



## **The Weekly Update – January 30, 2025**

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***Attachments:***

1. Journal of Special City Commission Work Session, Commission Retreat, January 3, 2025
2. Journal of City Commission Work Session, January 21, 2025

**JOURNAL OF SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION WORK SESSION**  
**Great Falls Fire Training Center, 1900 9<sup>th</sup> Street South, Great Falls, MT**  
**January 3, 2025**

1

City Commission Retreat

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

**Staff present:** City Manager Greg Doyon and City Clerk Lisa Kunz

**Facilitator:** Mark Willmarth

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Reeves called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Shyla Patera**, North Central Independent Living Services, Inc. (NCILS) submitted written comments requesting the City Commission focus on accessibility for all, inclusive of CDBG projects, ADA Transition Plan, City sidewalks and streets, and a snow removal policy. She also suggested enhancing public-private partnerships that create accessible, affordable opportunities pertaining to housing, ADU's, tiny housing, and a universally designed shelter that will accommodate homeless individuals with disabilities. Ms. Patera further suggested the City work with NCILS to encourage the Montana Department of Commerce to reopen the Section 8 waiting list as soon as possible.

**1. FACILITATED SESSION WITH MARK WILLMARTH ON  
COMMISSION PRIORITIES FOR 2025**

Facilitator Mark Willmarth provided an overview of the retreat proceedings to include a look back over the past year and review what has been accomplished, discuss the issues and challenges facing the Commission moving forward, and to develop a set of goals/priorities for the next 12 to 18 months.

He began with a roundtable discussion asking the following questions:

1. What do you want or hope for Great Falls in the next five years?
  - Commissioner Wolff wants the Commission to be prepared to team with other people to discuss the hard topics of funding issues, tax abatements, etc. for the upcoming Sentinel and Calumet Montana Renewables projects. She wants to have a strong relationship with Malmstrom leadership in hopes of having some influence on the location of Malmstrom's large infrastructure project so that it benefits the City of Great Falls and community after the project. It gives her hope and excitement how the City, Great Falls Development Alliance (GFDA) and the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce are all working together

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now. More things can be done as a community by combining those efforts and working off each other's strengths.

Manager Doyon added that a question to think about is how to prepare the future City Manager and City Commission members for the impact of the Sentinel project.

- Commissioner Tryon's vision is for the Commission to do what it can to create the safest (public safety), most functional (infrastructure), affordable, family friendly, and prosperous community in the state and region.
- Commissioner Wilson would like the focus to be on the Montana Renewables expansion project and the "Project Falcon" company that may come to Great Falls sooner than the Sentinel project. There are people living in their cars now that have jobs and cannot afford a place to live. It is going to get worse.

Mayor Reeves and Commissioner Wolff noted that contractors/developers and workers are in Bozeman where they can maximize their profits building \$850,000 homes versus affordable homes here for the working class.

Manager Doyon added that soils has been a big road block. Director Cherry is working on a new policy that will come before the Commission at a work session that he hopes will be a common sense way of managing the soil issue and overcome that road block.

- Commissioner McKenney commented that more housing of all types is at the top of his list.
- Mayor Reeves hopes to get through the federal mandate of the water service line inventory and lead pipe transition, to keep public safety a priority, and to continue to do what the City can with the unhoused.

With regard to housing, Commissioner Tryon suggested the Commission needs to be very clear and define what the Commission/City can and cannot do.

Commissioner Wolff suggested the Communications Specialist could help more with that type of messaging. The City Commission approved a lot of housing developments that have yet to be built.

It was further noted that the airmen cannot afford rent in Great Falls with their BAH, and the School District cannot attract or retain teachers because they cannot afford to build here on their pay.

Commissioner Tryon again commented that the Commission should try to make Great Falls the most desirable place to live and businesses to prosper. The focus should be on what the Commission can do – try to make Great Falls a safe, family friendly, and affordable community.

Commissioner Wilson added that a way to do that is to support any efforts of another Mobile Response Team (MRT) in Great Falls to take some stress off police and fire calls.

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2. What topics would you like to spend more time discussing today?

- Mayor Reeves noted he has a voicemail from Library Director Susie McIntyre to share with the Commission.
- Commissioner McKenney - public safety, core City services and sanitation. He suggested removing Court and Legal from a levy discussion and funding those two departments with the budget, focusing the general fund on core City services, and to be open-minded to a private sector sale of sanitation. He also thinks the Commission should appoint an advisory committee, similar to the Public Safety Advisory Committee, to conduct town hall meetings and make a recommendation on public safety and core City services to the Commission.
- Commissioner Wolff - funds needing assistance and core City services, and parameters to help the Commission with abatement or assistance for new development that the Commission thinks will make a difference for Great Falls. She wants the Commission to be proactive in seeking grants, strengthen communications with messaging of what the City Commission is doing really well and what it can and cannot do, and staying abreast of the 2025 Legislature.
- Commissioner Tryon - public safety. He is not excited about asking the public to spend more money for public safety unless and until the Commission has proven it has done everything that it can to use the general fund money it has for public safety. He also wants to discuss core City services, funds receiving subsidies and possibly cutting back amenities, and the pros and cons of providing sanitation services versus the private sector. He also wants communication messaging about what the City Commission cannot do. The Growth Policy will have a big part to play in how the City Commission moves forward with housing and economic development. The Little Shell development is also a big project to keep in mind.
- Commissioner Wilson - grants. The City needs a pot of money to be able to seek grants that require a match and to sustain what is being introduced to help the Fire and Police Departments. Over the next year she is also going to continue working on getting a Portland Loo in downtown Great Falls.

