

## Regular City Council Meeting

City Hall

January 5, 2026

Mayor Ferguson opened the meeting at 7:00pm and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Others Attending are:

Council: Kerri Baird, Mike Duval and Leonard Woehler. Jeff Davis was absent.

City Staff: Hope Mosness, Clerk/Treasurer, Jim Lippert, City Attorney, and Kris Novotny, Public Works Director

Public: Angela Selby, Mike Shirley, Anita Dore, Shawn Smith, Angie Moen, Barbara Clark, Barb Selk, Linda Brunckhorst, Mark Curry, Joan Hansen, Melanie Roe, and Susan St. Germain

Councilwoman Baird made a motion to approve the minutes from the Regular City Council Meeting on December 15, 2025, as amended, seconded by Councilman Woehler. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Sheriff Ronneberg reported that there were 324 complaints, 4 cases, and 19 citations for the month of December. 2025 totals include 3,798 complaints, 135 cases, and 319 citations. The department received a new truck for the undersheriff. Sheriff Ronneberg attended coroner basic training in Helena. There have been lots of problems with vehicles needing to be repaired.

Kris Novotny, Public Works Director, stated that they have been taking care of downed trees in the park from the recent wind storm. They have been doing maintenance items and screening dirt. He believes the Whistle Creek transmission main project may start this week and it should take less than 12 hours. WesTech is working on updates to the SCADA system for the Water Treatment Plant.

Melanie Roe and Page Dringman presented information on the city and county creating a port authority together. She explained that it is similar to an economic governing board covering everything from housing to jobs, etc. Page added that the board would be able to apply for grants to help with rural economic development. There are many avenues this entity can be used for. The port authority would fall under the Montana Department of Commerce regulations. Melanie stated that the port authority can levy mills, however they do not anticipate doing that. The intention is for other agencies that use the port authority resources will help fund it. Melanie also stated that the goal is not to change Big Timber but to protect it from the outside forces pushing in on us. They would like to have a meeting with the city and county to come up with a resolution to create the port authority. Councilman Woehler asked for clarification on levying mills. Page stated that if the port authority wanted to levy mills, they would need to come to the city and county for approval. The goal would be to use grant money to hire someone as the executive director of the port authority. The plan is to not use any taxpayer money to fund the port authority. Mayor Ferguson asked how fast they would like to move forward on this. Melanie answered within the next month or two. A public hearing would need to be held to receive feedback from the public on creating the port authority. Public Comment: Mark Curry asked what

Melaine and Page consider “outside forces”. Melanie commented that a large subdivision on the west end of town would have an impact on our community. Page said that another example is that there is a large number of vacant homes whose owners live out of town and are not really contributing to the community. Part of the focus of the port authority would be to create housing for people that do want to move and live here. Susan St. Germain felt that this is something we should work on and supports the Port Authority. She added that we are losing our local businesses and we need help and this is important for our community.

Jim Lippert stated that he reviewed the Dornix Park Agreement, which expires in February, and will prepare the next agreement with anything that the Council has with respect to the existing agreement. Angie Moen, President of the Friends of Dornix Park would like to see a ten-year agreement. Jim Lippert stated that there are exit clauses in the contract for both parties so he doesn’t see a problem with increasing it to ten years. Councilman Woehler would like to see language in the agreement to review the insurance requirements as needed. Jim Lippert will prepare the new agreement and have it ready to approve at the next city council meeting. Angie Moen asked why the insurance provision is needed. Jim Lippert explained that all of the other city leases are reviewed annually and since this is a ten-year lease they would need the ability to review the insurance requirements as needed.

Joan Hansen from the Tree Board asked the Council for approval to apply for the \$350 Arbor Day tree grant. Councilwoman Baird made a motion to approve the tree board to apply for the Arbor Day grant, seconded by Councilman Woehler. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Councilman Davis was not at the meeting to discuss the snowplowing policy change. Councilman Woehler made a motion to table the snowplowing policy change, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Jim Lippert presented the lease agreement for Clay Nagel for 2026. Councilman Woehler made a motion to approve the lease agreement with Clay Nagel for another year, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Councilwoman Baird stated that she would like to change the city council meeting time to 6:00pm. However, she remembered that the Women’s Club meets at 6pm in the library meeting room the first Monday of the month. Mayor Ferguson stated that he spoke with several business owners and having the meeting at 6pm would make it difficult for them to attend. Public Comment: Mike Shirley stated he would leave the time alone. Linda Brunckhorst would like it to be earlier, but stated she thinks we need to think about business owners being able to make it to the meeting. Councilwoman Baird made a motion to reject changing the city council meeting time, seconded by Mike Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Councilman Duval asked if the city council members could get dedicated email accounts for them. Mayor Ferguson cautioned the council that any electronic communication concerning their council position is open to being looked at. Kris Novotny would like to see all employees and elected officials go to dedicated email addresses through our web domain address. Kris will ask Austin Thompson, Assistant Public Works Director, to do some research and bring that information to the next meeting.

Mayor Ferguson asked the Council to elect a council president for 2026. Councilwoman Baird made a motion to table the election of the Council President, seconded by Councilman Duval. Public Comment:

Linda Brunckhorst thinks that Councilman Woehler should be the president because he has the most institutional knowledge. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Mayor Ferguson asked the council to remove Greg DeBoer and add himself as a signer on the city bank accounts. Councilman Woehler made a motion to remove Greg DeBoer and add Justin Ferguson to the city bank accounts, seconded by Councilwoman Baird. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Councilwoman Baird made a motion to approve the claims, payroll, and overtime for December, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.

Public Comment: None

There being no further business to go before the Council, Councilman Woehler made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:57pm, seconded by Councilwoman Baird. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council present.



Justin Ferguson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Hope Mosness, Clerk/Treasurer