

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
140 WEST PINE STREET
MISSOULA MONTANA

JUNE 21, 2010, After the City Council Meeting

Members present: Ed Childers, President; Stacy Rye, Vice President; Dick Haines; Lyn Hellegaard; Roy Houseman; Bob Jaffe; Marilyn Marler; Renee Mitchell; Dave Strohmaier; Pam Walzer; Jason Wiener; and Jon Wilkins

Members absent:

Others present:

I. Administrative Business

Approve minutes dated [June 2, 2010](#)

The minutes were approved as submitted.

II. Public Comment on items not listed on the agenda

None

III. Regular Agenda

A. Mayor's Update – Ongoing in Committee. (Mayor Engen)

Mayor Engen talked with the City Council about the fiscal year 2011 budget. He said Mr. Childers sent council members a message outlining the roles the Council and the Mayor play in developing and approving the city's budget. The budget process used to take a few months, but in the current economic climate, it has evolved into a year round effort. As the Mayor, he is responsible for submitting a balanced budget to the council and to be a good steward of funds appropriated. He said the staff is continuing to cut their budgets with a 2% reduction this year. The administration is freezing wages, and people have been laid off. Staff are also trying to continue a level of service supported by the citizens. He also hears from constituents in the community, and they are contacting him about their safety and security, roads, parks, and other interests. Those interests need to be made manifest in the budget. This budget was developed to reflect that times are tough, and the city needs to trim expenses. The budget is also designed with tools to address problems in the future. The districts proposed in this year's budget will help address problems with streets and parks. The general fund revenue growth is capped by the legislature, and the city is left to ask citizens to help address needs in the future. He has heard folks ask "if we don't do the maintenance districts, what happens?" He said the answer is that it will leave a \$500,000 hole in the budget. He reviewed a list of cuts, and he didn't find those options acceptable. He doesn't find it acceptable to cut jobs in departments that are lean or to close public restrooms in parks. He elected not to offer cuts in neighborhood grant programs. There are all sorts of important things in the budget that matter. His job is to find the balance. The budget includes some painful cuts, and the administration is asking for a little more money from citizens. One of the reasons he favors the district option is that it connects services with funds in a way that raising the general fund levy does not. He indicated he looked at the choices of what would get cut without creating the districts. He looked at those choices, and he didn't make that choice. The Council's role is to look at the budget. If they want to change something, make a referral, find six people who agree and change the budget. The Council has tremendous power as it considers the budget. To date he hasn't heard a suggestion from a council member about how to amend the budget. He is open to talking about the budget, and he'll do his best to deliver information about proposals members make so they can evaluate them.

Ed Childers said he recommended increasing revenue, but he wouldn't say that he has six votes for that proposal.

Mr. Wilkins said a year ago, the city went to the neighborhood councils to talk about maintenance districts. The question was asked if extra things would get done with street maintenance, boulevards, curbs and sidewalks, would citizens support them? The maintenance districts were presented as a way to get extra things done, not as a way to maintain the existing level of service. He asked why the city isn't levying the general fund to the cap set by the legislature and saving the districts for a time when the economy is better. He also noted if the city is in a hard place, he'd rather not see more employees laid off. He's also like to avoid cutting police and fire.

Mayor Engen responded it is a policy decision. He noted Missoula has been in a tough recession for two years. Last year, there was a health insurance levy increase, but there wasn't a general fund increase. The Mayor indicated he has a responsibility to communicate with people better about the way their taxes are being spent. He said he can't directly tie the increase in levies to the services they fund. A district is a tool that can be used over time. When the city first proposed maintenance districts, it was a way to respond to citizens concerns. At that time, they were talking about increasing the level of services offered to the citizens. This year, the money will be raised to maintain current services. Over time, the city could use this revenue to help support projects like Hillview Way. It's a way to move forward now and in the future. He wants to remain sensitive to the fact that it's tough out there. He would like to create this new financing tool that ties services with the funds collected.

Ms. Hellegaard said the Council has been invited to come up with proposals. They did a couple years ago, and they were severely admonished. They had a list of items and positions they wanted to discuss, not necessarily cut, but they were chastised and vilified.

Mr. Haines said he feels like if he comes in with proposals, it won't do any good. The Council is a rubberstamp for the Mayor. His constituents haven't told him to raise taxes. He thinks the city should look at increasing the levy, and he might support maintenance districts in the future. He predicted if the city puts maintenance districts in place this year, next year the general levy will be increased to meet revenue needs. This isn't the time to hit people with any kind of tax increase. He indicated maintenance districts might be a solution he could support in more prosperous times.

Mr. Engen said this is good time to propose changes to the budget because the administration has time to respond to suggestions. At some point, someone suggested if the Missoula In Motion program was eliminated, we'd save \$300,000. He said a question like that makes him wonder if the city is getting all it needs from that program. Is there a way to reorganize and do something different that meets people's needs that might cost less? If the Council approaches these conversations in a collaborative way, he is very open to discussing them. He requested that members tone down the heated nature of discussions. If Council thinks a general fund tax increase makes sense, he'd like to discuss it. He invited the Council to debate the merits of the maintenance districts.

Ms. Rye said times are difficult and policy level discussions are no fun. This year the conversation is whether general fund or maintenance districts should help fund the budget. She said the Council can propose cuts to the budget. She has been asking why the city doesn't fund parks. Several years ago, the Parks department operations budget was cut, and she doesn't think it's a good idea for Missoula. The question worth asking, in her opinion is "how much would the city have to come with to fund

parks at the level they were funded a couple of years ago?" The budget this year isn't as much fun. She finds the maintenance districts vs. general fund an interesting conversation. In her experience, Missoulians want services.

