



The City Link

Official News and Information
from the City of Billings

Billings Pride:
City-wide

Winter 2008

City Finance Division Earns Two Awards for Excellence

Officials and staff from the City of Billings offer congratulations to the City's Finance Division for receiving, for the 22nd consecutive year, the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and, for the 16th consecutive year, the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.

The Certificate of Achievement was given for the fiscal year 2007 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). The award is the highest form of recognition for excellence in state and local government financial reporting.

To receive a Certificate of Achievement, a government entity must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized comprehensive annual financial report. This report must satisfy both generally

accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements.

The GFOA has a 43-page checklist, containing approximately 800 questions, which serves as the guide for preparing the report.

The second award was given by the GFOA for the fiscal year 2008 Annual Budget. The award reflects the commitment of the governing body and staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting. To receive the budget award, the City had to satisfy nationally recognized guidelines for effective budget presentation. Budget documents must be rated "proficient" in all four categories to receive the award. These guidelines are designed to assess how well an entity's budget serves as:

- * A policy document;
- * A financial plan;
- * An operations guide; and,

* A communications device

The Finance Division works as a team to produce an award-winning CAFR and Annual Budget. The team is made up of many different members with varied job duties, including accounting, tax, debt and investment recording, publishing and supervision. The Division's three accountants all have bachelor's degrees and are Certified Public Accountants (CPAs).

The CPAs are: Alene Malloy, who has dedicated 24 years to serving the City; Jim Hauck, who has contributed 14 years of service; and, Vicky Harrison who has served five years. Vicky also has several years of governmental accounting experience from her employment with a public accounting firm. Tax Specialist, Steve Forsch, and Debt/Investment Coordinator, Teri Walker, contribute their specialized knowledge, time and skills to the CAFR and Budget Document.

Administrative Assistant, Jamie Ogger, keeps everyone organized. She also is responsible for the "narrative" pages and assembles the CAFR and Annual Budget documents. Financial Services Manager, Pat Weber, has worked for the City almost nine years. He has a bachelor's degree and his other work experience includes 14 years as a controller and finance manager for a Fortune 500 company.

Thanks to the Finance team for once again receiving an unqualified audit opinion and the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting awarded by the GFOA for the fiscal year 2007 CAFR and Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for fiscal year 2008 Annual Budget. Thanks are also extended to the other City Departments/Divisions for their help in both processes.

Fisher Construction Wins Contract for MET Transfer Center

On Monday, July 28, the Billings City Council awarded the MET Downtown Transfer Center project to the low bidder, Fisher Construction.

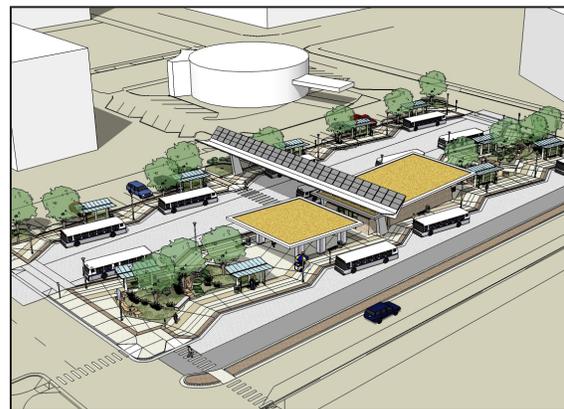
The new MET Transfer Center, located at 220 N. 25th Street, will consolidate the existing downtown transfer areas located along 3rd Avenue N. and N. 26th Street to enhance customer convenience and safety. Once completed, the site will accommodate 15 buses, passenger shelters, a covered passenger waiting area and a driver break facility.

The site improvements were developed by CTA Architects and reviewed by an Ad Hoc Committee established by City Council and comprised of MET users, downtown property owners and those interested in improving the City's public transportation system.

During numerous design meetings, the Ad Hoc Committee favored a site design that embraced Leadership

in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. These standards suggest a variety of design and building material options for sustainable construction which have an added benefit of reducing the ongoing operation and maintenance costs of the facility. Some notable features include a solar photovoltaic array which will drastically reduce the center's electrical cost, and a vegetative roof over the administrative space and covered waiting area which adds many years of life to the roof, as it protects it from the sun's UV rays and prevents the drastic heating and cooling which shrinks and swells the rubber membrane, causing cracks.

Eighty percent of this \$3,153,100 project will be funded through a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) discretionary grant. The City's Aviation and Transit Department, as well as the thousands of MET riders, look forward to the anticipated opening of the transfer center in April 2009.



