



The Weekly Update – August 28, 2025

Attachments:

1. Journal of City Commission Special Work Session, July 22, 2025.
2. Journal of City Commission Work Session, August 5, 2025.
3. Journal of City Commission Work Session, August 19, 2025.
4. City of Great Falls Total Cash and Investments as of July 31, 2025.
5. Department Monthly Update, July 2025.

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION SPECIAL WORK SESSION
July 22, 2025 – City Commission Special 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, City Attorney David Dennis, Fire Chief Jeremy Jones, Police Chief Jeff Newton, and Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeni Dodd, City resident, read from a prepared statement pertaining to her belief that the city failed to follow state law when it recently purchased land and when it increased the water, sewer and storm drain utility rates. The City Manager purchased the land and executed the buy-sell agreement without commission approval. The City paid more than the property's appraised value. Ms. Dodd commented that her issues with the utility rate increase were because of improper public notice due to incorrect increase percentages, failure to publish public notice according to the legal schedule and the resolution containing two options failed to correctly inform the public of the actual intended increase. With regard to fireworks, Ms. Dodd commented that aerial fireworks fly into the airspace of neighboring lots with the potential to cause damage or death.

Shelly Vance, City resident, commented that she and her husband run a fireworks stand, and fireworks are more than blowing things up, they are about families, traditions and making memories. Ms. Vance expressed support of placing a fireworks question on a ballot.

JoAnn Wright, City resident, expressed concern about the noise, debris, pets, veterans with PTSD, sleep disruption and financial cost to the Great Falls Police Department and Great Falls Fire Rescue (GFFR) with regard to fireworks. Ms. Wright expressed support of a ban of the personal use of fireworks in the city limits and the celebration of Independence Day with a public fireworks display permitted by the city for a maximum of one hour beginning at sunset and hefty fines for offenders. She encouraged the City Commission to work with the County Commissioners to ban fireworks from residential areas in the County adjacent to the city limits.

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Ron Paulick, City resident, read from a prepared statement pertaining to his belief that the City is moving too fast with the potential resolution because of ballot issue deadlines. Mr. Paulick expressed concern about what the real reason for banning all residential fireworks in the city, controlling the desire to celebrate if there is a ban on fireworks and addressing the concerns of the losing side if a ballot fails. He concluded that it might be better to make a resolution to address the real reasons that should be addressed and leave everything else the same.

Larry Stimac, commented that the fireworks issue is a serious matter that needs to be addressed for the safety of City residents and property. Aerial fireworks have the potential of causing fires and spreading from roof to roof. Mr. Stimac added that the spread of fires could create a disaster in the city with the low staffing of the GFFR and failed Public Safety Levy.

Lee Vandeburg, City resident, commented that bans do not work because there is a problem in the City with methamphetamines even though it is illegal and people would continue to ignite fireworks within the city limits with a ban. Banning things and taking away freedoms from everyone to protect Veterans with PTSD or because of the actions of a few bad apples is wrong.

Pam Hendrickson, City resident, commented that the 4th of July is one day and, in her neighborhood, fireworks are ignited for a week, and fireworks are not currently regulated. It is not patriotic to make it a three-day event. She expressed support of public fireworks on the 4th of July only, having fireworks vendors pay a fee when they get their license and have that fee go towards enforcement of fireworks calls; otherwise, a ban in the city limits. The death of an elderly lady, the fact that it was dry and no other major City in Montana allowing public fireworks needs to be considered.

Britta Oliverson, Area Manager for TNT Fireworks, commented that TNT would like the opportunity to partner with the City as a resource by promoting safety and education of fireworks and finding solutions that are good for the City and still allow traditions important to the citizens. People want to celebrate families, freedoms and fireworks on the 4th of July. Prohibition does not work, and law enforcement officials are not able to adequately enforce bans on fireworks. A fireworks ban in the City would push people to the County where the fire danger is higher. TNT started a Bucket Brigade fire prevention in Colorado and it is spreading nationwide to educate people how to properly dispose of fireworks. She appreciated the different options being considered by the Commission and suggested targeting the fireworks that explode in the air and allow fireworks that stay within the space of an area. TNT is willing to do anything it can to help promote safety and education rather than an all-out ban on fireworks.

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Logan Dow, City resident, commented that fireworks have always been important to him. He may not always have his family; however, he will always have the memories of doing fireworks as a child with them. Mr. Dow expressed concern that banning fireworks in the City will push people outside city limits and increase the amount of those drinking and driving longer distances. He concluded that accidents and fires may happen from fireworks; however, it is not fair to punish the rest of the community because of a few accidents. Fireworks can be managed safely and enjoyed.

Gerry Jennings, City resident, opined that a few people want fireworks in the City and the majority do not want them here. Ms. Jennings explained that 20 years ago, while she was out of town, the roof on her home caught on fire because of fireworks. Fireworks go on for days, not just the three days that they are legal. She questioned if it takes a woman dying before something is done about fireworks. People igniting fireworks in their neighborhood are entertaining themselves and the City's fireworks display entertains the community for one hour on the 4th of July.

Destri Hilbig, City resident, shared information regarding fireworks use in Missoula. Although the city has a fireworks ban, she noted that approximately 400 complaints were filed between July 1–5, 2005, yet Missoula City Police only responded to four incidents and issued no citations, citing limited time and manpower.

Ms. Hilbig also raised concerns about individuals traveling to nearby Indian Reservations to purchase unregulated fireworks, often with no education on safe use. She and her staff invest significant time during the season educating customers on the use of fireworks.

She emphasized that "bad eggs" will likely disregard rules regardless of regulations and urged the Commission to either increase education efforts or consider placing the issue on a ballot.

Pierre (Tony) Peres, City resident, expressed support for preserving family traditions and civil liberties, and specifically the right to celebrate the birth of our nation with fireworks. If there is to be a formal decision on the issue, he argued it should be placed on a public ballot rather than decided solely by the five-member Commission. He voiced opposition to any potential ban on fireworks, suggesting such a ban would not only be inappropriate but also difficult to enforce.

Ray Zimmerman, proposed that the Commission focus more on educating the public about the responsible use of fireworks. Bans do not work.

Jim Ramsey, City resident with over 30 years of experience in the fireworks business and a strong supporter of fireworks, shared that the Billings Police issued large citations for

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fireworks violations, which led to a clogged court system due to contested tickets. He emphasized that illegal or homemade fireworks, which are not sold through consumer channels, negatively impact both the fireworks industry and law-abiding users.

Mr. Ramsey also pointed out that many residents over the age of 65 who now support a ban on fireworks once enjoyed them in their youth. He called for greater tolerance from the public and increased consideration from fireworks users, suggesting that fireworks are a limited-time activity that could be managed more effectively through public education rather than strict enforcement or bans.

Mike Maeder, City resident, spoke in support of legal fireworks, noting that they are tested for safety by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). He emphasized that when used properly and with common sense, fireworks do not cause injuries or fires, especially if users follow safety guidelines like keeping a hose or water nearby. Fireworks are part of a 250-year-old tradition and argued that they should not be banned. Mr. Maeder cited a study by the American Pyrotechnic Association, which found that only about 10% of people nationwide dislike fireworks, suggesting that most Americans support their continued use.

