

DRAFT - Missoula City Council Budget and Finance Committee Minutes

June 11, 2025

9:30 AM

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

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

Members present: Amber Sherrill, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, Sandra Vasecka

Members absent: Stacie Anderson, Sierra Farmer

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

1.1 Roll Call

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

1.2.1 Minutes from June 4, 2025

The minutes were approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Budget Presentations

~~Municipal Court - 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM~~

City Attorney - 9:30 AM - 10:15 AM

Parks & Recreation - 10:15 AM - 11:45 AM

Ryan Sudbury, City Attorney for Civil Services, presents. He discusses highlighted priority work, noting the ongoing litigation, priority legal support in-house, and agency support for city-affiliated organizations. He provides statistics on the workload history over the last few years. See presentation and recording for specific data.

Ryan details the current baseline budget for the Civil Attorney Services.

Keithi Worthington, City Attorney for Prosecution Services, presents. She provides an overview of the staffing in the office, as well as of the baseline budget overview. She notes that about 96% of their budget is salaries.

Keithi discusses the three new requests for the department. She is asking to fund one Victim-Witness Coordinator position back to a full-time position, as well as maintaining salaries for the others as hard funded with the loss of ARPA funds. She details the responsibilities of these positions, as well as statistics of how many contacts, meetings,

and court appearances during FY2025. See presentation and recording for specific details.

Keithi is also asking for funds to update the case management software to Pinetech. She details the functions of a case management software and the necessity of it in their daily operations. She details how the software functions, the relevant information, and the integration of other utilized software. She shows an example of a case in JustWare to illustrate how the program works. See recording for specific details.

Keithi details the third budget request for prosecution services, a recurring contract with Missoula County Community Justice Department (MCCJD). She discusses how MCCJD supports the Crime Victim Advocate's Office. This request would continue to fund the salary for the three existing staff members.

Keithi notes that Prosecution is down 2 staff members and has a goal of full staffing for FY26, as well as plans to clearly outline the work of the civil and prosecution divisions.

Gwen Jones asks about the hiring landscape for attorneys in public service. Keithi speaks to the prosecution standpoint, saying that the last five years have been challenging, even for prosecution state and nation-wide. Her division has had one position with consistent turnover. She notes that there used to be 20-30 applicants and now they average 5-8.

Ryan Sudbury speaks to the experience of the civil division. He notes that they also have had difficulty finding high numbers of satisfactory candidates.

Gwen also asks about experience requirements for the positions. Ryan notes that the civil division does not work much with new graduates; most of their projects are long-term and are not compatible with internships. Keithi talks about previous requirements for two years of prosecutorial experience, but they have since removed that requirement in order to get more applicants. Paid internships have gone by the wayside, but they have been successful utilizing clinical internships with the University. She also notes that they have seen an increase in out of state applicants, resulting in a new requirement of having a Montana license or the ability to acquire one within 90 days.

Donna Gaukler, Director of Parks & Recreation and Ryan Applegate, Deputy Director of Parks & Recreation, present.

Donna begins by noting there are requests based on the desires and recommendations of council members and residents as well, noting the prioritization of the requests based on the PROST plan and the state of current parks. She details the City's mission and vision, noting how Parks & Recreation fits within these guiding principles. She provides data on how parks impact health, safety, community, and the environment. See recording and presentation for specific data.

Donna talks about the PROST goals and the priorities for FY2026. She also talks about the priorities reflected from resident surveys: walkability, safety, clean air & water, accessibility for people with disabilities, and access to childcare. She also talks about the review of the Polco National Community Survey, the CHIP, and the CHA surveys. See recording and presentation for specific data.

Donna talks about the impact of community programs, especially after-school programs on children's earning potential, school performance, and interactions with criminal activity.

She talks about how sliding fees and grants can help make these programs and the cost of living as a whole more affordable. She notes that some grants are uncertain or expiring in the future as well.

Ryan Applegate presents, beginning with the organizational structure of the department and the responsibilities of the four work teams. He provides statistics on the number of developed parks & trails, ecosystem services, and recreation services. See recording and presentation for specific data.

Ryan discusses the baseline budget for FY26 for the Parks District 1 fund. He provides an overview of the various activities: Administration, Business, Projects & Planning; Operations; Recreation Services; and Aquatic Services. He then briefly outlines other funds: Conservation & Stewardship Mill Levy (CSM), Fort Missoula Regional Park Operations (FMRP), and the Recreation Fund. See recording for details.

Gwen Jones asks about Health Levy Transfer. Ryan elaborates that this transfers to Park District #1 to support the Health Benefit program as a part of payroll. This is levied separately, but then is under the expending authority of the Park District Fund. Park District pays for labor, but the benefits come from this levy.

Ryan then provides a graph breaking down the fund by major expense components. He notes that the Cost Allocation Plan is increasing this year. He then talks about the increase of fees in the upcoming fiscal year. These are proposed to increase 2-5% to offset inflation and wage costs. He provides specific data on fees for aquatics admission fees. He notes that passes, punch cards, and low-income grants exist to help offset these costs for community members.