CTA's Rendering of the new MET Downtown Transfer Center

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Visit the City's Website: <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us>

Budget-in-Brief -- Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2009

The purpose of this "Budget-in-Brief" is to provide a concise, easy to use document that provides a brief overview of the City's budget process, describes the fund structure used in the budget and summarizes the fiscal year 2009 approved budget by highlighting key budget features and basic facts. Questions regarding the budget can be answered by calling the Finance Division at (406) 657-8209 or by stopping in at City Hall at 210 North 27th Street. The budget document is available for viewing at the Parnly Billings Library, the City Clerk's office, or on-line at www.ci.billings.mt.us, then "Your Government," then "Finance," then "Budgets & Financial Reports."

Function of a Budget

For the Citizens, the budget presents a

picture of the City's operations and intentions for the coming fiscal year.

For the City Council, the budget serves as a policy tool and as an expression of goals and objectives.

For City Management, the budget is the annual operating guide and spending plan.

City of Billings Approach to Budgeting

A Balanced Budget is defined as when cash-on-hand combined with current revenues and other funding sources is greater than or equal to the approved expenditures for the year.

The Capital Budget for three distinct capital plans is adopted by the City Council at the beginning of the budget cycle. The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is for public facilities (streets, buildings, etc.) greater

than \$25,000. The Equipment Replacement Plan (ERP) is for all rolling stock with a value greater than \$5,000. Technology equipment with a value greater than \$5,000 is included in the Technology Replacement Plan (TRP).

The Budget is not prepared using the same basis of accounting as the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, and therefore cannot, in all cases, be compared to information reported in the annual report.

Financial Structure Overview

The City's accounting system is organized on a fund basis in which each fund is a distinct accounting entity used to record all financial transactions related to a specific purpose for which that fund was created. These fund categories are

the General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Debt Service Funds, Capital Project Funds, Enterprise Funds, Internal Service Funds and Permanent Funds. The City has over 100 distinct funds. This is comparable to a group of 100+ people. Each person probably has a different way of making their income (revenue) and they all have their own set of rules on how they spend their money (expenditures).

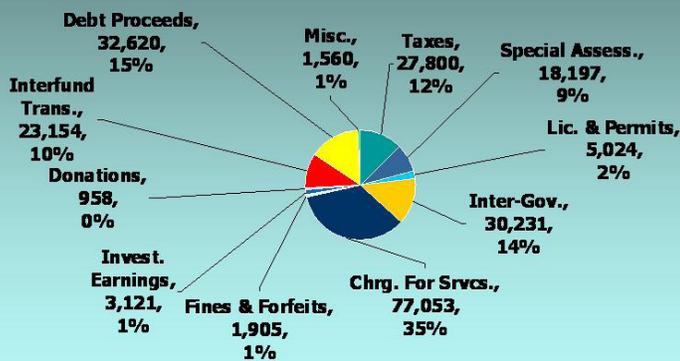
Interfund Transfers

Interfund transfers are a movement of cash or property between funds without a repayment requirement. Transfers tend to overstate or inflate the total budget figures.

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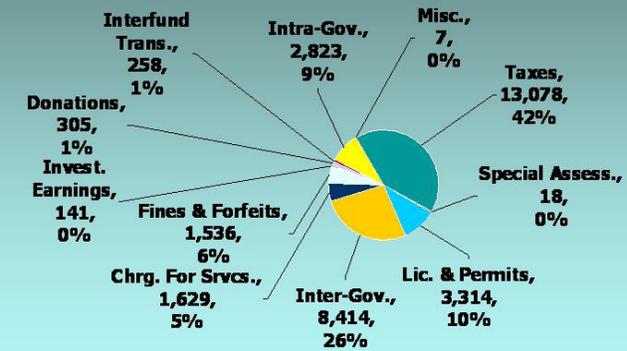
FY 09 Budgeted Total Revenues and Expenditures

Revenues – All Funds (000's) \$221,623

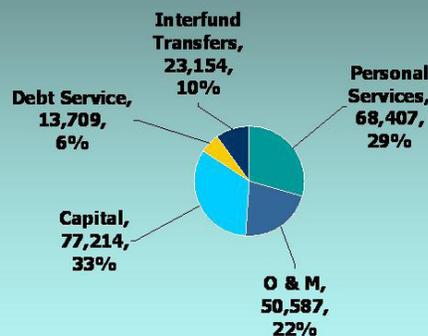


FY 09 Budgeted General Fund Revenues and Expenditures

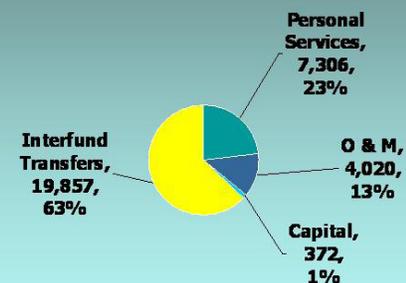
Revenues – General Fund (000's) \$31,523



