



Work Session Meeting Agenda
2 Park Drive South, Great Falls, MT
Gibson Room, Civic Center
September 03, 2024
5:30 PM

The agenda packet material is available on the City's website: <https://greatfallsmt.net/meetings>. The Public may view and listen to the meeting on government access channel City-190, cable channel 190; or online at <https://greatfallsmt.net/livestream>.

Public participation is welcome in the following ways:

- Attend in person.
- Provide public comments in writing by 12:00 PM the day of the meeting: Mail to City Clerk, PO Box 5021, Great Falls, MT 59403, or via email to: commission@greatfallsmt.net. Include the agenda item or agenda item number in the subject line, and include the name of the commenter and either an address or whether the commenter is a city resident. Written communication received by that time will be shared with the City Commission and appropriate City staff for consideration during the agenda item, and, will be so noted in the official record of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

PUBLIC COMMENT

(Public comment on agenda items or any matter that is within the jurisdiction of the City Commission. Please keep your remarks to a maximum of five (5) minutes. Speak into the microphone, and state your name and either your address or whether you are a city resident for the record.)

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. Airport Annual Update - John Faulkner.
2. Public Safety Advisory Committee Administrative Summary and Final Recommendations.

DISCUSSION POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

ADJOURNMENT

City Commission Work Sessions are televised on cable channel 190 and streamed live at <https://greatfallsmt.net>. Work Session meetings are re-aired on cable channel 190 the following Thursday morning at 10 a.m. and the following Tuesday evening at 5:30 p.m.

Wi-Fi is available during the meetings for viewing of the online meeting documents.

UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE

City Commission Work Session - Tuesday September 17, 2024 5:30 p.m.

City Commission Meeting - Tuesday September 17, 2024 7:00 p.m.

Airport Update Summer 2024 GTF



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Airport Authority Pandemic Recovery



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Available Seats now Higher than pre-Pandemic Delta-MSP returned February 2023 and Alaska-SEA back to 2x daily summer 2024

**Great Falls International Airport
GTF**

Year-Over-Year Capacity Change Report - Seats per Day Each Way

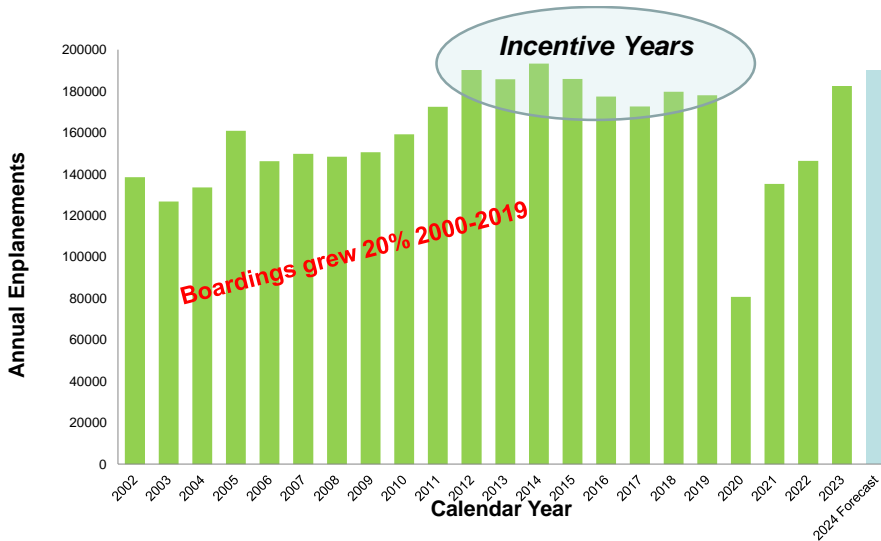


Airline	Destination	Equip	July			August			September			October			November			December				
			2019	2024	Change	2019	2024	Change	2019	2024	Change	2019	2024	Change	2019	2023	Change	2019	2024	Change		
AS	SEA	E75	142	147	3.4%	147	152	3.3%	119	81	-31.9%	118	76	-35.4%	127	73	-42.0%	132	76	-42.6%		
	SEA Total		142	147	3.4%	147	152	3.3%	119	81	-31.9%	118	76	-35.4%	127	73	-42.0%	132	76	-42.6%		
AS Total			142	147	3.4%	147	152	3.3%	119	81	-31.9%	118	76	-35.4%	127	73	-42.0%	132	76	-42.6%		
DL	MSP	319 CR9 E7W	132			128	2		76			76			73			76				
	MSP Total		132	76	-42.4%	130	76	-41.6%	76	76	0.0%	76	76	0.0%	73	76	3.4%	76	76	0.0%		
	SLC	CRJ E7W	144			142			143			144			137			140				
	SLC Total		144	205	42.6%	142	203	43.1%	143	195	36.0%	144	202	40.8%	137	210	53.9%	140	216	53.7%		
DL Total			276	281	1.9%	272	279	2.6%	219	271	23.6%	220	278	26.7%	210	286	36.2%	216	292	34.9%		
G4	AZA	319 320	51			23						5	46	54	18.2%	5	47	56	18.2%	63	54	-14.0%
	AZA Total		51			23						51	54	6.5%	52	56	6.5%	63	54	-14.0%		
	LAS	319	45	45	0.0%	45	45	0.0%	47	47	0.0%	40	40	0.0%	47	47	0.0%	55	65	18.2%		
	LAS Total		45	45	0.0%	45	45	0.0%	47	47	0.0%	40	40	0.0%	47	47	0.0%	55	65	18.2%		
G4 Total			97	45	-53.2%	68	45	-33.5%	47	47	0.0%	91	94	3.6%	99	103	3.4%	118	119	1.1%		
UA	DEN	319 320 CRJ E7W ERJ	252			219	38		50			185	35		48			95				
	DEN Total		147	252	71.7%	150	258	72.1%	150	243	61.7%	150	146	-2.7%	145	144	-0.9%	140	168	19.5%		
	ORD	CR7 E7W	76	10	-87.1%	49	7	-85.0%	74	7	-90.0%	5										
	ORD Total		76	10	-87.1%	74	7	-90.0%	5			5										
UA Total			223	262	17.5%	224	266	18.6%	155	243	56.9%	150	146	-2.7%	145	144	-0.9%	140	168	19.5%		
Grand Total			737	735	-0.3%	711	742	4.3%	540	641	18.8%	540	594	2.8%	581	606	4.3%	607	655	7.9%		

GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

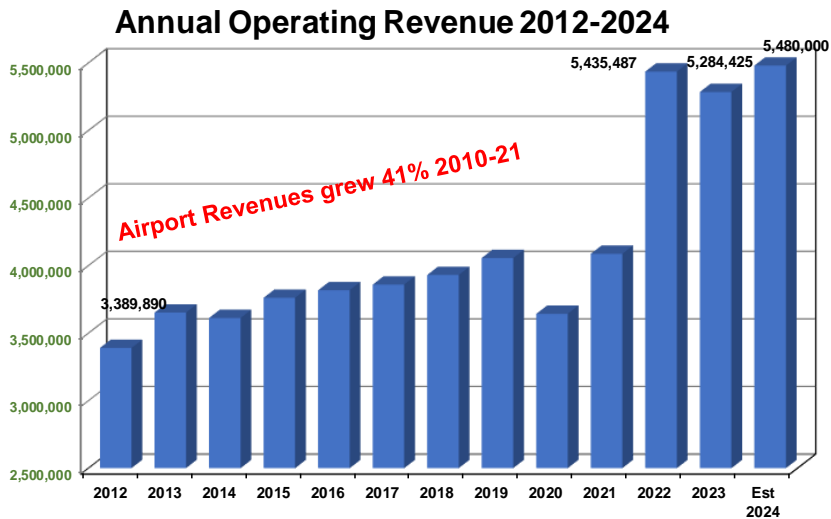
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Passenger Activity has Recovered from Pandemic Full recovery in 2023 and near-record volume in 2024



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Revenue Diversification is a Prime Strategic Initiative
FY2022 had \$600k in one-time FedEx sale revenue



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Non-traditional sources provide revenue growth
Often more durable in economic downturns than passenger revenue

- **Seven projects in past six years have generated \$900,000 in new annual revenue**
 - ✓ I-State Trucking: New commercial development
 - ✓ EagleJet: Large hangar development
 - ✓ Love's Travel stops: Planned commercial development
 - ✓ Avmax: Leased GTF former snow equipment building
 - ✓ Fleet Truck and RV Repair: Leased GTF former maintenance building
 - ✓ FY23 GTF parking generated \$6.93 per boarding which is 19% more than all time high!
 - ✓ Renegotiated FedEx generates \$200,000 in new income over prior deal after decline of \$600,000 in one-time sale revenue this year.

Airports are a cost recovery business with airlines picking up the residual. Development allows us to maintain low rates and prevent "rate shocks" during industry downturns.

GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Diversification: Phase I Industrial Condos Now fully leased



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

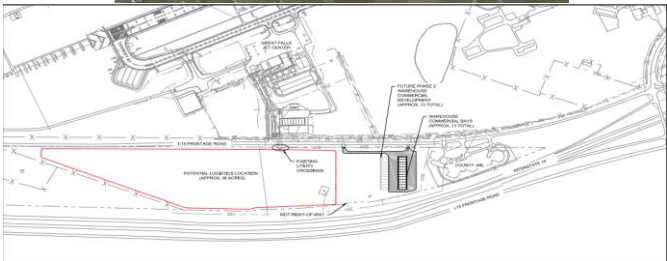
Diversification: Airport Light Industrial Park Capitalizing on the growth in ecommerce, air cargo and I-15 location



Opportunity - As ecommerce expands in Montana, air cargo, trucking and fulfillment needs to expand, as logistics expands local small manufacturers can reach new markets. This project provides space for small industry and logistics providers to co-locate.

