public questions to be answered.

Steve Gillespie, City resident, commented that to him, the water, sewer, storm drain utility rate increase is a tax that is being blended into the water bill. It appears the City is raising money for some future development expenses. He inquired if there would be a

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separate line item on the water bill showing the accumulated amount of the rate increase in a separate account. He concluded that he may want to protest his bill after the account gets to a certain amount.

Mayor Reeves responded that City staff is currently developing rules for the infrastructure utility fees that will be set up similar to TIFs.

John Hubbard, City resident, commented that people on social security cannot afford the water, sewer and storm drain utility rate increase. Rather than raising rates, he suggested going after Governor Gianforte for sitting on \$2.5 billion of taxpayer money, the marijuana tax money and the lottery money.

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

2. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

None.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

3. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

None.

CITY MANAGER

4. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

City Manager Greg Doyon made the following announcements:

- The City's Wastewater Treatment Plant was presented the NACWA Peak Performance Gold Award for 2024. This award recognizes that the facility received no permit violations for the entire calendar year. The City owns the facility, but it is operated by Veolia.
- Police Department promotions: Congratulations were expressed to Cara Guderian who was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and Clay Bott who was promoted to the rank of Master Police Office.
- Ayden Conley started as a Probationary Firefighter. When he completes the fire academy, it will bring operations up to budgeted staff.

CONSENT AGENDA

5. Minutes, July 1, 2025, City Commission Meeting.

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6. Total Expenditures of \$6,014,290 for the period of June 12, 2025, through June 25, 2025, to include claims over \$25,000, in the amount of \$5,214,920.
7. Contracts List.
8. Approve the purchase of one new 548 Peterbilt tandem axle cab & chassis with a rear load packer, including a Qwik-Tip from Northland Truck Sales of Fargo, North Dakota, through Sourcewell, for a total of \$347,971.20 and declare unit #907, a Sterling LT9500 truck as surplus.
9. Approve a final payment for the Missouri River North Bank Stabilization – Phase 2 project, in the amount of \$15,755.25. This comprises \$15,597.70 to Olympus Technical Services and \$157.55 to the State Miscellaneous Tax Fund and authorize the City Manager to make the payments **OF 1693.1**.
10. Approve the CDBG Funding Agreement in the amount of \$65,000 to the Public Works Department for the Parks ADA Corners CDBG Project for installation of ADA compliant handicap sidewalk landings adjacent to Grande Vista and Bel View parks **OF 1816.0**.
11. Set a public hearing on Resolution 10579, Annual Budget Resolution, for August 5, 2025.
12. Set the public hearing on Resolution 10580, Intent to Increase Property Tax, for August 5, 2025.
13. Set the public hearing for Resolution 10585 to levy and assess the General Boulevard District for August 19, 2025.
14. Set the public hearing for Resolution 10586 to levy and assess Great Falls Park District No.1 for August 19, 2025.
15. Set the public hearing for Resolution 10587 to levy and assess properties within Special Improvement Lighting Districts for August 19, 2025.
16. Set the public hearing for Resolution 10588 to levy and assess the Portage Meadows Maintenance District for August 19, 2025.
17. Set the public hearing for Resolution 10591 to levy and assess the Street Maintenance District for August 19, 2025.

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

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public.

Jeni Dodd, City resident, referred to Item #12 and expressed opposition to any proposed increases. With regard to Item #14, she wants to know how much Park District money is going to support the Scheels Aim High Big Sky facility before the public hearing.

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John Hubbard, City resident, expressed opposition to Items #12 - #17.

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

Commissioner McKenney referred to Item #12 and noted that about 85% of the general fund goes to public safety. The City of Great Falls has limited ability to increase property tax revenue because of a statewide property tax cap. The City is authorized to increase property tax revenue by one-half of the average rate of inflation for the prior three years.

Per the Montana Department of Administration, the allowable inflationary adjustment is 2.11%. That means that inflation was 4.22%, which means the City's buying power went down 2.11%. That is why the City cannot fund public safety.

Commissioner Wolff referred to Item #10 and expressed appreciation for the CDBG funding to install ADA corners so that people of all abilities can enjoy those parks.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

18. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) FY 2026 BUDGET AND WORK PLAN.

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

BID Executive Director Kellie Pierce reported that the BID had a successful fiscal year. She highlighted accomplishments that included: four permanent interior improvement grants, and nine applications for the business incentive grant program.