Jonah Shirley, City resident, spoke in strong support of preserving fireworks traditions, arguing that bans—while well-intentioned—have consistently failed across Montana and the U.S. He noted that local ordinances adopted in cities such as Missoula, Bozeman, Helena, and Billings have complicated enforcement rather than reducing risk. Residents often circumvent restrictions by purchasing fireworks outside city limits and using them illegally.

The resident cited international examples to show that bans do not eliminate demand, but instead push celebrations into unsafe or unregulated settings. He stressed that fireworks are a longstanding cultural event that strengthen community bonds and should not be outlawed.

He urged the Commission to reject outright bans in favor of smart regulation, such as enhanced enforcement, designated zones, adjusted hours, and public education. He concluded by advocating for community involvement in the decision, encouraging the Commission to let the people decide the issue.

Jacob Smith, City resident, spoke in support of preserving fireworks, describing them not as a nuisance, but as a cherished celebration and expression of patriotism, family, and unity. He urged the Commission not to allow this tradition to disappear, emphasizing that fireworks, when used responsibly, are safe, peaceful, and create lasting memories.

He noted that seasonal fireworks stands contribute to the local economy and provide jobs. He framed fireworks as a cultural expression and a unifying force in a time when many traditions are being lost. Fireworks help honor the past, celebrate the future, and teach younger generations the meaning of freedom.

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With America's 250th birthday approaching, he called on the Commission to embrace tradition rather than move away from it and urged them not to take the joy of fireworks away from the people of Great Falls.

Greg Hall, City resident, expressed concern about the speed at which the fireworks issue is being addressed. He questioned whether the process is being rushed—either to place the matter on a ballot or to have the Commission vote directly. He reminded the Commission that they were elected to make thoughtful decisions on behalf of the public and questioned whether sufficient input from constituents has been gathered through surveys or other outreach.

Mr. Hall does not believe a ban or new restrictions are justified at this point and cautioned against making decisions hastily, as rushed actions often lead to poor outcomes. He encouraged the Commission to slow down, conduct more research, and explore educational alternatives before taking further action. He concluded by saying the Commission appears to be running down a road that it doesn't have a map to.

Keith Chambers, owner of Beijing Bob's Fireworks, noted that the issue of fireworks regulations has been raised at the state level but ultimately deferred to local governments. With 25 years of experience in fireworks sales, he stated this was the fifth similar meeting he has attended in various Montana cities.

He commented that bans in Bozeman and Billings had no significant impact on his business, suggesting that such measures may be ineffective. He urged the Commission to gather all relevant information before making a decision that may be difficult to enforce. He emphasized the importance of collaboration over division, stating that working together is more productive than taking a one-sided approach.

Jeff Thill, City resident, shared a personal perspective as a single parent caring for a sick son who requires frequent travel to Salt Lake City for medical treatment and takes medication not covered by insurance. He explained that fireworks sales are his major source of income to support his family.

He recalled working with former Mayor Kelly during the reduction of the fireworks period from 12 days to 3 days, at a time when the Great Falls allowed the same fireworks as the County. As part of that effort, they developed educational materials for all fireworks stands—materials he said the city has since failed to continue distributing.

He warned that banning fireworks would directly impact his livelihood and ability to care for his son. He stated he has over 10,000 receipts from his stand as proof that fireworks remain popular in Great Falls. Addressing concerns about noise, he compared fireworks to common disturbances like barking dogs and stockcar races, suggesting that living in a community requires tolerance of occasional nuisances.

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Written correspondence expressed support of banning fireworks in the City was received from **Zachary Slattery** (via July 17, 2025 email), **Jude Mahlum** (via July 18, 2025 correspondence), **Kristina Thompson** (via July 18, 2025 email), **Jane Hashley** (via July 19, 2025 email), **Linda Metzger** (via July 19, 2025 email), **Michael and Lorna Emineth** (via July 20, 2025 email), **Kathryn Kotynski** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Gordon Whirry** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Maria Gamradt** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Kyle Belcher** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Eva and Richard Martz**, (via July 22, 2025 email).

Written correspondence expressed opposition to banning fireworks in the City was received from **Rudi Birgenheier** (via July 16, 2025 email), **Shiloh Miller** (via July 22, 2025 email), **Nicole Hilbig** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Krista Bergstrom** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Kyle Belcher** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Kirsten Steele** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Karly Ames** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Dorri Holzheimer** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Hannah Parker** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Jose and Debra Martinez** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Clinton Stark** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Rocky Vance** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Melinda Pantaleon** (via July 22, 2025 email), **Jennifer Maxwell** (via July 22, 2025 email), **Phillip Becker** (via July 22, 2025 email), **Jamie Sandefur** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Douglas Deshner** (via July 22, 2025 email), **Stephanie Johnson** (via July 22, 2025 email), **Kristie Conant** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Christina Pike** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Amya Rivera** (via July 22, 2025 email), **Destri Hilbig** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Erin Riotutar** (via July 21, 2025 email), **Elizabeth Kriedeman**, (via July 21, 2025 email)

Written correspondence expressed support of placing a fireworks question on a ballot was received from **Terry Bjork**, (via July 18, 2025 email) and **Bianca Hibbert**, (via July 21, 2025 email)

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. CITY COMMISSION DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL FIREWORKS RESTRICTIONS (CONTINUED FROM JULY 15, 2025 WORK SESSION)

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that options based off prior conversations were presented to the Commission including keeping the current approach, the Commission exercises its authority to legislate more restrictions on fireworks up to and including banning them or ask the voters. City staff could provide more information to the Commission if needed, including statistics, data and the options could be tailored to meet the needs of the Commission.

Mayor Reeves explained that the Commission's focus tonight is to provide staff with clear directions whether this issue will be legislated as a body or sent to a ballot and discuss the options. He clarified that at the July 15, 2025 City Commission Work Session meeting three Commissions wanted a ballot and two wanted the Commission to legislate it.

Commissioner Wolff expressed appreciation to the public for their input. She explained that she is not in favor of putting this out for a vote and is in favor of the Commission legislating

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this and coming up with its own resolution. She is interested in learning more about promoting safety and education.

Commissioner Tryon inquired about the timeline required to provide the necessary public notice between first and second reading to have it on a ballot. He added that he has heard that people feel like this is being rushed and the City is ignoring all other issues.

Commissioner Tryon clarified that the reason it appears to be rushed is because the Commission is working under the assumption that there is an 85-day deadline if it were to be put on a ballot. He assured the public that the City Commission, Manager and Staff are not ignoring other city issues and focusing only on this.

City Attorney David Dennis responded that the process to get this on a ballot is a resolution referring an ordinance to the voters through a process that does not have a first and second reading. A hearing could be set at the August 5, 2025 City Commission meeting instead of an August 11, 2025 Special City Commission meeting.

Commissioner McKenney explained that his job as an elected official is not to avoid controversy, it is to lead through it and make decisions. The voters trust the Commission to responsibly govern and use its judgment on their behalf. If people do not agree with his decisions, they have the right to vote him out. He is not going to pass the buck because it is politically safer to dodge the bullet. He agreed with a previous speaker who indicated that making decisions in hast is a bad idea.

Mayor Reeves explained that he respectfully disagreed with Commissioner McKenney's comments and does not believe it is kicking the can to the community. A ballot measure gives voters the final say. If a ban or restriction is approved, it reflects clear public support and provides a strong foundation for implementation. If it is rejected, it helps clarify the community prefers the current approach. He supports putting the decision on a ballot and with everything he has heard up to tonight, if it is left up to the Commission to decide, he would not support a ban on fireworks in the city.

