

Missoula City Council Public Works Committee Minutes

December 10, 2025, 1:35 pm

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

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

Members present: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra (chair), Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Amber Sherrill

Members absent: Sierra Farmer

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

1.1 Roll Call

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

1.2.1 Minutes from December 3, 2025

The minutes were approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Downtown Safety Access & Mobility Professional Services Agreement Amendment #3 with DJ&A

Megan McMeekin presenting,

This contract amendment will allow DJ&A to continue designing and performing engineering-related tasks to carry us through 30% of the Downtown Safety Access & Mobility (SAM) project. This amendment will also allow additional communication support, working group facilitation, geotechnical services, environmental permitting and coordination, and assembly and submission of the final checklist to FHWA. This amount is still within the final engineering budget for the project. This work is all covered through the base phase of the grant, and all expenses to date have been reimbursed. A detailed budget list is included with this referral. Ms. McMeekin said she would like to come back in January with a more thorough update of the project.

Mr. Campbell is concerned about some scaling back in areas such as the Ryman Street Gateway. Ms. McMeekin said the costs were received back for widening the sidewalk and improving the grade of the ramp down to Caras Park. It turned out to be more expensive than what was anticipated. The North Riverside Parks and Trails Master Project has plans to improve this area. If the Downtown SAM project were to make changes, they may be changed again in a few years as part of that project.

Mr. Campbell also asked about the Higgins Ave design and what substantial modifications will be made. Ms. McMeekin said they are narrowing the scope of the

sidewalks back, working only from curb line to curb line and not widening any further. She also said they are changing from the raised bike lane to a separated at-grade bike lane to reduce construction costs.

Eric Melson recused himself because he has a professional relationship with DJ&A. Ms. Becerra also recused herself for the same reasons.

Ms. Jordan asked about the cutbacks on the stormwater designs. She wants to know why the plans that were originally there are no longer there. Ms. McMeekin said she would address this with more detail in the January meeting. She explained that, since they are working from curb line to curb line, they are not disrupting the stormwater.

Ms. Jordan said she has concerns about improvements that are being installed over dilapidated stormwater infrastructure. She explained it is like putting a Band-Aid on without cleaning the wound. She added that they should be improved as we improve the streets. Ms. McMeekin said if they were tearing up more of the street, they would look at those issues. Ms. Jordan said she has serious concerns that we are not addressing stormwater infrastructure while we are addressing the top of the road.

Mr. Nugent asked about the Higgins and Broadway intersection and when it would be addressed. Ms. McMeekin said that would be in this part of the design phase under this scope. He added that this is a make-or-break item for him on this project.

Mr. Campbell asked why the scope states that the lighting will be done in phases as funding allows. Does this mean we don't have financing in place? Ms. McMeekin said the lighting will be addressed in this design phase. She said they are looking at other developments that may benefit from lighting and could contribute to it.

Jim Sayer, a member of the Downtown SAM working group, is providing public comment. He explained that he wants to see this project move forward and that he supports the motion. He did want to highlight a few things. With this 30% design stage, we have lost some components of the bike lanes that align with the complete streets policy, which calls for protected bike lanes. The current design shows five-foot bike lanes on Front Street, which will be in the door zone for cars. This is not very safe. Also, there will be no bike facilities on Main Street or Broadway. The trade-off was not to take away parking that takes up a lot of space. Many business owners have said they have not heard any complaints about the 150 spaces that are unavailable due to construction. He thinks we could do parallel parking and have more room for bike lanes. The bike lanes were a significant component of previous designs and had already been approved by FHWA. He added that we made adjustments to save money on Higgins, and that he feels we could also do the same on Front and Main.

