

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
October 7, 2025 – City Commission Work Session
Civic Center Commission Chambers, Room 206 -- Mayor Reeves Presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM

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, City Attorney David Dennis, Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, Park and Recreation Interim Deputy Director Jessica Compton, Park and Recreation Park Manager Kevin Vining, Public Works Director Chris Gaub, Library Director Susie McIntyre, Assistant Chief of Fire Prevention Mike McIntosh, Police Chief Jeff Newton, and Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jake Clark, Great Falls Development Alliance (GFDA), expressed support of the Voyager Stadium upgrades and project. GFDA has invested heavily in keeping the team here because of the strong, positive economic impact of having a pro baseball team in the community. Mr. Clark urged the Commission to consider these upgrades knowing there is private investment and public-private partnership backing the City's investment. He concluded that this seems like the type of project that the community would benefit from.

Richard Irving, City resident, urged the Commission to take a close look at the library's proposal for a library foundation/city agreement before accepting, amending or rejecting it, because much of it is fictional. Mr. Irving opined that the proposal is different from every previous presentation and most of it is not needed but merely wanted by library management and/or the foundation. The library needs a new air-handling system and to replace plumbing that is failing. He suggested substituting the city manager for the mayor as contact person because the manager has more experience in contracting and financial matters than the mayor.

Ben Forsyth, City resident, commented that he has talked to the Commission 20 times in the last year and has not responded, and people are being hurt and injured because of that. The harms of marijuana are scientifically documented. Marijuana can create nausea, internal disabilities, personality distress, dizziness, chest pain, cardiovascular problems, immunity issues, dementia, schizophrenia, reduction of motivation, personality changes, violent behavior, self-aggrandizement and deaths. Last year in the State of Montana, 19.2% of the deaths on highways from vehicle accidents had marijuana in their blood system. A recent

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research study finds that people who died from COVID-19 in the last year had a higher rate of THC potency in their veins than people who did not die. Mr. Forsyth suggested having a public meeting at the Civic Center with both supporters of marijuana and those who are concerned scientifically about it.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. CENTRAL MONTANA TRANSPORTATION STUDY – ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Sarah Nicolai, Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA), introduced Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Project Manager Jackson Lang and Great Falls District Administrator Jim Wingerter.

Ms. Nicolai reviewed and discussed PowerPoint slides (available in the City Clerk's Office). Highlights included:

- Study Background – What?
 - Comprehensive long-range plan to manage regional transportation system
- Study Background – Why?
 - In response to anticipated impacts from planned development and military activities
- Study Background – How?
 - Pre-MEPA/NEPA study
 - Collaborative process with MDT (including Systems Impact Action Process), FHWA, military, local jurisdictions, resource agencies, and the public
 - Identify transportation needs and potential solutions
- Planning Study – occurs before design, right-of-way acquisition, environmental compliance, and construction.
- Central Montana Study Area – focus of today's presentation – Access Management Plan: Great Falls – 57th Street and US 87/89.
- Why is MDT conducting access management? Access management along the 57th Street and US 87/89 corridors in Great Falls is a high priority given

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activities at Malmstrom Air Force Base and other development planned in the area. MDT is addressing this as a first task in the study.

- What is Access Management? Access Management helps preserve the function and character of highways by facilitating efficient traffic flow, improving safety, and consistently managing existing and future access to maintain mobility. An Access Management Plan provides guidance as development, redevelopment, and new highway construction projects occur.
- Access Management Principles:
 - o Limit the number of conflict points
 - o Provide separation between conflict areas
 - o Reduce interference with through traffic
 - o Provide sufficient spacing between at-grade intersections
 - o Reduce conflicting volumes
 - o Improve roadway and driveway operations
- Access Management Methods
 - o Consolidate/Eliminate Approaches
 - o Shared Accesses on Property Line
 - o Frontage/Rear Access
 - o Relocate Access for Corner Lots to Side Street
 - o Cross Access Between Adjacent Properties
 - o Cross Access Through Parking Lots
- Implementation will occur over time based on new development, changes in property status as owners redevelop or expand, local initiatives and partnerships with businesses, communities, local governments and available funding. Currently there are no planned state or federal construction projects or identified funding with the sole purpose of implementing access management.
- There were public open houses in June 2025, landowner notifications, public review period and informational presentations to the City and Cascade