Commissioner Wilson commented that from what she has heard from both sides, they prefer to have it on a ballot. She expressed support of placing it on a ballot with Option 3. Commissioner Wilson concurred with Ms. Dodd's comment about when a rocket leaves your space, it is going to enter someone else's space.

Mayor Reeves received clarification that Option 3 is more restrictive than Option 2.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that tonight City staff needs specific guidance as to which direction the Commission wants to go so the resolution and ordinance could be prepared for the August 5, 2025 City Commission meeting.

Commissioner Wilson added that enforcement is going to be difficult, but something has to be done and some sort of limit that ensures safety for the community needs to happen.

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Mayor Reeves received clarification that if Options 2 or 3 goes on a ballot and fails, it would revert to how things are currently.

Commissioner Tryon concurred with Option 3 and with Commissioner McKenney's comment about the Commission's obligation and responsibility to make decisions; however, this is a unique situation. He commented that the issue of fireworks in the city limits has been ignored in the past; however, it cannot be ignored anymore. It is important to put this on a ballot because the decision is definitive either way. When something goes on a ballot, the City is required by law to make the ballot question a "yes" or "no" with no options.

Commissioner Tryon mentioned that there were rumors, and misunderstandings about the tragic death of an elderly woman who perished in a house fire. He inquired about the following:

- Did the women get out of the burning house and run back into her house to save her cat.
- Did the fire start outdoors or indoors.
- Was the fire exacerbated because the woman was a hoarder.

Fire Chief Jeremy Jones responded that GFFR has concluded its investigation and although it was unintentional, the probable cause was fireworks due to burn patterns and what was found at the scene.

- The woman was not outside and did not go back into the house for a cat.
- The fire started from the exterior and moved towards the house.
- The fire was not exacerbated because the woman was a hoarder.

Commissioner Tryon commented that there seems to be some concern in the community that no one has been charged with regard to the death of the elderly woman. He inquired if someone could be charged if it was proven that they had negligently set off fireworks that caused a fire and was determined to be the cause of the fire.

Police Chief Jeff Newton responded that anytime there is a suspicious fire determined to be arson or a death, GFFR works closely with GFFR on the investigation. GFFR determines the cause of the fire and GFFR determines if there is a probable cause of charge. In this case, no charges were made because GFFR was unable to determine where the fireworks came from and who was responsible for setting them off.

Commissioner Tryon commented that whether fireworks are banned, the City needs to make sure it has the resources and a plan to enforce it or else it will not make a lot of difference. He heard many of the vendors say that if there was a total ban on fireworks, it would not make a difference because it is unenforceable, and vendor sales would be the same no matter what. He questioned why they are all opposed to it if it would not make a difference.

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Commissioner Wolff commented that she still prefers a ban because when we talk about freedoms, whose freedoms are we talking about. Did the woman who lost her life have the right and freedom to live without fear and do people have the freedom to not have their houses or property damaged. She appreciated the comment about educating the people who sell fireworks because some have said a ban would not make a difference and fireworks would continue to be sold and ignited. She questioned why sending it to a ballot would make a difference because people choose not to follow the law.

Commissioner McKenney commented that other police departments in other communities in Montana have indicated that fireworks bans are difficult to enforce. He is not for any of the options because fireworks sales are going to continue and it is not enforced.

Commissioner Tryon commented that the point of restricting fireworks and putting it on a ballot is to let people decide whether they believe a restriction on fireworks would mitigate to some degree the number of fireworks being ignited in residential neighborhoods. He believes that restricting fireworks in the city limits would have an impact on the number of fireworks being set off in residential neighborhoods. Whether a fireworks ban passed or not, a conversation about enforcement will need to happen.

Mayor Reeves summarized the following:

- Commissioner Tryon supports Option 3.
- Commissioner Wolff is opposed to a ballot and supports working with the community to create a resolution and ordinance.
- Commissioner McKenney believes this is being rushed and there is no enforcement. He wants to take more time and work with the community.
- Commissioner Wilson supports Option 3 and a ballot because the City Commission has been dealing with this topic for decades.
- Mayor Reeves believes that if this does pass, it would be another ordinance that cannot be enforced; however, he will support Option 3.

It was the consensus of the Commission to have Option 3 and a ballot.

Commissioner Tryon inquired if Fire Chief Jones had anything to add.

Fire Chief Jones responded that he has talked to his colleagues around the State and enforcement is the biggest component for cities that have fireworks bans. Regardless of how this plays out, he requested some type of targeted proactive approach and enforcement.

Commissioner Wolff inquired what could change the behavior for those who are not following the City's ordinance and resolution.

Fire Chief Jones responded setting a fine that has an impact and setting a statement.

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Police Chief Newton concurred with Fire Chief Jones's comments. He added that the GFPD and GFFR are parallel but different. Approximately 90% of the calls on July 3 and 4, 2025 were responding to calls for service, which means GFFR had to place fireworks calls to a lower priority. GFFR overstaffs on New Year's Eve and the 4th of July. There would need to be strategic decisions to mitigate it and would require significant staffing and cost to do so, because eliminating it completely is not going to happen.

Mayor Reeves explained that for GFFR to do proper enforcement, it would require approximately \$28,000 and he would rather see that money go to DUI enforcement or something serious instead of fireworks complaints.

City Attorney Dennis explained that the current fine structure was established in 2007; however, the fines would be something the Commission could deal with after a vote on what is allowed and not allowed.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal special work session of July 22, 2025 at 7:25 p.m.

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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 6th 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.

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.

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
August 19, 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, Shannon Wilson, and Susan Wolff.

Also present were City Manager Greg Doyon and Deputy City Manager Bryan Lockerby, Deputy City Attorney Rachel Taylor, Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, Interim Park and Recreation Director Jessica Compton and Park Manager Kevin Vining, Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry and Deputy Director Lonnie Hill, Fire Chief Jeremy Jones, Police Chief Jeff Newton, and Deputy Clerk Darcy Dea.

Mayor Reeves reported that agenda item 1 was pulled and will be added back onto a Work Session once City staff has an opportunity to meet with County staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Written comments were received from **Sarah Willis**, (via August 17, 2025 email), **Bob Kelly** (via August 18, 2025 email), and **Bill Wadman** (via August 18, 2025 email) in support of agenda item 3.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

**1. OPIOID METRO REGION GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE PROPOSED
INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION –
CONTINUED FROM AUGUST 5, 2025.**

*PULLED

**2. DOWNTOWN URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT – WORKFORCE HOUSING
PROGRAM UPDATE.**

Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry reviewed and discussed PowerPoint slides (available in the City Clerk's Office). Highlights included:

- Workforce Housing Recap – What is Workforce Housing?

