

Journal of Proceedings

Missoula City Council

January 5, 2026, 6:00 pm

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

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

Members Present: Mirtha Becerra, Bob Campbell, Betsy Craske, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Sean McCoy, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Justin Ponton, Jennifer Savage, Amber Sherrill

Members Absent: Stacie Anderson

Administration Present: Mayor Andrea Davis, Ryan Sudbury, City Attorney, Claire Trimble, City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Missoula City Council was called to order by Mayor Andrea Davis at 6:20 PM. Meeting as delaying and video unavailable due to technical issues.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2.1 Minutes from December 15, 2025

Approved as submitted.

3. ANNOUNCE CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDAS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP APPROVALS

3.1 Committee Schedule for January 7, 2026

4. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

4.1 Neighborhood Council Updates

4.2 Proclamation - Ballet Beyond Borders Week

- Charlene Campbell, the Artistic Director of Rocky Mountain Ballet Theatre and Ballet Beyond Borders, spoke about the significance of the event. She highlighted that it brings together dancers from 35 different countries and promotes cultural exchange. She mentioned the upcoming events on January 8th, 9th, and 10th, including a gala at the Denison Theatre.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

- Suzette Dussault thanked council for delaying the Unified Development Code and she's been trying to read through the documents related to this adopted by the council over the years.
- Ellen Lauring asked that Missoula adopt an official organic land use policy.
- Katie Thompson is disappointed in the lack of answers stemming from questions related to Midtown Commons.
- Jeremy Drake is opposed to the artificial turf proposal at Ogren Park.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

6.1 Conditional Use Request for Wireless Communication Facility at 5425 Gharrett Street

Zoe Walters provided the staff presentation, including an overview of the conditional use request for a ground-mounted wireless communication facility (radio tower) at 5425 Garrett Street. She explained the zoning requirements, the proposed site plan, and the review criteria. Zoe highlighted that the radio tower would be 80 feet tall with a 4-foot antenna and would be located in the southwest corner of the property. She mentioned that the tower is exempt from certain development standards and that the proposed use aligns with the land use plan. Zoe concluded by recommending approval of the conditional use request, subject to one condition of compliance with applicable zoning ordinances.

Tom Labonte, the pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church, emphasized that the radio tower is a low-power FM station intended to broadcast community programming and provide communication capabilities during emergencies. Frank presented videos showing the proposed tower location and its impact on the surrounding area. He explained that the tower's height is necessary to ensure proper signal coverage and avoid obstructions from trees and buildings. Frank also mentioned that they had followed the permitting process in good faith and had invested in the tower and equipment based on previous approvals. They addressed concerns about noise, lighting, and safety, stating that the tower would not require additional lighting and would operate quietly.

Public Comment

- Mike Langston, representative of the HOA, noted that it would be 80 feet tall and radio towers are more likely to be hit by lightning.
- Kurt McGrane spoke in opposition to the tower.
- Katie Thompson spoke in opposition, noting there are likely other options, like tower rental.
- Josie Hill Warner noted that there are a lot of undesirable shops around town and she is in favor of the church being allowed to have a two foot tower to reach a generation of people who might otherwise be alone.
- Janet Crane spoke in favor, saying it would be a good thing for people to hear having a bad day.
- Andy Crane stated that he doesn't think it's right for an HOA to be dictating what someone does on their property.
- Individual who runs the faith-based recovery group notes that radio is another way to reach those who need to hear about the services.

Council Questions & Comments

- Councilor Campbell: Asked about the legal implications of denying the permit, particularly concerning religious freedom. He also inquired about the cost and feasibility of co-locating the tower on an existing structure.
- Councilor McCoy: Questioned the applicant about the consideration of podcasting or streaming as alternatives to a radio tower.
- Councilor Nugent: Asked about the height restrictions in the current zoning and whether the staff's recommendation would be the same if the property were not used for religious purposes.

- Councilor Sherrill: Inquired about the potential increased risk of lightning strikes and the safety concerns associated with the tower.
- Councilor Jordan: Asked if the review criteria considered the potential for the tower to fall over and the associated safety risks.
- Councilor Becerra: Confirmed that the fire department had reviewed the application and had no comments. He also asked about the possibility of changing the setbacks for the tower.
- Councilor Melson: Asked about the cost and effort involved in determining the site location and the feasibility of co-locating the tower.
- Councilor McCoy: Asked if the applicant had considered placing the tower next to the building.
- Councilor Nugent: Commented that he would vote no, as he would not approve an 80-foot tower in a residential neighborhood for any reason, including religious purposes.
- Councilor Jones: Expressed concerns about safety, particularly the risk of lightning strikes, and stated she would vote no.

