

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION**  
**August 5, 2025 – City Commission Work Session**  
**Civic Center, Gibson Room 212 -- Mayor Reeves Presiding**

**CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM**

**ROLL CALL/STAFF INTRODUCTIONS:**

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

Also present were City Manager Greg Doyon and Interim Deputy City Manager Bryan Lockerby, City Attorney David Dennis, Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, Park and Recreation Interim Director Jessica Compton, Park Manager Kevin Vining and Forester Todd Seymanski, Police Captain Brian Black, and Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Brett Doney**, Great Falls Development Alliance (GFDA) President and CEO, commented that GFDA supports allocation of tax credits, market rate housing development and subsidized housing including Carter Commons, Baatz Building and Timmer Apartment project. Great Falls Association of Realtors is hosting a housing event on August 7, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. and will have a potential developer from out of town announce another large-scale affordable housing project. Mr. Doney expressed appreciation to the Planning and Community Development and Public Works departments for being helpful working through some of the issues with this project.

Mr. Doney further commented that improvements to parks are important because they attract manufacturers, are a modest investment, pay off in tax base because it improves property values, and helps retain and attract the workforce.

**Ben Forsyth**, City resident, commented that the City Commission is currently breaking about four or five laws to allow harms to the people of the City of Great Falls. Mr. Forsyth provided and discussed handouts about laws to ensure the safety of marijuana and marijuana products. Mr. Forsyth opined that the Commission is aware of the harms that are created, documented hospitalization, Police Department and County Sheriff harms. He commented that City Code 17.4.050 states that this title is established to promote public health, safety, and welfare. There are tremendous increases in crime, as much as 84% in one year, and approximately 250 hospitalizations a month. Montana Code Annotated 16.12.108 (j) (2021) states that this chapter does not permit conduct that endangers others. He commented that a lot of people are being endangered by allowing the harms of marijuana. The Police Chief and Sheriff can tell the City Commission about the tremendous volume of increase of violent

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felonies related to drug abuse and drug use. Mr. Forsyth read 16.12.301 subsection (2) (a) from a handout that stated, “to protect the public health, safety, or welfare, a local government may by ordinance or otherwise regulate a marijuana business that operates within the local government’s jurisdictional area in order to ensure compliance with any public health, safety, and welfare requirements established by the department or the local government.” He further read from Montana Code Annotated 2021 76.2.304 that stated, “zoning regulations must be designed to promote public health, public safety, and the general welfare of the people.” Mr. Forsyth added that these are laws that the City Commission is breaking and people are suffering because of this. He is not running for office or here to make money and this is costing him thousands out of his own pocket. He is here to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people by reducing the harms of marijuana.

**Ron Paulick**, City resident, commented that marijuana industries are multi-million-dollar businesses. In many instances when there is a lot of money involved, there are a lot of problems that come along with it. Proof of this is agenda item two of this work session, the opioid situation, and that is what marijuana may or does push the City further into. Referring to agenda item 18, Resolution 10592 a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow marijuana cultivation at tonight’s commission meeting, Mr. Paulick provided and discussed a 2020 Federal Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration Drug Fact Sheet Marijuana/Cannabis and How to Increase THC When Growing Weed handouts. He commented that achieving high drug potency levels when they are above laws creates black market activities. These activities generate millions of untaxed dollars, whether they are products of drugs or marijuana.

**Beth Morrison**, City resident, expressed concern about the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) being considered for a marijuana cultivation facility at 748 Crescent Circle. Ms. Morrison commented that although the applicant has met the requirements laid out in the City Code, she believes the proposal raises important questions about long-term impacts for the site and how CUP’s are applied throughout the City. This site sits near residential areas and is in a corridor that already has two marijuana dispensaries. Adding a cultivation facility to this area represents a significant intensification of cannabis related uses. There has been an uneven distribution of marijuana businesses, particularly along 6<sup>th</sup> Street Southwest and it may be time to revisit the City’s zoning rules that would cap the number of marijuana related businesses aloud in a given zoning district or require greater spacing between such facilities. Even modest changes could help preserve the balance and predictability for the long term. The CUP process is meant to provide flexibility; it also assumes that exceptions will be made with care and discretion. If they become too frequent, it may undermine the public’s trust in the City’s zoning process and might reduce clarity for both residents and businesses. She hopes the Commission considers these broader implications carefully when it makes its decision. This permit is about more than one project; it is about how development is guided in the community.