Utility Served – All major utilities on site

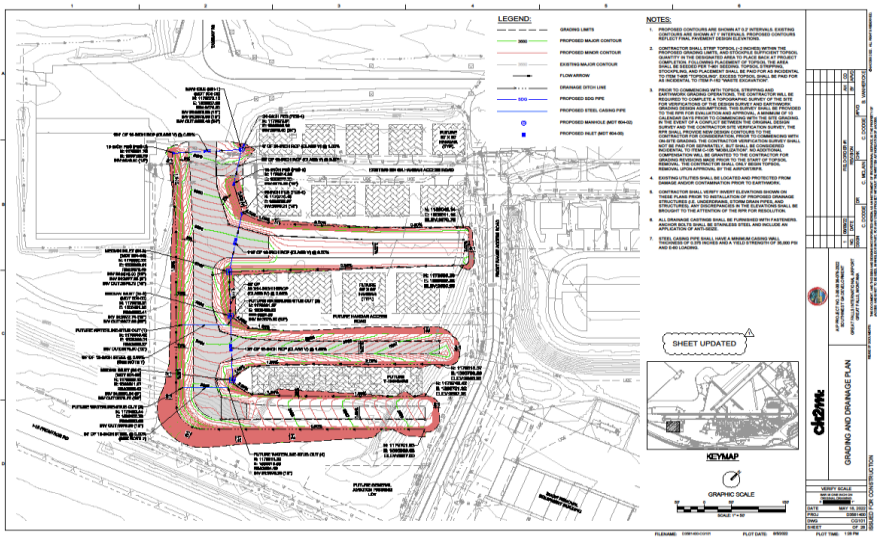
Revenue – Annual revenue expected to be \$450,000 annually



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

November 2020

Diversification: Private Hangar Sites Two Private Hangars to develop in 2024



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Airport Capital Projects



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



GTF GREAT FALLS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



2024-5 Other Projects

- **Taxiway A Maintenance:** Fog seal and repaint Taxiway A
- **Access Control Phase II:** Adding card/PIN, door sensors and alarms
- **Design West Concourse Expansion:** Extending the width of the hallway in Gate 1 (United) and Gate 2 (Delta) for additional holdroom capacity, expanded restaurant space, new restrooms.

Community Growth: GTF's Greatest Threat

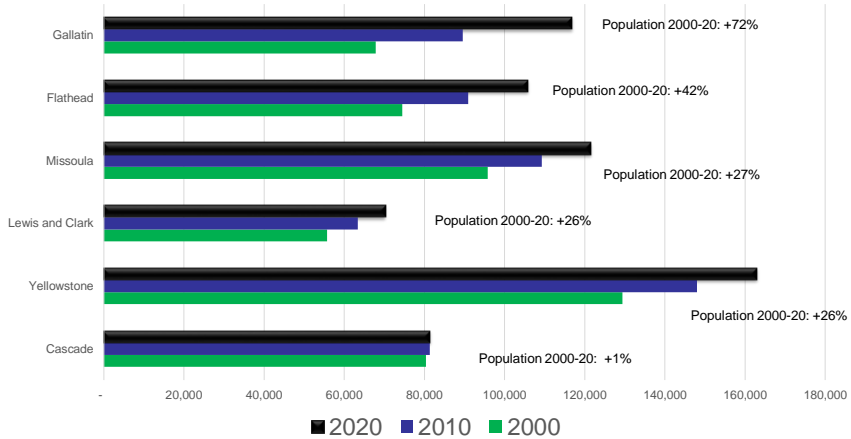


Did you know? Common misconceptions about airports

- What % of the ticket price do airports receive?
 - 0% Airports get none of the ticket price
 - Also no local tax money is received at GTF
- What are the Airports largest revenue sources?
 - Parking and rental cars
 - GTF makes more money when more people fly from GTF
 - Airports want the lowest supportable airfares
- Does GTF have the highest or lowest fees to the airlines of MT airports?
 - 2021 & 2022 MT Aeronautics data showed GTF had the lowest airline landing fee in MT
 - GTF-\$0.99 BZN-\$1.00 MSO-\$1.91 BIL-\$1.07 GPI-\$1.42 HLN-\$1.00
- Generally, do larger aircraft have higher or lower airfares on them?
 - Lower, middle seats and the back of plane has cheapest airfare. RJ's don't have a middle seat & fewer back seats
 - All planes now require 2 pilots and 737 is same crew as an RJ. Larger aircraft are cheaper to operate

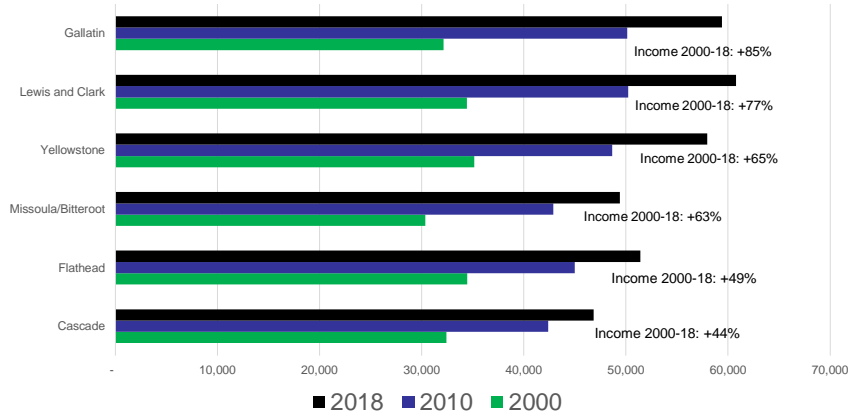
Headwinds for Flights Next slowest county grew 26x Cascade Population

Airport Base City Census Comparison 2000 to 2020



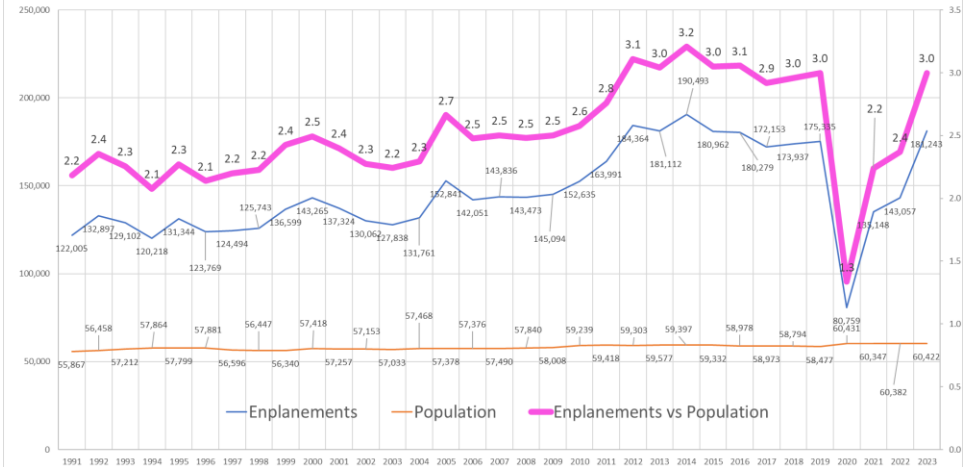
Local Headwinds : Cascade now lowest Household Income

**Airport Service Area Economic Base Comparison
Median Household Income Growth 2000 to 2018**



Consistent demand for a Generation Daily demand for seats virtually unchanged in 30 years

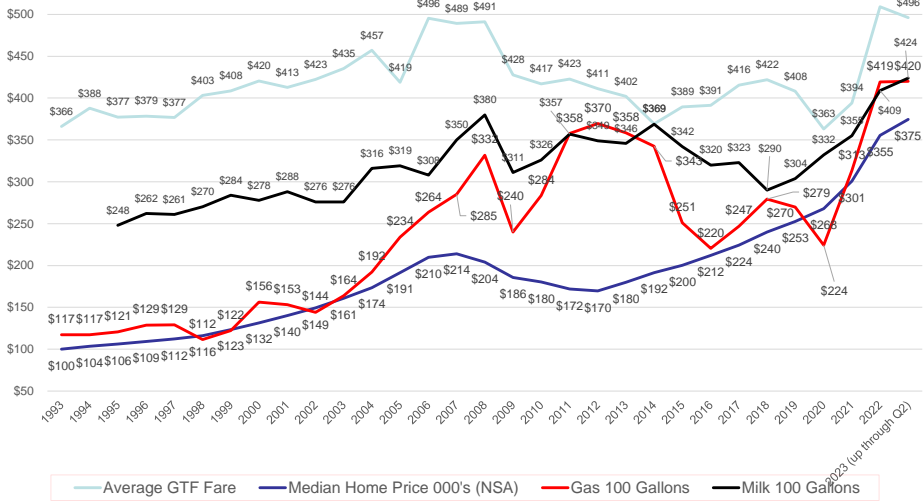
**Great Falls Historic Population, Enplanements and
Enplanements per Population Comparison**