Expenditures – All Funds (000's) \$233,071

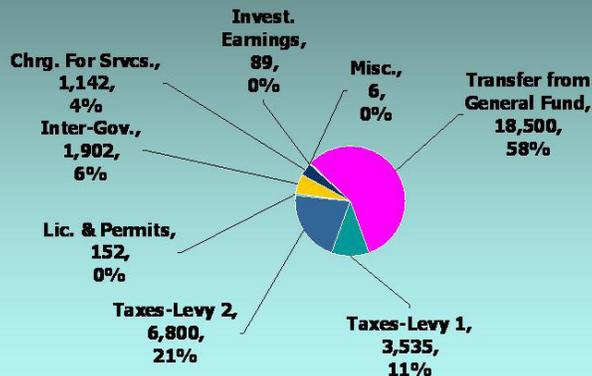


Expenditures – General Fund (000's) \$31,556



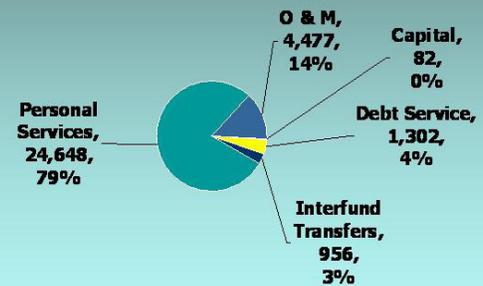
Revenues – Public Safety (000's)

\$32,126



Expenditures – Public Safety (000's)

\$31,465



FY 09 Budgeted Total Revenues and Expenditures

Reserves are being used to balance the overall budget. The City plans and pays for some one-time purchases by using its reserves as a savings account until the funds are needed for the project.

FY 09 Budgeted General Fund Revenues and Expenditures

The General Fund budget increased from \$29.9 million in 2008 to \$31.5 million in FY 2009. Part of the increase resulted from a City Council initiated change in how the Library receives tax revenue. The Library

in previous years, levied 9.5 mills, of which 4.5 were part of the 74 general mills allowed by the City Charter. The Library will levy 5 mills and the General Fund will levy 74 mills instead of 69.5 mills. The \$800,000 that is generated by the 4.5 mills will be transferred to the Library Fund. This increases the General Fund revenue and expenditure budgets by \$800,000.

The General Fund budgets for the Mayor and Council, Parks, Recreation and Public Lands, Municipal Court, Legal, Human Resources, Finance, Administration and PW Engineering. The single largest General Fund expense is a transfer to the Public Safety Fund, which

pays for police, fire and emergency communications operations.

FY 09 Budgeted Public Safety Fund Revenues and Expenditures

The Public Safety Fund includes the 4th year levy increase that was approved by voters in November 2004. This levy built a new fire station and is being used to hire more firefighters and police officers. The new fire station was opened in December 2007. The largest Public Safety revenue source is an \$18.5 million interfund transfer from the General Fund.

Paul Dextras Takes Over as New Fire Chief

Billings' new Fire Chief, Paul Dextras, began his fire service career in 1972 with the Wichita, Kansas, Fire Department. After 22 years, he left Wichita and accepted a position to manage the Operations and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) with the Independence, Missouri, Fire Department.

In 1997 Chief Dextras was recruited to fill the Fire Chief position with the

Logan, Utah, Fire Department. Prior to his position in Billings he was the Fire Chief in Arvada, Colorado.

Chief Dextras has a Fire Science certification and a Masters Degree in Public Administration. He is also a graduate of the National Fire Academy and is recognized by the International Association of Fire Chiefs with a Chief Fire Officer designation. His career opportunities have been instrumental

in his knowledge and experience of labor relations, fire-based ambulance transports, and the management of both volunteer and career personnel.

Chief Dextras and his wife, Linda, have a 12-year-old daughter, Tessa. The Dextras family is very excited about their move to the City of Billings and they look forward to quickly integrating into the community and the various social and community activities.



Paul Dextras

Frank Odermann Promoted to Assistant Fire Chief

The Billings Fire Department is proud to announce the promotion of Frank Odermann from Fire Marshall to the position of Assistant Fire Chief.

Assistant Chief Odermann has been a member of the Billings Fire Department since 1994 and has held the position of Fire Marshall since 2002. He has an established management background in

the Fire Prevention Bureau and his distinguished military service, including his service as a Navy Seal, will serve to be a positive attribute to the administration responsibilities associated with the Billings Fire Department.

The primary responsibilities of this position will be to plan, direct, manage, and oversee the activities of the opera-

tions of the Fire Department including the fire prevention, suppression, and the communications center.

Chief Odermann will use his array of experience to work with other City departments as well as outside organizations in the Billings community.