Danielle Pettry, a downtown business owner, also provided public comment. She is concerned that the project is not meeting any of its goals. She said it is difficult to find research on separated bike lanes. Still, in places that have tried them, they have discovered that midblock-separated bike lanes are safer for cyclists by preventing side-swiping crashes at intersections. A bicyclist safety advocate in Missoula told her that bike lanes need to be raised to be safe. The bike lanes will not be raised because of funding constraints. In fact a lot of the questions today are not happening because of funding constraints. There is not enough money to complete this project. As Jim just said, changing Main and Front to two-way traffic will not allow space for bike lanes. A few

people on the working group, including Ms. Pettry, feel this is a regression. A study in Bend, Oregon, that converted four lanes to three found that at four lanes, there were 17 crashes and two bicycle accidents. In the three lanes, they had 32 crashes, two bicycle crashes, and two pedestrian crashes. This was not an increase in safety.

Ms. Pettry also said the project is supposed to increase access and mobility. Access to Caras Park has been an issue for those needing mobility devices for years. This project was supposed to address this by decreasing the slope and adding an ADA ramp. We recently learned this was being changed. The working group was very upset about the removal of the ADA ramp. On Sunday, the Amendment showed a total cost of 1.9 million; today, it was updated to 2.5 million, and a note from the original amendment was removed. The note stated that this contract amendment excludes design for the 30 to 100 percent Bear Tracks ramp, 60 to 100 percent for Front and Main, and 100 percent for lighting. Last week, Ms. McMeeking said there was a \$500,000 shortfall in the ADA ramp budget. We are now requesting an additional \$558,078 for engineering design. How is this under budget when the working group was told there was no funding for the ramp? Where are the extra funds coming from? Just the planning half of this project is a million dollars. It seems clear at this point that this project is going to be way over budget, or we will not meet our original goals and leave downtown less safe. At the same time, there are claims that other projects will address some of these issues. However, those other projects are not going to be paid for by this grant, but most likely by taxpayers. It's embarrassing not to meet goals when we have federal funding, but if we wait until we're further into this project to admit defeat, it's going to cost our citizens. Jim said there is no bike lane on an East-West route North of the river, but there is a trail north of the river that runs East-West and is perfectly safe.

Moved by: Stacie Anderson

Approve and authorize the Mayor to sign Contract Amendment #3 to the Professional Services Agreement with DJ&A for tasks related to the Final Engineering Services at a cost not to exceed \$2,470,940.

AYES: (6): Stacie Anderson, Daniel Carlino, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Mike Nugent, and Amber Sherrill

NAYS: (2): Bob Campbell, and Kristen Jordan

ABSTAIN: (3): Mirtha Becerra, Sean McCoy, and Eric Melson

ABSENT: (1): Sierra Farmer

Vote results: Approved (6 to 2)

3.2 Update on Regional Federal Transportation Grant Strategy and Priorities

Staff report.

Aaron Wilson presenting,

This is an update on where we are in the federal grant strategy and funding. This will look back through the infrastructure investment in the JOBS Act and what's coming forward.

We are entering the final round of financing for that federal reauthorization. We will then move on to transportation reauthorization.

We have had four of the five years with the JOBS Act's infrastructure investment. Most of those grants have been coming through as opportunities for the city. We have successfully obtained several grants. In the last four years, we have been awarded over \$100 million.

With this last year of funding, we know some additional programs are coming up, such as BUILD. That program helped us fund the Mullan BUILD project west of Reserve Street. This also funded the Lolo to Missoula trail and is helping to fund Downtown SAM. The next round must be submitted by February, so we will need to get projects moving again quickly.

The attached map shows areas in need of funding, including the Y area, the Brooks Corridor, the remainder of the Mullan BUILD project, the North Reserve-Scott Street area, the Reserve Street safety corridor, and Hwy 200 East Missoula. As we move forward, we need to assess which of these projects are ready to go and which would be a good candidate for the grant. The criteria will also change this year.

The Mullan BUILD project feels like the one that is starting to filter to the top. It has a lot of potential right now, and it is timely given Mountain Line's new facility. We will need to decide within the next few weeks, but we will be back to the council in January.

The Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant is also coming up and might be suitable for the Reserve Street project or some of these smaller projects. The challenge here is finding the local match. The BUILD grant did not require that.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is hoping to secure direct federal funding that would not require grant applications and would be a fixed funding source. The Hwy 200 project might be a good fit for that funding.