Mr. Wiener said he spent his afternoon walking on the North Hills and through Pineview Park. There were dozens of children playing on the new structures there, and he thought that taxes really do support projects people want. He found the budget proposal Ms. Hellegaard referenced was submitted on August 22nd two years ago. He said there wasn't a lot of positive feedback about that proposal, and maybe thoughts have changed with the times. He feels the Mayor's budget represents a balanced approach, and that doesn't make him a rubber stamp.

Ms. Walzer said one of things she heard about this past weekend was Pineview Park and parents talking about the other improvements planned for other parks. She heard downtown merchants wanting to have more police. She noted after her first city council budget was adopted, there was a meeting with animal control where people were asking why they weren't enforcing the leash law. It takes money to buy gas, staff time etc. to enforce the leash law. Everything she is hearing from citizens is that the City isn't doing enough. The maintenance districts will guarantee a certain level of funding for the parks and the streets. As far as rubberstamping, it's possible that there are members that have similar philosophies, but it doesn't mean there is a rubberstamp. She knows that people want more, that's why she supported raising the levy last year.

Mr. Wilkins said he wanted to make it clear that he has an open mind. He is going to do what he thinks is best for Missoula. He will ask questions and learn as much as he can. During the survey at neighborhood council meetings, the majority of people were willing to support maintenance districts for extra things not to balance the budget. He allowed that there may not have been a lot of people at some of the meeting. Assessments paid for maintenance districts can't be written off at the end of the year. Someone made a comment that it's only \$13 or \$16, but in the future it could increase. Maintenance districts aren't capped and can be levies can be raised. If the city is going to set these districts up, the Council should limit what future Councils can do. He wants to have the conversation, and hopefully the public will help and respond. What does Missoula want the Council to do to balance the budget? He suggested the city should look at changing the fiscal year because of the timing in getting revenue figures from the state.

Ms. Hellegaard said two years ago they weren't recommending all the positions be cut. They wanted to understand what functions those positions did and to see if any savings could be reached by contracting out or hiring in house. They were topics for discussion and that's all they were. They didn't want to cut all of those positions.

Mr. Strohmaier said he thinks it's helpful to understand what types of cuts might be looked at if maintenance districts aren't considered, like the restrooms. He can't remember a single phone call from a citizen who has requested a reduction in services. He had a call tonight from a constituent about Van Buren noting it's a mess. That's a large project. Pineview Park was a controversial SID. That was the only way to get that project accomplished. Currently the city doesn't have a way to equitably distribute the costs of those types of projects across the city. Parks are not just extras. He serves on the downtown master plan implementation committee, one of the representatives of MAEDC said that parks are an integral part of economic development for the community.

There was no public comment.

B. **Updates from Council representatives on the Health Board, Community Forum, Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee, other boards and commissions as necessary. – (Ongoing in Committee)**

Health Board—Ms. Mitchell said the board approved a letter of support to Five Valleys Land Trust for the Jacobs parcel along Deer Creek Country Road east of the Kim Williams Trail. They also accepted the resignation of Sandy Kuntz who has served on the board for a long time. She and her husband are going to move. Ed Franceschina reported on Animal Control operations. He gave the board statistics about the animals that move through the shelter and they perform well compared to other shelters in the state. She noted someone driving a car hit a gas pump at Dale's Dairy, and there was a spill. The department is monitoring the water with monitoring wells in the area.

Community Forum—No report

Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee (TPCC)—Mr. Wiener said during the May meeting they approved a contract for a traffic demand model to help identify the benefits of multi-modal improvements. There was some concern about a contractor from Denver being hired, but purchasing policies were followed. They also talked about the TIGER 2 grant. In May, they authorized applications for a planning grant and a \$10,000,000 grant for bridging gaps in the sidewalk system. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee was requested to advise TPCC about these projects. TTAC recommended instead to look at land for an industrial park near Howard Raser Drive and to apply for a capital grant to do the Wyoming Clegg connection at the Millsite because of the significant potential for private matching funds. TPCC approved both recommendations.

Mountain Line was looking at serving the Lolo area, but there isn't enough support in the community. They are looking at expanding the frequency of service in Missoula so people can ride schedule free.

Local Emergency Planning Committee—Ms. Walzer said the committee hasn't met, but she wanted to announce that Reverse 911 is being rolled out. If you have a cell phone or service from a company other than Qwest or Blackfoot, you need to add your numbers to the Reverse 911 system to be notified in the event of an emergency. Contact the county's website at <https://missoula.onthealert.com/> When they tested the Reverse 911 system on the Northside, it took a while to get the word out to everyone because there were so many calls. Mr. Jaffe asked if he could register more than one number. Ms. Walzer said yes.

IV. Held in committee

1. Joint meeting of the Mayor, City Council and County Commission; a facilitated quarterly OPG review as directed in the [Interlocal Agreement](#) (Agenda)—Ongoing (Mayor Engen)
2. Develop short and mid-term goals ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Bob Jaffe) (Referred to committee: 4/23/2007)
3. Joint meeting between the Missoula City Council and the Missoula County Public Schools' Board of Trustees ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Dave Strohmaier) (Referred to committee: 09/17/07)
4. Examination of Office Planning and Grants ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Lyn Hellegaard) (Referred to committee: 09/08/08)

5. Review CIP funding mechanism, vehicle replacement policy, department vehicle use practices, specifically Police, Fire, and Parking Commission ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 11/10/08)

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marty Rehbein
City Clerk