

City Council Work Session

October 16, 2006
5:30 PM
Community Center

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Tussing, Ronquillo, Gaghen, Stevens, Brewster,
 Veis, Ruegamer, Ulledalen, Boyer, Jones, Clark.

CONVENE TIME: 5:30 P.M.

ADJOURN TIME: The work session ended at 7:00 p.m. The special session started at 7:00 p.m. and ended at 8:30 p.m.

Agenda

TOPIC #1	PUBLIC COMMENT
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ JOE WHITE OF 926 N. 30TH ST said he objected to the ballpark campaign stating that MSU-B should be kept out of it. 	
TOPIC #2	Board & Commission Reports – Library Board
PRESENTER	Library Director Bill Cochran and Board Chairman Lloyd Michelson
NOTES/OUTCOME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Library Board Chairman Lloyd Michelson said the board has been implementing the Interlocal Agreement and developing a three-year plan. He noted there are additional members on board due to the change in agreement. The new appointees are: Dan Carter, Tony Hines, Lyn McKinney, Steve Tucker, and Paulette Laszlo (a county appointee). Mr. Michelson said the Board conducts a performance evaluation of the library director in conjunction with the City Administrator, and submits a letter to the City Administrator with its findings, noting that the library director receives closer observation than anyone else. He said this report will also be presented to the county commissioners at future date. ▪ Mr. Michelson said the 3-year plan includes focus groups of users, youth, seniors, etc. with diverse backgrounds. He noted that Councilmember Ulledalen is on the planning committee. This committee met in July and August and will meet again in October. The Board will take action by November 11th and submit the report to the Council by January. He noted that the Planning Dept. is facilitating the committee meetings. ▪ The Library policies are being reviewed and will be done by March, after which they will be submitted to the city attorney for review with implementation by July. Mr. Michelson said the Bylaws are also being reviewed. He noted that the Board’s primary roles are advocacy and 	

contract review – i.e. Interlocal Agreements with schools, etc. Mr. Michelson thanked the Council for its assistance during the Interlocal Agreement review process.

- See HANDOUT attached.

TOPIC #3	Joint Community Library Project @ MSU-Billing College of Technology (COT)
PRESENTER	Dr. Ron Sexton, Chancellor - MSU-Billings
NOTES/OUTCOME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Ron Sexton spoke on a “community” library vision. He said this is exceptional timing for this proposal, noting that this project has been on the drawing board for 5 years. Mr. Sexton said the COT received a small federal appropriation (\$250,000) for planning. He reviewed some of MSU’s statistics include: student demographics, the fact that the university is a \$72 million annual business, the COT placements are at 94% and it offers lots of internship placement opportunities. Councilmember Jones asked if online classes were for on-campus students too. Dr. Sexton replied that they were. ▪ Dr. Sexton said the COT location is the fastest growing component of the University. It received \$12 million in grants in the last year, which has been utilized for land and further academic expansion. The COT is located in the middle of west- end growth. He said there is a population of 40,000 from 24th St. W. to 62nd St. W. A 50,000 square foot classroom building is underway. Campus master planning is also underway with School District #2 and neighborhoods. Dr. Sexton said there is currently no real library facility at the COT, only 600 square feet with seating for 10 and 6 computers. ▪ Campus master plan. Dr. Sexton said the likely location for a library is in the southwest corner of the property. They can accommodate up to 3000 students at this location, which may be met in 5-6 years. He said they also provided workforce training for 5000 at its downtown facility. ▪ Dr. Sexton said they have a positive relationship with the library. They share collections, information bases, technology, and expertise. Now they want to share facilities, not duplicate facilities. The plan is to be the first city site for new high speed internet access technology – in approximately 18 months. ▪ He said Rep. Rehberg secured \$250,000 in federal funding, but the total cost is \$400,000 for full planning and design. Dr. Sexton said they need the Council’s continued support. The near-term need is to start working out the dollars. He said they will continue to seek federal appropriation, will request legislative funding and are willing to go to the students for their share of funding. ▪ Lloyd Michelson (Chairman of the Library Board) said the Board is excited about working with the COT. While the Downtown library needs action, now is probably not the time he said; plans are not done and there are no plans for the 4th floor. Mr. Michelson said the Board has reaffirmed its support and named the COT library as its #1 capital priority. ▪ Mr. Michelson said many goals could be accomplished by the joint library. The locations downtown and at the COT are good ones. He noted that the next priority should be a branch in the Heights, probably in cooperation with a partner as is being done at the COT. Mr. Michelson said the next step is for the Council to authorize Staff to work with the COT on additional funding = to federal appropriation. ▪ Councilmember Gaghen asked how much the COT is seeking from feds. Dr. Sexton replied that 	