GTF Avg Airfares – Mostly Flat for 30 years

Other retail goods have seen significant inflation

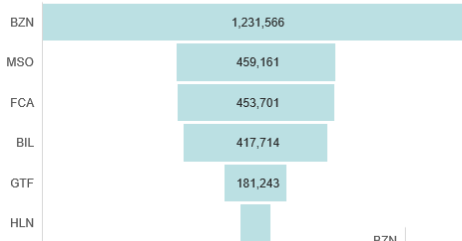
Historic Growth in GTF Airfare, US Housing, US Milk and US Gas Prices



Size Matters: More middle & back of plane seats

GTF had 2nd Lowest Fare in MT despite being smaller than most

2023 Montana Airport Ranked by Boardings



Average One-Way Airfare 2023



How do we lower fares? Must grow or bring more tourists here to fill new seats

- GTF is teaming with the Chamber to develop an airline incentive fund
 - In the past ten years, new flights REQUIRE a profit guarantee from the community
 - Great Falls received air service grant Aug 2022 and we have over \$1 million in incentives

Thank you City of Great Falls for contributing to the Low-Airfare Initiative

- Please Fly Local! Why?
 - Local jobs, air service employes over 200 local people at airlines, Holman Aviation ,etc
 - Due to population stagnation, we are stuck in tiny planes. We need to graduate to full-size planes that are cheaper to run and have cheap middle seats.
 - 50-seat jets are extinct, 76-seaters are next and the transition to 150 seat aircraft with stagnant population growth means we only have demand for 500 seats per day – likely 3 or 4 flights on one airline in the future. Wait to see what the fares look like then!
 - With no demand growth, imagine future Great Falls with no mall, movie theater or flights!

Top Target LA: Consolidate regional demand, maximize Canadian traffic, attract new inbound tourists



What are the Stakes for Great Falls?

As the Regional Jet Age came to end over **50 airports lost all service**

When regional airports ended commercial service

2013		2014		2015	
Airport	State	Airport	State	Airport	State
Inyokern*	California	Gulf Shores	Alabama	Muscle Shoals	Alabama
Chicago	Illinois	Bullhead City	Arizona	Kingman	Arizona
Gary	Indiana	Chico*	California	Macon	Georgia
Lewistown	Montana	Modesto*	California	Tupelo	Mississippi
Miles City	Montana	Telluride	Colorado	Teterboro	New Jersey
Ely	Nevada	Athens	Georgia	Los Alamos	New Mexico
Westerly	Rhode Island	Topeka*	Kansas	Moab**	Utah
Del Rio*	Texas	Tunica	Mississippi	Vernal**	Utah
Eagle River	Wisconsin	Klamath Falls*	Oregon	Port Angeles	Washington
Minocqua	Wisconsin			Sheridan	Wyoming

Note:
 1. All airports listed were served exclusively by regional airlines.
 2. Airports with ** indicate United as marketing carrier and *** indicate Delta as marketing carrier.

United's 38 city cuts during the pandemic
 Here is a list of all the U.S. cities United has exited during the pandemic, according to Cirium and Ailevon Pacific data.

- Abilene, Texas.
- Alamosa, Colorado.
- Alexandria, Louisiana.
- Cape Girardeau, Missouri.
- Clarksburg, West Virginia.
- College Station, Texas.
- Columbia, Missouri.
- Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida.
- Eau Claire, Wisconsin.
- Erie, Pennsylvania.
- Evansville, Indiana.
- Everett/Paine Field, Washington.
- Flagstaff, Arizona.
- Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.
- Hilo, Hawaii.
- Kalamazoo/Battle Creek, Michigan.
- Kearney, Nebraska.
- Killeen/Fort Hood, Texas.
- Lansing, Michigan.
- Lewisburg, West Virginia.
- Monroe, Louisiana.
- Muskegon, Michigan.
- Ogdensburg, New York.
- Paducah, Kentucky.
- Pierre, South Dakota.
- Plattsburgh, New York.
- Pueblo, Colorado.
- Rochester, Minnesota.
- Santa Rosa, Texas.
- Santa Rosa, California.
- Springfield, Illinois.
- Staunton/Waynesboro, Virginia.
- Stockton, California.
- Tallahassee, Florida.
- Texarkana, Arkansas.
- Twin Falls, Idaho.
- Watertown, South Dakota.
- Wausau, Wisconsin.

Full List Of 2022 American Airlines Route Cancellations

- Boston (BOS)
- Raleigh (RDU) – ends January 4, 2022
- Charlotte (CLT)
- Champaign/Urbana, Illinois (CMI) – ends April 5, 2022
- Toledo, Ohio (TOL) – ends April 5, 2022
- Chicago (ORD)
- Charlottesville, Virginia (CHO) – ends April 5, 2022
- New York Kennedy (JFK)
- Liberia, Costa Rica (LIR) – ends April 5, 2022
- San Antonio (SAT) – ends January 4, 2022
- San Jose, Costa Rica (SJO) – ends April 5, 2022
- Montreal (YUL) – ends January 4, 2022
- Toronto (YYZ) – ends January 4, 2022
- New York LaGuardia (LGA)
- Nantucket, Massachusetts (ACK) – ends June 17, 2022
- Asheville, North Carolina (AVL) – ends March 27, 2022
- Bangor, Maine (BGR) – ends January 4, 2022
- Boston (BOS) – ends January 4, 2022
- Charleston, South Carolina (CHS)
- Orlando (MCO) – ends January 4, 2022
- Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts (MVY)
- Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (MYR)
- Philadelphia (PHL) – ends January 4, 2022
- Pensacola (PNS) – ends May 5, 2022
- Portland, Maine (PWM) – ends January 4, 2022
- Savannah, Georgia (SAV) – ends June 3, 2022
- Traverse City, Michigan (TVC) – ends June 2, 2022
- Philadelphia (PHL)
- Baltimore (BWI) – ends April 5, 2022
- Charleston, West Virginia (CRW) – ends April 5, 2022
- Ottawa (YOW) – ends April 5, 2022
- Phoenix (PHX)
- Calgary (YYC) – ends April 5, 2022
- Vancouver (YVR) – ends April 5, 2022

Airlines forced to drop service at these US airports due to the pilot shortage By Chris Isidore – July 2022

American Airlines (AAL), the only carrier providing regular service to Dubuque, is dropping its routes due to a lack of pilots...airline is also dropping service in Islip, New York, Ithaca, New York, the upstate home of Cornell University, and Toledo, Ohio, for the same reason.

Why Great Falls must Urgently grow Our Air Service

And why you need to FLY LOCAL

U.S. Regional Airline Trans States to Close by Year-end

by [Gregory Polek](#)
 - February 24, 2020, 3:08 PM

Some of the most remote areas in the US are losing an air service link to the rest of the country

Taylor Rains Nov 20, 2021, 6:33 AM

American is cutting 3 more US cities, bringing pandemic-era total to 18 market exits: Jan. 05, 2023

[The Points Guy by Ethan Klapper Dec 15, 2021:](#) *At a Skiff Forum last month, Kirby (United CEO) warned of staffing-related impacts to 50-seat regional aircraft operations. "We don't have enough pilots to fly all the airplanes," he said. "So the 50-seaters are at the bottom of that pile, and markets that rely on 50-seaters are the ones that are going to lose service."*

Air service abruptly ends at Pierre, Watertown airports

[Lisa Kaczke, Argus Leader](#) Published 1:34 p.m. CT Jan. 22, 2019 | Updated 5:19 p.m. CT Jan. 22, 2019

Effects of Pilot Shortage Are Far Reaching and Changing the Way We Travel - Source The Dallas Morning News (TNS) Sept 26,

2022: *A shortage of pilots looming over the travel industry for nearly two decades is now the main constraint for airlines, forcing carriers to cut recovery plans...That means about 100,000 fewer flights each month across the airline industry.*

United Airlines pulling out of Capital Region International Airport in January

[Ken Palmer](#) Lansing State Journal November 9, 2021

MRONetwork.com, Jan 2016: *"Going forward, the number of dots on the airline map will be fewer...with the disproportionate impact being felt at the smaller markets"*

United States Carriers Are Cutting Flights To Regional Airports by Lucas Souza Nov. 2022

More small airports are being cut off from the air travel network. This is why SEPTEMBER 4, 2023 "The highway has become and will become the first access point to the air transportation grid going forward," he added. "Not every community can support the trend toward larger airframes."

But: Air Service Growth is expensive

Other regional Communities are spending millions and spurring growth

- **Southwest Will Get \$2.5mn In Incentives For Colorado Springs Flights** by [Jay Singh](#) November 3, 2020
- **Bozeman:** \$10 million in new community incentives in past ten years brought new direct markets, American Airlines and Jet Blue. One of fastest growing in US. **Now MT's #1 Airport by more than 3x volume!!!**
- **Kalispell:** Estimated \$2 million in incentives for American Airlines to Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles **Now MT's #2 Airport by volume!!**
- **Missoula:** \$1.4 million in community incentives for American Airlines to Dallas and Chicago. **Now MT's #3 Airport by volume!**
- **Billings:** \$1.6 million in community incentives for American Airlines to Dallas. **MT's #4 Airport by volume.**

Consider the full Cost!

