

City Manager Comments

March 2, 2009, Regular City Council Meeting

City's Web Site

We're working on improving this site as a ready reference tool for staff, council, and the public. If you've looked at it lately there's a couple of new additions. One is that almost the entirety of the city manager selection process is set out. We plan to add an "update" as necessary. Also, there's a new link on the page to "Your Tax Dollars At Work," which was the Clerk's idea for the name of the informational link, which so far consists of these City Manager comments. Since I try in these comments to keep the council advised of what has happened, what is going to happen, what the staff are working on, and as many attaboys as I can get in there, it seems a well-rounded, general information tool and I think that together with the minutes ought to give any interested person a comparatively thorough look-see.

Appropriations

Last week we emailed our appropriations requests to Senator Tester's office. You'll recollect that I mentioned this was in the works. We sent in appropriations requests for five different infrastructure projects already existing in our capital improvements plans for a total of \$13.5M. Maybe some money will fall out of Congress on us. We sent the same data along to our State legislators as well.

Schools

Brian Kunz, the PPD evidence technician, recently successfully completed a two-week school in Missoula put on by the MLEA, the Montana AG's office, and the state crime lab, on collection and preservation of forensic evidence. Some pretty high-speed, low-drag material, including tire track, fingerprint, photography, and DNA, all in the context of how and why those types of evidence are used in the courtroom to secure convictions. Mr. Kunz asked me specifically to tell you all "thanks" for allowing him to attend; evidently a very good course.

Bravo Zulu

The PPD received a very nice letter of thanks for Detective Booth's excellent work in a theft case where Alan did a fine job nailing down the perpetrator and recovering the stolen property. He'll get a letter in his personnel jacket.

Skyline

I took some time Wednesday last to meet with the Lake County Commission regarding what, if anything, can be done to improve Skyline Drive. Basically, I'm interested in wider and straighter. There does not seem to be any possible way, given its slope, to be able to get it into City spec, but if it can be rationally improved perhaps the City might

be interested in having it. An alternative came up, which would involve extending First Street East farther south to link up with a possible future development adjoining the Jensen and Wilkins projects on the south slope of the moraine, and making a one-way going south, and a one-way coming north. That alternative is a bit pie in the sky, because we don't know if that project will or won't go through, and even if it did, we're still faced with the steep grade heading south through Fiorentino. My sense of it is, the better plan is to see what it might cost to widen and straighten Skyline, and if it makes sense, look at an SID/RSID package together with some MOU with the County about maintenance responsibilities or what have you. I've asked the City Engineer to get us a cost estimate to get us a rough guess at actual costs to improve.

Technology Infrastructure

Your staff is looking at data protection with City electronically-kept records. It might mean a wholesale revision of our present ad-hoc system that's simply grown up over time organically and doesn't make much overall sense and, more importantly, leaves the City technology vulnerable to all the bad viruses, bugs, and spyware out there today. So we're looking at the issue, see whether or not our existing data protection is adequate.

Golf Course Sewer Crossing

That project had one manhole installed and the pipe run started last week; however, the subsequent weather has made it difficult to continue. We plan to be back on it as soon as possible; meanwhile, we're going to try to install some fire hydrants along Claffey Drive, a project that has been in the works for some time.

Mr. Sohm also asked me to read into the public record several notes I've made regarding progress on earlier council directives, and I state them here:

Billing of Organizations for Police Hours

As far as this office is concerned the object is fully met, in that the PPD has been instructed to coordinate/participate in event planning and in each such case where more law enforcement will be necessary to be straightforward with the organizers about paying the piper. I do not believe a written policy is necessary.

Bayview Sewer Hook Ups

This matter is in track, as I mentioned at the last Council meeting. Where it is at right now is trying to definitely determine who is and is not hooked up to what, because I believe some kind of declaratory judgment action in the district court will be necessary in order to enforce compliance, therefore, we will have to have our data ducks definitively lined up, first. I anticipate being able to tell the Council their options, as hard facts, by the second meeting in March.

Parking

I have advertised for persons interested in a parking commission to be formed pursuant to Section 3.02.14 of the Charter, as an advisory committee to the city manager's office. My thinking is that the issue should be dealt with comprehensively, and rather than engaging the council's time, the matter can be delegated out to an advisory body to conduct meetings and other research, analyze the issues, and make some recommendations to the council. This morning I approached the PBC asking whether they had a couple of people interested in serving. I'm hoping to see some results from that by the second meeting in March, also; if not, I'll ask a few individual people and try to put something together, and if that plan also fails, we'll have to try to do something makeshift in-house. But I'm looking for long-range, long-term, comprehensive solution sets so we don't have to keep revisiting this every couple of years – a plan of some kind. My thinking is also that such a committee might be very useful in gathering data and making recommendations for the short-term parking problem we'll have in the Streetscape/bridge work periods coming up.

Annex All Surrounded Properties

In August the City adopted an annexation policy, Ordinance 637. The policy does not mandate annexation of wholly-surrounded parcels, but only gives future councils general guidance respecting how future annexations are to be treated. Yet I agree that the council has indicated that wholly surrounded properties should be annexed – where possible, since lands in Trust all wholly surrounded but are not annexed. We've surveyed the problem, which is as follows: from the canal at Hillcrest to the cemetery, many parcels both sides, and extending from Hillcrest south almost to Fifteenth. In that block are approximately forty parcels. The existing mains and roadways in that block are scattered. Two other areas are the Claffey Drive/Mission View/JB Drive hilltops, where annexation is spotty, about twenty parcels, all told, and the Rung Lane area, approximately ten or fifteen or so parcels. The smallest, and most land-locked group, is Brown's Lakeview Tracts, altogether seven lots under five owners all completely surrounded by City limits and adjacent to water, sewer, and a paved road. What we'd like to do is cut our teeth and do our learning starting with the simplest one, Brown's Lakeview Tracts, and move on to harder ones – the Claffey/JB complex, then Rung Lane, then the Hillcrest Complex. There will be issues along the way. The resolution of intent for the Lakeview Tracts process is on your next agenda.

Improperly parked/stored vehicle

The matter came up at the September 3, 2008, council meeting, and the minutes indicate that some councilpersons and the Chief of Police were going to put their heads together. Doug tells me no meeting has yet taken place; perhaps it is awaiting spring. I gave Jay Henry a fairly comprehensive detailing of existing City rules with respect to junk, junk vehicles, and all the rest of it when the matter first came up. How we deal with it at present is that we take steps in accordance with our own rules when we receive a complaint.

Current Budget

Aggi and Kala boiled down some budget data and I give it here, all as of January 31, 2009: Total revenue of all funds at present is at 48%; total expenditures all funds is at 37%. Broken down, revenues for the general fund are at 50%, for golf at 46%, for water at 37%, and for sewer at 63%. Expenditures are at, for the general fund, 54%, for the golf fund, 59%, for the water fund, 17%, and for the sewer fund at 25%. These percentages are based on the 'frankenbudget,' the budget expenditure lines I administratively reduced out of non-personnel lines for the second half of FY 08-09.