Ms. Anderson congratulated Mr. Wilson on the amount of grants they can get without an actual grant writer on staff. She also inquired about the growth into East Missoula and the funding source we were considering for that growth. Mr. Wilson said he has been thinking about breaking that project into pieces, with the most expensive component being the railroad bridge. There was a successful grant from Powell County called Parks the Passes, which included five or six focus areas to get the most out of the grant. One area is the Hwy 200 corridor, which will help continue work on the project's design. Some other options are MPO funding.

Ms. Becerra said she feels the need will outweigh the funding source. She is thankful we have plans in place so that we are well-positioned to apply for the limited federal funding that might be available.

3.3 Great Northern Well Pump Replacement Project

Autumn Lauer is presenting,

This well pump is at the intersection of Palmer Street and Great Northern Ave. This well was identified by staff as being unreliable and inefficient. The new pump will be a one-hundred-horsepower pump. This project includes removing the existing pump and cleaning the well. The work will take place in Spring 2026. This project was publicly

advertised, and two bids were received. Valley Irrigation was the low bid and met all the experience qualifications.

Moved by: Mike Nugent

Authorize the Mayor to sign the City/ Valley Irrigation construction contract for the Great Northern Well Pump Replacement project.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Amber Sherrill

ABSENT: (1): Sierra Farmer

Vote results:Approved (11 to 0)

3.4 Dixon Well Pump Replacement Project

Autumn Lauer is presenting,

This project is located near the intersection of Clark Street and Dixon Avenue. This pump is also inefficient and unreliable. The existing building and discharge piping were also found to be in rough shape, and in September, Council approved a contract with Jackson Contractor Group to replace the building. The motion today is only for the well pump, which will be installed once the building is complete in the spring of 2026. The bid for the 100-horsepower pump was publicly advertised, and two bids were received. Valley Irrigation was the lowest bidder.

Mr. Nugent added that it is great that our water system is so efficient and collects the money needed to pay for updates. He is happy to make the motion to keep the water pumping.

Moved by: Mike Nugent

Authorize the Mayor to sign the City/Valley Irrigation construction contract for the Dixon Well Pump Replacement Project.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Amber Sherrill

ABSENT: (1): Sierra Farmer

Vote results:Approved (11 to 0)

3.5 West End Farms Park Test Well

Andy Schultz presenting,

This professional agreement is for the design and construction of the West End Farms Park Test Well. This well is located in the West End Farms Subdivision of England Blouvard. A park will be designed here in the future. There is a need to increase groundwater production capacity on the Northside of the Clark Fork River. Municipal

wells are complex to cite because of separation requirements from sources of contamination, such as sewer mains and stormwater facilities. We have identified the West End Farms Park as a potential site for several reasons. It meets the separation requirements for contamination, and the existing wells indicate it could be high-producing, up to 3000 gallons per minute. Also, the electricity is provided by Missoula Electric Co-op, which offers nearly carbon-free power. This will allow us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the production from other wells that rely on Northwestern Energy's grid. This location would not only increase our water supply on the north side of the river but would also be where we are seeing the most growth.

We have one well on the south side of the Clark Fork River that pumps to the north side through a buried pipe under the river. If that were ever to fail, the north zone would not have an adequate water supply.

To bring a municipal well online, we first need to drill a test well, which is what we are requesting today. We have worked with Parks and Recreation on this proposal, and we have two potential sites. We will narrow it down based on the test results. The plan is to find a site that will also work as a Parks and Recreation irrigation well.