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- Per the MCA, Workforce housing is housing affordable to households whose income is between 60% and 140% of the area median income (AMI), as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- What does that mean for Great Falls.
 - Household size with 1 person, 60% AMI is \$36,120; 140% AMI is \$84,280.
 - Household size with 2 persons, 60% AMI is \$41,280; 140% AMI is \$96,640).
 - Household size with 3 persons, 60% AMI is \$46,440; 140% AMI is \$108,360.
- Our Mission Started with Public Priorities. As identified in the recent Growth Policy Survey and reinforced through feedback from Downtown business owners, property owners, and design professionals during informational sessions on May 28th and 29th included:
 - Upper-Floor Housing: Add homes above retail to maximize existing space.
 - Reinvestment in Historic Buildings: Preserve Great Falls' character while creating modern housing.
 - Blight Removal: Turn vacant or deteriorated properties into community assets.
 - A Thriving, Livable Downtown: Support 18-hour activity and economic resilience through added residential presence.
- Missoula's TIF-Funded Workforce Housing. Missoula is the only Montana city actively using TIF for workforce housing. Project spotlight-Scott Street-Ravara Housing Development:
 - Key Partners:
 - Missoula Redevelopment Agency (City) – TIF Administration.
 - Homeward & Trust Montana-Community Land rust and Compliance.
 - Ravara Development, LLC-Private development team.

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- Total: 314 units:
 - 89 for-sale homes (46 income-qualified).
 - 225 market-rate rentals 160 units (51%) reserved for households 120% (e.g., \$72,600/year for a 1-person household).
 - 160 units (51%) reserved for households 120% AMI.
- Site Plan (9 acres):
 - 3-acre Community Land Trust:
 - 46 income-qualified homes.
 - 43 market-rate homes.
 - 5-acre mixed-use development:
 - 225 rental apartments.
 - 35,000 sq ft of commercial space: childcare, grocery, and community hub.
- Missoula Key Takeaways:
 - Larger projects succeed when paired with a partner (nonprofit, housing authority, developer) to manage income compliance.
 - Smaller projects without a compliance partner face higher risk and administrative burden, often outweighing the benefit.
- Biggest Challenges:
 - Income Compliance Complexity. Ensuring TIF-supported units stay within workforce income limits requires ongoing income verification, legal agreements, and monitoring. This makes small-scale projects, like upper-floor conversions, challenging to implement without a partner to manage compliance long-term.
 - Limited Support for Workforce Tier. Organizations like NeighborWorks can assist with income compliance, but their focus is typically on subsidized or lower-income housing. While valuable, this doesn't fully address the need for market-rate or higher-tier workforce housing support.

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- Next Steps – Pilot Program Considerations:
 - A pilot workforce housing program can move forward, but:
 - May not meet original goals for moderate-income housing.
 - Unlikely to support simple upper-floor renovations by existing property owners.
 - More likely to benefit from new construction with subsidized housing partners.
 - Does not address the large inventory of vacant downtown upper floors.
- Next Steps towards market housing development Downtown?
 - Explore sending out a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit interest in building market rate housing on City-Owned Property Downtown (surface parking lots).
 - Explore property tax abatements/exemptions. Time-limited relief on the value added by rehab (often 5-10 years). Does not address the large inventory of vacant downtown upper floors.

Building Permit Fee reductions, specifically for existing downtown vacant buildings.

Mayor Reeves inquired if a program like this would be eligible for CDBG HOME funding and if the best results would be with a partner group.

Director Cherry responded that CDBG HOME funding could be added to the capital stack for a project if it is in a qualifying district. The city does not have the capacity to provide income compliance in perpetuity and would need to partner with an existing non-profit or create a community land trust.

Commissioner Wolff commented that the former Bon Marche building would make a great place for some form of housing. She received clarification that a TIF award and private investment was used to redo the old Johnson Hotel.

Planning and Community Development Deputy Director Lonnie Hill explained that people who owned buildings downtown were concerned about all the requirements and non-profit agencies consider this as another tool to put into that capital stack to make these projects work. The estimated number to remodel upper floors downtown

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is over \$200,000 a unit. Another tool that has been successful is the TIF Building Program for life safety and permits.

Commissioner McKenney inquired if a person who fit that workforce income was to remodel units into condos and later decided to sell to a higher income person, if it would still be locked into that perpetuity.

Director Cherry responded that once a TIF award is utilized based on that workforce funding, the city is obligated as the awarding jurisdiction, to ensure that it remains as such in perpetuity. The city is still not hitting the mark based on the Growth Policy Survey and Town Hall meeting; however, he wants to make an intentional effort towards getting that desire of filling empty spaces downtown.

Commissioner Wolff commented that good things happen when starting small and if this is kept in front of people, it could grow into what the original intent was.

Commissioner Tryon inquired about surface parking lots and if there are any other TIF Districts, outside of downtown, that this tool could be used with a non-profit partner that could monitor the income compliance requirements.

Director Cherry responded that the Westbank TIF District has opportunity for some more greenfield development; however, he does not want to lose the momentum that the community is hoping for with filling up downtown. With regard to surface parking lots, the city can be very descriptive with a Request for Proposals (RFP) about the outcomes it expects for specific locations.

Commissioner McKenney commented that the RFP reminds the private sector that the mindset of the Planning and Community Development department has changed and lets the community know that the city is open for business.

It was the consensus of the Commission to have Director Cherry move forward and explore all options.

Mayor Reeves explained that Commissioner Wilson is present and watching the meeting from another location because her allergies are bad tonight.

3. REQUEST OF CITY PROPERTY FOR THE NEW TOBY'S HOUSE CRISIS NURSERY.

City Manager Greg Doyon explained that City staff have been engaged with representatives from Toby's House for a while. Part of the challenge is per city code, there is no clear pathway when there is interest in acquiring city property and the sale, purchase or lease of city land is cumbersome.

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Toby's House Crisis Nursery Executive Director Leesha Ford reported that Toby's House Crisis Nursery is a local non-profit serving children ages 0-6 and their families in the Great Falls community since December 2020. The nursery is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect providing crisis and respite care, as well as some transitional care for families waiting for availability at a daycare. The nursery was recognized by Montana Children's Trust Fund as the Montana Nonprofit Organization of the year in 2022.

The origin of Toby's House Crisis Nursery is rooted in a tragic span of years in which Great Falls lost numerous lives to child abuse and neglect. In 2024, Toby's House provided over 4000 hours of care, helped over 100 new children and their families, and has been a community resource center for diapers, formula, clothing and more. Currently located at 421 5th St North, the nursery's rental site has limited space, and its layout does not support the community's needs long-term. The Nursery would need to be near downtown for walking accessibility and is best suited for an area in a city park, to fully maximize benefits to the city's children and families.

The nursery is funded through private donors and grants/foundations and is growing its program services that support operational funding. Families using the nursery do not need to meet income criteria, and services are at no cost to families. The nursery operates from 8am to 11:59 pm (or when last child leaves) Monday through Friday and has an expansion grant from Montana Children's Trust Fund for initiating weekend hours which has been 9am to 3pm on Saturdays to provide resources and in the future will include childcare on weekends. The crisis nursery was a 2014 committee/project of the Early Childhood Coalition to address child abuse and neglect in Great Falls. Eleven years later, the committee incorporated as a nonprofit, opened the state's first crisis nursery, and has a contract with Bright Futures Birth to 5 Project to pilot a mentorship to replicate our success in another Montana Community.