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County. The draft plan is posted at:
mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/centralmt/documents.aspx

- Access Management Plan Recommendations

Commissioner McKenney received clarification that if the proposed development moves forward as anticipated, the traffic volume will increase on 57th Street and the existing accesses and will need to be looked at to make sure travel on 57th is safe and efficient. There is no dedicated funding identified for any of the improvements that were identified for this study. However, MDT has different pots of money and is looking for different partnership opportunities to help fund some of these improvements.

MDT Great Falls District Administrator Jim Wingerter added that funding is an important part of what MDT does and is in the process of finalizing a five-year temporary construction plan. Until MDT has something identified, it won't have any funding designation for a project until MDT puts it into its TCP. High priority projects can be moved up the list and different funding pots could be utilized.

With regard to the "Central Montana Study Area" slide, Commissioner McKenney further received clarification that the entire green bubble outlined in the dashed line is the whole study area encompassed within the Central Montana Transportation Study. That roughly corresponds to the missile fields for Malmstrom AFB and both the active and inactive missile fields are being considered for reusing some of the missile silos near the Shelby area.

Commissioner Wolff expressed appreciation to RPA and MDT for being proactive and looking to the future rather than trying to fix something after things have started.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that the Access Management Plan will be completed in the coming months, and the overall Central Montana Transportation Study will extend through 2026. He expressed appreciation to Ms. Nicolai for making the distinction that a lot of Central Montana would not pertain to things within the City's purview.

Ms. Nicolai added that there is an advisory committee that is supporting the study and Planning and Community Development Senior Transportation Planner Andrew Finch and his staff are participating in that process. The advisory committee has the opportunity to review all draft materials, provide input and feedback, and make sure the community values and priorities are considered before it goes out to the public and before a more polished draft is presented to the Commission.

Commission Wilson commented that this was a thorough presentation and she likes that this would be implemented over time and business owners would not be asked to give money to do these access points right away.

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2. LIBRARY FOUNDATION'S CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND FUNDRAISING PLAN

Great Falls Library Foundation Executive Director Brianne Laurin reviewed and discussed PowerPoint slides (available in the City Clerk's Office). Highlights included:

- The current building opened in 1967; GFPL Foundation incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 in 1968.
- Purpose of Foundation is to provide additional support for Library materials and programs not covered by taxpayer dollars.
- Master Plan conducted in 2022 revealed the need for major building infrastructure and systems updates; deferred maintenance can only last so long!
- The Foundation has made important steps in understanding feasibility and capacity to launch a campaign.
- Only through a multi-channeled, years-long fundraising approach with dedicated community support is this possible.
- Enhanced Entry – self-checks, community programming and automatic material processor.
- Unity Stair
- Cordingly Room
- Adult Fiction
- Teen Zone – gaming/coding, collaborative reading and private study.
- Experiential Kids – experiential play and exploratory reading.
- Interactive Kids – story time and kids tech and innovation suite.
- Twin Elevators
- Adult Innovation Suite – recording room, notary public, computer/internet center and digital creation.
- Non-Fiction/Reference – community meeting space, collaborative reading and private and team study.

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- Montana – research suite, historic Montana high density archive and genealogy high density archive.
- Community – book sale and multi-use gallery and casual event.
- Draft Letter of Agreement.

Ms. Laurin reported that at its September board meeting, the library board voted to approve the draft letter of agreement with the understanding that there will be revisions by the City Commission that will be represented to them at their October board meeting for final approval, along with the foundation board. We are entering a “leadership phase” of a campaign where she and her team, along with the board at the foundation, will be working to secure early and inspiring gifts from individuals, foundations and corporations. The success of this campaign will ultimately depend on the community coming together to support this project when a public phase is launched in approximately 18 months.