Frank Odermann

NEWS FROM THE



Friends of the Library Book Sale

The Friends of the Library will once again sponsor its fall Book Sale, scheduled this year from Oct. 16 to 19 at the Library.

This is the major fund-raising activity for the Friends of the Library, and always proves to be a great way for readers to stock up by choosing from an excellent selection of books, magazines and audio visual materials. Prices range from 25 cents to \$2 per item.

The first evening of the sale, Thursday, Oct. 16, is open to Friends members only, or to those who wish to join at the door. The remaining three days are open to the general public, so be sure and mark your calendar for this major fund-raising event of the Friends.

High Plains Book Awards Finalists

The Parnly Billings Library Board has established the High Plains Book Awards to recognize regional authors and/or literary works which examine and reflect life on the High Plains, including Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas, as well as Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The 2008 Award Finalists are:

Best First Book

* *Migration Patterns*: Stories by Gary

Schanbacher

* *Turpentine* by Spring Warren

* *Where the Rivers Run North* by Sam Morton

Best Nonfiction Book

* *Boxing for Cuba* by Guillermo Vincente Vidal

* *Charles M Russell: A Catalogue Raisonne*, B Byron Price, Editor

* *Gall: Lakota War Chief* by Robert W. Larson

* *One Woman's Montana*, by Kathe LeSage

* *This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor* by Susan Wicklund

Best Fiction Book

* *A Feast of Longing* by Sarah Klassen

* *Shallow Grave* by Lori Armstrong

* *The Watershed Years* by Russell Rowland

Winners in each of these categories will be announced at the Book Awards Banquet on Friday, Oct. 17.

Library Presents Silent Film Series

The Library will begin a series titled Great Silents, featuring great silent films, as part of its Thursday Night at the Movies Series beginning in October. The following films will be shown on the Thursdays listed:

Oct. 23: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1921), starring Werner Krauss and Conrad Veidt.

Nov. 6: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923), starring Lon Cheney.

Nov. 20: *The Cameraman* (1930), Buster Keaton.

Dec. 4: *The Mark of Zorro* (1920), starring Douglas Fairbanks.

Each of these classics begins at 7 p.m. on the third floor of the Library, so join us for these great silent films sponsored by the Parnly Billings Library Foundation.

The Library Presents Haunted Billings

Do you believe in ghosts? If not, you may change your mind after attending the Library's annual program titled Haunted Montana: Ghosts and Hauntings in the Big Sky State on Monday, Oct. 20 at 7 p.m. on the third floor of the Library.

Karen Stevens, author of the popular book Haunted Montana, has spent years researching ghosts, haunted buildings and locations, and talking to people who believe they have seen ghosts. Karen will talk about her research, some of the stories that she has heard and mention some local places that are reputed to be haunted. This is a great Halloween program, so be sure and join in!

Mayor and City Council of Billings

Mayor Ron Tussing
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657-8296

WARD 1
Peggie Gaghen
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Vacant
WARD 3
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259-1109

Chris "Shoots" Veis veiss@ci.billings.mt.us
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WARD 4
Jani McCall
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Ed Ulledalen
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248-1478

WARD 5
Richard (Dick) Clark
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Mark Astle
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Council
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City of Billings

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Growth Policy Update Highlights Vibrant Past and Looks to the Future

It is always wise to look back at what you have accomplished as you plan for the future. In the case of Billings and Yellowstone County, the last five years have seen economic vitality, improved quality of life, and steady growth and development.

The current community-wide review and update of the 2003 Growth Policy highlights community accomplishments and envisions a bright future. Of the 235 implementation strategies suggested by the community to achieve goals outlined in the 2003 Growth Policy, 85 percent have been completed or attempted. Consider a few of the statistics supporting many of these community achievements:

Billings has grown 6.7 square miles in the last five years.

Between 2000 and 2007, the City's population has increased 13.4%.

The median home price increased 44 percent from \$107,750 in 2000 to \$154,700 in 2006.

County-wide employment grew by 15 percent between 2000 and 2007, with growth focused in construction, retail sales and service jobs.

New funding sources such as the City Arterial Fee and Tax Increment Financing are available for public projects.

Twelve miles of trails have been added to the Heritage Trail System since 2003.

Almost 110 acres have been added to the City park inventory between 2000

and 2007.

Visitation to Montana State Parks and Recreation areas in the community has increased about 30 percent between 2001 and 2007, with more than 50,000 additional visits to Lake Elmo.

The community is now reviewing the 2003 Growth Policy and is updating its vision and strategies to ensure our community maintains a position of regional leadership. Visit www.ci.billings.mt.us/growthpolicy for more information on the 2008 Growth Policy Update and how you can be involved, or call the City-County Planning Department at (406) 657-8246.