With regard to the work plan, the BID is building relationships with the Police Department, City staff, Commission, downtown property owners and business owners.

With regard to beautification, the BID hired a company to pressure wash the sidewalks in phases. Banners and flags were expanded into the 700 block, and the BID is working on expanding the sound system downtown.

She concluded that the work plan and budget is status quo.

Mayor Reeves asked if the Commissioners had any questions of BID Executive Director Pierce.

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in support of the FY 2026 BID Budget and Work Plan.

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Rebecca Engum, Great Falls Montana Tourism, commended the work that the team at the BID does for downtown Great Falls. They have been fantastic partners with many ideas and efforts that bring people into the community and stimulate the economy.

Sherrie Arey, NeighborWorks Great Falls Executive Director, noted that she serves as the Treasurer for the BID. She pointed out that it is not always obvious to everyone about why murals, flowers and clean sidewalks are a lever to economic development. She can see that business attraction, retention and safety has increased, as well as the overall atmosphere of the community by having a strong, vibrant downtown.

Brett Doney, Great Falls Development Alliance (GFDA), commented that it took a long time to get the momentum going downtown. There are empty spaces and underutilized properties downtown. If the momentum keeps going, it will build tax base and provide a wonderful asset for all City residents.

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in opposition to the FY 2026 BID Budget and Work Plan.

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves closed the public hearing and asked the will of the Commission.

Commissioner Wolff moved, seconded by Commissioner McKenney, that the City Commission accept the FY 2026 Business Improvement District Budget and Work Plan.

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

Commissioner Wolff appreciates the Downtown Safety Alliance, which is part of the BID. She has seen a vast change in the amount of loitering and illegal actions that were occurring. After the Rural Summit, she heard from people who hadn't been in Great Falls for a while, and who had been here before, that they were amazed at the significant, positive improvements that have been made.

Commissioner McKenney commented that the change downtown has been amazing. He noted that the BID's overall purpose is to improve and revitalize the downtown area. The fiscal impact is about \$300,000, and the BID office has grant programs, tree maintenance, beautification efforts and additional projects for streetscapes, and economic growth. The goal of the BID is to create an environment that appeals to shoppers, office workers, residents, tourists, new businesses and investors. Job well done.

Commissioner Wilson thanked the BID for its proactive actions downtown. They approached her, on behalf of her American Legion Post, and funded flags for another block. The next holiday will include flags down to 8th Street.

Mayor Reeves commented that he is proud of downtown. It is awesome to see the revitalization going on.

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

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Motion carried 5-0.

19. TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (TBID) 2025/2026 BUDGET AND WORK PLAN.

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

TBID Executive Director Rebecca Engum introduced Suzi Kearns, a public school teacher doing her externship with the TBID through Reach Higher Montana that helps her get her continuing education credits and gives the TBID an opportunity to share what it does at Great Falls, Montana Tourism in totality.

Executive Director Engum reported on the successes of last year:

- 1.7 million overnight visitors in Great Falls, who spent over \$275 million dollars in the Cascade County economy
- Room demand of 485,000 rooms
- Launched 20 new partnership opportunities for local businesses to leverage TBID efforts and market to the traveler market
- Great Falls brand to keep the community message consistent across all partner platforms

The TBID measures a lot of its success in tourism with room demand. On any given night there are 2,300 rooms available to rent in Great Falls. The collective market was up 4% ahead of last year. However, January began a downward slide that is connected to Canadian travel, layoffs of government workers, as well as fiscal impacts to some federal entities that are big tourism drivers – Glacier National Park, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, for example. As of June, she projects a 1% growth over fiscal year 2024.

TBID is in the midst of a partnering a public relations effort with the Great Falls Development Alliance. The services of a public relations firm have been retained to engage prospective writers who will make Great Falls the feature of articles in regional and national publications. This is a 12-month project with the first few months spent onboarding and doing research. Two pieces about Great Falls have been drafted that have been sent to 192 writers, with one writer currently planning on coming into the market to do a piece on Great Falls in August. This new strategy is continually being evaluated, and the TBID will make a reinvestment if it makes sense. At this time, however, the TBID does not have a budget line for it in the FY 26 plan.