Donna discusses the first 7 budget requests from Parks & Recreation, some of which are authority to spend revenues the department is bringing, like fee increases. Donna discusses the prioritization of the requests, but will present in a more cohesive order based on relation to one another. She discusses the request to meet contractual obligations; funding a Community Experience Specialist (1 full time employee (FTE)); funding a Communications Specialist (.5 FTE), funding for a Maintenance Technician Assistant for irrigation (.83 FTE); funding for an Urban Forestry Worker (.49 FTE). Ryan discusses the request for fee for service to meet the increased demand for programming. He also discusses funding for Community Programming Access to increase access to out-of-school programming for children. See recording and presentation for details.

Ryan also briefly discusses requests 12-15, which are one-time grants for community programming with no tax impact. These include a Play Specialist position, Afterschool Programming, Jump Start, and Lowell Programming. See recording and presentation for details.

Donna discusses requests 8-11, which are related to operations and intend to maintain vital community services. The Safety, Asset Management, Reporting and Natural and Organic Land Management request (#8)--funding for nine FTE, Turf Care products, and technological upgrades. Request #9 is for a Conservation Lands Maintenance Technician (.33 FTE and a match with an existing .77 FTE). Request #10 is for Deferred Maintenance and Capital Support to help assist in cyclical maintenance needs that otherwise rely on vacancy funds. Ryan presents on Request #11, relating to fleet

replacement. This is to finance 4 vehicles to replace older and failing vehicles that are not on the replacement schedule. See recording for details.

Ryan briefly discusses requests #16-20. These include Open Space acquisition support to assist in work with consultants to identify potential open space land; Projects & Planning staff to provide support for in house design; Developed Parks & Trails, a previously unfunded request; Mirmonte Park Maintenance for a new park coming online; and maintenance for the Bitterroot Trail Lighting. He also covers #21-26: Season extensions, turf management, staffing, land management, and a right of way crew. See recording for details.

Ryan covers the requests related to the FMRP and CSM funds. He talks about the contractual obligations, risk mitigation, CSM Ambassador Support, and CIP support for Moon Randolph. See recording for details.

Donna then discusses Community Improvement Plan information for FY26-FY30 in 6 broad categories: Multi-department efforts, Neighborhood parks, Park Asset Management & Deferred Maintenance, Region & Community Parks, Open Space Conservation Projects, and Active Transportation (trails). She talks about the work with MRA and PWM on several projects, highlighting the West Broadway River Corridor, the South Avenue Grant, Stormwater projects, Cultural/Historic Preservation projects, and Fort Ponds Developments. She then talks about the updates on Neighborhood, Community, Regional areas. See recording for details on these updates.

Mirtha Becerra asks about if increased capacity also includes increased staff capacity as well. Donna affirms this and elaborates that it also includes cost of supplies and operations.

Donna talks about the impact of Revenue Bonds and the projects supported by the FY26 debt service. She highlights the ADA accessibility of the Bonner Band Shell and the Playfair Tennis Courts. She also talks about the strategy of limited bonding to retain services. She notes that project identification happens prior to grants to ensure that the funds are appropriated correctly. She also provides the design for the proposed Northside Neighborhood park. Donna discusses the analysis for Aquatics upgrades, including play structures, slide updates, and new party cabanas. See recording for details.

Donna discusses projects related to Neighborhoods, Community, and Regional aspects. These include the California Street Pedestrian Bridge, Moon Randolph Homestead, Pleasant View Park, and Fort Ponds. She notes that Parks & Recreation maintains more bridges than Public Works, and that the aging of bridges is not cost effective because repair and restoration is expensive. She briefly discusses local parks as well. See recording for specific details.

Donna also provides a brief overview of Outyear projects, highlighting the FMRP request for equipment to take care of turf, and better lighting to utilize sports spaces better. She also discusses how Parks is working to meet community needs and address challenges. She notes that Parks provides more services for less money per capita compared to similar departments across the nation. She also notes the housing, affordability, and safety challenges that Parks prioritizes. See recording for details.

Gwen Jones asks about the biggest challenge the department faces in the next few years. Donna responds that aging infrastructure is a big concern, because it is the

easiest way to defer cost, but it gets more expensive as time goes on. She also discusses the department working with one another and with other departments and prioritizing how to care for one another and build social capital.

Mike Nugent inquires about lighting as an inexpensive route to increasing capacity. Donna provides an example at FMRP that the department had a 6-year payback estimate on LED lighting that they completed that in 4 years. She notes sports aren't played in the peak of summer in longer days due to heat, so spring and fall can increase play time with lighting at night. The ability to do so conserves the need to use more land for more parks. Lighting can save on capital investment and operations.

Mike Nugent notes how late he has observed people playing tennis at Playfair, as well as the weather people will play on fields like FMRP that are maintained year round. Donna notes that these opportunities are good for people, both in activity and team-playing.

Amber Sherrill notes that she has played pickleball later in the night as well. She asks about the Splash pools and if the issues there will be resolved quickly and available for the public. Donna responds that the department is going to great lengths to complete the resolution as fast as they can, including emergency orders and acquisition of consultants. She commends Eric Seagrave for his work on this issue and project. She notes that the Lazy River and the Pond, as well as Currents, remain open. The department will communicate to the public as things progress. She also notes that park impact fees were very beneficial to the department, but they lost a lot of that through the last legislative session. See recording for specific details.

Dale Bickell informs council and the public that the budget page on the website continues to be updated with what was presented today as well as additional summaries.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourns at 11:28 AM.