Break 9:31 – 9:45 a.m.

[Mayor Reeves played a voicemail from Library Director Susie McIntyre requesting guidance on an upcoming annual report/presentation from the Library Board of Trustees to the Commission at a work session. It was the consensus of the Commission for Mayor Reeves to follow up that the Commission would like to hear from the Board regarding what it will be focusing on in the next year and what their broad policy goals are. The Commission already receives the Library Board meeting packets so it has a sense operationally what is happening. The Commission wants to hear about the services the Library is going to retain.]

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Facilitator Willmarth reviewed PowerPoint slides of 2024 Commission priorities and continued asking the following:

<b>2024 PRIORITIES</b>	<b>2024 PRIORITIES</b>
<div style="background-color: #f8d7da; padding: 5px; border-radius: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Public Safety</b> </div> <div style="background-color: #f8d7da; padding: 5px; border-radius: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Housing</b> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">Encourage/facilitate infill development; consider options and best practices            Continue to explore options (grant writing/legislature) to facilitate affordable housing and full spectrum of housing            Discuss camping ordinance and low barrier options with Continuum of Care group (two-four year plan)</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f8d7da; padding: 5px; border-radius: 5px;"> <b>Economic Development</b> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">Streamlining zoning and permitting            Attracting primary sector businesses            Discovering ties between economic development to infrastructure and public safety</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #f8d7da; padding: 5px; border-radius: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Growth Plan</b> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">Living, breathing document            Inclusive process            Sentinel plan component with infrastructure considerations            Consideration of environmental sustainability</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f8d7da; padding: 5px; border-radius: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Legislative Session Prep</b> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">One on one relationships with local legislators/delegation as a whole            Drawing lobbying capacity from City staff and exploring how to fund lobbyist</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #f8d7da; padding: 5px; border-radius: 5px;"> <b>Communication</b> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">Education to citizenry about what City government does and doesn't do            Listening to learn seasons - small venue 2 to 3 per year with question and answer session</p> </div>

3. What is one accomplishment from last year that you are most proud of?
4. Why?
5. What impact did it have on the City organization and/or community?
6. What wasn't accomplished that you wished you had accomplished?

Public Safety

- Mayor Reeves - Although controversial, bringing back 3.5 mills to the general fund. That, combined with liability insurance savings, can hopefully fund the Court and Legal Departments and remove those departments from inclusion in a possible future public safety levy.
- Commissioner Tryon – Utilizing ARPA and Covid funds to relocate the Municipal Court, construct the Police Department Evidence Building and renovations at the Fire Department, as well as the Commission conveying that public safety is a priority.
- Commissioner McKenney – After the failed public safety levy, putting together a Public Safety Advisory Committee for the Commission to consider their recommendations moving forward.
- Commissioner Wolff – The accomplishments of the well-planned use of ARPA funds.

Mayor Reeves commented he wants to focus on core City services and that will require hard decisions to support public safety. A lengthy discussion followed about whether or not the revenue gain by eliminating general fund subsidies and closing or privatizing certain City services would be worth it. Mayor Reeves concluded that the funds being subsidized by the general fund should be run like enterprise funds and fees/rates need to cover the costs to be self-sustainable.

Facilitator Willmarth summarized that what may have spun out of that conversation may be a way to address the next step in the public safety piece. Everyone has a different idea about the issue of core services. If a way to move through that is to get the community more involved, then that is what the Commission's effort should be for the next six months.

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Housing

- Commissioner Wolff – The Commission encouraged and facilitated in-fill development, although not all projects have been started; and, the Commission supported the Carter Commons housing project.
- Mayor Reeves – The Commission has been a housing-friendly Commission.
- Commissioner McKenney – The development community is sensing a “yes” attitude from the Planning and Community Development Department.
- Commissioner Tryon – The Commission has done everything it could pertaining to housing, including use of CDBG funds.

Commissioner Wilson commented that, after consultation with Chief Newton, the Montana Department of Transportation installed “No Trespass” signs along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets. She commented that people are being criminalized for being on the boulevard.

Manager Doyon explained how it got to that point. The “No Trespass” signs provide the Police Department the ability to move people along that are loitering in that area. It is a problem to be managed and not solved.

The Commission did adopt a no camping in parks ordinance. If the Commission wanted to address this in some shape or form, the Commission could make the ordinance stronger or repeal it. He suggested the better play would be to partner with agencies that support the homeless in a way that the City can’t through CDBG and other means.

Economic Development

- Commissioner McKenney – The goal is to keep doing our best to streamline/one-stop shop. Attracting primary sector businesses grows the economy, not new restaurants.
- Commissioner Wolff – Continue working with the Great Falls Development Alliance and the Chamber of Commerce. A goal would be for the development organizations to be in the same building.
- Commissioner Tryon – Making sure our infrastructure is modern and having good public safety. The Commission needs to communicate that the City of Great Falls is not an economic development organization, but is an organization that can create the environment for economic development.