Great Falls, Montana Tourism will continue with paid, owned and earned media to include out of market and resident influencers. The development of a media kit has been added. The public relations strategy will be finished. New, for this plan, is an enhanced film and television production strategy. In the last year, the TBID has had the opportunity to host three different film companies in Great Falls, producing a variety of TV shows, documentaries and movies.

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They will continue its guerrilla style resident sentiment effort, providing strategically aligned sponsorship, assisting market guests with details on how to explore the community and donating Great Falls getaway prizes as silent auction items and fundraisers in targeted communities. With its group strategies, the TBID will continue to include a winter event and a film festival. However, the TBID has decided not to move forward with Rhythm and Rumble, after a deep dive into analyzing the market and digging into the ever increasing amount of competition for live music. The TBID will continue to support established events like Mimosa Showdown, which is in partnership with Downtown Great Falls; and, new this year will be an event training resource to help organizers of local events leverage the traveler market.

The TBID has a shift in its strategy for meetings and conventions and will refocus efforts to source meetings, conventions and passion projects from residents. They found the greatest success on gaining new business in Great Falls comes from local champions.

The targeted event attendance will focus on bus tours and sports for FY 26. They will continue efforts to support local businesses bringing in outside labor with an objective to have the worker experience the fun of Great Falls that they will then share with friends and family for an initial and subsequent return visit. New initiatives include an event called Pledge Great Falls to rally new residents to get excited about living in Great Falls, a frontline ambassador training, and hopefully leveraging the government access channel for information sharing.

In closing, the assessment budget presented is an estimate. The final reporting of assessment collection by lodging properties will not be completed until the end of July. The assessments collected are from travelers staying in a hotel or motel here in Great Falls. Those people staying will only pay that assessment if they are here for 30 days or less.

The final amount of the assessment collected will be provided to the Commission to levy on the property tax statement distributed by Cascade County and the budget will be amended to the actual amount after the final assessment is levied.

Mayor Reeves asked if the Commissioners had any questions of TBID Executive Director Engum.

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in support of the 2025/2026 TBID Budget and Work Plan.

Kellie Pierce, BID, commented that it means a lot to have the partnership with the TBID to support the local economy and help grow tourism not just for downtown, but Great Falls in general.

Brett Doney, Great Falls Development Alliance (GFDA), commented that this is a unique concept to Montana that has been spreading around the country that hotel owners essentially vote to tax themselves. The importance about tourism for Great Falls is (1) it is a primary sector industry, (2) it supports a number of local businesses, and (3) it is a

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great marketing tool to attract entrepreneurs, developers and primary sector businesses. The key success is everyone working together all the time.

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in opposition to the 2025/2026 TBID Budget and Work Plan.

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves closed the public hearing and asked the will of the Commission.

Commissioner Wilson moved, seconded by Commissioner Wolff, that the City Commission accept the 2025/2026 Tourism Business Improvement District Budget and Work Plan.

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

Commissioner Wolff recommended TBID Director Engum connect with the Airport Director and Board about the TBID successes. She noted that she was appalled to read in the executive summary that 34% of residents would not recommend visiting Great Falls. With regard to outdoor recreation, she was thrilled for the kayak rentals.

Commissioner McKenney commented that he has been in Great Falls for 40+ years. There is so much to do in the area in a day's drive, and he hasn't done it all yet. He inquired what Great Falls is doing right and where can it improve.

Executive Director Engum responded that what we are doing right is arts and culture - the work of the BID team with the creation of murals, the Rivers Edge Trail Foundation with 30 art installations on the River's Edge Trail, and 13 museums in the community. Beyond the live music and symphony, there is just a ton of art in our community. That is something we should be very proud of that many communities our size and larger don't have.

Great Falls has opportunities for convention and meeting space or usable event space. There is a lot of opportunities for groups of 50 or less, but it becomes a challenge to find availability of the assets within the community for groups of 500 and more. Not necessarily because the venues don't exist, but because they are occupied, dated or capital improvements haven't been made. Great Falls is competing against 400 other communities in the United States for the same business. They don't have to come here.

When HVAC systems are not improved, when technology isn't available, and when the capital improvements haven't been made to properties in over 20 plus years, people who book nationally and internationally know that and it causes Great Falls the inability to land some of that business.

Commissioner Wolff encouraged everyone to see the local, top quality production from the Great Falls Theater – Fiddler on the Roof.

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

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Motion carried 5-0.