Make a Difference, Participate in the Process

The Yellowstone County and City of Billings 2003 Growth Policy is a visionary document that provides community leaders some of the tools necessary to make the right choices for our future. While three community meetings to collect input have been held, there is still time to submit your comments on the drafting of the 2008 Growth Policy. Please visit www.ci.billings.mt.us/growthpolicy for more information on how you can be involved, call the City-County Planning Department at (406) 657-8246, or plan to attend one of the following public hearings:

Yellowstone County Board of Planning: October 28, 2008 – 6 p.m., Large



Community Visionaries: About 60 people gathered on Aug. 26 for the second public meeting to assist in the update of the 2003 Growth Policy.

Conference Room, 4th Floor, Parnly Library Building, 510 North Broadway.

Billings City Council: November 24, 2008 – 6:30 p.m. City Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 210 North 27th Street.

Yellowstone County Board of County

Commissioners: November 25, 2008 – 9:30 a.m., Room 403A, 4th Floor, County Courthouse, 217 North 27th Street.

Town of Broadview Council: December 9, 2008 – 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, Broadview, Call Town Clerk at 667-2360 for location and more information.

Miller Crossing Development Moves Along

Since the last CityLink, there has been considerable progress on one of the city's newest commercial developments. The Miller Crossing development in the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District is moving forward.

Petitions from the three property owners, which include Foursquare, Millers and Cabela's, created a Special Improvement District

(SID) for the public improvements on King Avenue East.

The City Council approved a new development agreement and awarded the King Avenue East construction contract to Knife River. The winning bid for the bonds that will pay for the street improvements is scheduled for City Council approval at the October 14th meeting. The developer and

Cabela's will be responsible for making the SID payments until there is enough Tax Incremental revenue to cover the semi-annual payments.

Cabela's has started construction with a scheduled completion date of no later than June 1, 2009. Foursquare has started on-site improvements with a completion date of May 2, 2009.



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- Earns Market Rate Interest (min. balance required)
- First Box of Checks is Free (Liberty Gold Plus)

Gold Plus Checking

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- Earns Market Rate Interest
- Free Checks (Liberty Gold Plus)
- Free Traveler's Checks
- Free Cashiers Checks
- Free VISA® CheckCard
- Free access to Billings Federal ATMs
- Free (foreign) ATM Transactions*
- Free Internet Banking & Bill Pay
- Free 24-Hour Phone Banking
- Overdraft Protection Available**

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* Three free per month; \$1 thereafter. ** Subject to approval. *** Drawing to be held December 5th. Need not be present to win. Registration not limited to account opening.

Winter Sets Priorities at Billings Logan International Airport

Passenger safety is the top priority of snow removal at Billings Logan International Airport.

Snow removal begins when the first snowflake falls and continues until the last pile of snow is moved. It is vital that runways and taxiways are kept clear of snow/ice in order to maintain safety for arriving and departing aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates and mandates how snow removal operations at a commercial service airport take place.

Airport Operations staff is responsible for the snow removal operations. Nineteen full-time employees, some of whom also serve as firefighters, mechanics and electricians, are placed on standby and work 12-hour shifts around the clock to ensure that the airport remains open. The airport has the equivalent of 60-plus miles of pavement, which includes runways, interlinking taxiways, aircraft parking ramps and vehicle roadways.

The snow removal fleet consists of 15 pieces of equipment, worth over \$2 million, and includes a combination of front-end loaders, snow plows, runway sweepers and snow blowers. Annual maintenance/repair costs range from \$75,000 - \$100,000.

Annual snowfall amounts average between 40 and 60 inches. However, during the winter of 1996-1997, the airport received over 100 inches of snow and was the recipient of the national Balchen/Post Award for excellence in performance of snow and ice control.



Snow is cleared from the runway at Logan International Airport.



Comments and Questions from Jay Westermarck via email:

Is there a city ordinance concerning trees over hanging alleys and yards? Our neighbors have tree limbs that hang across the alley and over our yard. These trees have not been trimmed for years and have lots of dead branches that we fear will break and damage our fence and hedge. When the wind blows, there are a lot of dead branches and leaves that end up in our yard. These trees hang so low, we are surprised the garbage truck operators haven't complained. Is there anything we can do about this situation?

Answer:

Below are the two City Codes referencing tree and vegetative care. For further information and assistance, please contact Nicole Cromwell with the Code Enforcement Division at (406) 657-8246 or via email at cromwelln@ci.billings.mt.us.