Hidden costs of driving three hours for air service

- We aren't asking to spend a lot more, just consider all the costs.
 - Parking: GTF Economy Lot \$25 a week – BZN lowest weekly rate \$60
 - Main lot GTF \$35 per week – BZN = \$105!
 - Total Driving Dist: AAAE estimates 2023 cost is \$.76 per mile or **\$272 roundtrip to BZN**
 - Road Grub: Will you kids let your drive 3 hours without eating out? Family of four = \$50 for fast food
 - Weather delay? Hotels \$350 a night, extra day off work
 - Time: Is your personal time worth anything?
- Unavoidable costs: extra parking, drive cost and meal = \$357

For Additional Information

Contact

**John Faulkner
Airport Director
Great Falls International Airport Authority**

**2800 Terminal Drive
Great Falls, MT 59404**

406-727-3404

john@flygtf.com



Public Safety Advisory Committee
Administrative Summary and Final Recommendations

August 29, 2024

Executive Summary

This Administrative Summary is not intended to be a comprehensive or all-encompassing report of all Public Safety Advisory Committee meetings. Rather, this is a broad summary of PSAC meetings.

The summary does however, include a detailed outline of recommendations directly from the PSAC to the Great Falls City Commission.

Establishment of the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC)

The City Commission of Great Falls, Montana, adopted Resolution No. 10544 on April 2, 2024 to establish the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC). The resolution addresses growing concerns in the city, due to increasing public safety challenges and limited resources.

Background

In response to these challenges, the Great Falls Crime Task Force was established in 2021 to evaluate public safety and recommend improvements. Despite these efforts, it became evident that the city's overall public safety infrastructure remains insufficient to meet both current and future needs. Two ballot measures aimed at securing additional public safety funding through property tax levies were rejected by voters in November 2023, emphasizing the need for alternative approaches.

Purpose of the PSAC

The PSAC is charged with studying and making recommendations on key areas impacting public safety in Great Falls:

1. **Recommending Broad Public Safety Priorities:** Identifying overarching priorities to guide the city's public safety strategy.
2. **Departmental Priorities:** Specifically evaluating the needs and priorities for the following departments:
 - **Police Department**
 - **Fire Department**
 - **Court System**
 - **Legal Department**
3. **Funding Strategies:** Developing strategies to secure sustainable funding for public safety needs across these departments.
4. **Community Engagement:** Proposing methods to involve a broad range of community members and businesses in public safety discussions and solutions.

Membership and Operations

The PSAC comprises of ten appointed members representing various sectors of the community. The committee was required to operate transparently by adhering to Montana's open meeting

laws, including public notice requirements, agendas, and meeting minutes. The PSAC met at least once a month, with the goal of delivering recommendations to the City Commission by September 2, 2024. The committee will be dissolved after its August 21, 2024 meeting.

Outcomes

In this report, the PSAC provides the City Commission with practical recommendations that align community safety needs with available resources. These recommendations will focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police, Fire, Court, and Legal departments while considering sustainable funding options.

This resolution represents a strategic initiative by the City of Great Falls to address public safety challenges through a comprehensive, community-driven approach.

Public Safety Advisory Committee Members

Members of the PSAC were nominated and appointed by Great Falls City Commission as follows:

- Sandra Guynn (Chair - Community Representative)
- Aaron Weissman (Vice-Chair - Community Representative)
- Mike Parcel (Community Representative)
- Wendy McKamey (State Senator)
- Jeni Dodd (Community Representative)
- George Nikolakakos (State Representative)
- Tony Rosales (community representative)
- Thad Reise (Community Representative – resigned)
- Joe McKenney (City Commissioner)
- Shannon Wilson (City Commissioner)

PSAC Activities and Meeting Summary

This administrative report is intended to provide a brief overview of PSAC meetings. PSAC meeting minutes and supplemental information are available for public review online at:

<https://greatfallsmt.net/citycommission/great-falls-public-safety-advisory-committee>

Summary of PSAC Meetings

The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) meetings involved extensive discussions on the challenges and needs of the city's public safety departments. The discussions began with presentations from key city officials, including the City Attorney and Municipal Court Judge, who highlighted the increasing workloads and resource limitations in handling criminal cases, especially misdemeanors. These presentations underscored the need for additional staff in both the City Attorney's Office and the Municipal Court to manage rising caseloads effectively.

Subsequent meetings featured detailed overviews from the Police and Fire Departments. The Police Department reported severe staffing shortages, increasing violent crime rates, and an overwhelming volume of service calls. Specific challenges included the complexities of DUI investigations, growing assaults on officers, and escalating issues related to narcotics, particularly fentanyl. The department emphasized the urgent need for additional funding and personnel to maintain basic law enforcement services. Similarly, the Fire Department highlighted its struggles with staffing shortages and the increasing demand for services, pointing out that its resources had not expanded in over 26 years despite the city's growth.

Committee discussions frequently focused on the need for updated technology, additional resources, and advocacy for securing funding to address public safety needs. Members generally agreed on the importance of understanding public safety challenges, particularly those affecting the police, fire, legal, and court departments. There was a consensus on the necessity of meeting regularly and conducting further educational sessions with public safety departments to develop effective funding strategies and set priorities.

However, the committee faced several areas of dissent. Concerns were raised about the sustainability of current resource allocations and the long-term impact of legislative changes on public safety. Some members questioned the effectiveness of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts in promoting economic development, arguing that they might burden taxpayers without providing significant benefits. Others felt that discussions on topics like city finance and tax policy were outside the committee's primary focus on public safety, leading to some debate over the scope of the committee's responsibilities.

Public engagement was another key topic of discussion. The committee agreed on the importance of conducting a survey or poll to gauge public sentiment on public safety funding and needs. While there was broad support for public engagement, members were divided on whether to invest in a professional survey or pursue more grassroots, community-based outreach. Concerns were raised about the cost of professional surveys and whether they would yield the necessary insights.

Throughout the meetings, the committee recognized the pressing need for additional staffing across various departments to manage increasing workloads and ensure public safety. Members acknowledged the challenges posed by budget constraints and discussed the potential of separate levies for different public safety needs to allow for more targeted and manageable funding requests. The committee agreed to continue exploring funding options and public engagement strategies, while also monitoring legislative developments that could impact local funding and public safety.

Over the course of the PSAC's eight (8) meetings, members highlighted the significant challenges facing the city's public safety departments due to resource limitations and increasing demands. While there was general agreement on the need for additional staffing and effective resource allocation, debates over funding strategies, the role of TIFs, and the scope of the committee's discussions revealed the complexities involved in addressing these issues. The committee recommends that the City Commission find sustainable solutions to support public

safety while balancing the city's financial constraints before submitting another levy request to the voters.

A more detailed summary of the PSAC meetings may be found in Appendices.

At its final PSAC meeting on August 21, 2024, the members adopted recommendations to the Great Falls City Commission.

The PSAC's final recommendations to the City Commission include:

1. Recommended Priorities for Public Safety

Broad Priorities

- The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) recognizes that safety is vital for the entire community and recognizes the challenge of gaining public support for funding.
- The PSAC encourages the City Commission to support a responsive and effective public safety team with community support and engagement.

2. Recommended Priorities for Police, Fire, Court, and Legal Departments

A. Police Department Priorities

- **Visible and Proactive Policing:** Focus on crime prevention with quick response times.
- **Increase Personnel:**
 - Add approximately 14 patrol officers
 - 2 investigators and 2 dispatchers
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Enhance School Resource Officers (SROs) programs.
 - Improve dispatch capabilities.
 - Regularly publish a crime blotter for public information.
- **Improved Communication:** Ensure the public is better informed and engaged regarding incidents and safety issues.
 - Use targeted community surveys to solicit community feedback and improve general data and analytics to answer various questions

B. Fire Department Priorities

- **Prevention and Education:** Focus on fire prevention education and life safety, including first aid.
- **Increase Personnel:**
 - Add approximately 16 firefighters
 - 1 fire prevention personnel
- **Expand Facilities:**
 - Plan for future fire stations as needed.

- **Engage the Community:** Emphasize public involvement and education through school programs and a training center.

C. Court and Legal Department Priorities

- **Timely Legal Resolutions:** Prioritize efficient and effective handling of legal matters.
- **Increase Personnel:**
 - Add 1 jury clerk and 1 courtroom clerk in the municipal court.
 - Add 1 prosecutor and 1 victim/witness coordinator in the city attorney's office.
- **Support Programs:**
 - Implement a volunteer program.
 - Enhance public education and victim awareness advocacy.

D. General Public Safety Recommendations

- **Community Feedback and Data-Driven Decisions:** Encourage GFPD and GFFR to conduct regular community surveys for improved data analytics and targeted improvements.
- **Crime Problem Analysis:** Use data to address crime issues in Great Falls.
- **Mental Health and Social Worker Integration:**
 - Contract with mental health and social work professionals to handle some disturbance calls more efficiently.
 - Encourage the creation of a crisis center similar to those in other regions to prevent certain types of disturbance calls.

3. Strategies for Funding Public Safety Priorities

A. Expand and Diversify Revenue Sources

- Utilize grant funding to address Public Safety needs to the fullest extent.
 - Grants may offset budget General Fund expenditures otherwise appropriated using property taxes. Encourage the City to achieve grants to help fund public safety priorities.

B. Levy Options

- As a last resort, consider asking citizens for a public safety levy.
- **Reduced Ask:** Acknowledge voter resistance to previous levy amounts by making future requests smaller and more specific.

C. Library Funding Drawback

- **Evaluate Library Funding:** Explore drawing back up to seven (7) mills from the Great Falls Public Library, which could be redirected to public safety and court needs.

D. Revise Levy Requests

- **Separate Public Safety Levy Requests:** Consider separating any future levy requests by individual departments (e.g., fire, police, and courts) rather than one large multi-agency levy request.