20. 2025-2029 CDBG & HOME CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN.

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

ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman reported that CDBG and HOME programs are federal programs administered by HUD to help fund local community development programs including affordable housing, public service agency assistance, economic development and public infrastructure projects. The primary goal of these programs is to assist low and moderate income (LMI) persons in Great Falls. State and local governments receive funding from HUD based on a formula derived from population and housing statistics. HUD requires public input, especially input from lower income citizens and the agencies representing them, on issues and needs of the community.

For the development of the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan, the City choose to work with a consultant who specializes in CDBG planning. The City contracted with Community and Policy Advisors, LLC to prepare the draft Consolidated Plan and help staff through the public consultation process. As part of the requirements of public consultation, the consultant put together a community survey that City staff distributed to known local advocates, as well as posting to the City website and social media pages. The survey received over 500 responses, and provided many useful comments. The City also hosted a Community Housing Work Group on March 26, and a Community Needs Work Group on April 16. Both these meetings were well attended with 20-30 individuals, both in person and online; and provided great input and discussion from community members.

For the Consolidated Plan itself, the consultant updated data throughout the plan to reflect the new timeframe, updating the City Department to Finance, and updating the demographic information from their research. Much of the demographic data is based on the 2020 Census and American Community Survey Data. The biggest change in terms of Goals, is the combination of updated goal outcomes and updated five-year funding amounts. For example, Fair Housing was included in the public service goal, and Affordable Housing was also joined with Housing Rehabilitation. The dollar amounts assigned to each goal has been updated somewhat based on the data analysis and public input. These goals are specifically broad and not based on anticipated projects, as it offers the City a large amount of flexibility to fund a variety of projects and align with the current capacity of city programs already in place, as well as the opportunity to address additional needs, should it arise in any one area. The Consolidated Plan focuses on the following priorities: 1) Public Services, 2) Affordable Housing, 3) Economic Development, 4) Public Facilities and Improvements, 5) Planning and Administration, and 6) CDBG Slum and Blight Removal. The yearly Annual Action Plans will be more specific, calling out anticipated projects and funding amounts.

Based on the survey responses and community partner discussion, affordable housing was the area most wanted to see supported. Therefore, as you will see in the Goals Summary

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Table (SP-45), we have allocated the largest percentage of funds to that goal over the next 5 years. Unfortunately, the total allocation for this goal over the next 5 years amounts to just over 2 million dollars between CDBG and HOME funds. Our yearly allocation for CDBG is estimated to be \$761,417.00 and HOME is estimated at \$226,142.00, for a 5 year combined total of approximately \$4.9 million dollars. With the rising costs of construction and infrastructure installation, that amount is but a drop in the bucket for a lot of projects. Therefore, to leverage these funds to help the maximum amount of people, staff has to focus on ways to implement this funding quickly and spread it across the community as best we can. These funds should really be looked at as part of a blended funding mechanism, rather than a sole source, for larger projects especially.

The consultant also helped the City revise the Citizen Participation Plan. This revision will streamline the public notification process. The biggest change is what is defined as a "substantial amendment". A substantial amendment is now defined as a "Change in allocation priorities of more than 20%; Carrying out new program activities that do not meet the goals identified in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan; Change in purpose or scope of activities identified in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan." The purpose of changing this is to reduce the administrative burden of having to put amended plans out for the 30-day public review process unless they fall into these categories

City staff presented these plans at the May 20, 2025, commission meeting and made the draft plans available for public review at that time. These plans have been available for longer than the required 30-day comment period and staff has not received any comments on the draft plans. Staff is confident these plans represent a good path for administering CDBG and HOME funds for the next 5 years, based on the community's needs, and recommends adopting the final draft of the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan and Citizen Participation Plan.

Mayor Reeves asked if the Commissioners had any questions of ARPA Project Manager Tarman.

Mayor Reeves inquired how many dollars are set aside for blight removal.

ARPA Project Manager Tarman responded that \$200,000 is set aside for the next five years.

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in support of the 2025-2029 CDBG & HOME Consolidated Plan and Citizen Participation Plan.

Cari Yturri, Development Director at Family Promise, commented that there is a big problem, especially for single wage earners, to find homes. She urged the majority of funds to be spent on affordable housing.

