

DRAFT - Missoula City Council Budget and Finance Committee Minutes

December 11, 2024

11:20 AM

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

Attend in person: City Council Chambers, 140 W Pine, Missoula MT

Members present: Amber Sherrill, Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Sandra Vasecka

Members absent: Jennifer Savage

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

1.1 Roll Call

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

1.2.1 Minutes from December 4, 2024

The minutes were approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Increasing the Annual Allocation of the Neighborhood Project Fund Grants

Councilor Carlino presents on the Neighborhoods Grant Program and shares about projects the neighborhood councils have worked together to create. He gives examples of painted traffic circles, garden features, and little free libraries. He discusses how neighborhoods apply for the grant and the application scoring metric. He explains the current time and monetary limits on specific projects and proposes the larger pool of funding be increased to \$35,000 from the current \$20,000. He explains potential funding sources within the budget and that he would like this resolution to apply for fiscal year 2026.

Councilor Sherrill inquires about the need for the resolution. Councilor Carlino explains that if projects apply to parks or roads, the funds for the grant could be pulled from those departments.

Councilor Sherrill inquires about past totals for grants. Kalina Pritchard, CPDI Neighborhood Specialist, speaks to the sum of funds requested from previous fiscal years and expands on how last year was an outlier in projects funded as well. She then discusses the process of determining the feasibility of projects through a pre-application process.

Councilor Campbell inquires about the similarities in this request to a request from Councilor Carlino during the August budget process. Councilor Carlino expands that via resolution, the administration would be able to ensure that the funds are available and make future decisions about the specificities of accounts for payment. See recording for details.

Councilor Campbell inquires about the current queue for grant requests. Kalina Pritchard speaks to what neighborhoods currently have requests for grant funds and expands on the seven applications submitted in the past year. See recording for details.

Councilor Melson inquires about neighborhoods that may not be involved in the program, whether previously "offline" or newly developing. Kalina Pritchard speaks to the 20 current neighborhoods in Missoula, expanding on the ones that are becoming more active in the program. Councilor Melson also inquires to the rules for the funding and if it is "use it or lose it." Kalina responds that the limit is \$20,000, but in the past not all has been spent and remaining allocated funds return to the general fund. Councilor Melson inquires about the criteria to approve grant requests and how, if requests were greater than the allocated funds, less than the limit was granted. Kalina responds about specific examples as to withdrawals, rejections, and scoring metrics. See recording for details.

Councilor Sherrill asks when the last increase to the grant program occurred. Kalina responds that it was prior to 2020, but is unsure of specific year at this time.

Councilor Becerra speaks to the potential of neighborhood growth and potential improvements to the application chart. She inquires about feedback from Public Works and if they invest anything further than the grant funds, including money or staff time. Councilor Carlino responds that he communicated with the Finance Department, and he does not have information from Public Works at this time. Kalina responds that grant requests regarding traffic circles were focused on beautification rather than transportation functions. Councilor Becerra inquires about traffic signal boxes and if the requests for these comes from the neighborhoods or the Public Arts Committee. Kalina believes that most of these have been handled via the Committee rather than these grant funds.

Councilor Nugent asks that while the City tries to award the budget limit, if there is a different amount actually spent each year. Leigh Griffing, Director of Finance, responds with the amount budgeted and spent in previous fiscal years. See recording for details. Councilor Nugent asks if the goal for this resolution is to create a larger pool for similarly financially sized projects or to create a pool for financially larger projects. Councilor Carlino responds that the current intention is to increase the number of projects rather than amount of funds per project at this time. Councilor Nugent asks about potentially rejected grant applications and if the Council's proposed budget amendments would be a correct process to then still fund those projects. Leigh responds that this would be the correct process.

Councilor Sherrill asks that the \$20,000 has been allocated for several years, and that while allocated, if it must be used. Leigh Griffing responds that her understanding is correct. See recording for details. Councilor Carlino responds that the entirety allocated would not have to be spent, but the larger pool of funding would assist in helping fund more projects that may have been rejected before.

Councilor Melson comments that he is a fan of the Neighborhood Council program and considers it an effective use for the grant dollars. He expresses that the neighborhood growth, through more activity and new development means that increased funding is a good idea.

Councilor Becerra is supportive in theory, but has questions regarding funding and the ramifications of tapping into other sources.

Councilor Campbell echoes Councilor Melson's statement and that he is grateful for the avenue of budget amendments as well. He feels that this is a good way to improve community engagement.

Councilor Sherrill expresses concern about the next budget season. She supports this program but is concerned about funding in an upcoming tight budget year. She is considering the fact that we do not have \$20,000 allocated by resolution currently and that council has the ability to be flexible at this time.

Councilor Nugent also discusses funding and is interested in alternative paths to this goal. He discusses potential changes to the procedure for project approval through the grant committee and other departments as well.

Councilor Vasecka speaks to her budgetary concerns.

Councilor Carlino proposes holding item in committee if council would like to hear from other departments.

Item will remain in committee for a future meeting, date to be determined.

Moved by: Daniel Carlino

Adopting a resolution to increase the annual allocation of the Neighborhood Project Fund grants from \$20,000 to \$35,000.

3.2 Lumen ISP Renewal Contract

Jesse Neidigh speaks to the renewal of the service provider contract. He explains that the contract was not going to be renewed due to migration, but that plan is behind schedule, so renewal is necessary.

Jesse requests to change the motion language to authorize the mayor to sign the language, rather than City.

Motion passes unanimously.

Moved by: Mike Nugent

Authorize the Mayor to approve amendment of the Intrastate Agreement for CenturyLink Metro Ethernet Service to renew City of Missoula ISP connectivity with Lumen for one-year.

AYES: (11): Amber Sherrill, Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Sandra Vasecka

ABSENT: (1): Jennifer Savage

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)

4. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourns at 12:04 PM.