E. Evaluate Use of Economic Development Tools

- **Review Tax Increment Financing District Usage**
 - **Retire Underperforming TIF Districts:** Terminate TIF districts that do not meet their objectives within a reasonable timeframe and avoid creating new ones.
 - **Sunset Underperforming TIFs:** Set clear timelines for terminating underperforming TIF districts.

F. Evaluate Use of Tax Abatements

- Assess the fairness of abatements, especially for businesses that protest property taxes.
- Consider a quicker exit plan when using these tools

G. Use Existing Funds more efficiently

- **Shift CDBG Funds:**
 - Redirect Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from local nonprofits to city needs, freeing up general funds for public safety.
- **Recreational Marijuana Revenue:**
 - Earmark all marijuana tax revenues for Public Safety.
 - Ask State Legislature to increase the amount of marijuana tax revenue that is sent back to the municipalities.

H. State-Level Advocacy and Legislative Action

- **Taxation Reform:** Engage local state delegation and lobby state legislature for local government revenue options that may include tax code changes, state revenue sharing, and property tax relief.

4. Recommended Strategies for Engaging a Broad Spectrum of Community Members and Businesses

A. Polling and Surveys

- **Encourage the City Commission to identify a private advocacy group to conduct and pay for an in-depth Poll:**
 - Conduct a citywide, scientifically significant poll that probes residents' opinions on public safety services, costs, and potential tax support.
 - Ensure the survey includes open-ended questions and avoids biased assumptions.

B. Independent Advocacy and Community Feedback Mechanisms

- **Promote Citizen Advocacy Groups:**
 - Encourage the formation of independent citizen advocacy group(s) that will drive public safety initiatives and fundraising efforts.
- **Public Safety Advisory Commission:**
 - Consider establishing a permanent Public Safety Advisory Board with rotating city officials and community members to listen to concerns and provide recommendations.
- **Annual Citizens Forum:**
 - Organize an annual “Council of Councils” forum dedicated to discussing public safety, gathering feedback, and fostering collaboration among community groups.

C. Lobbying for Legislative Support

- **Develop a Lobbying Agenda:**
 - Formulate clear lobbying recommendations for state and federal action on issues that impact public safety funding and policy, targeting the 2025 legislative session.

Action Plan Based on PSAC Recommendations

The action plan below outlines specific responsibilities and strategies for various stakeholders to address the public safety needs in Great Falls, as recommended by the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC).

1. City Commission Responsibilities:

- **Support Public Safety Funding and Personnel Increases:**
 - Endorse budget allocations to hire approximately 14 additional patrol officers, 2 investigators, 2 dispatchers for the Police Department, and approximately 16 firefighters and 1 fire prevention personnel for the Fire Department.
 - Approve budget requests for 1 jury clerk, 1 courtroom clerk, 1 prosecutor, and 1 victim/witness coordinator for the court and legal departments.
- **Revenue and Funding Strategies:**
 - **Levy Options:** Consider separate levy requests for each department (fire, police, and courts) to improve chances of voter approval.
 - **Evaluate Economic Development Tools:** Review and retire underperforming Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and reassess the use of tax abatements to ensure fairness and efficiency.
 - **Shift CDBG Funds:** Redirect Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from local nonprofits to public safety needs.
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Commission a scientifically significant poll to gauge public opinion on public safety services and potential tax support.
 - Establish a permanent Public Safety Advisory Commission to facilitate ongoing community feedback and engagement.

- **Advocacy and Legislative Support:**
 - Develop a lobbying agenda for the 2025 legislative session to seek support for local government revenue options and public safety funding.

2. Police Chief Responsibilities:

- **Personnel and Operational Enhancements:**
 - Implement the hiring of additional patrol officers, investigators, and dispatchers as soon as funding is available.
 - Enhance the School Resource Officer (SRO) program and dispatch capabilities.
 - Regularly publish a crime blotter to keep the public informed about safety issues and departmental actions.
- **Community Feedback and Data-Driven Decision Making:**
 - Conduct regular community surveys to gather feedback and analyze data to address crime problems effectively.
 - Integrate mental health and social work professionals into the team to handle disturbance calls more efficiently and explore the creation of a crisis center.

3. Fire Chief Responsibilities:

- **Personnel and Facility Expansion:**
 - Recruit and onboard additional firefighters and fire prevention personnel as soon as budget allows.
 - Plan and advocate for future fire stations and a training center to adequately cover the city and improve response times.
- **Community Education and Engagement:**
 - Enhance fire prevention education and life safety programs, targeting both schools and the general public.
 - Promote public involvement in safety initiatives through community programs and educational outreach.

4. City Attorney Responsibilities:

- **Legal and Court System Improvements:**
 - Hire additional legal staff (1 prosecutor and 1 victim/witness coordinator) to improve the handling of legal matters, as budget allows.
 - Enhance public education on legal processes and support victim advocacy efforts.
- **Support Programs:**
 - Develop and manage a volunteer program to support court operations and improve public engagement with the legal system.

5. Judge Responsibilities:

- **Court Efficiency and Personnel Management:**
 - Advocate for and manage the hiring of additional court staff (1 jury clerk and 1 courtroom clerk) to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of court proceedings.

- **Support Programs:**
 - Implement a volunteer program to assist with court operations and promote public understanding of the legal process.

6. State Legislator Responsibilities:

- **Advocacy for Local Funding and Policy Support:**
 - Advocate for property tax relief measures, changes in the tax code, and state revenue sharing that can benefit local governments.
 - Lobby for legislative support to increase shared revenue from marijuana sales with cities and develop a local option tax on marijuana sales for public safety funding.

7. Nonprofit and Advocacy Group Responsibilities:

- **Community Support and Advocacy:**
 - Form and promote independent citizen advocacy group(s) to support public safety initiatives and fundraising efforts.
 - Facilitate public safety discussions and gather feedback through annual forums and community events.
- **Polling and Surveys:**
 - Assist in conducting community surveys and polls to understand public opinion on safety services and funding needs.

Final Comments from the PSAC

The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) extends its sincere gratitude to all committee members, community stakeholders, residents, and city staff who have contributed to this process. The PSAC appreciates the valuable input provided by everyone and officials who offered their time and expertise in the various discussions and testimonies. Participant insight was crucial in shaping the Committees understanding of ongoing public safety needs and the challenges faced by our community.

Throughout our deliberations, it became clear that the safety of our community is a shared responsibility. The presentations and discussions have highlighted not only the areas where improvements are necessary but also for the resilience and dedication of our public safety personnel and community members. By working together, we can build a stronger, safer Great Falls.

The recommendations put forth in this report represent a comprehensive and strategic approach to addressing the public safety needs of our community. They reflect a commitment to proactive policing, fire prevention, efficient legal processes, and funding strategies. The PSAC encourages the community to be engaged, offer continued feedback, and consider new strategies to meet evolving needs.

The PSAC is optimistic that, with the support of the City Commission, city departments, state legislators, nonprofits, and advocacy groups, these recommendations will lead to meaningful improvements in public safety. Together, we can ensure that Great Falls remains a safe and vibrant place to live, work, and play.

Appendix 1 – Public Safety Discussion Resources

1. 2021 Great Falls Crime Task Force:

<https://greatfallsmt.net/citycommission/great-falls-crime-task-force>

2. 2023 Public Safety Levy/Bond Web Page:

<https://safetyinthefalls.com/>

3. 2024 Public Safety Advisory Committee:

<https://greatfallsmt.net/citycommission/great-falls-public-safety-advisory-committee>

Appendix 2 - PSAC Meeting Summaries Meeting

For complete minutes and video of meetings please visit:

<https://greatfallsmt.net/citycommission/great-falls-public-safety-advisory-committee>

May 1, 2024

Key actions, discussion and outcomes included:

1. **Election of Officers:** Sandra Guynn was elected as Chair, and Aaron Weissman was elected as Vice-Chair, both unanimously.
2. **Educational Presentations:** Presentations were given by City Attorney David Dennis and Municipal Court Judge Mark Dunn. They discussed the workload of their respective offices, challenges in handling criminal cases, and the impact of limited resources. Highlights included:
 - The increasing number of criminal cases, particularly misdemeanors like theft.
 - The struggles of prosecutors to keep up with case preparation, often leading to dismissals or plea deals.
 - The need for additional staff in both the City Attorney's Office and the Municipal Court to handle rising caseloads.
3. **Areas of Agreement and Action:**
 - The committee agreed to focus on understanding public safety challenges, especially those affecting the police, fire, legal, and court departments.
 - The group decided to meet twice a month through August 2024 to ensure timely recommendations for the City Commission.
 - Future meetings will include continued educational sessions with public safety departments and discussions on setting priorities and funding strategies.
4. **Dissenting and Opposing Viewpoints:** There was acknowledgment that some community members feel they cannot afford more taxes, highlighting the need for careful consideration of funding solutions.
5. **Public Comments and Suggestions:** Public input was encouraged, and suggestions included conducting ride-along with police and fire departments and reviewing the city budget's impact on public safety.