Mayor Reeves inquired about the process with regard to signing the letter of agreement.

City Manager Doyon responded that there are still revisions that need to occur in the letter of agreement. The Commission could ask questions tonight with regard to the intent behind the letter of agreement and it could be added to the next commission meeting if there is a majority consensus. However, the Commission would not have a chance to review any of the changes. The other option would be to have another work session to look at a finalized version from the library and foundation board and add it to the following commission meeting.

Commissioner Wolff suggested that the Commission see the final version at a work session and move it to the following commission meeting. She commented that the library is known as a “third space” where people of all generations can gather and believes it is going to be a place that will be well utilized in the upcoming years. She appreciates having multiple meeting spaces and extra natural light.

Commissioner McKenney commented that he appreciated that this will not require additional taxpayer funding. This is for a great cause and is a template for how local government may have to work in the future. He inquired how the foundation concluded that this was a need and that it could do it.

Ms. Laurin responded that the library was able to undergo a master planning process in 2022 and engaged with an organization called Rethinking Libraries that did an assessment of the library and its ability to serve the community, including building infrastructure, HVAC system, electrical and accessibility. That assessment informed the library’s strategic plan from 2023 to 2026 of creating a safe and accessible library

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that will serve the community for the next 50 years. The foundation board invested in supporting the library's need by hiring an outside consultant that did a confidential planning study and researched the history of giving to the foundation. With all of this careful planning, the foundation board believes it has the capabilities of reaching approximately \$13 million.

Commissioner Tryon commented that the Letter of Agreement needs some revisions including the responsibilities and expectations of the City of Great Falls. He inquired if there would be any additional operational costs that would be a result of this, because that would be taxpayer funded, and if the city would be responsible for any potential litigation that might arise from construction.

Ms. Laurin responded that there is no technical data available at this time about what the savings would be; however, the intention is to have better outlets, lighting, heating and cooling that have better energy costs. The square footage does not expand, and the current square footage would be used better. The architects have incorporated any sort of technology that would reduce the utility and operational costs and knowing that would need to be maintained within the budget of the library.

With regard to the City's responsibilities, Ms. Laurin stated that City Attorney David Dennis had flagged the word "shall not" and it would be changed in the next version of the Letter of Agreement. This version is to keep things moving forward and there would be a much further developed Memorandum of Understanding between the City, Library Foundation and Library Board that outlines the whole construction process. Part b of 4.3 of the Draft Letter of Agreement was intended to state that if the Commission approves this, it is with knowing that the Foundation has guaranteed the funds for the contract and a Request for Proposals (RFP) will not be put out without knowing that the project is possible.

Commissioner Wilson expressed appreciation for the efforts that went into the design because Library Director Susie McIntosh put a lot of effort into getting what the community wanted and for Ms. Laurin's experience with leading the Foundation.

It was the consensus of the Commission to have another work session to look at a finalized version of the letter of agreement and move it to the following Commission meeting.

3. FUNDING REQUEST FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS AT VOYAGER'S STADIUM

City Manager Greg Doyon explained that the city has had a long-standing relationship with the Voyagers Baseball Club, and the stadium has had a lot of needs over the years. In June 2003, the City Commission approved approximately \$436,000 through an interfund/Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

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combination to address some issues. In February 2010, there was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed, and the city committed approximately \$345,000 to put towards an investment that the Voyager's were making also into the facility. Some of that came from Park Trust and a loan from Central Garage. The Voyager's had some operating difficulties in 2020 and asked for a rent reduction, which was denied by the Commission at that time. In November 2022, there was an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation of approximately \$600,000 for field work at the facility.