they didn't know yet. He said there are tremendous material cost increases causing problems with building plans, and they don't yet know how much to ask for. Dr. Sexton said he thought they will continue to get private sector funding support. In past years, this support has totaled approximately \$3million in land and infrastructure.

- Councilmember Boyer asked if the Board is no longer focusing on the downtown facility. Mr. Michelson replied “no,” but it is still willing to work on the downtown facility depending on what happens with the adjacent property development. He said there is a \$7 - \$12 million cost for the downtown facility.
- Dr. Sexton said \$150,000 additional funding is needed to complete planning work for COT joint library. City Administrator Tina Volek suggested that the Council authorize Staff to work with MSU-B and return to Council with a funding sources proposal. She said the planning match is mostly in place, but construction will have to be a bond issue in 2009.
- Councilmember Jones said this is a great project and agreed that staff should work with MSU-B. Ms. Volek asked the Council for its participation. She noted that Councilmembers Gaghen and Ronquillo have participated in the past and will continue to do so.
- Mayor Tussing concluded by stating that Staff would return to the Council with a funding proposal for discussion.
- See HANDOUT attached.

TOPIC #4	MLCT Report
PRESENTER	Councilmember Nancy Boyer
NOTES/OUTCOME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Councilmember Boyer said 345 people attended the conference in West Yellowstone. She said, “We’re all learning about the committee participation process.” Councilmember Boyer noted that Councilmember Veis is on the legislative committee and she is on the nominating committee. ▪ She noted MLCT has adopted a resolution to allow local option tax of up to 4%, with 25% to a regional revenue sharing account. MLCT will work on cooperating with the expected Billings legislation. She noted that the MLCT wanted reference to Billings taken out of the resolution, but she abstained until she could consult with Council. Councilmember Boyer said the Chamber assumes the City Council agrees with its objective to pass a resort tax. She said the City needs to come up with an agreement between the City and MLCT and the Chamber. Councilmember Boyer said Resolution #3 on hotel/motel tax will be important. ▪ Councilmember Ruegamer said there was some discussion on small cities that have resort tax not being included in the revenue sharing requirement. Billings’ proposal for resort tax isn’t going anywhere unless it has a revenue sharing component he emphasized. So, the City will need to support the MLCT position. He said there is not a lot of confidence that local option will pass, but it is more about an accommodations tax. ▪ Councilmember Veis said 3 options were presented to the legislative committee. The committee chose sharing because it’s the only way local option will pass. “Small towns do not have anything to lose, so they’ll hold out for revenue sharing. Revenue sharing is bad policy and I can’t support it,” he said. Councilmember Veis noted that large cities were represented at the committee meeting and they don’t like this option, but believe it’s the only way it will pass in the legislature. 	

He noted that BSEDA and the Chamber support the resort tax without revenue sharing, adding that there needs to be a “unified” Billings’ proposal.