May 15, 2024

Key actions, discussion and outcomes included:

1. **Municipal Court and Legal Presentation:**
 - City Attorney David Dennis highlighted Cascade County's high crime rate and the challenges posed by limited access to necessary case management tools.
 - Discussion emphasized the need for updated technology and resources to manage the increasing caseloads in the city.
2. **Public Safety Challenges:**

- Committee members discussed challenges related to city growth, resource limitations, and outdated infrastructure.
 - George Nikolakakos and others highlighted the critical shortage of firefighters and police officers, the impacts on emergency response times, and public safety standards.
3. **Police Department Presentation by Chief Jeff Newton:**
- Chief Newton detailed operational strains within the Great Falls Police Department (GFPD), including staffing shortages, increasing violent crime, and an overwhelming volume of service calls.
 - Specific challenges include time-intensive DUI investigations, increased assaults on officers, and growing narcotics issues, particularly fentanyl.
 - Chief Newton stressed the urgency of additional funding and personnel to maintain basic law enforcement services.
 - The presentation highlighted significant increases in overdoses and crimes related to drugs, noting that GFPD is currently nine officers and seven dispatchers short.
4. **Committee Inquiries and Concerns:**
- Members inquired about the impacts of staffing shortages, state legislative mandates, and compensation packages for officers.
 - The discussion highlighted the need for advocacy to secure funding for unfunded state mandates and the importance of community education regarding public safety needs.

5. Key Actions and Future Plans

- A. **Advocacy for Resources:** The PSAC acknowledged the need for better communication and education efforts to address the community's expectations and secure necessary resources.
- B. **Further Research on Legislative Mandates:** PSAC members agreed that they need to explore how the state might fund the unfunded mandates that burden the city's resources.
- C. **Exploring Compensation and Recruitment Strategies:** There was agreement on the importance of evaluating compensation packages to improve officer recruitment and retention.

Areas of Agreement and Dissent

- **Agreement:** The committee largely agreed on the critical need for additional funding, updated resources, and advocacy to handle the increasing demands on public safety.
- **Concerns and Dissenting Viewpoints:** Some members voiced concerns about the sustainability of the current resource allocation and the long-term impact of legislative changes.

June 5, 2024

Key actions, discussion and outcomes included:

1. **Follow-up Presentation from Great Falls Fire Rescue:**
 - **Presenter:** Deputy Chief of EMS, Jeremy Virts.
 - **Summary:** The presentation provided data on the number of calls responded to by the Great Falls Fire Rescue (GFFR) related to drug incidents. From May 1, 2023, to May 1, 2024, GFFR responded to 590 calls that potentially involved drugs, with 94 of these being adverse reactions to medications. The presentation highlighted the significant time and resources required to address these emergencies.
2. **Public Survey/Poll:**
 - **Discussion Led by:** PSAC Member Joe McKenney.
 - **Summary:** The discussion centered around the idea of conducting a professional poll to gauge public sentiment on a public safety levy. The City had issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Ballot Measure Polling and Outreach Consultant Services, with proposals due by June 19, 2024. The estimated cost for the poll is between \$25,000 and \$30,000. Committee members debated the benefits of a professional poll versus more cost-effective methods, such as including surveys in water bills or conducting them online.
3. **Overview of Great Falls' Economic Past:**
 - **Presenter:** City Manager Greg Doyon.
 - **Summary:** The presentation summarized two academic papers discussing the financial challenges faced by the City of Great Falls. Key themes included the city's slow growth, overreliance on property taxes, and the need for economic diversification. Recommendations from the papers included tax reforms, increased state assistance, cost reductions, and exploring new revenue sources.
4. **City Funding, TIFs, and Tax Abatements:**
 - **Presenter:** Finance Director Melissa Kinzler.
 - **Summary:** An overview of the city's budget for Fiscal Year 2024 was provided, detailing the various sources of revenue and the distribution of funds across different departments. The discussion included the impact of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and tax abatements on the city's revenue and their role in supporting public improvements.

Areas of Agreement:

- **Need for Public Engagement:** There was consensus on the importance of engaging the public to understand their views on public safety funding and the public safety levy.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Committee members agreed on the necessity of using data and reliable information to guide decisions about public safety and city funding.

Areas of Dissent:

- **Cost and Method of Public Survey:** Some committee members, such as PSAC Member Dodd, expressed concerns about the cost of a professional poll and suggested exploring less expensive options. There were also concerns about the efficacy of using consultants who are not familiar with the local community. The committee did not make a final decision on conducting a public survey or poll but agreed to continue exploring options.

Future Actions and Direction:

- **Further Discussion on City Funding:** Ongoing discussions are expected on the city's financial strategies, including the impact of TIFs and tax abatements, and potential reforms to improve the city's fiscal health and support public safety needs.

June 19, 2024

Key actions, discussion and outcomes included:

1. **TIF's and Tax Abatements Follow-up:**
 - **Finance Director Melissa Kinzler and City Manager Greg Doyon** discussed the City's five TIF districts and the different types of tax abatements. They highlighted the complexities and legalities involved in TIF funding, the impact on the City's finances, and the potential for economic development through TIFs.
 - **Discussion Points:**
 - PSAC Member Dodd raised concerns about TIFs not promoting economic development and burdening taxpayers.
 - There was a discussion about the East Industrial Park TIF District and the potential benefits of keeping it for future business developments.
 - The committee discussed the importance of a balanced property tax base to support core city services like public safety.
2. **Public Survey/Poll Follow-up:**
 - **Discussion Points:**
 - PSAC Chair Guynn emphasized the need for a survey or poll to gauge public opinion on public safety and other city services. She noted that voting against the levy might not reflect opposition to public safety but rather to the specific proposal.
 - The committee discussed the challenges of public engagement and the importance of understanding community needs and opinions through reliable methods like professional polls.

Areas of Agreement:

- There was a general consensus on the need for more structured and reliable public engagement to understand community opinions on public safety and other services.
- The committee agreed on the importance of balancing economic growth with the provision of essential services, ensuring that TIFs and tax abatements are used effectively to support the city's development and financial stability.

Areas of Dissent:

- PSAC Member Dodd expressed concerns about the efficacy of TIFs and the perception that they might not effectively promote economic development while burdening taxpayers.

Outcomes and Decisions:

- **Survey/Poll Initiative:** The committee agreed to recommend conducting a professional poll or survey to gather statistically valid information about public sentiment on public safety and city services.
- **TIF and Tax Abatement Analysis:** Continued discussions are planned to evaluate the impact of TIFs and tax abatements on the city's finances and public safety funding.

Future Actions and Direction:

- **Development of Survey/Recommendations:** PSAC members were encouraged to draft recommendations for a public survey or poll to understand community sentiment on public safety and city services.
- **Further Discussions on TIFs:** The committee will continue discussions on the effectiveness of TIFs and potential improvements in their application to benefit public safety and city development.

July 3, 2024

Key actions, discussion and outcomes included:

1. Employee Testimonies from Court, Legal, Police, and Fire Departments:

○ **Municipal Court:**

- **Presenter:** Court Clerk Allison McMaster.
- **Summary:** The court faces significant challenges with jury management and compliance due to high volumes and insufficient staffing. The need for a dedicated Jury Clerk was highlighted to handle approximately 20 trials a day and manage up to 600 jurors a month. Issues with outdated software and the time-consuming process of notarizing jury excusals were also mentioned.
- **Key Points:**
 - Municipal Court needs additional staff for jury and compliance management.
 - The court is considering the implementation of a Pretrial Service program to improve defendant compliance.
 - Challenges include frequent mistrials due to jurors not showing up and the lack of time for staff to adequately manage jury duties.

○ **City Attorney's Office:**

- **Presenter:** Chief Prosecutor Neil Anthon.
- **Summary:** The office struggles with the volume of cases and a lack of time for proactive measures. The current staffing levels make it difficult to communicate effectively with victims and witnesses, and there are limited resources to address mental health cases. The office expressed a need for a Victim Witness Coordinator.
- **Key Points:**

- High workload and limited staffing lead to frequent plea deals and insufficient communication with victims.
- The need for a website to update witnesses and improve transparency was suggested.
- The office operates reactively due to workload, preventing the development of proactive legal strategies.
- **Police Department:**
 - **Presenter:** Sergeant Katie Cunningham.
 - **Summary:** The police department faces severe staffing shortages, resulting in burnout and forced overtime. There is a pressing need for more officers, especially for specialized roles such as School Resource Officers (SROs) and Child Abuse Investigators. The department also highlighted the increasing number of violent crimes involving juveniles.
 - **Key Points:**
 - GFPD is operating with insufficient staff, leading to overworked officers and delayed response times.
 - The department requested 24 new officers, additional equipment, and support for managing evidence.
 - Challenges include handling a high volume of child abuse and internet crime cases, and the need for better collaboration with schools on minor issues.

Areas of Agreement:

- **Need for Additional Staffing:** There was general consensus among the committee and department representatives on the need for additional staff across the Municipal Court, City Attorney's Office, and Police Department to handle the increasing workload and ensure public safety.
- **Focus on Efficient Resource Allocation:** The committee agreed that funds and resources should be allocated effectively to address the most critical needs in public safety and judicial processes.

Areas of Dissent:

- **Plea Deals and Judicial Efficiency:** Some members, such as PSAC Member Nikolakakos, expressed concern over the reliance on plea deals due to high caseloads, which may allow offenders to avoid appropriate consequences.
- **Budget Constraints:** There were underlying tensions regarding the financial limitations of the city, as highlighted by discussions on the costs associated with hiring additional staff and the failed public safety levy.

Outcomes and Decisions:

- **Recognition of Staffing Needs:** The committee acknowledged the pressing need for additional staffing in key areas of public safety and legal departments. No formal

decision was made regarding immediate actions, but there was a clear recognition of the issues.