Sherrie Arey, Executive Director for NeighborWorks Great Falls, would like to see that housing through CDBG and HOME be the priority. The amount for slum and blight is not enough. The only way in some downtown areas to create affordable housing is to be

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able to partner with the City to use CDBG funds to remove a blight and be able to put in a new home. She encouraged the Commission to continue to put more funds into homes and to use every tool possible to make sure that housing production continues.

Brett Doney, Great Falls Development Alliance, commented he thinks this is the best plan that the City's had since he has been here. It is commendable to spread the money as widely as possible. However, he suggested focusing the money on one to three projects a year to get more bang for the buck. He also noted that HUD has made the use of CDBG funds for economic development very difficult. He suggested that allocation could be shifted to housing.

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public in opposition to the 2025-2029 CDBG & HOME Consolidated Plan and Citizen Participation Plan.

Jeni Dodd, City resident, commented that she has issues with this whole program due to a lack of transparency. She has been seeking program records from subrecipient Great Falls Development Alliance for more than two years and has not received any records. As a federal taxpayer, she wants to know where this money is going and what it is being used for.

There being no one further to address the Commission, Mayor Reeves closed the public hearing and asked the will of the Commission.

Commissioner Wolff moved, seconded by Commissioner Tryon, that the City Commission adopt the final draft of the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan and Citizen Participation Plan.

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

Commissioner Wolff expressed appreciation to ARPA Project Manager Tarman for the extensive conversation today. She noted that a lot of entities came together for the Baatz Building, and that project will be an amazing change for downtown and for some most needy citizens. She envisioned a project where all the Continuum of Care entities came together and used all of their resources for better outcomes. She encouraged the entities to find common goals and make things happen.

Commissioner Wilson commented that she has seen a lot of housing projects come before the Commission. She could not afford to move into any of those projects the Commission has approved the past couple of years. Great Falls needs more affordable housing. There are people who are working and living in their cars because of the lack of affordable housing.

Commissioner McKenney inquired of Ms. Yturri what she meant by - there is a big challenge for single wage earners.

Ms. Yturri clarified it is virtually impossible for single wage earners with children to find affordable housing. This is a nationwide challenge.

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Commissioner Tryon reiterated that the total amount for the five-year plan is \$4.9 million. This year would comprise approximately \$777,000 in CDBG funds and \$230,000 in HOME funds. What he is hearing is that the priority should be focused on housing.

ARPA Project Manager Tarman responded that of the six goals, housing has the largest funding.

Commissioner Tryon inquired about opportunities and restrictions that HUD puts on leveraging CDBG funds with private money. CDBG is not going to take care of housing - low-income or otherwise.

ARPA Project Manager Tarman explained that the hard part is trying to solely fund a project, because CDBG funds cannot be used for planning, architecture, or engineering fees. That is when it helps to partner with operations like Family Promise or NeighborWorks. Those organizations can get through the planning stages. The City comes in as a supplementary funding mechanism.

Commissioner Tryon inquired if the City could only partner with non-profits or if it could partner with privately funded developments.

ARPA Project Manager Tarman responded that, if the City helps support a project, there is a period of affordability. That requires them to keep rents or sale prices to a certain threshold, which is 80% of the median area income. A lot of private entities are in it for profit. At those rates, that project will not pencil out.

Because of the minimal funding the City receives, Commissioner Tryon commented that having one big CDBG project as has been suggested wouldn't fully address the housing that is needed.

Because of restrictions, reporting and monitoring, ARPA Project Manager Taman noted that it is easier to focus on rehabilitation of existing units to keep existing units habitable.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

21. RIVER'S EDGE TRAIL CONNECTOR AGREEMENT AMENDMENT #1.

Planning and Community Development Deputy Director Lonnie Hill reported that this item is a request to amend the existing 2019 agreement for the River's Edge Trail

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Connector project along River Drive South from Broadwater Bay north to the Electric City Water Park.

This trail project, which began planning in 2016, effectively fills the gap along the river, creating a straight and direct connection between the segment of trail that runs south of Broadwater Bay and the trail running north past the Weissman Pedestrian Bridge.

Currently, the route runs off the river through the police station parking lot, confusing visitors and new trail users, as well as causing conflict between vehicles, trains, and trail users.

This project is a collaboration between the City of Great Falls, the River's Edge Trail Foundation, and the Montana Department of Transportation.

The project includes the realignment of River Drive South as it passes under the railroad crossing.