The nursery provides support for families struggling with crisis and emergency, families needing a break from a crying baby, health and mental health needs, sobriety support, and supports the city's workforce when their daycare, school, or HeadStart is closed, and when childcare plans fall through at the last minute. Toby's House Crisis Nursery's services are a vital part of our city's economic and workforce development, ensuring workers can take a job even though the daycare they enrolled at cannot take their child for another two months. Toby's House Crisis Nursery 'minds the gap' and collaborates with many entities to ensure we have a thriving, family-friendly community.

The community has an urgent need for a new crisis nursery site, and Ms. Ford requested that the city commit to either a long-term lease or a parcel of land inside a park.

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Ms. Ford read from a prepared statement that stated the following: “The question has been raised why Toby’s House needs to be in a park and why not a parking lot, or some patch of pavement where the sun bakes the ground and no one lingers? The answer is simple, because we’re not talking about cars, we are talking about children. Not teenagers with earbuds and independence, but babies and toddlers. Not prisoners at the jail, out walking the yard, but tiny humans still learning to walk, to speak, to trust the world. And what kind of world are we building if the best we offer them is concrete? Children of Great Falls deserve more than a slab of asphalt. They deserve trees that bend in the wind, grass they can tumble into without scraping their knees, a swing set that whispers: You are safe here. You are wanted here. You are a child, not a burden. Parks are not a luxury, they are a promise. And Toby’s House is in the promise-keeping business.

So why Carter Park? Because it’s one of the smallest, but one of the least used parks. Other neighborhood and pocket parks like Kranz, Roosevelt, and Boston Heights are nestled in neighborhoods already rich with housing, families, and play. Carter Park is different. It sits on the edge, between hope and hardship. It is one of the least known, least used, and perhaps most overlooked green spaces in the city. And that makes it the one most full of possibility. Its location as a site for a partnership with Toby’s House is no accident. It’s within walking distance of the homeless shelter, the YWCA, and regular meeting places for AA and NA. It’s in a neighborhood with high poverty, high addiction, and some of the city’s most at-risk children. That’s where the need is greatest. And that’s what Toby’s House is all about.

When it comes to parks and green spaces, our city’s charter asks for joint public-private efforts like this, ones that don’t just make life better, but make it safer. Toby’s House doesn’t need a park because it’s nice. It needs part of a park because it’s necessary. Because a child should grow up believing there’s always a soft place to land. Toby’s House wouldn’t take from Carter Park, it would give. Adding Toby’s House to the park space would bring new life and presence to a forgotten corner of the city. It wouldn’t diminish the park; it would deepen its meaning. It would offer eyes and ears on the park, creating a sense of safety and stewardship. This isn’t about losing green space, it’s about reimagining it as a place where care and play coexist. Not just a playground, but a sanctuary. A shelter for the most vulnerable among us.

And what about the neighborhood? Toby’s House wouldn’t stand in its way, it would stand in service to it. It would revitalize a neglected block, through compassion. Through care. Through presence. Some might ask, Why Toby’s House? Why this one organization? Why not do this for everyone? And that’s a wonderful question, one I wish we could answer with a resounding: We are.

Many years ago, there was an agreement to use a city park for a Boys and Girls Clubhouse, which never got the funding for a new construction at that time. Perhaps Toby’s House is a great trial for us as a city, to demonstrate the partnership that can

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benefit and enhance our parks, our park programming, and reduce the burden on the city services.

I wish every child, every family, had access to the kind of care Toby's House provides. But part of why we are here is because Toby's House has earned this moment. It has been a quiet force for good, recognized as Montana's Nonprofit of the Year, and modeled as a pilot program for expansion in Missoula, contracted with Montana's Zero to Five after seeing the impact of Toby's House on infants, toddlers, and families. The state is supportive of innovative approaches and sustainable solutions across the state, and a creative partnership could be a feather in our Great Falls cap, a chance to lead at something other than the number of deaths of children ages zero to five. Toby's House has proven, day after day, what's possible when compassion is paired with action. And because of that reputation, because of the lives already changed, a group of generous builders and developers have stepped forward, not to profit, but to believe. To invest in a safer future. The nursery has been generously supported by local people, organizations and businesses. They've offered Toby's House the chance to grow, to move from helping eight families a day, five days a week, to eighteen families a day, 24/7. To not only protect children, but to walk alongside parents, offering them the tools, the support, and the grace to become the best versions of themselves.

And this expanded capacity doesn't just help the families who walk through the doors of Toby's House, it helps the entire city. It prevents child abuse before it starts. It helps parents keep their jobs, maintain their sobriety, and stay on stable footing. In a small but meaningful way, it eases the burden on our already overstretched police force and child protective services, agencies doing their best to serve a population that has outgrown their resources. Toby's House doesn't replace those systems, but we try to give them breathing room. It offers upstream care, quietly, effectively, and with lasting impact.

A partnership with Toby's House will increase utilization of Carter Park, bringing the target populations of families with toddlers and infants and their vitality, to spark joy in an often overlooked and underutilized green space. Toby's House over time will funnel the power of its volunteers, donors, employees and families, social media, and enthusiasm to enhance the park's features and future plans, will ensure that more trees, more benches, more facilities aligned with the city, neighborhood council & park board's strategic plans to add to and increase the usage of the park, host family-friendly events, and to partner for what dreams may come. The return for the city on sharing roughly 6% of this green space could be incredible and could be designated a pilot project on reducing burdens on the city. And best of all, it costs the city nothing to build it."

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Ms. Ford provided and discussed a scaled drawing of Carter Park. Carter Park is approximately 4.2 acres, and she is asking for 10,000 to 11,000 square feet inside the park, which is less than 6% of that park space.

Mayor Reeves inquired if the project was approved would Toby's House have a fence around the property.

Ms. Ford responded it would have a secured playground inside for when staff are working with children who are vulnerable and cannot be outside of the park. It would have a fenced area in the back and the parking lot would be open for staff use.

Commissioner Wolff inquired if Toby's House would be responsible for maintenance of the grounds and if there would be more childcare services.

Ms. Ford responded that if there is a long-term lease, the liability on that site would be Toby's House to hold and is covered under its childcare insurance. It is a likely possibility that there would be more childcare services.

Commissioner Wilson explained that the 11,000 square feet being proposed would be approximately 11% of the park, because the park is 110,000 square feet.

Ms. Ford responded that it is her understanding that the park is approximately 4.2 acres, the building itself is approximately 5,000 to 6,000 square feet and the 11,000 is inclusive of the playground.

Commissioner Wilson expressed concern that it would be taking up a lot of green space.

Ms. Ford commented that it is considered a moderate use park, and the city could help decide where to put the building in an area in the park where the park is less used or impacted. Her hope is to continue to add services, programing, and people to the park.

Commissioner Tryon commented that Toby's House Crisis Nursery is a huge asset to the community. Referring to an email from Interim Park and Recreation Director Jessica Compton about concerns from the Park Board, Commissioner Tryon requested that it be sent to Ms. Ford so she could answer those questions before proceeding with the request.

He inquired if donated private property has been considered and if Ms. Ford is requesting to lease the property from the city for a minimal amount or if the city just gives the land in Carter Park. He is concerned about the precedent it would set to proceed with this kind of arrangement.

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Ms. Ford responded that she has approached several property owners, and her preference would be a long-term lease at a nominal cost. If Toby's House were to outgrow the facility or relocate, it would become part of the City's assets. This is an opportunity for the city to consider it a pilot project and use that to formulate what the community wants as the guidelines for that.