Sec. 25-204. Responsibility for trees and vegetative care. In addition to caring for trees and vegetative growth on owned property, the person in control of the property is charged with care, maintenance and full responsibility for trees and all vegetative growth on adjacent streets, alleys, boulevards and public ways; provided, that to maintain rights-of-way, clear vision zones and unobstructed view, traffic-control signs and devices, the city may in its discretion prune and remove trees and other vegetative growth. (Code 1967, § 14.01.070)

Sec. 25-205. Trees and other vegetative growth projecting over public ways. It is unlawful for any person who is the

From Our Readers

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

owner or person in control or management of any lot, block or parcel of land within the city to permit or allow to be kept or allow to grow upon such lot, block or parcel of land or within the curb of the street, alley, boulevard or public way adjacent thereto, any tree or other vegetative growth whose limbs or branches shall extend over the sidewalk along the property within eleven (11) feet above the surface of the sidewalk or any tree whose limbs or branches shall extend over the street along the property within fourteen (14) feet above the surface of the street or shall extend into the alley more than one (1) foot from the property line for a distance of fourteen (14) feet above the alley surface. (Code 1967, § 14.01.080)

Comments from J. Kramer of Billings:

Since you solicit questions to be submitted by your readers, here are two that I wish you'd answer, but I know you won't. Why wasn't a left turn arrow put into the stoplight at the east exit of the west side of Wal-Mart (e.g. northbound onto 24th St. W.)? Why are the stoplights on Lewis and Broadwater (north-south bound) consistently far, far longer than any other lights at similar intersections - for instance, Grand, Central, Rimrock, Poly or Monad? I have encountered a red light duration of over a minute traveling south on 16th St. W. at the intersection of Lewis Ave.

There is a longer delay at this light than there is at the intersection of Central and 24th St. W - a much busier intersection, but with shorter lights.

I doubt you'll get much information from the Public Works Department or the State DOT - they have a way of sloughing things like this off on each other...always!

Answer:

1. A left turn arrow at 24th and Rosebud for eastbound to northbound traffic was not put in when the signal was installed because traffic volumes did not warrant it. Left turn arrows are only used at locations where the volume of left turns and the volume of opposing traffic are high. Along a busy street such as 24th Street West, preference is given to the major street traffic. Left turn signals take green time away from the major street, so in order to keep traffic moving on major streets, the City is judicious about where left turn signals are used. However, the City is conducting a signal timing study for the 24th Street Corridor between King and Grand. From the preliminary data that has been collected it looks like a turn arrow at this location is now justified and a left turn arrow for this approach will probably be installed. The new timing plans should be implemented sometime this fall or next spring.

2. Signal timing is set according to the volume of traffic and the number of lanes that are available to carry that traf-

fic. Without knowing the time of day that you drive the various intersections mentioned, it is impossible to explain why your delay may be longer at one location than another. During peak traffic periods (such as 5 o'clock traffic), a longer delay at 16th and Lewis than at 24th and Central, indicates that this is not a signal timing problem because during peak periods, the overall cycle length at 16th and Lewis is roughly half of what it is at 24th and Central. There may be a vehicle detector problem on 16th and the signal controller isn't detecting your vehicle. In that case, you would not get the green signal until a car pulls up on the opposite approach. The City's signal technicians will check the vehicle detectors and repair them if needed. At this intersection, there is roughly twice as much traffic entering the intersection from Lewis as there is from 16th. Therefore, during normal operations, Lewis will be given roughly twice as much green time. At 24th and Central the traffic volume is more balanced, and therefore the amount of green time given to N-S vs. E-W will be closer to being equal.

If you encounter a recurring signal problem at an intersection (i.e., not just a one-time problem), please contact Terry Smith, City Traffic Engineer, at (406) 657-8234 or via email at smitht@ci.billings.mt.us with specific information such as the time of day you are driving the intersection in question, your direction of travel, and a detailed description of the problem that you encounter. Your concern will be investigated and malfunctions will be corrected.

Thanks for reading the CityLink and for sending in your great suggestions and comments!

Airport Purchases New Fire Trucks

Billings Logan International Airport recently purchased two new fire trucks for the Aircraft Rescue Firefighting Division. The trucks were manufactured by Rosenbauer of America, a firm located in Minnesota.

Each truck is approximately 40 feet long, 10.5 feet wide, 12 feet tall and weighs a hefty 52,000 pounds.

The trucks are equipped with Detroit 60 series engines that produce 665 horsepower, allowing the trucks to accelerate from 0 – 60 mph in 25 seconds. Each truck carries extinguishing agents such as 1,500 gallons of water, 200 gallons of foam, 500 pounds of Purple K dry

chemical, and are equipped with turrets or master stream nozzles that are dual flow at 375/750 gallons per minute. They can automatically deploy and be operated from the driver's seat. Although 1,500 gallons of water appears to be a significant amount, they can be expelled in only 1.5 minutes.

