

Commission Work Session Meeting 7/15/2025

To: Mayor commissioners, city staff

Ron Paulick, 708 56th St So, GF

Email dated: July 11, 2025

Titled: Utility Rates Increased to Fund Infrastructure Needs

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: City Commission, citycommissioners@greatfallsmt.net Utility Billing Office, 406-727-7660

Email Section: Planning for the Future

The adopted rate structure includes a new Capital Improvements Fund (targeted at \$2 million per year) to prepare water, sewer, and storm drain infrastructure to support new jobs, development, and housing. The cost of new public infrastructure and access to the current service areas has long been identified by the City as a significant barrier to growth. This funding will allow the City to partner with developers, through a public process, to construct new utility infrastructure. The intent is to move the dial on Great Falls' slow growth, to increase the City's property tax base, create new jobs, and attract businesses and housing desired by residents.

Concern 1: The basics.

a) What city department will be responsible for handling this specific fund? Will that department need additional employees especially for the expected city of growth? Will the Fund include any size development even single family homes? Will it be for any industries? Will the Fund have a drop dead date?

Concern 2: "The adopted rate structure includes a new Capital Improvements Fund..."

a) It seems this Fund is outside the scope of utility rate increases. Such increases cover usage and maintenance costs. Shouldn't this Fund have been a separate ask from the public, like a levy? The law about rate increases does specify infrastructure. However, in my thinking, that infrastructure is referring to existing stuff. Not infrastructure in the future.

Concern 3: "This funding will allow the City to partner with developers...through a public process... to construct new utility infrastructure."

a) What will these partnerships look like? Will all of them be different? I assume "Public process" means no difference than the usual "Resolution" process. So it includes competitive bidding between how many companies? Would this be a city utility infrastructure construction cost for a private development? Are public funds paying for standard private development construction costs? How will the Fund's money be used to offset future utility rate increases? Or will they ever?

Concern 4: The word "Fund"

a) I did not see or find a link to a pdf file that allows the public to review this Fund. However, thanks for providing the Utility Billing Office phone number. I hope, when I call, they can provide that link.