

## Public Hearing and Regular City Council Meeting

City Hall

July 20, 2026

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

Others Attending are:

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

City Staff: Hope Mosness, Clerk/Treasurer

Public: Sandy Smith, Schar-A-Lee (Charli Smith), Michael Shirley, Roger Lee Sanstad, Yancy Terland, Landen Terland, Ron Thomas, Ranna McCauley, Mike McCauley, Linda Brunckhorst, Jonathan VanDaveer, Christina Bowden, Hunter Roberts, Angie Roberts, Peter D Fox, Melanie Roe, Page Dringman, Jami J Moody, Paula S Curtain, Frank Laverell, Wayne Pollari, Betty Alexander, Clayr Alexander, R Harrick, Laura McKinnon, Robert McKinnon, and Aaron Freed.

Public Comment: Paula Curtain stated she is opposed to the port authority as there is not enough information and she needs more understanding about what it is. Page Dringman explained how the idea for a port authority came about and what they hope it will accomplish. Hunter Roberts and Robert Errick asked for clarification on the difference between an economic development organization and a port authority, was the economic developer going to be a paid position and how it would be funded. Peter Fox, Charli Smith, Jami Moody, and Yancy Terland all spoke in favor of establishing the port authority. Their reasons were to help and support our local business, guide our own growth and how it happens, ability to apply for grants, the need for someone to help with economic development, and a way to solve some of the community issues such a declining school enrollment, housing and creating business opportunities.

Robert McKinnon, Hunter Roberts, Ron Thomas, and Frank Laverell spoke against establishing a port authority. Their reasons were concern for some of the language contained in the resolution concerning eminent domain, concern with creating another government bureaucracy, creating more bodies to take care of work, and making sure that our infrastructure is taken care of.

Council comments: Councilman Davis' understanding is that the city would not be putting in any money at this point. He also wants to know exactly what this port authority is going to do. He doesn't see how the Big Timber we love can stay if we have this entity. Page Dringman stated there would be no taxpayer salary. Page explained that you can't create a port authority without city and county approval. They are a quasi-judicial entity. Councilman Duval asked about open meeting laws. He is concerned about the entity listening to public opinion. Councilman Woehler believes the positives outweigh the negatives. Someday the mine is going to leave and we need to be prepared for that. He supports the port authority. He added that if it doesn't work, we have the ability to dissolve it. Mayor Ferguson asked the public in attendance who was for the port authority, the majority raised their hands, one was against it, and five were undecided.

Mayor Ferguson closed the Public Hearing at 8:02pm and opened the Regular City Council Meeting.

Councilwoman Baird made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 6, 2026, Public Hearing and Regular City Council Meeting and July 13, 2026, City Council Budget Meeting, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Councilman Davis made a motion of informal consideration of all remaining agenda items, seconded by Councilwoman Baird. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Additional comment was received on the Resolution to establish a Regional Port Authority called the Sweet Grass County Port Authority (SGPA). Aaron Freed stated that he wanted to address that while there is progress in this port authority there is also protection for our city in allowing the economic developer to shepherd what is happening with growth in our area. Robert McKinnon supports moving forward so that there isn't a decline in our community that we can't come back from. He's worried about the eminent domain verbiage in the resolution. Does the port authority need that if the city already has it? Linda Brunckhorst stated that in 3.2 the council could amend it so that the authority doesn't have eminent domain. Sandy Smith sees the language as being a safety net. The bylaws will follow state statutes. Councilman Duval mentioned section 3.3 states it shall adopt bylaws and asked if there is an approval process for those bylaws. Jim Lippert, City Attorney, stated that the bylaws do not need approval by the city or the county. However, if they want to levy taxes, they have to come to the city, but they can apply for grants on their own. Page added that the board oversees how the money will be spent. The board members will be appointed by the council. She stated that the director will be hired by the board. They will have a job description. The board will develop bylaws and come up with a strategic plan. Councilman Woehler made a motion to approve the resolution to establish a regional port authority called the Sweet Grass County Port Authority, seconded by Councilwoman Baird. Motion carried by Councilmembers Baird, Duval, and Woehler voting aye. Councilman Davis voted nay.

Mayor Ferguson presented Resolution #1053: A Resolution to Adopt the Preliminary Budget for FY2026-2027. Councilwoman Baird made a motion to approve Resolution 1053: A Resolution to Adopt the Preliminary Budget for FY2026-2027, seconded by Councilman Woehler. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Councilman Davis made a motion to approve the claims for the second half of June 2026, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Public Comment: Mike Shirley stated that the streetsweeper is not being operated correctly and the city employees need to be held accountable for what they do each day.

Council Concerns: Councilman Davis stated that we bought a machine for Public Works to repair potholes and they are not being filled. Councilman Woehler agrees. He added that 211 W 1<sup>st</sup> Ave has overgrown bushes that need to be trimmed back. Hope will ask the deputy clerk to send a letter. Councilman Davis stated the stop sign is faded at Yellowstone Ave and McLeod St driving west. It needs to be replaced. In addition, he would like the crosswalk striping by the grade school to be painted. Mayor Ferguson stated that they are usually painted right before school starts. Mayor Ferguson added that he will be gone for the next meeting. Council President Baird will run the meeting.

There being no further business to go before the Council, Councilman Duval, made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:41pm, seconded by Councilman Davis. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Justin Ferguson", written over a horizontal line.

Justin Ferguson, Mayor

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hope Mosness", written over a horizontal line.

Hope Mosness, Clerk/Treasurer