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## **WORK SESSION ITEMS**

### **1. PARK MAINTENANCE DISTRICT 1 PROJECT RECAP**

Park and Recreation Interim Director Jessica Compton reported that the Park Maintenance District (PMD) was initially thought of during a master plan that was provided for the City Park and Recreation. It was done about 10 years ago and one of the recommendations was that Park and Rec provide a maintenance district to create a sustainable funding source. Maintenance, repair, upkeep, implementation for public safety, purchasing, replacing equipment, labor, materials and staffing were areas of focus. The Park Maintenance District started in 2019 and will end in 2039.

Money was held during the Scheels Aim High Big Sky Aquatic and Recreation Center (SAHBS) project in case there was a shortfall in funding; however, none of the money collected for the PMD went towards building SAHBS.

Interim Director Compton reviewed and discussed PowerPoint slides (available in the City Clerk's Office). Highlights included:

- The history of the Park Maintenance District:
  - Purpose of Park Maintenance.
  - Park and Recreation Master Plan - 2026.
  - 20 Years – 35% Plan Completed.
- Revenues and Expenses:
  - \$10,470,394 Collected to Date.
  - \$7,480,812 Spent to Date.
  - \$1,500,000 average yearly.
  - % of total tax evaluation of property.
  - 2024 \$19.26 per every \$100,000.
  - No PMD monies used to fund facility operations.
- Because there is PMD:
  - Repair and Maintenance – Vandalism.
  - 10 Minute walk to parks.

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- Tree Trimming and Planting.
- Irrigation and Turf Maintenance.
- New and replaced Playgrounds in Parks.
- Open facilities indoor and outdoor.
- Priorities to Project List:
  - Deferred Maintenance.
  - Deterioration and Age.
  - Certified Inspection Reports.
  - Community growth and service requests.
- Completed Project Highlights:
  - Oddfellows and Lions Park Bathrooms \$597,695.
  - Playground and Sport Court at Jaycee Park \$263,548.
  - Asphalt Seal Coat Machine \$28,090.
  - Forestry Equipment \$261,679.
  - Sport Court upgrades \$148,942.
- Recurring Projects:
  - Turf Maintenance \$100,226.
  - Tree Trimming and Planting \$41,976.
  - Irrigation \$561,298.
  - Labor Full-time and Part-time \$1,123,564.
- Proposed FY 2026:
  - Construction and Renovations \$243,000.
  - Irrigation \$99,000.
  - Equipment \$88,000.

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- Turf Maintenance \$107,000.
- Rivers Edge Trail Matching Funds \$295,000.
- FY 2027 Beyond:
  - Playground and Pavilions – Replace or New Installation.
  - Irrigation – Automated in remaining #54 Parks/Master Valves.
  - Equipment/Materials – Liquid Fertilization Station.
  - Sport Courts – 24 Court upgrades.
  - Trails – Hard Surface replacement with concrete.
- Project Partners:
  - Grants.
  - Foundations and Associations.
  - Private Donors.
- Find updates on Future Projects and Completed Projects on website at:
  - [Greatfallsmt.net/recreation](http://Greatfallsmt.net/recreation).

Mayor Reeves inquired if more lighting in parks would help reduce vandalism and criminal behavior.

Interim Director Compton responded that lights in parks encourage people to be there at night.

Parks Manager Kevin Vining added that having lights in parks is a risk/reward type of decision to make. Motion lights have been considered; however, it would require an ordinance change.

Commissioner Tryon inquired if the watering schedule for parks could be adjusted if there was a deluge the prior evening.

Parks Manager Vining responded that the irrigation system is not centralized yet, each park has its own clock, and shutting down each system in 57 parks would be labor intensive.

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Mayor Reeves received clarification that four parks have automated irrigation systems, and PMD funds could potentially be used to upgrade irrigation systems in other parks.