- **Future Presentation from Fire Department:** Due to time constraints, the Fire Department's presentation was postponed to the next meeting scheduled for July 17, 2024.

Future Actions and Direction:

- **Continued Discussion on Public Safety Funding:** The committee agreed to continue exploring options for securing additional funding for public safety, including reconsidering a public safety levy and exploring other financial strategies.
- **Focus on Improving Public Awareness:** The committee emphasized the need to better inform the public about the challenges faced by public safety and legal departments to garner support for future funding initiatives.

July 17, 2024

Key actions, discussion and outcomes included:

1. Employee Testimonies from Fire Department:

- **Presenters:** Deputy Fire Marshal Tom Zaremski, Fire Chief Jeremy Jones, Fire Captain Brandon Jaraczski.
- **Summary:** The presentation focused on the challenges faced by Great Falls Fire Rescue (GFFR) due to staffing shortages and the increasing demand for services. The Fire Prevention Bureau is unable to conduct sufficient public education and inspections due to a lack of personnel. There is a significant strain on resources, leading to longer response times and insufficient coverage. The department emphasized the need for additional personnel, more fire stations, and a training center to ensure adequate service delivery and prevent burnout among current staff.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Staffing and Resources:** GFFR has not increased staffing for over 26 years, causing a strain on resources and impacting the department's ability to meet community needs.
 - **Response Times and Coverage:** The city has expanded from 15 to 26 square miles, but the number of fire stations has not increased, leading to longer response times and inadequate coverage.
 - **Training and Equipment:** The lack of a training center and sufficient personnel limits the ability to maintain high standards of service and safety.

2. Discussion on Emails Received for the Committee:

- **Summary:** PSAC Chair Guynn discussed several emails attached to the agenda, including concerns about city finances, tax policy, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. These topics were considered outside the committee's primary focus on public safety but were still acknowledged for their relevance to the broader community context.

3. **Alternatives to TIF Districts Proposed by Committee Member Dodd:**

- **Summary:** PSAC Member Dodd raised concerns about the loss of revenue due to TIF districts, suggesting that some TIFs be retired to bring more revenue into the city budget. Other members discussed the potential benefits and drawbacks of TIF districts, with varying opinions on their effectiveness in promoting economic development and supporting public safety funding.

Areas of Agreement:

- **Need for Additional Fire Department Resources:** There was broad agreement on the necessity of increasing resources for the fire department, including more personnel, fire stations, and a training center to ensure adequate coverage and response times.
- **Evaluation of TIF Districts:** The committee agreed that TIF districts should be evaluated to ensure they provide a net benefit to the community and do not excessively divert funds from essential services.

Areas of Dissent:

- **Effectiveness of TIF Districts:** Some members, like PSAC Member Rosales, questioned the value of TIF districts and suggested they might not provide additional growth or revenue, while others, such as PSAC Member Weissman, emphasized their role in revitalizing blighted areas and contributing to long-term economic development.
- **Scope of Committee Discussions:** There was some disagreement on whether topics like city finance, tax policy, and TIFs were within the scope of the PSAC's responsibilities, with some members arguing that these issues are outside their primary focus on public safety.

Outcomes and Decisions:

- **Consensus on the Need for Fire Department Improvements:** The committee recognized the critical need for additional resources for the fire department and acknowledged the potential consequences of failing to address these needs, such as increased response times and reduced safety.
- **Plan for Draft Recommendations:** The committee agreed to continue discussions and provide draft recommendations at the August 7, 2024, meeting, focusing on public safety priorities and funding strategies.

Future Actions and Direction:

- **Further Discussions on TIF Districts and Tax Policy:** While there was some debate on the relevance of these topics, the committee acknowledged the importance of understanding their impact on public safety funding and agreed to consider these factors in future discussions.

August 7, 2024

Key actions, discussion and outcomes included:

1. Legislative Updates from PSAC Member Nikolakakos:

- **Summary:** PSAC Member Nikolakakos provided an update on the anticipated legislative changes and directions. Key points included potential property tax relief, movement towards a homestead exemption, and targeted tax relief programs for low-income seniors and homeowners. He also discussed the ongoing debate over Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, potential caps on their usage, and the need for local governments to balance funding sources.
- **Key Points:**
 - There will likely be property tax relief and reform in the next legislative session to alleviate pressure on homeowners.
 - Discussions on TIFs may lead to caps on bonding, changes in definitions of blight, and possible reductions in their use.

2. Legislative Updates from PSAC Member McKamey:

- **Summary:** Member McKamey echoed the complexities of managing local and state budgets, emphasizing the need for incremental changes in tax policies rather than broad, sweeping reforms. She highlighted the importance of treatment courts and the necessity of additional resources for public safety and community services.
- **Key Points:**
 - McKamey supports treatment courts and additional funding for public safety, provided there is a solid plan for implementation.
 - She stressed the challenge of balancing state and local budgets while ensuring adequate public safety funding.

3. PSAC Member Recommendations and Discussion:

- **TIFs and Tax Abatements:** The committee discussed the future of TIFs and tax abatements, with mixed opinions on their efficacy. Some members, like Rosales, suggested disbanding or restricting TIFs, while others supported their use with stricter oversight and clearer exit strategies.
- **Public Survey/Poll:** The need for a public survey or poll was debated, with members discussing the potential benefits and drawbacks of outsourcing this task to a professional firm versus conducting community-based surveys.
- **Separate Levies for Public Safety Funding:** There was agreement on exploring the option of separate levies for different public safety needs, allowing for more targeted funding requests.

Areas of Agreement:

- **Need for Public Engagement:** There was general consensus on the importance of conducting a survey or poll to better understand public opinion on public safety funding and needs.

- **Evaluation of TIFs and Tax Abatements:** Most members agreed that TIFs and tax abatements should be closely evaluated to ensure they are used effectively and do not undermine public funding for essential services.

Areas of Dissent:

- **Cost and Implementation of Public Surveys:** Members were divided on whether to invest in a professional survey or conduct more grassroots, community-based outreach. Concerns were raised about the cost of professional surveys and whether they would provide the necessary insights.
- **Use of TIFs:** Opinions varied on the future use of TIFs, with some advocating for their elimination or restriction and others supporting their continued use with improved regulations.

Outcomes and Decisions:

- **Support for Public Survey:** While there was no formal vote, the committee generally supported the idea of conducting a survey or poll, with further discussion needed on the method and funding.
- **Consideration of Separate Levies:** The committee showed strong support for the idea of separate levies for different public safety needs to allow for more targeted and manageable funding requests.

Future Actions and Direction:

- **Further Discussion on Public Safety Funding:** The committee will continue to explore funding options for public safety, including the possibility of separate levies and improved public engagement strategies.
- **Evaluation of Legislative Proposals:** The committee will monitor legislative developments that could impact local funding and public safety, including potential property tax reforms and changes to TIF regulations.

JOURNAL OF PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS
AUGUST 21, 2024 **2024.68**

Regular Public Safety Advisory Committee Meeting Civic Center, 2 Park Drive South,
Gibson Room 212, Great Falls, MT 59401

CALL TO ORDER: PSAC Chair Sandra Guynn called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL: Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) Members present: Sandra Guynn, Joe McKenney, Mike Parcel, Aaron Weissman, Jeni Dodd, George Nikolakakos and Mike Parcel. Member Wendy McKamey arrived at 6:02 p.m.

Absent: PSAC Members Tony Rosales.

Action Minutes of the last meeting of the Public Safety Advisory Committee

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM AUGUST 7, 2024

1. PSAC Member Weissman moved, seconded by PSAC Member Parcel, that the PSAC accept the Minutes of the August 7, 2024, PSAC Meeting as presented.

PSAC Chair Guynn asked if there were any comments from the public or discussion amongst the Committee. Hearing none, PSAC Chair Guynn called for the vote.

Motion carried – 7-0.

2. **CONTINUATION OF PSAC MEMBER RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION.**

PSAC Member McKenney expressed appreciation to the PSAC members for their participation and sacrifice to the community. When selecting members, the City Commission was looking for diversity and those that took an interest in the public safety levy, whether for or against it.

PSAC Chair Guynn expressed appreciation to City Manager Greg Doyon and his team for their efforts with regard to putting together a draft summary of Committee Members broad recommendations as set forth in the draft document titled “Executive Summary, Great Falls Public Safety Advisory Committee, August 21, 2024.”

City Manager Doyon clarified that the draft summary was a consolidation of statements that were made by individual PSAC members when responding to primary areas in the Resolution.

PSAC Chair Guynn read each section of the draft document individually. After lengthy discussion, clarification from PSAC Members about certain recommendations and staff clarification, the PSAC agreed, or in some instances a majority of the PSAC agreed, to make the following amendments to the draft document, which removes any language indicated by a ~~strike out~~ and adds language which is **bolded and italicized**, as follows:

Introduction

The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) recognizes that safety is vital for the entire community and recognizes the challenge of gaining public support for funding.

PSAC encourages the City Commission to support a responsive and effective public safety team with community support and engagement.