Manager Doyon referred to the activity summary and noted that the Commission did a lot with regard to economic development. A critical piece was retaining the services of a water rights consultant to update the City’s water portfolio, engaging water rights counsel to review the consultant’s recommendations and to develop an update through the Montana Water Courts.

He further noted that the cost of infrastructure holds the City back with regard to Housing and Economic Development. It was communicated during the last legislative session that if the

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legislature really wanted to deal with housing then they needed to make sure that connectivity to utilities is easier. The revolving loan program to developers never got any traction. When talking to developers about why are they building in the county, it is just cheaper to put in a septic tank and drill a well than it is to do a subdivision. In his opinion, the City doesn't have the demand either. Great Falls isn't like Bozeman where a developer knows they will sell what they are building. What drives the decision making is that, historically, we never see primary economic drivers substantially change in Great Falls, and we are never flush to begin with.

Growth Plan

- Commissioner Tryon is on the Growth Policy Committee. Director Cherry is doing an outstanding job coordinating stakeholder meetings and surveys. His hope is the Growth Plan will continue being flexible with zoning and housing ADU's/CUP's, and innovative thinking to address storm water/retention ponds.
- Commissioner Wolff expressed excitement in seeing the economic development occurring on the Airport property.
- Commissioner McKenney cautioned only allowing casinos in certain areas as it gives the false impression of Great Falls having "more" casinos.

Manager Doyon encouraged the Commission members to each attend one of the five Growth Policy community workshops and provide their notes to him to consolidate.

Facilitator Willmarth summarized that the Growth Plan is well underway. There will be a shift this year in that whole effort.

Legislative Session

- Mayor Reeves was excited the Commission agreed to hire a lobbyist to represent the City's interests in Helena. Communication to and from the lobbyist will be funneled through Manager Doyon.
- Commissioner McKenney wants the weekly Zoom meetings with legislators to continue similar to the last legislative session. Now that the City hired a lobbyist, the Commission members could rotate attendance to avoid a quorum. He suggested the City's lobbyist emcee the meetings.

Communication

- Commissioner Wolff was glad the Communications Specialist position went full time. She would like to hear from the new Neighborhood Council Coordinator Rob Moccasin about what he is hearing and learning.

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- Commissioner Tryon thinks the City Commission should conduct quarterly town hall type listening sessions. Core City services or public safety could be topics where citizens could raise issues and get questions answered.

Mayor Reeves noted he does not want to have meetings just to have meetings, especially based on the lack of public attendance at the prior public safety town hall meetings.

Manager Doyon agreed with Mayor Reeves, adding that the Commission has a lot of meetings and the public has a lot of opportunity to make comment, and there are Neighborhood Councils representing their neighborhood interests. Since he has been here he has seen Commission members try really hard to be engaged with the residents they serve.

The Commission knows they are doing well when that roar is just a dull roar. When the Commission goes off the skids the people will show up in mass at meetings and voice their disagreement. The Commission can't poll or force people to come in and have the engagement that he is asking for, whether it is done through the Communications Specialist or a listening session. The Commission is very accessible and responsive.

Discussion continued about possibly starting with certain City service topics and having applicable staff in attendance based on the subject.

Commissioner McKenney concurred with Manager Doyon that, if no one is attending meetings it is because everything is fine. It is when they are really concerned about something, they show up at meetings.

Break 11:22 – 11:38 a.m.

Facilitator Willmarth continued the roundtable discussion, asking if the Commission members wanted to add any more context or have a deeper discussion about topics discussed thus far.

- Mayor Reeves noted he is a huge proponent of grants, but not for personnel. He is glad Tom Hazen is the dedicated grant writer for the City.
- Commissioner Tryon would like work to begin on action plans for public safety, core City services, communications, Growth Policy and 2025 legislative session.
- Commissioner Wolff commented that funding the Portland Loo or other downtown public restroom could be under grants, but the funds needed for the long-term upkeep, location, infrastructure, etc. will need to be discussed. Discussion followed about the pros and cons



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and the comments Commission members heard from people that were for or against it. Commissioner Wilson concluded it is a project of hers to work on another year.

Facilitator Willmarth commented that having the harder discussions is hard. The Commission has done that with a few things over the last year. Know that whenever the Commission goes from “what is” to “what could be” there is a space in there that is always difficult. There is a lot of emotion whenever the Commission talks about changing things.

For the afternoon, he wants the Commission to talk about the goals, or things the Commission wants to explore, in the next 12 to 18 months.

Mayor Reeves discussed a conversation he and Manager Doyon had with Republic Services. A brief conversation followed about PSC approval of sanitation rates, as well as NorthWestern Energy acquiring Energy West and power rates.

Lunch break 12:02 – 12:33 p.m.

Facilitator Willmarth began the afternoon session with a review of the morning’s discussions and the common themes resulting therefrom. For each theme, he asked the Commission to answer “we will, we must and why.” Commission discussion commenced and resulted in the following collective priorities:

**Great Falls City Commission - 2025 Priorities**

**Review City Services**

We will ..., we must ...

- Examine revenues and expenses for City services requiring general fund subsidies.
- Form an advisory committee to review City services.
  - Host a Town Hall meeting.
  - Start by conducting a mini City 101 program for the advisory committee to educate them on City departments and services.
- Make a decision on funding for all City services requiring general fund subsidies prior to the 2025/26 budget.