The trucks are unique in that they can be operated by a single person, have the ability to "pump and roll" or move and shoot water, and can discharge a variety of extinguishing agents. Each truck is manufactured according to guidelines and specifications set forth by the FAA to be used specifically at airports.



One of the new firetrucks for the airport.

MMIA and the City of Billings

The Montana Municipal Insurance Authority (MMIA) is a leader in the management of municipal risks. When formed in 1986, the MMIA tackled the problem of government being unable to find or afford liability and/or workers' compensation insurance. The running of municipal operations - fire, police, roads, parks, and utilities - represents significant exposure and risk. In 1986, the insurance industry looked at government and responded by saying these activities represented too much risk and they did not want to insure them. The cities and towns of Montana took matters into their own hands. They created pooled coverage programs which survive and thrive to meet the same needs today.

The MMIA is governed by a 13-member Board of Directors, representing its member cities and towns from across the state. The staff of MMIA administers four separate risk retention pools: Liability, Workers' Compensation, Property and Employee Benefits. In addition to these products, MMIA provides risk management and training services in an effort to be more cost effective within the programs and manage the exposures experienced by member communities. Major challenges for the MMIA continue to be the diversity of its members, the size of the state and the diversity of the economy. To learn more about the MMIA, visit their website at www.mmia.net.

City Surplus Property Auction

The City of Billings conducted its annual auction of surplus City items on Saturday, September 27, 2008, at the Billings Operation Center, located at 4848 Midland Road, Billings, MT 59101. Viewing of items began at 8:00 am the day of the auction, with the auction starting at 9:00 am.

Items auctioned off included vehicles, miscellaneous equipment, office equipment, computers and electronics, and other miscellaneous items too numerous to mention. Approximately 200 people attended this year's auction, which was handled by Dan Tryan of Tryan's Auction Services. This annual auction is a way for the City to "recycle" still usable items within the community, while returning needed funds to the City coffers. Although the numbers are not yet tallied for this year, last year's auction raised over \$50,000 to offset costs of future purchases for participating departments.

For more information about the City's surplus property auction, please contact Liz Kampa-Weatherwax, Purchasing Agent, at (406) 657-8216 or via email at kampal@ci.billings.mt.us.



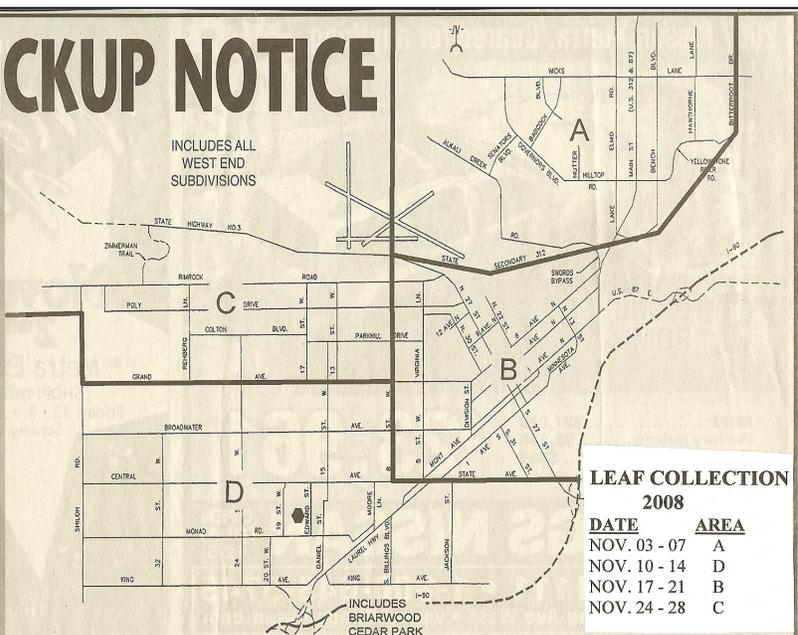
Two popular items in this year's auction – a mower and a sweeper

Fall Leaf Collection Program

LEAF PICKUP NOTICE

City of Billings

To have your leaves collected, rake them to the curb line **prior** to your scheduled week. The pickup schedule begins the week of November 3 weather permitting. This map shows the areas and the dates. After your scheduled pickup week, **THE HOMEOWNER MUST BAG THE LEAVES FOR SOLID WASTE COLLECTION.** Please don't park cars on or near the leaf piles.



The City of Billings has operated a Fall Leaf Collection Program for many years, and plans are being developed for this autumn.

The program was developed to reduce the amount of leaves that enter the storm drain system and to prevent further problems during the winter snow season. It is a vital part of our winter preparation efforts.