The proposed amendment is necessary to outline revised financial commitments, which are shown on the table on page #273 of the agenda packet.

The original cost of the project was estimated to be \$1.9 million in 2019. The current estimate is approximately \$5.2 million.

Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) dollars through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) make up a bulk of the difference, but the State of Montana has also stepped up to contribute \$180,000.

The City's contribution has also increased from \$265,214 to \$522,000 (a difference of \$256,786). These funds have been budgeted by the Park & Recreation Department's list of Maintenance Projects for FY2026.

Commissioner Wilson moved, seconded by Commissioner Wolff, that the City Commission approve Agreement Amendment #1 with the Montana Department of Transportation for the River's Edge Trail Connector project along River Drive South.

Mayor Reeves asked if there were any comments from the public.

Rebecca Engum, Great Falls Montana Tourism, 15 Overlook Drive, commented that the opportunity that this project provides, not just for leisure travelers and tourism, is the sports segment to expand opportunities for races and competitive sports that don't exist now because of the way the trail is set up. She added that Great Falls Development Alliance commissioned a recreation and entertainment market assessment. In the current market findings report, there is indication that there is strong potential for recreation and natural environment opportunities. This project fits with that, so the commitment for the City to step up with all the other partners to make this happen is incredible.

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Brett Doney, Great Falls Development Alliance, commented that GFDA is excited this project is moving forward. He added this project is a big public safety improvement.

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

Mayor Reeves noted the skyrocketing costs – six years ago this was about a \$2 million dollar project and now it is \$5.2 million.

Commissioner Wolff added that the realignment of some of the path is to help save additional costs, especially if it were going to be further out along the river.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

22. LABOR AGREEMENT BETWEEN CITY OF GREAT FALLS AND CITY OF GREAT FALLS PUBLIC EMPLOYEES CRAFTS COUNCIL FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2025 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2027.

Human Resources Director Gaye McInerney reported that there are two collective bargaining agreements before the Commission. The City began the collective bargaining season in April of 2025.

These two collective bargaining agreements represent three and four of seven contracts. As a reminder the seven contracts represent 11 unions covering approximately 350 employees or 75% of the City's workforce. The first collective bargaining agreement is for the City of Great Falls Public Employees Crafts Council which consists of 116 employees across four departments of Administration, Library, Park and Recreation and Public Works. The two negotiating teams worked to update and clarify contractual language and came to consensus. Key items of change include (1) the term of the agreement for two years from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027; (2) Annual health insurance premiums will be shared with the City paying 80 (eighty) percent and the employee paying 20 (twenty) percent; (3) Article 36 was added which states employees may not be under the influence of or impaired by alcohol or controlled substances while on duty. All Crafts members are subject to random drug testing as referenced in Section 8 of the Personnel Policy Manual; (4) Two positions were added - Maintenance Worker III – one in each of the Operators, Teamsters and Laborers unions, and Senior Vehicle Services Mechanic – one in each of the Machinists and Operators unions.

In addition, the FY26 and FY27 wage schedules reflect targeted market adjustments based on a competitive market wage study as follows: Laborers – 2 percent, Teamsters – 3 percent, Operators – 4 percent, and Machinists – 7 percent, as well as a cost of living increase of 3 percent and a health insurance adjustment of 1 percent for each year of the two-year contract was negotiated.

The financial impact of the targeted market adjustments, cost of living increase of three percent and a health insurance adjustment of one percent for the term of the two-year contract is approximately \$1,115,140.

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Commissioner Wolff moved, seconded by Commissioner Tryon, that the City Commission approve the labor agreement between the City of Great Falls and the City of Great Falls Public Employees Crafts Council for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027.

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 McKenney inquired if Article 36 was in the previous labor agreements and is it going to be in all the negotiated agreements.

Director McInerney responded that they are attempting to negotiate a clause similar to Article 36 in all the agreements. A couple of the agreements already had that language in place. Before the Commission tonight is the first agreement that they were successful in bargaining it in.

Commissioner McKenney received clarification that that the health insurance adjustment of one percent was to help ease the transition to the 80/20% split.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

23. LABOR AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS AND THE MONTANA FEDERATION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES (MFPE), CITY OF GREAT FALLS 911 PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS OFFICERS, LOCAL #8541 FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2025 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2027.