Commissioner Tryon commented that there are 57 parks in the city, and it is worth considering other uses for these parks.

Mayor Reeves concurred with Commissioner Tryon. He added that Toby's House is invaluable, what the community needs, and he wants to see this move forward.

Commissioner McKenney commented that Toby's House is an asset to the community; however, he believes there needs to be a plan in place first because of the precedent this would set. He suggested exploring Toby's House request and expanding it to include other community needs.

Commissioner Wolff inquired about the financing and funding of this project.

Jim Filipowicz, Steel Etc President, commented that he and his wife are willing to put in a half million plus.

Scott Dunbar, Walsh Construction Company Senior Project Manager, commented that he is with a large construction company working at Malmstrom Air Force Base. This community has been good to his company, and they saw this need and want to fulfill this need. Most of the funding will be through donations from construction partners and vendors his company regularly uses that provide them with materials and equipment for their normal construction. The big limitation is businesses set business plans, and those plans include benevolent giving on a fiscal year. He is concerned that time is of the essence and if we do not move forward and commit this money, businesses are going to commit it to somewhere else or some other need and it will go away. If there are going to be studies and protracted processes to make this happen, the money will go away.

Commissioner Wolff commented that the need is much larger than many people want to acknowledge and this should move forward. There would still be plenty of room at Carter Park for the neighborhood children and there are other parks that could be used for future things. This would be the beginning of something that could really help the community.

Mr. Filipowicz commented that if the city is concerned about setting a precedent about donating property, he would buy the property and donate it to Toby's House.

Commissioner Tryon responded that selling city parks is a convoluted and long process and a lease agreement is the best way to get this done quickly.

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City Manager Doyon commented that the city code relating to the sale, trade or lease of park property is cumbersome. It calls for obtaining an appraisal on the property and indicates that the sale, trade or lease of real property must be made to the highest responsible bidder. That is a process that needs to be overcome, and he is not sure that there is flexibility to do that unless there is only one responsible bidder. He wants to ensure that the city does this right, so other community groups do not become enraged that the city is not following the process.

If the Commission is interested in exploring this opportunity with Toby's House, he will work with the Legal Department to outline the next steps and put a timeline to it and meet with Park and Recreation to determine what the impact would be for utilizing Carter Park.

Commissioner McKenney commented that making an individual decision about Toby's House might not be the right thing to do. The city needs to make a policy about possible uses of parks and undeveloped land and what the city would consider.

Commissioner Tryon commented that he does not believe there is anything in the current policy that precludes the city from considering options like this. The Park Masterplan is a policy that is already in place that states that the city can entertain working with non-profits.

It was the consensus of the Commission that Manager Doyon start working with legal and explore options to present back to the Commission.

Commissioner Tryon inquired about the timeline for the money.

Mr. Dunbar responded that he believed the monies must be committed by December 31 tax year.

Commissioner Wilson commented that although she is not happy about losing a big portion of green space at Carter Park, she agreed to have Manager Doyon explore options.

Mr. Filipowicz commented that if this project moves forward, he will donate the playground for the park.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that there were no topics for the September 2, 2025 work session.

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ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of August 19, 2025 at 6:49 p.m.



Finance Department Memorandum

To: Greg Doyon, City Manager; City Commission; Members of the Investment Committee
From: Kirsten Wavra, Deputy Finance Director
Date: August 11, 2025
Re: Total Cash and Investments as of July 31, 2025

The City of Great Falls' total cash and investments at the end of July 2025 was \$101,333,935.63. This included cash in bank accounts totaling \$15,628,539.08. Total cash and investments decreased from \$105.0 million in June to \$101.3 million in July. It is normal for this amount to fluctuate from month to month depending on payments made on large capital projects and funds received from utilities, taxes, and grants, for example. The General Fund cash balance decreased from \$9,229,235.41 in June to \$6,978,798.73 in July. The graphs for the City's total cash and investments as well as the General Fund, specifically, are on the next pages. All cash balances are monitored on a monthly basis.

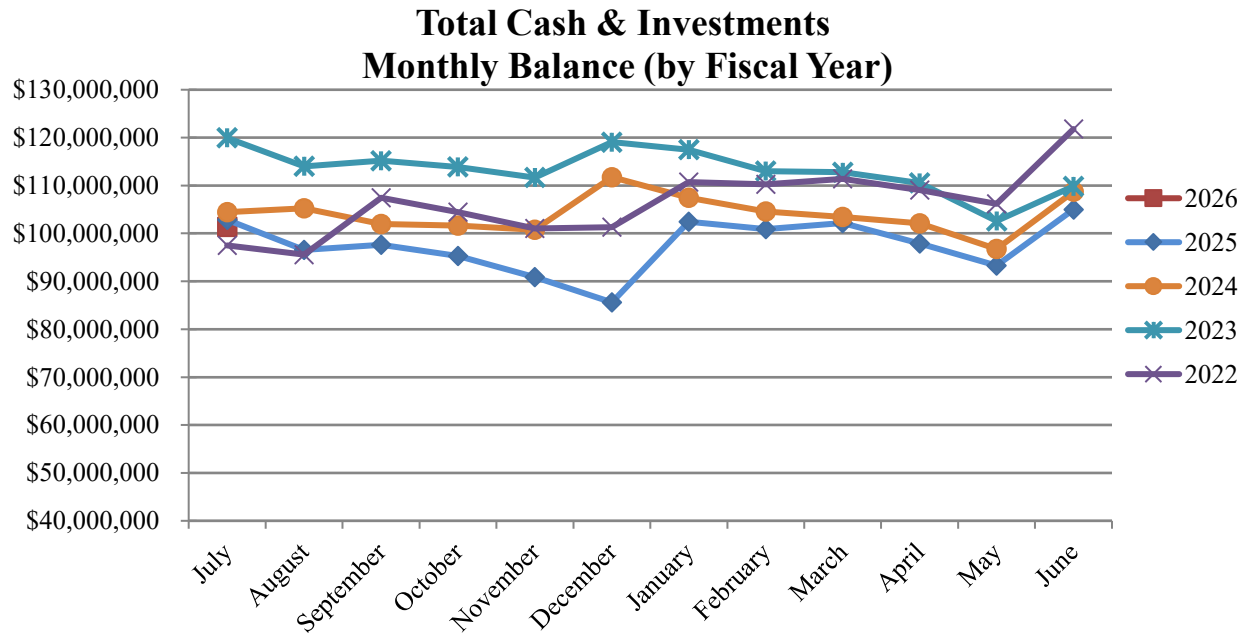
Also on the next page is the summary of the City's total cash and investments. The City's investment policy specifies the percentage the City of Great Falls must have of the different types of instruments allowed by state statute. The chart below lists those percentages compared to the City's investments as of July 31st. The investments in the Montana Board of Investments (STIP) and US Bank Insured Cash Sweep (ICS) are liquid and may be called at any time. The current interest rates being earned in STIP and ICS are competitive. They are listed in the table on the next page.