The Fall Leaf Collection Program has evolved over the years into an efficient method of leaf removal. City crews use a combination of trucks, front-end loaders, leaf vacuums, and street sweepers to efficiently collect leaves before they find their way to the storm drain system. The leaves are hauled to the landfill for composting. The resultant compost is used to re-establish vegetation cover on completed landfill areas. City staff is committed to continually reviewing new methods and concepts to ensure continued improvement of the program.

Each year, the City publishes a map in the Billings Gazette showing leaf pick up areas and collection dates before the program begins. This advance notice helps citizens plan an appropriate time to rake their leaves into the street. This also means fewer leaves blowing around neighborhoods. City staff are happy to report that the City's Fall Leaf Collection Program has received significant positive public response over the years.

City residents will be allowed to place leaves in the gutter beginning the week prior to the scheduled Leaf Collection for their area. The pickup schedule will begin the week of Nov. 3, weather permitting.

Please be aware of the date your area will have the leaves picked up and have them in the gutter by the Monday of the week scheduled for your area. After this date, the homeowner must bag the leaves for Solid Waste collection.

City Code Limits Political Signs

Billings Montana City Code Article 27-707 (b)(16) (City Sign Code - Exemptions) regulates the placement of political signs on private property. The link to the applicable code is <http://ci.billings.mt.us> - choose City Code, Article 27-700. Time limits within the existing City Sign Code are not applicable due to recent court decisions.

There are five basic rules to remember when placing political signs within the city limits:

You may post as many political signs as you want on any one property, so long as the total size of all signs added together does not exceed 32 square feet. The area should be computed based solely on the size of the sign, not the fact that there may be writing on each side of the sign.

Signs may not be placed on a boulevard, in a city right-of-way, on a utility pole or on the roof of a structure. Signs placed in city right-of-ways will be removed by City Code Enforcement Officers. Officers will contact candidates so signs may be retrieved.

Signs over 30 inches in height must be outside of clear vision areas at street intersections, where driveways enter streets and at alley entrances.

Signs may not be over 6 feet in height from grade.

Permission of the property owner is required prior to placement of a political sign.

If you have questions regarding



political signs please contact one of the City Code Enforcement Officers at the phone numbers or emails listed below:

- * Nancy McCullough: 247-8611 mcculloughn@ci.billings.mt.us
- * Cal Meyer: 657-8288 meyer@ci.billings.mt.us
- * Don Vegge: 657-8313 vegged@ci.billings.mt.us
or
- * The Code Enforcement Division: 657-8281

City of Billings Prepares for Biannual Legislative Session

The Billings City Council is developing its priorities for the upcoming 2009 Montana Legislature.

The Council adopts a bi-annual legislative agenda that focuses on legislation it would like the Legislature to adopt, and legislation it will oppose if it is introduced during the legislative session, which starts in January. The priority-setting efforts are important to residents and businesses because they can affect the outcome of legislation that has the potential to impact citizens' daily lives, as well as the City's ability to retain and attract businesses.

The City Council has developed preliminary proposals that support local control over state mandates, fair property tax reappraisal, infrastructure funding and

cooperation with other local organizations such as Yellowstone County, the Chamber of Commerce and the Big Sky Economic Development Authority. The City will probably oppose state legislation that intrudes on local taxing decisions and which does not fully fund state-legislative mandates.

The City hired Ed Bartlett from Billings to represent the City during the legislative session, thereby avoiding having to transport City Council members and staff to Helena multiple times during the 90-day session.

The Council will also consider supporting the Montana League of Cities and Towns' legislative agenda when representatives attend the League's annual conference in October.

City of Billings to Conduct Citizen Survey

The City of Billings will sponsor a citizen survey later this fall. The survey will be designed to determine citizens' satisfaction with City services, to rank the importance and cost effectiveness of those services and to identify services or facilities that residents think should be improved.

The City will hire a consulting firm or educational institution to develop the survey, administer it among Billings residents, analyze the results and report them to the City Council.

The survey organization will select about 1,200 residents to receive the survey and at least 400 must be completed in order to

produce a statistically valid and reliable survey response.

City officials will never know the identity of individual respondents but will receive demographic breakouts such as which neighborhoods responded and how those responses compare with other neighborhoods, differences between responses by men and women and the ages of survey respondents.

If you receive a survey in the mail or are contacted by telephone to respond, please recognize that your participation is important in helping the City to improve public facilities and services.

We want to hear from you

Please provide us with input for our next newsletter.

What did you like most about the newsletter?

What would you like to see in upcoming newsletters?

Mail or e-mail your comments to us at:

citylink@ci.billings.mt.us

The City Link
P.O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103

Notice:

Public Works Administration and the Engineering Division have moved. They are now located in the Historic Depot Building at 2224 Montana Avenue - 2nd Floor

Phone: (406) 657-8230
Fax: (406) 237-6291

8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Monday - Friday