WHY? To gather input from the community and establish a city-wide philosophy regarding the level of general fund support for City services. This approach ensures the most effective use of public resources.

**Public Safety**

We will ..., we must ...

- Target the funds from the 3.5 mills to public safety needs of Legal and Court operations.
- Develop a proposal for a Public Safety Levy – \$ amount and date.
  - Build community support to advocate for the levy.
- Explore a capital campaign for an additional fire station and a new training center.

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WHY? Public safety is our top priority, and we are committed to making Great Falls a desirable place to live and work.

Break 1:56 – 2:03 p.m.

**Community Development**

We will ..., we must ...

- Adopt the Growth Policy
  - Each Commission member will attend at least one of the five scheduled listening sessions on the Growth Policy.
- Continue to strengthen the relationships with the City, GFDA and the Chamber.
- Continue to work with Planning and Community Development to streamline processes and eliminate any barriers to development in Great Falls.
- Continue to support diverse housing opportunities.
  - Focused use of CDBG money.
  - Stay flexible with zoning while maintaining safety.

WHY? To support Planning and Community Development in making policy decisions that enable diverse housing development in Great Falls.

**Communication/Education**

We will ..., we must ...

- Continue to educate the community on what the City can and can't do.
- Explain to the community, in a variety of formats, what it means to be a charter government.
- Share success stories about the City organization on social media.
- Conduct at least two Town Hall meetings led by the Mayor and Commissioners focused on a community issue.
- Invite different groups/organizations to Commission meetings to provide community updates.

WHY? It is important that the Mayor and Commissioners be ambassadors of the City. We recognize the challenge of communicating City challenges to the community and connecting with constituents. The City will find ways of communicating more effectively with residents about the City's accomplishments and limitations.

Commissioner Wolff left the special work session at 2:38 p.m.

**Legislative Presence**

We will ..., we must ...

- Conduct at least weekly dialogue with our lobbyist and legislators.
- Review and emphasize our highest priority legislative issues. Communicate what is in the best interest of Great Falls.
- Stay engaged with the Interim Committees of the State Legislature beyond the legislative session. This includes legislators, state agencies and the Governor's Office.

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WHY? Relationships matter with the state legislators, governor and state agencies.

Additional topics brought up for consideration included Commissioner McKenney suggesting the title of “City Commission” being changed to “City Council.” This action would require an election and approval of a City Charter amendment by the electors of the City of Great Falls. Mayor Reeves made the suggestion of putting a fireworks ban on a ballot for the electorate to decide.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the informal special Commission Work Session of January 3, 2025, adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

City Commission Work Session  
Civic Center, Gibson Room 212

Mayor Reeves presiding

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

**CITY COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cory Reeves, Susan Wolff, Rick Tryon, Joe McKenney, and Shannon Wilson.

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Manager Greg Doyon; Deputy City Attorney Rachel Taylor; Finance Director Melissa Kinzler; Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig; Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry; Public Works Director Chris Gaub; Police Chief Jeff Newton; Fire Chief Jeremy Jones, Captain Maren Reilly, Assistant Fire Chief/Operations Jeremy Virts and Deputy Chief/Training Jason Furr; and, Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Ron Paulick**, City Resident, inquired about 2025 House Legislative bills, future reporting on lobbyist engagement with the Commission, the amount spent for the lobbyist firm and if there was a cap on that expenditure. Mr. Paulick added that citizens would like to participate in discussions about legislative bills not suitable for the City.

Responding to Mr. Paulick's inquiries, City Manager Doyon responded that he would provide an update about the engagement the City has had with lobbyist during the Manager's Report at the January 21, 2025 City Commission Meeting.

Mayor Reeves added that City staff would provide a cap amount to Mr. Paulick later.

**Lela Graham**, Chairperson of Housed Great Falls, commented that Housed Great Falls runs the cold weather drop in center at First United Methodist Church. She reported that the cold weather drop in at the Church was open nine nights in November, five nights in December, and all nights to date in January. In November and December, they averaged 23 people and 27 people so far in January. She invited the Commission to visit the drop in center to see what they do.

**1. AMENDMENT AND EXTENSION TO MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH COURSECO, INC.**

Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig introduced CourseCo President/CEO Michael Sharp and General Manager Jeff Stange. He reported that the Amendment and Second Extension of Anaconda Hills Golf Course and Eagle Falls Golf Club Management Agreement would extend the term for an additional five years. CourseCo would distribute \$50,000 to the City towards capital equipment/improvements for the first 5-year extension and another \$50,000 if the second five-year extension is agreed upon. CourseCo would build into the operational plan an identified process to pay down the golf debt through the budget. Since 2019, CourseCo has returned approximately \$1.3 million to the City, with \$80,000 of that being

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used for the Eagle Falls Tap House renovations, \$75,000 for golf carts and the Pasta Montana money going towards the golf debt. If at any time during the course of the agreement either party deems that the operation of two courses is not economically feasible, by mutual agreement, one course may be closed. The management fee paid by the City to CourseCo would increase to \$105,000 annually and the accounting fee would increase to \$29,000 annually.

Commissioner Wolff inquired about the number and demographics of users per golf course.