Issuer category	Minimum %	Maximum %	City's Investments % as of July 31, 2025
Master, savings, and ICS accounts	20% combined	100%	100%
Montana Board of Investments STIP		100%	
Money Market/Repurchase Agreements		100%	
Direct Obligations of the U.S. which includes Treasury Notes and Bills	0%	80%	0%
Obligations of agencies of the U.S.	0%	30%	0%

City of Great Falls
Total Cash & Investment Summary
July 31, 2025

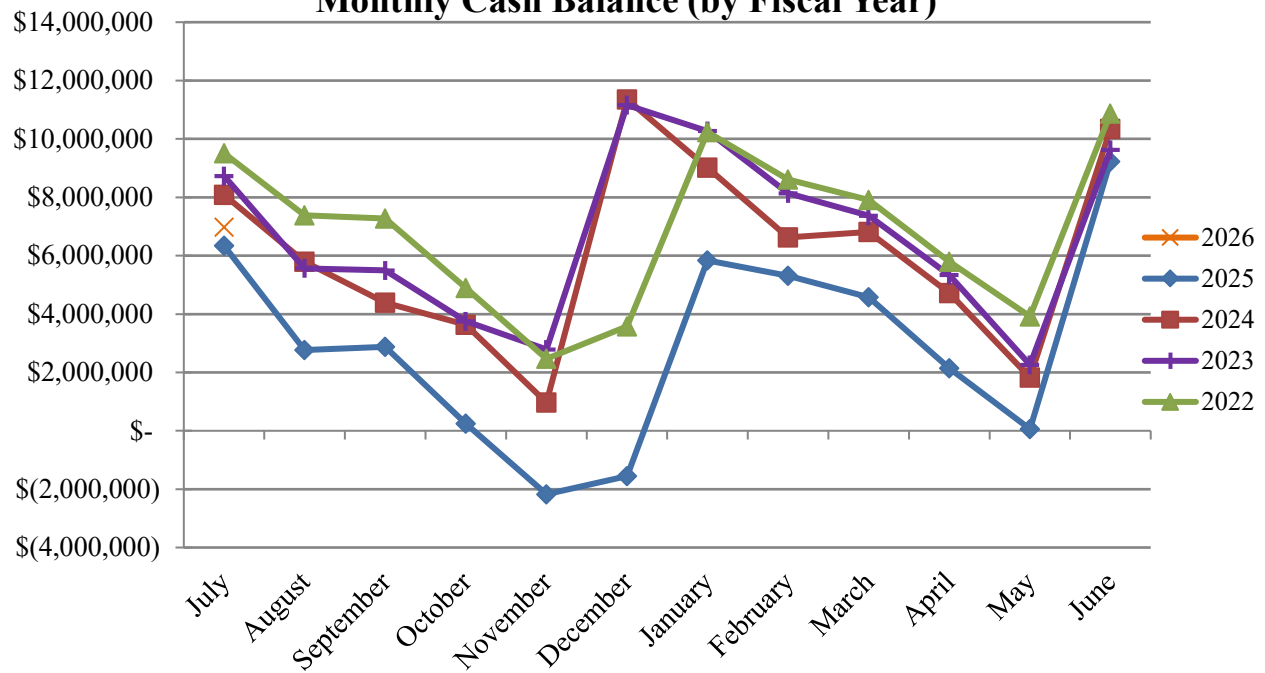
Description	Rate	Due Date	Principal Cost	Market Value
US Bank Investments				
Insured Cash Sweep	3.450%		38,728,324.04	38,728,324.04
Total US Bank Investments			38,728,324.04	38,728,324.04
State of Montana Short Term				
Investment Pool (STIP)	4.511%		46,977,072.51	46,977,072.51
Total Investments			85,705,396.55	85,705,396.55
Cash on Hand, Deposits in Bank			15,628,539.08	15,628,539.08
Total Cash and Investments			<u>\$101,333,935.63</u>	<u>\$101,333,935.63</u>

Total cash and investments are still at a higher level (see graph below). The higher levels can be attributed to receipt of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding. These monies originally accounted for \$20 million included in our total cash and investments. All ARPA funding has been committed at this time and is being spent down on a project-by-project basis. The final projects for the police evidence building and new municipal court space are well underway. All ARPA funds must be spent by December 31, 2026.



The General Fund monthly cash balances generally show a cyclical pattern largely dependent on the receipt of tax revenue usually in December and June each year (see graph below).

General Fund Monthly Cash Balance (by Fiscal Year)



If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (406) 455-8423 or kwavra@greatfallsmt.net.

Department Monthly Update
July 31, 2025
Key Updates

City Manager	<p>1) Guided and assisted staff to provide the City Commission information, history, data and options regarding a fireworks ban.</p> <p>2) Responded to a proposed GFPL Scope of Service for HR and Finance.</p> <p>3) Continued to prepare for in-person interviews for the next Deputy City Manager and Parks and Recreation Director.</p> <p>4) Attended a Special Meeting for MMIA.</p> <p>5) Met with OLDCC regarding SAHBS facility access. Will report in more detail to the Commission later.</p> <p>6) Drafted department head performance appraisals.</p> <p>7) Reviewed draft soil policy with P&CD/Legal.</p> <p>8) Participated in SAHBS contractor walk-through.</p>
Deputy City Manager (Clerk, Comm Specialist, Neighborhood Councils, Events, GFAS)	<p>Animal Shelter: In line with our ongoing effort to improve the shelter environment, we have officially begun the fencing project for larger outdoor dog areas, funded by an ASPCA grant. Additionally, thanks to a generous grant from Home Depot, we will soon have gazebos in each yard, offering much-needed shade and comfort for our animals. By mid-August, we will have a completely transformed outdoor space that will significantly enhance the well-being of our dogs.</p> <p>During the month of July, we took in 31 kittens, 21 cats, and 20 dogs. The majority of the kittens were underage and are currently in foster care, with many thanks to the community for stepping up to support this effort.</p> <p>We are thrilled to report that our microchip scanning station, available to the public 24/7 at the front of the shelter, has earned national recognition from ASPCA Pro. This station allows us to help reunite lost pets with their owners, providing a valuable service to the community.</p> <p>Communications: Created and posted a video featuring Park & Rec. employees went on socials, the website, and City 190 in celebration of Park & Rec. month. Along with IT, pictures and design options were chosen for the newly updated City website (expected to be complete in Sept.). Reminders were posted about fireworks safety and regulations prior to the 4th. An educational campaign was started on what items shouldn't go into City sanitation bins (and how to dispose of those items), and it will continue over the next few months. Park & Rec. ads running via Townsquare Media were updated to reflect upcoming events. Wrote, edited, and posted information (and answered questions) about the utility rate. Went on a police ride-a-long. Put out information to the public on Dept. of Revenue property appraisers, as some appraisers were being harassed by property owners. Put out information to the public on MDT's project on 6th St. SW, and worked on ensuring people know this is an MDT, not a City, project.</p> <p>Neighborhood Councils: Neighborhood Councils met 4 times this month, the rest of the Neighborhood Councils: Neighborhood Councils met 4 times this month, the rest of the councils do not meet during the summer months when school is out. Numerous topics were covered at the meetings to include, review of new legislative tax bills recently passed given by Representative Jane Weber, Col. David Smith gave a unit mission update of the MT Air Guard 120th Airlift Wing, Planning and Community Development gave a presentation of an Annexation/Assign R-10 Mobile Home Zoning in Council District 4. At least 83 citizens attended these meetings to provide input on the topics noted. Some councils are also planning to have Ice Cream Socials/Summer Celebration in the month of August to interact with their neighbors and promote Neighborhood Councils.</p> <p>Events: Contracted 2 Broadway shows which will go on sale on August 11th to season ticket holders. The shows are Tina - Tina Turner The Musical and Mannheim Steamroller. Hired Laura Auvil as our new technical director to replace John Gemberling after 40 years of service. Laura comes with 20 years of experience in South Carolina but is a Great Falls native. Theater ceiling repairs are on schedule and almost complete. Scaffolding is scheduled to be removed by August 8th.</p>
Finance	<p>1) Filed all quarterly federal grant reports.</p> <p>2) Working on finalizing FY 2025 financial numbers and year end entries. Preparing for the Fiscal Year End 2025 Financial Audit with new Financial Auditors.</p>

