

Public Hearing and Regular City Council Meeting

City Hall

July 6, 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, Kris Novotny, Public Works Director, and Jim Lippert, City Attorney

County Staff: Deputy Jason Ferguson, Lana King, City/County Planning Board

Public: Lee Andreas, Stephanie Bennett, Bryan Sondeno, Jane Hullquist, Mark Curry, Linda Brunckhorst, Clifford Brophy, Martin Wallach, Anita Dore, Wayne Pollari, Misti Titeca, Kaleb Stockwell, Ashley Stockwell, Peter D. Fox, Pat Hansen, Maria Davis, Natasha Davis, Linda Burch, Richard Burch, Aaron Freed, Lauren Dillon, and Christina Bowden

Public Comment on the traffic control measures at McLeod St and 1st Avenue: Mayor Ferguson read two emails submitted as public comment from Paula Curtain and Vicki Uehling. Paula, Vicki, Bryan Sondeno, and Lauren Dillon were in favor of no parking zones from the intersection to the alleys on all four sides of 1st Avenue. They are not in favor of a four-way stop. Kaleb Stockwell from Montana Department of Transportation shared that the state has been using roundabouts and will no longer install four-way stops. Lloyd Rue a former Montana Department of Transportation employee suggested curb extensions showing what he feels is a great solution. Deputy Jason Ferguson said the department received a request for more enforcement at that intersection. He stated he wrote a number of citations and warnings. Speed and visibility at the intersection are problems. A lot of confusion for pedestrian traffic. He agrees with the no parking zone and curb extensions. He suggested a yellow flashing light, speed radar signs, mirrors, and/or pedestrian flashing lights. Lee Andreas would like the council to devise a truck route for drivers to go down to Railroad Avenue and then up McLeod Street so they have to cross 1st Avenue. Mayor Ferguson asked the public if they agreed with the no parking zones and the majority of the public attending the meeting raised their hands.

Council comments: Councilmembers Davis, Duval, and Woehler all agree with the no parking zones. They would also like to see speed radar signs placed both ways on 1st Avenue. Lloyd Rue stated that we can ask MDT to do a traffic study at the intersection. Councilwoman Baird got quotes for digital speed signs. Four of them would be \$14,500.

Mayor Ferguson closed the public hearing at 7:40pm and opened the Regular City Council Meeting.

Councilwoman Baird made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 15, 2026, Budget Work Meeting and Regular City Council Meeting, and June 22, 2026, Budget Work Meeting, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Deputy Jason Ferguson stated that there were 339 complaints, 10 cases, and 27 citations for the month of June 2026. He said there has been an increase in County calls the past two weeks. The department is in the process of hiring another deputy. He stated that they have a lot of issues with their vehicles.

Kris Novotny, Public Works Director, stated that this last month the water treatment plant was reprogrammed. They fixed a leak on a service line on East 6th Avenue. Employees are working on patching potholes and working at yards affected by the street paving project. There is a drainage issue on 8th Avenue and Harris Street by the ball field. He is getting a plan together with Weave Construction and Great West Engineering to mediate the problem. The burn pile has been burned. Pool is working well, but the robot quit. A new one has been ordered and will be here Wednesday. The City Hall demolition is complete. A frost-free hydrant has been installed in case water is needed during construction of the new building. The animal control car requires a lot of repairs and feels the best option is to look for a replacement car. Linda Brunckhorst asked about the life expectancy of a road verses a road with curb and gutter. Kris stated the road lasts much longer when curb and gutter are included. Mayor Ferguson added that the cost for a street paving project is double when you put in curb and gutter.

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

Councilman Jeff Davis of the Labor Management Committee stated that they have looked at different options and would like to propose a 4.9% increase in wages for all city employees with the condition that any health insurance premium increase that may happen in March 2027 will not be covered. Councilman Duval would like to see us give the same wage increase as the county. Mayor Ferguson stated tonight is discussion only. He asked the Labor Management Committee to make a recommendation back to the Department Heads. A vote will take place at the next meeting. Mark Curry asked how many positions have been open in the last five years and how quickly they have been filled.

Aaron Freed asked the Council to appeal his fee for a liquor license as it is in non-use status with the state. He stated that the city license fee is for administration and regulation and because he has no place of business and is not selling alcohol he should not have to pay. The city fees were set back in 2009 and they need to be looked at as Montana Code Annotated states that the city can only charge 5/8 of the state cost for an all-purpose beverage license and the city is charging 100%. He would like a policy review to include non-use licenses in it. City Attorney, Jim Lippert, cited city code 113.02. In his view the ordinance requires a license before you were to sell alcohol, but not in a non-use status. His license has now expired, but when he intends to begin selling alcohol, he will have to apply for the license. Councilman Woehler made a motion to approve the request by Mr. Freed to appeal the city liquor license fee until which time he has a place of business, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Mayor Ferguson asked the council to make a decision on the traffic control measures at 1st Avenue and McLeod Street. He stated that it sounds like parking restrictions on 1st Avenue is the place to start. Councilman Davis would like to add radar speed signs to our request. Councilman Woehler would like to see a traffic study done by MDT. Mayor Ferguson asked the Council if they would like to authorize him to contact MDT about the restricted parking, possibility of speed limit signs, add crosswalk markings, contact the Sheriff's Department about additional enforcement, and the possibility of a flashing pedestrian sign, and any other ideas MDT might have. Councilwoman Baird made a motion to authorize the Mayor to proceed with the as stated recommendations from the Council, seconded by Councilman Davis. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Mayor Ferguson asked Lana King from the City/County Planning Department, if she felt the planning meeting for the sign variance was properly noticed. The time was wrong in the paper, but it was correct on the notice on the property. Jim Lippert stated that if the notice was published for 7pm but the meeting was held at 5:30pm then it was not properly noticed. Lana stated she can hold another public

hearing if needed. Councilmembers Baird and Davis showed up at 7pm but agreed to proceed with the sign variance request. Lana presented information on the sign variance for Sweet Grass Tavern. Councilman Davis stated that the variance approvals have come after things are already constructed and does not think it is right to grant them a variance after the fact. Councilwoman Baird agrees that the variance request should be approved before construction. Public Comment: Linda Burch understands there is a process, but this isn't the only business that has done this. Jason Ferguson stated the pedestrian traffic will increase and so having lighting on the sign at the corner is a good thing. Councilman Woehler made a motion to approve the sign variance with Sweet Grass Tavern with the condition that any further development on the property that is in question needs to come through the Council, as recommended by the planning board, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried with Councilmembers Baird, Duval and Woehler voting aye. Councilman Davis voted nay.

Councilwoman Baird made a motion to reject taking the Park Electric Capital Credits, seconded by Councilman Duval. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Councilwoman Baird made a motion to approve claims, payroll and overtime for June 2026, seconded by Councilman Woehler. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.

Public Comment: Lana King asked about property owners who are wanting to construct a fence that would cross a utility easement on Centennial Drive. Kris will need to see where they would like to put the fence before it comes to the Council as they will need to get driving access along the whole stretch of the easement. She will have the property owners contact Kris first. Linda Burch wants to know how long the rule has been in place to shoot fireworks until midnight on July 5th. She's been here for 8 years and thinks it is ridiculous. She lives out of town and can hear them. She asked if the council will review the ordinance next year.

There being no further business to go before the Council, Councilman Woehler, made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00pm seconded by Councilwoman Baird. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Council.



Justin Ferguson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Hope Mosness, Clerk/Treasurer