The request tonight is for concrete repair and box seat and safety netting replacement. The conversation about these items started in 2021 and over the last year, the former Park and Recreation Director had conversations with the Voyagers about adding these projects on to the Park Maintenance District fund. It was decided to delay use of this fund because of the Scheels Aim High Big Sky Aquatic and Recreation Center project. There was a change in leadership at Park and Recreation and in the priorities about what projects went on the Park Maintenance District list.

There is funding available in the Park Maintenance District for the projects at the Voyager's Stadium; however, it could potentially defer projects down the road. The Baseball Club is in a deficit and may not be able to contribute, which is why they are making this funding request.

The City needs a new lease with the Baseball Club and to possibly look at the facility itself in some sort of assessment because it is a community asset; however, there is no agreed upon capital improvement plan. Selling the property to the Baseball Club could also be a possible consideration. If the Baseball Club decided that it could not do this anymore, the city would not be able to run that facility.

Great Falls Voyagers President Scott Reasoner explained that the Baseball Club is about to hit the 80th year operating at that facility and the areas discussed tonight are original to the stadium. The Baseball Club is responsible for all the maintenance, bills, and operating the facility and field. Those costs are quite extensive and have increased over the past five years.

Mr. Reasoner requested funding assistance from the Park Maintenance District to help with certain life safety issues at the facility. The facility is home for 48 Voyager games; however, his organization also lets the Legion program use the facility rent free and offered it at no cost to the public schools. This is a community park owned by the city in the Park District and probably the most attended and used park in the city. This past year there were approximately 100,000 visitors at the baseball stadium for all events and activities, and the stadium has been donated for a haunted house to Malmstrom AFB. There are few of those third public spaces where everyone can gather and the baseball stadium is one of those last truly community spaces. The Voyager's organization has made sure it stays affordable in the community and if this project gets approved, prices will be lowered for Voyager games.

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Mr. Reasoner explained that the proposal included concrete repair, box seat replacement and safety netting replacement. The concrete throughout the stadium has significantly deteriorated, and the supporting structures for the box seating are in a similar state of disrepair. These conditions represent a serious safety liability for both the Voyagers organization and the City. The existing safety netting behind home plate is original to the stadium and, despite numerous repairs over the years, no longer meets modern safety standards. Replacing the current netting with a modern, durable system will enhance the safety and experience for all attendees. These improvements will significantly enhance the safety, accessibility, and long-term viability of Voyagers Stadium.

Commissioner Wolff commented that she was dismayed when she saw the condition of the concrete behind homeplate. She appreciates that the Voyager's organization supports baseball for all users and looks at the community as a whole. From a life safety perspective, this needs to move forward.

Commissioner McKenney commented that this is park land; however, there is an 80-year-old stadium on it that the city is responsible for. If the Baseball Club decided to be done, the city would have an unused stadium on a park land. He supports moving forward with this; however, he is open minded to exploring selling the stadium or park to the Baseball Club.

Mayor Reeves concurred with Commissioner McKenney's comments.

Commissioner Tryon commented that the conditions at the Voyager's Stadium are unacceptable, a safety issue and litigation waiting to happen. The request for these repairs and upgrades would come out of the Park Maintenance District fund and the original intention for that fund was for upgrades to city parks. He is in favor of doing the repairs if the money is there; however, he requested data about the impact of using this fund would have on the other parks if it were used to fund the upgrades and repairs at the ballpark.

Commissioner Wilson concurred with Commissioner Tryon's request. She added that she has mixed feelings because the Park Maintenance District funds were meant to maintain free public parks and there is a fee to enter the stadium for Voyager games.

Mayor Reeves inquired about the next steps for moving forward with this funding request.

Manager Doyon responded that it would be brought forward to the Commission, there would need to be a budget adjustment process, and the commission agenda report would lay out the cost and outline the projects that would get deferred.

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DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that a FY25 Yearend final review, FY2026 budget update and FY2027 planning, as well as a grants status update will be topics for the October 21, 2025, work session. An annual airport update and title 15 code amendments will be topics at the November 4, 2025, work session.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of October 7, 2025 at 6:44 p.m.