Moved by: Mike Nugent

Authorize the Mayor to sign the Professional Services Agreement with RPA

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Amber Sherrill

ABSENT: (1): Sierra Farmer

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)

3.6 Wastewater Phase 2 Solar Array

Andy Schultz presenting,

Missoula's Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) is served by 2 large electrical feeds. In 2023, the City installed a 575 kilowatt (kw) "behind the meter" solar array which produces approximately 25% of the annual power need for the largest electric feed that serves the wastewater aeration system. A second smaller electric meter serves the headworks building and associated pumping stations and its annual power consumption is approximately 50% of the power consumed by the larger electric feed. It wasn't possible to include the 2nd electrical feed in the design of the solar array previously installed, so the City intends to install a Phase 2 "behind the meter" solar array on the 2nd electrical feed. "Behind the meter" arrays are allowed to be larger than the 50 kilowatt (KW) maximum output allowed for "net metered" solar arrays (i.e. arrays which can run power backward through the meter and effectively use the grid as a battery at times that the array is producing more power than can be consumed onsite). "Behind the meter" arrays cannot run the meter backward, so they are typically sized to meet the minimum electrical load. The City contracted McKinstry through its existing Energy Performance Contract to complete an Investment Grade Audit (IGA) for a proposed

Phase 2 Solar Array to be installed on the 2nd electrical feed to the RRF. The IGA identified a solar array size (275 KW) that would match the minimum electrical demands on the 2nd electrical feed and developed a financial proforma that showed that the system would pay for itself in electrical savings over a 20-year period. With a modified amortization schedule that delays principal payments, the schedule shows that the power savings in each year of the 20-year financing term fully offset the debt service cost. The remaining 10-year anticipated life of the array after it is paid off will result in significant lifetime cost savings. The solar array will generate over 350,000 kilowatt-hours (kwh) of electricity in year 1, projected to decline 0.5% per year over its 30-year life span. The year 1 electrical savings is over \$31,000. The IGA projects a 4% annual increase in electric rates, based on recent past utility rate increases in Montana. The timing of this project is critical in order to beat a deadline for the expiring 30% Investment Tax Credit, while also qualifying for a Safe Harbor provision from upcoming Foreign Entities of Concern (FEOC) requirements that go into effect on 1/1/2026. These deadlines require that contracts are signed for the full scope of work and that a minimum of 5% of project cost is expended by the end of 2025. Upon receipt of a contract, McKinstry will place orders for the inverters for the project, at a cost of at least 5% of the total project cost.

Moved by: Stacie Anderson

Authorize the Mayor to sign Amendment No. 3 to the Master Energy Performance Contract with McKinstry Essention, LLC to design and construct the Wastewater Phase 2 Solar Array at a cost not to exceed \$786,995.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Amber Sherrill

ABSENT: (1): Sierra Farmer

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)

3.7 Construction Agreement with Jackson Contractor Group for the Broadway Building Solar Photovoltaic System

Andy Schultz presenting,

This project includes the complete supply and installation of a 50 kW photovoltaic (PV) system for the existing Broadway Building and a complete supply and installation of a 50 kW photovoltaic (PV) system for the future Truck Barn as part of the Broadway Building Remodel Project that was approved by the Missoula City Council in the FY26 budget. To preserve eligibility for the 48E Investment Tax Credit under current rules, the City with Jackson Contracting Group and On Site Energy intends to satisfy the IRS 5% Safe Harbor Test before December 31, 2025. This proposal outlines a path to safe harbor by purchasing a portion of the solar modules in 2025, with title transferred to Jackson Contractor Group prior to year-end. To secure the 48E Investment Tax Credit under current IRS rules, OnSite Energy recommends that the City purchase 100 solar modules for each project prior to December 31, 2025. Purchasing this portion of the total equipment serves two important purposes. First, it represents approximately 10% of the total project cost, which is the threshold we recommend to confidently satisfy the 5% Safe Harbor Test and preserve eligibility for the current credit value. Second, these modules

will be held in On-Site Energy's warehouse, ensuring that the equipment is fully under our control at the time of purchase should the City require contractor possession as part of its procurement process. Additional modules needed for full system construction will be procured and delivered during the build phase, but the initial purchase of 100 modules per project is sufficient to establish safe harbor for both systems.

Moved by: Stacie Anderson

Approve and authorize the Mayor to sign a Construction Agreement with Jackson Contractor Group for the Broadway Building Solar Photovoltaic System for a cost not to exceed \$410,813.00.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Daniel Carlino, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, and Amber Sherrill

ABSENT: (1): Sierra Farmer

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)

4. ADJOURNMENT