

South Billings Urban Renewal District

10.06.26 Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The South Billings Urban Renewal District Advisory Committee meeting was called to order at City Hall. This was the Committee's first meeting at the City Hall location.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The previous meeting minutes were presented for approval.

Motion: Approve the previous meeting minutes as presented.

Second: Motion was seconded.

Vote: Motion carried.

3. Draft Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Sara presented the draft five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), noting that much of the information had also been discussed during the preceding SBURA meeting.

The proposed CIP focuses heavily on infrastructure improvements, including:

- Completion of streets remaining on the district's master plan.
- Improvements/replacement associated with the South Side fire station.
- Expansion of the evidence lot.
- Park improvements.
- Potential additional parking and site development at the recreation campus.

The Committee discussed the importance of ensuring that sidewalks are included with street improvement projects, consistent with previous SBURA investments.

Committee members asked about the proposed Parks, Recreation and Public Lands (PRPL) shop displacement shown in the CIP. It was explained that the tentative fire station design would displace the existing Parks and Recreation shop located near or attached to the current fire station.

The Committee discussed whether the Parks shop could be incorporated into the new fire station project rather than relocated elsewhere. Members noted that relocating the shop farther away could increase employee travel time and other operational expenses. Staff agreed to inquire about whether incorporating the shop into the fire station project is feasible.

The Committee reviewed the remaining street projects within the original district. Members expressed support for prioritizing Street Project No. 5, noting concerns previously raised by nearby residents regarding impacts from new development.

Street Project No. 11 was also identified as a potential priority because of recurring flooding and the need to continually backfill the area with gravel. Members suggested paving the street could help address the ongoing issue.

Projects No. 8 and No. 9 were discussed in relation to Orchard Elementary and potential Safe Routes to School opportunities. The Committee also discussed whether recent City Council action related to school-zone safety could create additional funding opportunities or affect the prioritization of street projects.

Staff will investigate whether Safe Routes to School or other school-safety funding could be coordinated with proposed TIF street improvements.

During public comment, concern was expressed regarding the use of TIF revenues for traditional City infrastructure, including fire stations and other municipal facilities. The commenter encouraged the Committee to consider the impact on other taxing jurisdictions whose tax revenues are affected by TIF and emphasized that TIF expenditures should maintain a strong connection to economic development.

Committee members echoed the importance of determining what percentage of major City projects, such as the fire station, would be funded through the City's General Fund or other funding sources versus TIF. The Committee expressed interest in ensuring that funding responsibilities are equitable and that TIF is not used as the sole funding mechanism for projects that also serve broader City purposes.

4. Additional Parking at the Recreation Campus

Sarah presented drone footage showing parking conditions during a recent hockey game at the recreation campus. The footage was taken when hockey was occurring but there were no simultaneous major events at the courts or soccer fields. Despite this, vehicles were observed parking on grass, at nearby businesses and throughout surrounding parking areas.

SBURA is considering the possibility of developing additional parking on the third pad site. A preliminary estimate from K2 indicated that paving and related improvements could cost approximately \$1.8 million and create approximately 450 additional parking spaces.

Significant discussion occurred regarding the importance of adequate parking to the long-term success of the recreation campus. Members noted that the ice arena, recreation facility, Amen Park and potentially a future tennis facility will operate independently and may host major events simultaneously.

The Committee discussed the importance of ensuring that facilities can meet attendance and revenue goals without parking limitations negatively affecting visitors, tournaments or future events. Members emphasized that adequate parking is an important component of the district's economic-development goals, particularly if the facilities are expected to attract regional tournaments and visitors.

Discussion occurred regarding the proposed tennis facility and how its potential development would affect the parking plan. Some members expressed concern about paving the proposed tennis pad site before the future of the tennis facility is determined.

It was clarified that SBURA has expressed support for the tennis project but has not made a formal financial commitment to fund construction of the tennis center.

Potential alternatives discussed included acquisition or use of nearby properties, additional parking opportunities in surrounding areas, shuttle or transit options, parking created through future street improvements, and maximizing the remaining recreation-campus property.

The Committee expressed general agreement that additional parking is necessary, while recognizing that the exact solution remains under evaluation.

City staff reminded the Committee that Parks and Engineering plan to conduct a parking and traffic-circulation analysis. The analysis is expected to evaluate parking demand, King Avenue East traffic circulation, pedestrian movements, intersections and other transportation issues surrounding the recreation campus.

Potential pedestrian crossing improvements, including flashing crossing signals, may also be evaluated. Members noted that additional information from the study should be considered before final decisions are made, while several members emphasized that the parking issue appears urgent.

5. Energy Laboratories TIF Application

Sara introduced a new TIF application from Energy Laboratories. The application was brought before the Committee promptly so members could begin reviewing the project rather than delaying discussion for an additional month.

Representatives Jarrod Weenum and Tracy Dangerfield attended the meeting on behalf of Energy Laboratories and provided additional project information.

Company Background

Energy Laboratories has operated on the South Side for approximately 75 years and has remained at essentially the same location throughout its history. The company provides chemical and environmental analytical testing services involving water, waste, soil, air and petroleum products.

Company representatives emphasized Energy Laboratories' long-standing presence on the South Side and its history of employing individuals with science degrees, including recent college graduates.

Sara explained that additional information is needed to determine which portions of the project qualify as TIF-eligible expenses. Some construction costs are currently grouped together and will need to be separated into more detailed categories.

Public comment questioned whether TIF assistance was necessary given the company's financial strength and the significant amount of public infrastructure already constructed in the surrounding area.

Committee members generally expressed support for Energy Laboratories as a long-standing South Side business and for the economic-development benefits of the expansion.

Members noted that the project represents private investment within the expanded TIF district, improves a prominent entrance corridor into Billings, supports a long-established South Side employer, provides employment opportunities for individuals with science and technical backgrounds, increases taxable value within the district, and represents one of the first private TIF applications from the newly expanded portion of the district.

Additional Information Required

- Revised project costs separating work already completed or underway from work that has not yet begun.

- A revised TIF request based on remaining eligible project expenses.
- Detailed construction-cost breakdowns to determine TIF eligibility.
- The anticipated number of new permanent full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.
- Clarification of project financing and confirmation that sufficient funding is available to complete the project.
- Documentation explaining property ownership, the shareholder relationship and lease terms.
- Completion of all required application fields and signatures.
- Staff analysis of how a potential TIF award of approximately \$500,000–\$600,000 would fit within the district’s available budget.

No formal action was taken on the Energy Laboratories TIF application. The application will return to the Committee for consideration once the requested information and revised financial documentation have been provided. The Committee anticipates reconsidering the application at its November meeting, provided the necessary materials are available.

6. Advisory Committee Consolidation

A question was raised regarding whether the current Advisory Committee would meet again before implementation of the planned consolidated TIF advisory committee.

City staff indicated that the existing committees are expected to meet at least one more time because the consolidation process will require advertising for applicants, receiving applications and City Council appointments. The Committee therefore anticipates holding its November meeting under the current structure.

7. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

The Chair requested public comment on non-agenda items. No additional public comment was received.

8. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Adjourn the meeting.

Second: Motion was seconded.

The meeting was adjourned.