Commissioner Wolff expressed appreciation to Park and Recreation staff for their efforts with regard to the new trees in Gibson Park and giving people the option of the types of trees to be planted.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that no PMD funds were used for the operations of SAHBS. He inquired if PMD funds for operations of SAHBS could be used in the future.

City Manager Greg Doyon responded that PMD funds cannot be used for normal operations for SAHBS.

Finance Director Melissa Kinzler added that the PMD is not for programing and is used for maintenance of parks and Park and Recreation facilities.

Commissioner Tryon requested City staff to provide the Commission with information about whether maintaining the pool at SAHBS would be considered maintenance. He is concerned that in the future, there could possibly be a need to ask for more money from the PMD to subsidize parts of SAHBS.

Finance Director Kinzler responded that there is actual revenue of \$1.5 million a year in the PMD and that assessment has never been increased. There is a debt service for SAHBS of over \$700,000 and approximately \$300,000 is paid for current employees from Natural Resources and park employees to maintain parks. There is not that much additional revenue available every year to be able to use it and approximately \$500,000 every year is used to do specific projects.

Commissioner Tryon mentioned that a certified lifeguard told him that that they applied to be a lifeguard for the Water Tower Pool and was turned down. Commissioner Tryon's assumption was that the individual was not hired because a decision had been made to close the Water Tower Pool and there was no longer a need for lifeguards. He wondered why the City would not hire someone who was certified to be a lifeguard when there was a shortage of lifeguards.

Park and Recreation Interim Director Compton responded that there were maintenance issues with the Water Tower Pool and new standards for hiring lifeguards this year. The pool was drained right when the decision was made to close the Water Tower.

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Commissioner Tryon inquired about the status of the eastside parcel that was traded with the Great Falls School District for a portion of Lion's Park.

City Manager Doyon responded that the purpose of the swap with the School District was to put SAHBS there originally; however, it would have been too cost prohibitive because of the soils. That parcel is city-owned land and has not been identified as a park; however, other opportunities could be explored in the future for that parcel.

Commissioner Wolff expressed appreciation to the Park and Recreation Department for the wonderful and educational tour of the Electric City Water Park.

Commissioner Wilson commented that parks have improved greatly since moving back in 2012 thanks to the PMD. She expressed appreciation to the Parks and Forestry Departments for their efforts regarding the good work they do with PMD funds.

Park and Recreation Interim Director Compton mentioned that one great way PMD funds will be used in the future is Morony Park. CDBG funds and a proposed grant will be used to put in an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access playground and surfacing. Some PMD money will be used to update the irrigation. Morony Park is a community staple.

## **2. OPIOID METRO REGION GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – PROPOSED INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

City Attorney David Dennis reviewed and discussed PowerPoint slides (available in the City Clerk's Office). Highlights included:

- Montana Opioid Settlement Fund Allocation:
  - Local Governments (Participating Entities) 14.2%.
  - Attorney Fee Back-Stop 5.2%.
  - State Allocation (DPHHS & DOJ) 14.2%.
  - Montana Opioid Abatement Trust (MOAT) (Regional and State Projects 66.4%.
- Governance:
  - MOAT Regions:
    - MOAT holds 70% of funds.
    - 80 % of 70% designated for MOAT Regions.

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- Each MOAT Region must form Governance Committee.
- MOAT Region Governance Committee approves proposals.
- MOAT Advisory Committee must release funds for approved uses.
- Local Government:
  - Funds go directly to Local Government.
  - Local Government must form Governance Committee and appoint Fiscal Agent.
  - Local Governance Committee receives and approves proposals.
  - Local Governance Committee distributes funds.
- Interlocal Agreement:
- Governance Committee:
  - Composed of equal members appointed by the Cascade County Commission and the Great Falls City Commission.
  - Each appointing body appointment process.
  - Members serve at the pleasure of the appointing body.
- Committee Responsibilities:
  - Review and recommend approval of regional MOAT applications.
  - May coordinate joint applications between the City and County.
  - Designate a single point of contact with MOAT.
- Individual Applications:
  - Either the City or County may submit separate funding applications independently.
  - These do not require Governance Committee review.
- Meetings and Transparency:
  - Committee meets as needed.



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- All meetings follow Montana's open meetings and public records laws.
- May adopt internal bylaws.