CourseCo President/CEO Sharp responded that there were approximately 50,000 users, 48,000 rounds of golf and others utilized the driving ranges, restaurant and attended community events.

Mayor Reeves received clarification that CourseCo would develop the budget to pay down the golf debt; however, it would be a City-owned budget.

Commissioner McKenney received clarification that any capital equipment/improvements would be determined by both the City and CourseCo. The first \$50,000 would go towards replacing golf carts and once the golf debt is paid down, a capital fund could be built for future improvements. An indoor simulator at Eagle Falls is being considered to create year round golf, food and beverage revenue.

Commissioner Wilson received clarification that the current golf carts are below the market standard and replacing them every five to seven years would be what the industry expects.

Commissioner Tryon inquired about the plan to pay down the golf debt and hiring for the facilities.

CourseCo President/CEO Sharp responded that when CourseCo took over the operations of the facilities six years ago, the golf debt was over \$1 million and the Pasta Montana proceeds brought it down to approximately \$380,000. The operations of both facilities has a net profit of approximately \$200,000 annually. A realistic timeline to pay off the golf debt would be up to five years and CourseCo hires and trains employees for the facilities.


**2. BNSF CALUMET RAIL EXPANSION PROJECT**

Public Works Director Chris Gaub reported that Calumet informed the City in December about the expansion project and BNSF wanting to close the 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE railroad crossing.

He reviewed and discussed the following PowerPoint slides:

# JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION

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### BNSF CALUMET RAIL EXPANSION PROJECT

January 2025

**PURPOSE: INFORM CITY COMMISSION**


\*\*\*SLIDES NOT PRE-COORDINATED WITH BNSF OR CALUMET

### BNSF-CMR GOALS

- COMPLETE IN 18 TO 24 MONTHS (IDEAL: 12 MONTHS/DECEMBER 2025)
- EXPAND FROM 1 TO 3 TRACKS (MAP NEXT SLIDE)
- CLOSE 4<sup>TH</sup> ST NE CROSSING (3 TRACKS TOO DANGEROUS)
  - BNSF AUTHORITY: 30 DAYS' NOTICE
- ELIMINATE 1 SWITCH PER DAY - FROM 2 TO 1 (2-3 HRS/SWITCH)
  - BUSINESS EFFICIENCIES (STOPS PRODUCTION); DOLLARS SAVED
- BENEFITS TO CITY (PER BNSF/CALUMET):
  - ADDS RAIL CARS VERSUS TRUCKS (3 TRUCKS TO 1 RAIL CAR)
    - FEWER TRAIN HORNS: ELIMINATE 11 PM HORN
    - LESS DISRUPTION FROM FEWER RAIL SWITCHES
    - LESS TRUCK TRAFFIC ON ROADS (NOISE, SAFETY)
- MEETINGS WITH BNSF & CALUMET: 12/11/2024 (CALUMET INVITE), 1/9/2025 (CITY INVITE)

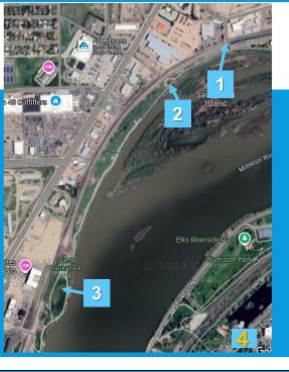
### PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. 4<sup>TH</sup> ST NE RAIL CROSSING: CLOSE ROAD
2. START: EXPAND TO 3 TRACKS FROM 1 (START)
3. SKINNY 3 TRACKS BACK TO 1
4. WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT
5. STORMWATER OUTFALL
6. RIVERS EDGE TRAIL
7. FIREWORKS STAGING
8. WESTBANK PARK




### COGF AREAS OF CONCERN

1. 4<sup>TH</sup> ST NE:
  - ACCESS WWTP, SEPTAGE RECEIVING STATION
  - EMERGENCY/SPILL RESPONSE (FIRE DEP T)
  - WEST BANK PARK/RIVERS EDGE TRAIL
    - 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY FIREWORKS SETUP/STAGING
    - SANITARY SEWER MAIN
  - CALUMET ACCESS:
    - SPILL/OUTFALL RESPONSE
    - MONITOR ENVIRONMENTAL WELLS AT WWTP
    - PRIVATE UTILITY LINE ACCESS (POWER, GAS...)
2. STORM DRAIN OUTFALL AT WEST BANK PARK
3. WEST BANK PARK
  - ADEQUATE SPACE FOR NEW ACCESS ROAD?
  - PLAYGROUND AND BATHROOM SAFETY/ACCESS
  - RIVERS EDGE TRAIL ACCESS
  - CITY UTILITY LINES: PAY ANNUAL ENCROACHMENT FEE (ON BNSF PROPERTY)



### COGF CONCERN #1: 4TH ST NE RAIL CROSSING

- BNSF PROPERTY CUTS OFF CITY STREET
- 1960/1975 AGREEMENT ALLOWS ACCESS
  - CITY NOT IN COMPLIANCE
  - CITY MUST CONTROL ACCESS TO PUBLIC
  - BNSF ALLOWED TO CLOSE ACCESS WITH 30 DAYS NOTICE
  - AGREEMENT EXPIRES: N/A