Human Resources Director Gaye McInerney reported that this item is the labor agreement between the City of Great Falls and MFPE City of Great Falls 911 Public Safety Communications Officers, Local #8541, which currently consists of 11 employees.

Members of the negotiating teams worked to update basic contractual language to make the Agreement clearer, more understandable and consistent. This included grammatical corrections, updating wording to reflect current terminology and referencing applicable policies throughout the agreement. Key items of change include: (1) a contract term of two years from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027; (2) annual health insurance premiums will be shared with the City paying 80 (eighty) percent and the employee paying 20 (twenty) percent; and addition of a Lead PSCO position at a Grade 38.

The FY26 and FY27 wage schedule reflects a market adjustment of five percent, a cost of living increase of three percent and a health insurance adjustment of one percent for each year of the two-year contract.

The financial impact of a market adjustment, cost of living increase and health insurance adjustment for the term of the two-year contract is approximately \$139,000.

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She concluded that this was the second contract that came to consensus in less than five hours, and that it contains similar language as Article 36 referenced in the previous agreement.

Commissioner Wolff moved, seconded by Commissioner Tryon, that the City Commission approve the labor agreement between the City of Great Falls and the Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE), City of Great Falls 911 Public Safety Communications Officers, Local #8541 for the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027.

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 commented that this entity is so critical to everyone in this community, and the difficulty of being able to attract people to these job and retain them. She is pleased with the agreement.

Commissioner Wilson commented that she has spent a couple of shifts at the 911 Center and those are the hardest working people under the most stressful conditions. They deserve all they can get.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS

24. ORDINANCE 3276, ASSIGNING PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) ZONING TO LOT 1 OF THE MERCEDES MINOR SUBDIVISION AS REQUESTED BY KARL BIRKY WITH KIB HOMES FOR THE PROPOSED PEACE HARBOR PHASE 1 MAJOR SUBDIVISION.

Planning and Community Development Deputy Director Lonnie Hill reported that this item is a request that the Commission set a public hearing for August 19th, 2025, to consider annexation, assignment of planned unit development (PUD) zoning, and preliminary plat for the proposed Peace Harbor Phase 1 major subdivision.

The applicant, Karl Birky of KIB Homes, proposes to establish a 67-lot single-family residential development to be constructed in two phases.

The applicant requests PUD zoning due to the proposed lot sizes of the development. The subdivision will include lots ranging in size from approximately 5,200 to 12,200 square feet.

The range in lot sizes supports a more diverse residential housing development, creating options for buyers, as well as making more efficient use of the land and public infrastructure.

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Tonight's action is not to approve or deny the request, but only to formally schedule the required public hearing for August 19th.

Commissioner Wilson moved, seconded by Commissioner Wolff, that the City Commission accept Ordinance 3276 on first reading and set a public hearing on for August 19, 2025.

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

Hearing none, Mayor Reeves called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

CITY COMMISSION

25. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Commissioner Wolff commented that she continues to see and hear comments about the Rocky Mountain Building. It is impacting downtown business people, their businesses and people wanting to be downtown.

26. COMMISSION INITIATIVES.

Commissioner Tryon requested clarification on the actions it will be taking following this evening's work session.

Manager Doyon responded that the Commission will be polled on its availability based on the absolute last dates for the Commission to put together a question to the voters on fireworks.

Staff will provide a basic draft question, and draft ordinance based off other communities in Montana.

The Commission will meet in a work session. Additional information will be provided from public safety staff pertaining to enforcement, hear more from the public, and then the Commission can decide if it wants to take action either way.

Commissioner Tryon inquired if the Commission could make amendments at the work session.

Manager Doyon responded, if the Commission chose to put it on a ballot, the last date is August 11, 2025.

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Commissioner Tryon reiterated that the Commission has the option of putting it on the ballot or not putting it on the ballot, and retain the option at first reading to amend the resolution as provided by staff for the second reading and final vote.

Commissioner Wolff requested an update from Planning staff of all of the housing developments, and where they are at in the process, that the Commission has approved.

Planning and Community Development Deputy Director Hill responded that he could update a map with current information.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, **Commissioner Tryon moved, seconded by Mayor Reeves, to adjourn the regular meeting of July 15, 2025, at 8:40 p.m.**

Motion carried 5-0.

Mayor Cory Reeves

City Clerk Lisa Kunz

Minutes Approved: August 5, 2025