- Councilmember Boyer said the Council must deal with this, stating, “We won’t get anything if we don’t compromise. It seems like a bill without revenue sharing is a lost cause.” She said presently Billings does not have a unified opinion/decision on this bill and she cannot represent the Council without that.
- Mayor Tussing said he thought that everyone was OK with the Chamber and BSEDA proposal. “This is our primary plan, but its okay to have a backup with revenue sharing,” he said.
- City Administrator Tina Volek said a resort tax is being discussed with legislative candidates. Resort tax isn’t a “new” tax so it might be easier than a new local option tax. She said she would not recommend using local option tax for operating costs, only capital because it may not be reliable. Ms. Volek said the City’s lobbyist Jani McCall is working on the platform and will have it to the Council next month. She said she hasn’t talked to other city managers about a resort tax, noting that Kalispell might support resort tax, but she didn’t know about the others. Ms. Volek reminded the Council that lots of candidates from rural areas are still opposed to a resort tax without revenue sharing.
- Councilmember Ronquillo asked if the Governor would accept new taxes or a bed tax. Councilmember Veis said that the Governor would sign the bill, but didn’t commit to the bed tax
- Councilmember Ruegamer noted the City could either pull away from MLCT and go its own course or it can get more involved with MLCT. He said he thought the City should get more involved and try to steer the group, noting he will volunteer for committees.
- Mayor Tussing asked if there is any harm letting both bills proceed. Councilmember Veis said that was behind the original resolution language. The Mayor said resort tax might do okay here, but has problems getting past the legislature. He said, “I don’t think that local option will pass here, especially with revenue sharing.”
- Councilmember Boyer said the Council needs to get legislative program together ASAP. Several dates were discussed. It was noted that November 28 won’t work because legislators are in training. Ms. McCall Jani has proposed a December 1st breakfast meeting instead, with the location to be announced. The City Council consented to that date. An evening event was suggested and Ms. Volek was directed to look into that possibility.

TOPIC #5	Fire Station #7
PRESENTER	Fire Chief Marv Jochems
NOTES/OUTCOME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fire Chief Marv Jochems said there are construction issues for fire dept. too. Staff is trying to get the project under a budget of \$1.5 million. Chief Jochems said Option 1 = mid-price; Option 2 = least expensive; Option 3 = most expensive. He said Option 2 won’t fit the neighborhood; Option 1 is mid- range and will fit the neighborhood. It includes block construction. He noted the site plan shows a 1200-square foot police substation. The Chief said if there is no objection, he will have CTA proceed with Option 1 at an estimated cost of \$1.3 million. 	

- There was general consent from the Council. Councilmember Gaghen said Option 1 looks like a hangar. There were additional questions about whether it really fits the neighborhood. The Council wanted to see comparative costs for all three options. Chief Jochems said he will ask CTA for that information.
- Councilmember Boyer asked if the doors on the station would be facing 54th Street. Chief Jochems replied they would face 54th Street, adding that trucks will drive around the back of station, pull through the bays to exit onto 54th. He said Staff will focus on Options 1 and 3 and report back to the Council with more information. Councilmember Ulledalen noted the City has to build the station, but it also has to be able to afford it even if it's ugly. Chief Jochems said they would drop an equipment bay to save cost before building an ugly station.
- Councilmember Jones asked if a meeting/community room is still being planned in the new station. Chief Jochems said that type of room is not being used well at Station 4 so it was dropped from the plans here. He noted that Cottonwood Park and the school may have that type of space.

Quarterly Council Initiative Review

PRESENTER

City Administrator Tina Volek

NOTES/OUTCOME

- Councilmember Jones asked about his initiative to have Engineering Inc. talk to the Council about (off-line) water storage possibilities. This initiative was not on the list; Staff will research it further.
- Councilmember Stevens referred to a 1/23/06 initiative to move the public comment section no later than 9:30 p.m. at regular sessions of the Council. City Administrator Tina Volek said the City Attorney has an ordinance ready to go and it will be scheduled on a future agenda.
- Councilmember Boyer asked about her initiative concerning lighting districts. Ms. Volek said the Public Works Director had a study done and was waiting for the final report. She noted that the study may show that the downtown is over-lighted. Councilmember said at the MLCT conference Great Falls said that they are buying all light districts and the savings are large. Councilmember Jones said he wanted to hear more about that.
- Ms. Volek asked the Council to review the initiative list further and let her know if there are additional questions.
- See HANDOUT attached.

TOPIC #7

Quarterly Budget Report

PRESENTER

Deputy City Administrator Bruce McCandless

NOTES/OUTCOME

- Deputy City Administrator asked the Council to review the quarterly budget report presented in the Friday packet further and to let him know if there are additional questions. He noted that the 1st Quarter FY07 report will be available in about 3 weeks.
- See HANDOUT attached.

Additional Information:

There was no additional information presented.

NOTE: A special meeting for an executive session to discuss litigation followed the work session.

Respectfully submitted,
Marita Herold, City Clerk