City Attorney Dennis reported that MOAT funds stay with the State, and the City and County are allocated a certain amount of money that goes into that pot, which is approximately \$780,000. Each metro region must form its own Governance Committee to take applications, make decisions on how to allocate funds and reward those dollars. In order to do that, there needs to be an Interlocal Agreement between the City and Cascade County.

A Draft Interlocal Agreement (agreement) has been set up to be as flexible as possible and to have an equal number of members from the County and City appointed to the Governance Committee. The City and County will each appoint its own members to the Governance Committee, and both will have the ability to remove and replace those members.

The agreement is set up so that the Governance Body for the Metro Region will take in applications and the entire body votes on it. The agreement is flexible if the City and County have different priorities on how to award funds. Individual or joint applications could be considered. The agreement allows County or City members to support an application and use the metro funds, even if the other body does not support it. It also allows for the combination of funds from the City Governance body and the Metro Governance body or both entities could do that together.

Mayor Reeves inquired if this Interlocal Agreement style is what other communities are doing.

City Attorney Dennis responded that this is not what other communities have done. The agreement has been set up to create the most flexibility, ensure that the dollars are going to get used and prevent conflicts that might hinder the ability to use these funds in the way they need to be used.

Commissioner Wolff inquired about the status regarding the funds for a diversion place for individuals who are struggling.

City Attorney Dennis responded that those funds were allocated to the Metro Region and are still with the abatement trust. Tonight, he is walking through the proposed outline of what the Interlocal Agreement might look like between the City and County that is needed to set up the Governance body so applications can be taken and funds distributed.

Commissioner Wilson inquired if the County could run off with the money.

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City Attorney Dennis responded that the way he envisioned the structure is that the money is allocated to the City and County in percentages. The City's percentage of money that has been allocated to local governments as a whole against the County's percentage. The City would be limited to being responsible for expending approximately 52% of those funds and the County approximately 48%. If we both agreed together then both could be taken away from us.

Commissioner McKenney commented that he is uncomfortable moving forward tonight and needs more information. He inquired about the term of the agreement and whether both parties would have to agree to terminate the agreement.

City Attorney Dennis responded that the agreement has to run as long as the funds are there. The term would be 10 years; however, at any time during the course of the agreement, there would be a provision if the parties wanted to amend the agreement. Typically, both parties have to agree to amend the agreement, and he believes that is the way this agreement is structured.

City Manager Doyon commented that pursuant to the agreement, it has to be modeled to have the two entities combined, which means the City would have to partner with the County. He inquired if the agreement contemplates direct use to get money released from the MOAT and about the overarching guidance from the State to set the MOAT up that does not doesn't preclude the City from direct access for both pots.

City Attorney Dennis responded that an application would need to be done to get money released from the MOAT and needs to show that the money is being used to mitigate the effects of opioid addiction. With regards to the City's pot, the City can make those awards within the bounds of what it is intended to be used for. For the metro regions, the MOAT itself, the opioid abatement trust, has an oversight function of the regional distribution.

Mayor Reeves inquired if the County Commissioners are in support of this agreement.

City Attorney Dennis responded that he is unaware if the County Commissioners are in support of this agreement and they will be discussing the agreement in the next few days.

After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Commission that as of tonight, it does not have enough information to make a decision to give City Attorney Dennis direction to move forward. The Commission requested that City Attorney Dennis provide clarification at the August 19, 2025 Work Session with regard to the following:

- Feedback from the County Commission.

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- A clearer structure about the governance and the whole process.
- What projects can be funded.
- If an entity can apply to both the MOAT and the local.
- Scenarios of who would be applying and who they would apply to
- Outcome if the City or County do not agree.

Commissioner Wilson received clarification that the City's portion of the MOAT funds is approximately \$230,000 and an email sent to the Commission about a secondary committee that must be formed by the Governance Committee would be sent to City Attorney Dennis.

Commissioner Wolff commented that for the good of the City, there needs to be clarification so things can start getting done. She requested that the City's safety departments be informed about what is happening.

### **DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS**

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that a workforce housing TIF update and Toby's House request for utilizing city property for new facility will be topics for the August 19, 2025 work session.

### **ADJOURN**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of August 5, 2025 at 6:50 p.m.