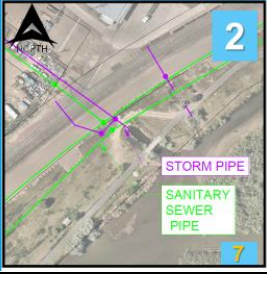
### COGF CONCERN #1: 4TH ST NE RAIL CROSSING

- ACCESS TO THE WWTP:
  - CITY EMPLOYEES (PW, PARK & REC, ETC)
  - VEOLIA EMPLOYEES
  - CHEMICAL DELIVERIES
  - REPUBLIC: SOLIDS REMOVAL ~4X PER DAY
  - CONTRACTORS/LARGE EQUIPMENT
  - PLANT MAINTENANCE
  - SEPTAGE RECEIVING STATION CUSTOMERS
  - 12 PERMITTED USERS
  - OPEN 7 DAYS/WK; 365 DAYS/YR
  - AVERAGE 4 TRIPS PER DAY
  - NO ALTERNATIVES IN CASCADE COUNTY
- LIMIT TO PUBLIC'S EASE OF ACCESS TO RIVERS EDGE TRAIL (PARKING LOT)



### COGF CONCERN #2: STORMWATER OUTFALL

- 16<sup>TH</sup> AVE NW
  - EXTENDING/MOVING WOULD BE COSTLY
  - SPACE FOR 2 ADDITIONAL TRACKS AND NEW ACCESS ROAD?
  - MDT, DEQ, ETC INVOLVEMENT?




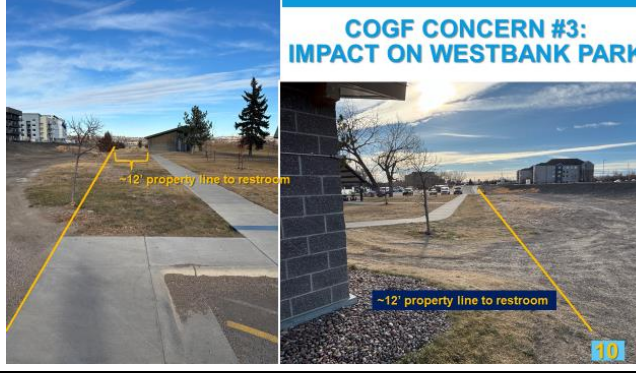
### COGF CONCERN #2: STORMWATER OUTFALL



DISTANCE BETWEEN CURRENT BNSF PROPERTY LINE & STORM DRAIN OUTLET = ~15'  
INADEQUATE SPACE TO BUILD A NEW ROAD



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<p align="center"><b>COGF CONCERN #3: IMPACT ON WESTBANK PARK</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UTILITY LINES ON BNSF OR CITY PROPERTY?</li> <li>• GRAVEL ROAD FROM PARK TO 4<sup>TH</sup> ST NE             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PRIMARILY ON BNSF PROPERTY</li> <li>• PARK &amp; REC EMPLOYEE ACCESS FOR MAINTENANCE</li> <li>• ACCESS FOR CITY SPONSORED ACTIVITIES (I.E. FIREWORKS DISPLAY)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• WEST BANK PARK PLAYGROUND             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAFETY IF ROAD IS SHIFTED – PROXIMITY TO CHILDREN</li> <li>• IF ROAD IS SHIFTED, WHO PAYS?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ACCESS TO RESTROOM IN WEST BANK PARK             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RESTROOM ON BNSF LAND? (see next slide)</li> <li>• POWER LINE</li> <li>• WATER SERVICE LINE TO RESTROOM</li> <li>• IRRIGATION LINES</li> </ul> </li> </ul> 	<p align="center"><b>COGF CONCERN #3: IMPACT ON WESTBANK PARK</b></p> 
<p align="center"><b>OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION</b>  <b>***COSTS ARE NOTIONAL</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. INSTALL GATE WITH ACCESS CONTROL (SOUND/CHIMES AND/OR KEY PAD)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROM COST \$2M</li> <li>• PROS: LEASER OF HIGH COSTS; RETAINS WEST BANK PARK SPACE; EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACCESS</li> <li>• CONS: RISK OF RAIL CARS BLOCKING GATE (PLANNED, UNPLANNED) I.E. DERAILMENT); LOSE PUBLIC PARKING FOR R.E. TRAIL</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. CONSTRUCT NEW ROAD FROM WEST BANK PARK TO WWTP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROM COST \$5M</li> <li>• PROS: RETAINS OPTION OF PUBLIC VEHICLE ACCESS TO WEST BANK PARK</li> <li>• CONS:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VERY COSTLY; ELEVATE ABOVE FLOOD PLAIN; \$TORMWATER OUTFALL COSTLY TO BRIDGE; HANDLE HEAVY TRUCKS</li> <li>• ONE ACCESS ROUTE TO WWTP (EMERGENCY RESPONSE?); FLOOD PLAIN</li> <li>• LONG TRIP ROAD – 3 MILES; EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIME; SANITATION TRUCK COST</li> <li>• PARK LOSES PARK LAND; CHANGES CHARACTER OF TIP DISTRICT &amp; WEST BANK PARK</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. COMBINATION OF 1 AND 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROM COST \$7M</li> <li>• GATE: IRREGULAR USE (I.E. EMERGENCY ACCESS, CONSTRUCTION ACCESS)</li> <li>• ROAD: REGULAR USE: DAILY EMPLOYEES, SANITATION, SEPTAGE CUSTOMERS, MAIL DELIVERY, ETC</li> <li>• PROS: SEGREGATES TRAFFIC BY FREQUENCY; INCREASED RAIL OPERATIONS SAFETY?; REDUNDANT ACCESS TO WWTP</li> <li>• CONS: MOST COSTLY INITIAL AND LONG-TERM; MOST COMPLEX</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p align="right">11</p>	

Mayor Reeves inquired who was responsible for the railroad crossing arms at the west end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North Bridge.

