



NEWS ADVISORY

June 28, 2023

For immediate release

Jim Nugent Retires as City Attorney

Missoula City Attorney Jim Nugent will end his 48 years and 10 days of service at the City of Missoula with a public retirement reception on Friday, June 30, 1 – 4 p.m. in City Council Chambers at 140 W. Pine St. All are invited.

Nugent earned his law degree at the University of Montana in 1975 and was admitted to the State Bar of Montana to practice law that June. That month, he also joined the City Attorney's Office at the City of Missoula. He was promoted to City Attorney in 1977.

Nugent has worked for eight mayors and scores of City Council members. His legal opinions have been trustworthy and he has been a beloved figure for countless City staff members as well as for attorneys across Montana and the region.

"Jim Nugent has been a dedicated public servant for nearly 50 years," said Missoula Mayor Jordan Hess. "He's contributed tremendously to not only the City of Missoula but to the field of municipal attorneys around the state. We'll miss Jim's depth of knowledge, his good humor, his legal mind and his encyclopedic memory for facts and stories."

Nugent was especially known for the high bar he set in ethics and public service.

"I had the privilege to work with Jim for over 30 years in my various jobs at the City," said former chief administrative officer Bruce Bender. "He was the most dedicated and competent public servant that I ever knew. Protecting and serving municipalities was his mantra for Missoula and other Montana cities. Whenever we needed assistance or advice, he was available. Missoula and all Montana cities will sorely miss Jim Nugent."

Among Nugent's hallmark projects and accomplishments were Missoula's acquisition of its water utility and the passage of the City's anti-discrimination ordinance, for which he won the

Walt Brown Award from the Montana Human Rights Network in 2011. At the time, Nugent told then-Missoulian reporter Keila Szpaller that he “isn’t convinced a staff person should earn such accolades.”

Other awards Nugent earned included

- Jaycees’ Outstanding Male Public Official of the Year (1982)
- Missoula County Sheriff Certificate of Appreciation (1996)
- Recognition for Outstanding Contributions in the Area of Safety and Liability Reductions from the City of Missoula (1996)
- George L. Bousliman Professionalism Award from the State Bar of Montana (2011)
- Bob Worthington Risk Management Loss Control Award from the Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority (2016)
- International Municipal Lawyers Association James H. Epps III Award for Longevity of Service to Community (2017)
- Alec Hansen Lifetime Service Award from the Montana League of Cities and Towns (2022)
- In Recognition for many years of guidance, visionary leadership and commitment as a member of the Board of Directors of the Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority (2023).

In nominating Nugent for the Montana League of Cities and Towns award, former Billings City Attorney Brent Brooks noted Nugent’s “encyclopedic knowledge of statutes, case law, Attorney General opinions and Administrative Rules applicable to municipal issues” and wrote, “Jim has been a constantly helpful mentor to literally hundreds of Montana City Attorneys, Deputy City Attorneys, and elected and appointed municipal officials for decades. Jim has been widely referred to as the Dean of City Attorneys. When you have a strange or sensitive legal issue that seems unsolvable or worse, you’d better call Jim because he will almost always have experience and wisdom to unselfishly share ... Despite having called upon Jim myself to periodically assist me, I still remain astonished at his knowledge and practical solutions to often strange municipal issues.”

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