Moved by: Alderperson Campbell

Motion to return to committee (without objection)

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Election of City Council President

No public comment made.

Moved by: Alderperson Sherrill

Nominating Mike Nugent as City Council President.

AYES: (10): Alderperson Becerra, Alderperson Campbell, Alderperson Craske, Alderperson Jones, Alderperson McCoy, Alderperson Melson, Alderperson Nugent, Alderperson Ponton, Alderperson Savage, and Alderperson Sherrill

NAYS: (1): Alderperson Jordan

ABSENT: (1): Alderperson Anderson

Vote result: Approved (10 to 1)

7.2 Election of City Council Vice President

No public comment made.

Moved by: Alderperson Becerra

Nominating Jennifer Savage as City Council Vice President.

AYES: (10): Alderperson Becerra, Alderperson Campbell, Alderperson Craske, Alderperson Jones, Alderperson McCoy, Alderperson Melson, Alderperson Nugent, Alderperson Ponton, Alderperson Savage, and Alderperson Sherrill

NAYS: (1): Alderperson Jordan

ABSENT: (1): Alderperson Anderson

Vote result: Approved (10 to 1)

7.3 City Council President Appoints Committee Membership

Council President Nugent assigned all council members to all standing council committees.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

9. CONSENT AGENDA

No public comment.

AYES: (11): Alderperson Becerra, Alderperson Campbell, Alderperson Craske, Alderperson Jones, Alderperson Jordan, Alderperson McCoy, Alderperson Melson, Alderperson Nugent, Alderperson Ponton, Alderperson Savage, and Alderperson Sherrill

ABSENT: (1): Alderperson Anderson

Vote result: Approved (11 to 0)

9.1 Accounts Payable (claims) for checks dated December 23, 2025

Ratify accounts payable (claims) for checks dated December 23, 2025, in the amount of \$6,298,213.61.

Vote result: Approved

9.2 Accounts Payable (claims) for checks dated December 30, 2025

Ratify accounts payable (claims) for checks dated December 30, 2025, in the amount of \$767,036.83.

Vote result: Approved

9.3 Accounts Payable (claims) for checks dated January 6, 2026

Approve accounts payable (claims) for checks dated January 6, 2025, in the amount of \$562,742.04.

Vote result: Approved

9.4 Wildroot Subdivision Phase 1 Final Plat

Approve the Wildroot Subdivision Phase 1 Final Plat

Vote result: Approved

10. REGULAR BUSINESS

10.1 Committee Reports

10.1.1 Budget and Finance (BF) committee report

10.1.2 Climate, Conservation and Parks (CCP) committee report

10.1.3 Committee of the Whole (COW) committee report

10.1.4 Housing, Redevelopment, and Community Programs (HRCP) committee report

10.1.5 Land Use and Planning (LUP) committee report

10.1.5.1 Minutes from December 17, 2025

10.1.6 Public Safety, Health and Operations (PSHO) committee report

10.1.7 Public Works and Mobility (PWM) committee report

10.2 Informational Reports

10.2.1 Administratively Approved Report

11. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

No comment given.

12. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- Thanked Amber Sherrill and Mirtha Becerra for their two years of service as City Council President and Vice President, respectively. She appreciated their guidance, leadership, and efforts in ensuring decisions were made in the best interest of the public and the city.
- Welcomed Marina Yoshioka, the new Parks and Recreation Director, who started her role on January 5th.
- Wished everyone a Happy New Year and expressed optimism for 2026.
- Provided an update on the ongoing Montana State game, mentioning that it was tied with 32 seconds left in the fourth quarter.

13. GENERAL COMMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Councilor Jones: Mentioned that the FCS game was going into overtime.
- Councilor Ponton: Expressed excitement about being on the Council and working with everyone, thanking the residents of Ward 2 for their support.
- Councilor Becerra: Thanked colleagues for allowing her to serve as Vice President for two years and appreciated the opportunity to help carry the responsibilities of the position.
- Councilor Savage: Thanked Sherrill and Becerra for their service and expressed that it was good to be back.
- Councilor Nugent: Thanked Sherrill and Becerra for their service, mentioned his family legacy of public service with his grandfather serving as council president starting in 1967, and noted the passing of Bill Jones, a long-serving volunteer.
- Councilor Sherrill: Thanked colleagues for their support during her tenure as President, appreciated working with Mayor Davis, and shared a personal anecdote about her niece's impression of the mayor.
- Councilor Campbell: Apologized for missing the swearing-in ceremonies and congratulated the new and returning council members.
- Councilor Jordan: Welcomed the new council member, Justin Ponton, and looked forward to working with him.

14. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

DRAFT