Public Works Director Gaub responded that BNSF would most likely be responsible.

Mayor Reeves further inquired why the City would be responsible for funding the arms at the 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE location.

City Manager Doyon responded that he would follow up with determining who would be responsible for funding of the 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE location.

Commissioner Wolff commented that whatever decision was made, economic development and the needs of the future should be considered.

Commissioner McKenney concurred with Commissioner Wolff's comment. He added that expansion and having an industry such as Calumet are good things for the City's tax base.

Commissioner Wilson commented that train horns are a big concern for Neighborhood Council 2. She received clarification that there was a collaborative discussion with BNSF about the 30-days' notice with regard to closing the 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE Crossing.

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Mayor Reeves added that there would be a quiet zone presentation at the January 28, 2025 Great Falls Citizens Council of Councils meeting.

Commissioner Tryon inquired about a timeline for making decisions and the Commission's role.

City Manager Doyon responded that the City needs access to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE is the most reasonable access. The City has an active railyard with BNSF and he would appreciate BNSF and Calumet being mindful of the impact that is going to occur in Westbank Park and the surrounding area with regard to access and public use. He expressed concern with regard to accessing the WWTP if there was an emergency at the plant during a switch over. City Manager Doyon further responded that the Commission's role would be to come up with options to cover the cost. The City would also need to address the loss of public access and that Westbank Park would not be used the way it was intended to be. Calumet would have needed this capacity, even without the expansion. This situation has limited options and is expensive.

Commissioner Wolff commented that we need to keep Westbank Park because there was a lot of work that went into it and is heavily used.

**3. FIRE TRAINING CENTER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Fire Chief Jeremy Jones provided and discussed a PPC Grade handout.

He reviewed and discussed the following PowerPoint slides:





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### Training Center 3

The GFFR Training Center was built in 1973.

- ❖ Very few improvements have been made to the infrastructure of the facility.
- ❖ In the late 80's, the burn building was condemned from live fire training due to asbestos.
- ❖ In the early 2000's we had failure of the asphalt in and around the training grounds.
- ❖ In 2019 we had a critical failure of the training tower leading to it not being able to be used for fire and high-rise operations (training).
- ❖ November 2024 the remaining two roof training props failed.
- ❖ Currently the class room and the Hazardous Material Rail car prop (donated by Steel Etc) is all that is available to be utilized at the 9.5 acre facility.

### Training Center 4

- ❖ The Training Center is an example of having kicked the can down the road for too long.
- ❖ Much like the failure of Fire Station #4, the Training Center has reached the failure point and has resulted in unsafe training conditions for fire fighters, equipment and fire apparatus.
- ❖ The failure of the mill levy/bond reinforced that no solution to address personnel/resources is in the near future.
- ❖ We must be able to train the personnel we have today at the highest level possible in an attempt to maintain the level of service the community expects.
- ❖ GFFR currently has no way to train firefighters in fire/rescue operations or to train new hires moving forward.

### Training Center 5

Previously attempted funding alternatives:

- ❖ Last legislative session, GFFR worked to secure state funding to upgrade the Training Center into a regional training facility but ended up being excluded from the final budget.
- ❖ Training Center did not qualify for ARPA allocation
- ❖ Training Center did not qualify for CDBG funding
- ❖ Training Center is not qualifying for FEMA/AFG funding
- ❖ Training Center was not included into the previous mill levy/bond discussion in an attempt to keep costs down
- ❖ Explored partnership with GFC-MSU in building a joint fire station/training center (failed when bond failed)

### Training Center 6

Impact to the CoGF if nothing is done:

- ❖ Insurance Services Office (ISO) awards up to 9 total points for training and this is based on having a 3 or more story training facility located on 2 acres and having live fire capabilities.
- ❖ CoGF is scheduled to be audited again in 2026.
- ❖ If we do not address the lack of training, we may receive a score that will assist with another regression.
- ❖ Every move, up or down, the ISO rating matrix is directly correlated to a 10% cost to the ratepayer. Ex. Going from a ISO 3 to an ISO 4 will result in a 10% increase to the insurance premium.
- ❖ GFFR is on the cusp of assuming another regression if we are not able to fix the lack of training capabilities at the current training center.

### Training Center 7

Our proposal:

- ❖ Invest in the future of public safety today. We must provide our current personnel and resources (police and fire) the ability to train to the highest standard possible.
- ❖ Allow for the City to pursue up to \$2.5 million in non-voted general obligation debt to reconstruct the training center that will address needs within GFFR and GFFD today.
- ❖ Refocus the vision of the training center to be an ALL public safety training facility and create a master plan of the site moving forward to address City needs into the future.