Department Monthly Update
July 31, 2025
Key Updates

	3) Completed and help present the FY 2026 Proposed City Wide Budget.
Fire	<p>Operations Division: The training tower was removed from the training center site as part of the re-build plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ongoing Recruit Training is being conducted with a current probationary fire fighter and one more is in the conditional job offer process •GFFR attended Hazmat training with Calumet Refining Company •Collaboration with the water treatment plant facility is in the works to establish communications for notifications of confined space entries. This puts our technical rescue crews on notice confined space work is being done at the water treatment plant. •Commercial fire drills have concluded for all platoons •GFFR transported 13 patients o the local emergency departments due to no private ambulances being available. <p>Fire Prevention Division:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The fire prevention bureau was tasked with the fire investigation of a fire that resulted in the loss of life of an elderly female. The cause of the fire was unintentional with the probable ignition source being fireworks •The AC of Prevention and the FC meet with Airport Director Faulkner regarding GFFR conducting fire inspections for all airport authority property and businesses. This was a successful meeting. Members of the FPB will undergo training and background screening in August •The FPB continued its summer youth presentations at local parks and daycares •The FPB worked alongside PCD, Engenieering and Environmental to determine a course of action for Great Falls Ice to take so that they can get their new building open •It's fair time again. The FPB inspected all the food vendors before the fair to ensure they are code complaint and conducts life safety walk throughs during the week, the engine companies did the life safety walk through on the weekend
Human Resources	<p>1) Managed the recruitment for 27 positions. There were 198 applicants yielding the onboarding of 18 new employees. July's turnover rate was 1.75 percent with the top two reasons cited returning to school and personal family/health issues. The average time to fill a position was 39 days.</p> <p>2) Finalized the GFPD bargaining agreement which will be presented to the Commission in September for ratification.</p> <p>3) Beginning the new FY26 year, there were five new work comp claims (Police, Public Works(4)) in July, leading injuries are strains/springs.</p>
Information Technology	<p>1) Successfully implemented a new endpoint management solution, increasing capabilities while lowering costs.</p> <p>2) Expanded the Public Works camera system, installing seven new cameras along with a point-to-multipoint radio system.</p> <p>3) Mapping updated a major web application used for street lighting.</p> <p>4) Implemented a new Helpdesk ticketing system and rolled out new IT SharePoint site.</p>
Legal	<p>1) Still working on 4 new threatened ligation, in MMIA hands, working on retaining counsel</p> <p>2) Dec Action (Harlan) has reached settlement agreement. Filed for motion to dismiss at this time. Waiting for court to approve.</p> <p>3) New Prosecution system is generating subpoenas on its on. PineTech is working on some hiccups before we start implementing fully.</p> <p>4) General stats: 1 new code enforcement case. 128 public records requests processed by civil division. 114 deferred prosecution agreements processed. 837 Subpoenas issues for witnesses to attend trials & hearings.</p>
Park and Recreation	<p>1) The Park and Recreation staff participated in a Threat Response Training course at the Park and Recreation Administration Office. This course was presented by Bryan Lockerby.</p> <p>2) Park and Recreation in conjunction with the River's Edge Trail Foundation hosted the first, in a three part 5K Fun Run series. The first run was hosted at the</p>

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	<p>3) A new turtle art sculpture was installed on the walking path in Gibson Park. The new sculpture replaced a previous wooden turtle art piece that was destroyed by vandalism. This piece was donated by sculptor Alex Smithson.</p> <p>4) On 7/13/2025 Harvest Springs, Antioch, and New City Church spent the day spreading over a 120 cubic yards of certified playground chips over 11 playgrounds as part of their service day.</p>
Police	<p>1) Promoted Cara Guderian to the rank of Sergeant, and Clay Bott to the rank of Master Police Officer.</p> <p>2) Sgt. Cunningham continued to lead the 4 school resource officers in their altered assignment to patrol in the downtown area. Their duties were changed during June and July to address the numerous complaints of disorderly conduct and other criminal behavior individuals were engaging in. There has been positive feedback from the downtown business owners regarding their efforts.</p> <p>3) The Evidence expansion project is continuing on schedule, with bi-monthly meetings are occurring with the architect, contractors and Sylvia Tarman to discuss the progression of the project.</p>
Planning and Community Development	<p>1) Great Falls Internation Airport has submitted a TIF application to utilize funds within the Airport TIF District to extend infrastructure along the Ulm Frontage Road. The application has been circulated to pertinent City Departments for review.</p> <p>2) For most of July, Brock was on parental leave.</p>
Public Works	<p>PWA: Worked with Communications Specialist to develop a social media campaign (kNOw Waste Wednesdays) for Sanitation what not to throw in Sanitation containers; conducted Internal Safety Audit for the Street and Sanitation Divisions; conducted Internal Safety Audit for Central Garage; lead new City employees on tour of Public Works Complex; had first meeting with design consultant for PW Admin and Utilities area addition/remodel project</p> <p>Water Plant: Demand is 18-23 MGD average; performed safety inspection of WTP facilities and assessed PPE requirements; started 5 year RMP, RRA, ERP renewal process and will finalize July 2026--these documents outline emergency response procedures such as a chlorine release, security breach, or other events. Key projects ongoing are basin settler improvements, Corrosion Control, Disinfection Alternatives for Chlorine Gas, Head House Improvements, Lead & Copper Sampling, etc.</p> <p>Central Garage: Large number of repairs completed on fire engine #3; assembling new drone response unit for PD, which will be used in an upcoming training exercise in August with Malmstrom AFB; new detective unit #40 being upfitted.</p> <p>Sanitation: Received Commission approval to order one residential side load truck and one commercial rear load truck.</p> <p>Environmental: Conducted 18 food service establishment (FSE) inspections. Began prepping for upcoming EPA audit (9-15-25) of Industrial Pretreatment Program. Completed 6 residential and 5 commercial building permit reviews.</p> <p>Utilities: Completed Russel pond draining and maintenance; repaired 5 water mains (3x 16", 1x 8", 1x 6") and 7 fire hydrants; replaced 3 pallets of SOD in customers back yard following 17' deep sewer repair in easement; prep'd previous dig locations for concrete and asphalt replacement.</p> <p>Engineering: Finished collecting data surrounding flooding complaints in Gibson Flats by tracking Russell Pond water surface elevations as the pond was drained; compared to water surface levels of the spring flowing out of the hillside below Russell Pond. Started authoring the policy outlining how the Capital Improvement Reserves will be managed, such as how they can be applied for, which projects qualify for use, and how funds will be awarded. Conducted preliminary meetings for updating the 2006 CoGF Water Master Plan.</p>