### Training Center 8

Critical improvements: Asphalt/Concrete Repair

- ▶ Old asphalt will be torn out and replaced. Concrete Sidewalk in front of classroom building will be repaired.
- ▶ Cost: \$553,500




### Training Center 9




### Training Center 10

Critical improvements: Training Tower

- ▶ Due to the proposed cost of bringing the tower up to safety code and standards as well as maintaining it over the next several decades, it has been deemed more cost effective to remove(demo) the tower and replace it with a newer, updated, lower maintenance training prop.
- ▶ Cost: \$65,000





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<p><u>Training Center</u> 11</p> <p>Critical improvements: New Tower/Burn Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Several fire training structures have been identified as viable options to serve our training needs. These structures can be customized to serve GFFR and our specific training needs.</li><li>▶ Cost: \$1,212,000</li></ul>  <p>FTS CUSTOM SYSTEM 8</p>	<p><u>Training Center</u> 12</p> <p>Critical improvements: Multi-purpose training building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Two-story training building will get power, insulation and heat making it functional for additional training applications, including potential use by GFFR and CCSO for active shooter and other trainings.</li><li>▶ Cost: \$120,000</li></ul> 
<p><u>Training Center</u> 13</p> <p>Critical improvements: Classroom Building Upgrades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Exterior paint and repair</li><li>▶ Cost: \$14,000</li><li>▶ Updated plumbing; tie into city sewer system</li><li>▶ Cost: \$160,000</li></ul>   	<p><u>Training Center</u> 14</p> <p>Critical improvements: Master Plan Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Long term planning for future development of the property</li><li>▶ Cost: \$65,000</li></ul> 
<p>15</p> <p><b>Total Cost Projection for GFFR Training Center Projects: \$2,189,500</b></p>	

Fire Chief Jones commented that the ability to train firefighters in real world scenarios and a safe environment is crucial. At a minimum, critical improvements would be removing the old training tower, replacing asphalt and purchasing the training facility.

Commissioner Wolff inquired about the financial impact to the City and the length of time a loan would take to pay off.

Finance Director Melissa Kinzler responded that a \$2.5 million loan with a 6% interest rate would be approximately \$255,000 annually for 15 years. Currently, the interest rate is 5.75% through the Intercap Loan Program; however, it resets every year.

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Mayor Reeves inquired if funds from a bond could pay off a loan through the Intercap Loan Program, if the City were to go out for another levy and the bond passed.

Finance Director Kinzler responded that loans through the Intercap program would have the ability to prepay a debt.

Commissioner Tryon inquired where the money would come from to make those payments, what the impact would be to the taxpayers and if other grant opportunities or training facilities have been considered.

City Manager Doyon responded that the money would come from the general fund. The legislature is also trying to reformulate the amount of the inflationary factor. The City would be committing half of that towards the debt service; however, the new budget cycle and labor negotiations could impact that number. There is such a deficiency at the training center that it is directly affecting the ability to train fire personnel, keep them safe and be prepared. Great Falls Fire Rescue's (GFFR) priority has shifted to a critical and emergent need and this would be one option to take care of it. Currently, a loan would be manageable; however, there would be an impact to other general fund departments.

Fire Chief Jones added that every grant and option was pursued and exhausted. The fee for renting other training facilities is on the GFFR's fee schedule that will be forthcoming for Commission approval. Most Class One Cities must have a training center in order to receive an ISO rating. There could be one year of training if these issues are addressed before mid-summer, which means he could choose when to be audited in 2026.

Mayor Reeves commented that there needs to be a training facility for fire personnel. Hard decisions have to be made and if other non-performing funds need to be considered, then that is what has to be done.

Commissioner Wolff concurred with Mayor Reeve's comments. She inquired if the training facility could be stood up quickly, once an infrastructure was in place.

Fire Captain Reilly responded several companies that make these modular structures have been identified. They would set them up; however, it could take several months to get here, the training tower would need to be torn down and new asphalt poured before one could be brought in.

Commissioner McKenney commented that he was not going to kick this down the road again and would like to take this under advisement for a couple months in order to determine community support of another potential public safety levy.

Mayor Reeves disagreed with waiting a couple months and wants fire personnel to have the proper training to do their job and ensure their safety. He inquired if a bond could be used towards paying a loan off sooner.

Finance Director Kinzler responded that the City staff would have to seek advice from Bond Counsel because staff would have to word the bond issue very carefully.

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Mayor Reeves commented that even if a bond would not pass, the City needs to do the right thing for the right reason and that is to protect fire personnel and provide them with proper training.

Commissioner Wilson commented that she was working towards becoming an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and could not imagine not having training. It is very important to have a training center for fire personnel right away.

It was the consensus of the Commission to have City Manager Doyon start exploring options as soon as possible to make this come to fruition.

Commissioner Wolff commented that it is critical that the Commission provide this direction now because of the upcoming budget cycle. She has spent a lot of time with fire personnel and at the training center. If someone were to get hurt because they did not have adequate training, it could cost as much as doing these improvements.

**DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS**

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that the February 4, 2025 work session will consist of a downtown market assessment and strategy as well as a Title 5 code changes – business licenses/permits and SIC's update.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of January 21, 2025 at 6:51 p.m.