1. Recommended Priorities for Public Safety

Broad Priorities

1. Police is the most important Public Safety Priority

2. Improve Communications and Cooperation with the Native American Population

- ~~Calls for better relations and understanding between the Great Falls Police Department (GFPD) and the Native American community, referencing incidents that raise concerns.~~

3. Adopt a Zero Tolerance Policy for Homeless Encampments

- ~~Recommend strict enforcement to prevent homeless encampments within city limits, reflecting public frustration over past situations.~~

4. Enhance Officer Training and Action

- ~~PSAC urges GFPD officers to do more than just "show up" and should actively address situations rather than claiming nothing can be done.~~

5. Enforce Accountability for Public Interference in Law Enforcement Actions

- ~~PSAC suggests charging bystanders who interfere with police operations to avoid setting a precedent that such behavior is acceptable.~~
- *The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) recognizes that safety is vital for the entire community and recognizes the challenge of gaining public support for funding.*
- *PSAC encourages the City Commission to support a responsive and effective public safety team with community support and engagement.*

2. Recommended Priorities for Police, Fire, Court, and Legal Departments

1. Police Department Priorities

- **Visible and Proactive Policing:** Focus on crime prevention with quick response times.
- **Increase Personnel:**
 - Add *approximately* 14 patrol officers
 - Add 2 investigators, and 2 dispatchers
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Enhance School Resource Officers (SROs) programs.
 - Improve dispatch capabilities.
 - *Actively Engage* with the community ~~more actively~~.
 - Regularly publish a crime blotter for public information.
- **Improved Communication:** Ensure the public is better informed and engaged regarding incidents and safety issues.
 - Use targeted community surveys to illicit community feedback and improve general data and analytics to answer various questions

2. Fire Department Priorities

- **Prevention and Education:** Focus on fire prevention education and life safety, including first aid.
- **Increase Personnel:**
 - Add *approximately* 16 firefighters ~~to staff a second company at the downtown fire station.~~
 - Add 1 fire prevention personnel.
- **Expand Facilities:**
 - Plan for a future ~~additional~~ fire stations *as needed*.
- **Engage the Community:** Emphasize public involvement and education through school programs and a training center.

3. Court and Legal Department Priorities

- **Timely Legal Resolutions:** Prioritize efficient and effective handling of legal matters.
- **Increase Personnel:**
 - Add 1 jury clerk and 1 courtroom clerk in the municipal court.
 - Add 1 prosecutor and 1 victim/witness coordinator in the city attorney's office.
- **Support Programs:**
 - Implement a volunteer program.
 - Enhance public education and victim awareness advocacy.

4. General Public Safety Recommendations

- **Community Feedback and Data-Driven Decisions:** *Encourage Bboth* GFRD and GFRR ~~should~~ *to* conduct regular community surveys for better data analytics and targeted improvements.
- **Crime Problem Analysis:** Use data to address ~~why Great Falls has a larger crime problem compared to other Montana cities~~ *issues in Great Falls*.
- **Mental Health and Social Worker Integration:**
 - Contract with mental health and social work professionals to handle some disturbance calls more efficiently.
 - ~~Explore~~ *Encourage* the creation of a crisis center similar to those in other regions to prevent certain types of disturbance calls.

5. Fireworks Ordinance

- ~~Delegate decision-making authority on fireworks to the fire chief and city manager based on fire danger and weather conditions.~~
- ~~Increase fines for ordinance violations.~~

6. Restitution Priority

- ~~Prioritize restitution to crime victims before city fines and court fees are paid, to show better support for victims. Investigate potential legal flexibility in the Montana Code Annotated regarding this matter.~~

3. Strategies for Funding Public Safety Priorities

1. Expand and Diversify Revenue Sources

- ~~Increase the Tax Base:~~ Encourage primary sector industries to expand the local economy.
- **Grants and Tax Adjustments:** Continue using grants and redirect limited property tax funds toward public safety. *Encourage the City to achieve grants to help fund public safety priorities.*
- **Levy Options:**
 - As a last resort, consider asking citizens for a public safety levy ~~in early 2026~~.

2. Library Funding Drawback

- **Reevaluate Library Funding:** Explore *up to* a 7-mill drawback ~~to free up \$1M from of~~ library funding, which could be redirected to public safety and court needs.
- ~~Prioritization:~~ Recognize the importance of public safety over non-essential services like library expansion, given current funding constraints.

3. Revise Levy Requests

- **Separate Agency Levies:** *Consider Bbreaking* down future levy requests by individual departments (e.g., fire, police, and courts) rather than multi-agency levies.

- **Reduced Ask:** Acknowledge voter resistance to previous levy amounts by making future requests smaller and more specific.
- ~~**Clear Promises:** Require departments to provide clear, measurable outcomes when requesting funds (e.g., lower crime rates or improved ISO scores).~~
- ~~Sunset future levy approvals after a set number of years~~

4. Re-evaluation of Economic Development Tools

- **Review Tax Increment Financing District Usage**
 - **Retire Underperforming TIF Districts:** Terminate TIF districts that do not meet their objectives within a reasonable timeframe and avoid creating new ones.
 - **Sunset Underperforming TIFs:** Set clear timelines for terminating underperforming TIF districts.
 - ~~**Fee in Lieu of Taxes:** Charge businesses within TIF districts a fee for public safety to balance the tax burden across the city.~~
- **Reconsider Tax Abatements:** Assess the fairness of abatements, especially for businesses that protest property taxes.
 - Consider a quicker exit plan when using these tools

5. More Efficient Use of Existing Funds

- **Shift CDBG Money:** Redirect Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from local nonprofits to city needs, freeing up general funds for public safety.
- ~~**Eliminate Non-Essential Expenditures:** Identify and reduce unnecessary city expenses to allocate more funds for public safety.~~
- ~~Adopt local option tax for marijuana sales~~
 - Earmark all *marijuana* revenues for Public Safety
 - Ask *the* State Legislature to increase tax *the* amount of *marijuana tax revenue that is sent back to municipalities*

6. State-Level Advocacy and Legislative Action

- **Taxation Reform:** Lobby the state for changes that spread the tax burden more equitably, focusing on residential property taxpayers.
- ~~**Property Tax and Criminal Justice Reform:** Advocate for state action on property tax reform and changes to the criminal justice system that reduce the burden on local courts and prisons.~~

7. Fee-for-Service Models

- ~~**Increase Service Fees:** Implement or raise fees for fire/business licenses and nuisance calls to cover costs.~~
- ~~**Private EMS Contracting:** Encourage the use of private EMS services to reduce costs for non-emergency medical situations.~~

~~8. Inter-Agency Coordination and Resource Sharing~~

- ~~**Law Enforcement Collaboration:** Improve coordination between city and county law enforcement to avoid redundancy and confusion.~~
- ~~**Shared Services:** Explore partnerships with other agencies (e.g., CCSO, MTHP, military bases) to share resources and reduce costs.~~

~~9. Stagger Levy Request and Timing~~

- ~~**Staggered Levy Requests:** Space out levy requests for different departments (court, legal, police, fire) over several years for better voter acceptance.~~

~~10. New Funding Mechanisms and Partnerships~~

- ~~**Explore Legal Options:** Investigate available legal funding mechanisms and partnerships, such as collaborating with the Little Shell Tribe for shared public safety responsibilities.~~

~~11. Inflation and Timing Considerations~~

- ~~**Delay New Levies during Inflation:** Given the current high inflation, hold off on asking for new levies until economic conditions stabilize.~~
- ~~**Taxpayer Prioritization:** Focus on needs over wants, ensuring that public safety is funded before non-essential services like library expansions.~~
- ~~Audit the Federal Reserve using State Constitutional powers/authority~~

~~12. Monitor Overtime Usage in Public Safety Departments~~

4. Recommended Strategies for Engaging a Broad Spectrum of Community Members and Businesses

~~1. Promote Community Advocacy and Leadership~~

- ~~**Encourage Local Advocacy Organizations:** Support the formation of a local advocacy group dedicated to promoting public safety solutions.~~
- ~~**Community Leadership Role:** Take proactive leadership in promoting solutions, engaging diverse voices, and facilitating public safety discussions.~~

~~2. Polling and Surveys~~

- ~~**Volunteer-Based Outreach for Polling:**~~
 - ~~Create a commission to develop a cost-effective survey strategy, including a “door-knocking” campaign by 15-20 community leaders to gather statistically meaningful feedback.~~
- ~~**Contracted In-Depth Survey:**~~

- Conduct a citywide, scientifically significant survey probing residents' opinions on public safety services, costs, and potential tax support.
- Ensure the survey includes open-ended questions and avoids biased assumptions.
- **Survey Considerations:**
 - Recognize the community's financial constraints and avoid expensive formal polling that might diminish taxpayer trust.
- *The City encourage a private entity to conduct a citywide, scientifically significant survey probing residents' opinions on public safety issues, costs, and potential tax support and to ensure the survey includes open-minded questions and avoids biased assumptions.*

3. Educational Outreach and Consequence-Oriented Communication

- **Public Safety Awareness Campaigns:**
 - Develop outreach programs that clearly communicate the consequences of insufficient funding for public safety.
 - Encourage city agencies to include consequence-oriented messaging while remaining compliant with legal restrictions on advocacy.
- **Retool Neighborhood Councils:**
 - Shift neighborhood councils from formal government bodies to active "field teams" focusing on grassroots engagement like "street meets" instead of traditional council meetings.

4. Independent Advocacy and Community Feedback Mechanisms

- **Promote Citizen Advocacy Groups:**
 - Support *Encourage* the formation of independent citizen advocacy groups that can take on public safety initiatives and fundraising efforts.
- **Public Safety Advisory Commission Board:**
 - Consider establishing a permanent Public Safety Advisory *Commission Board* with rotating city officials and community members to listen to concerns and provide recommendations.
- **Annual Citizens Forum:**
 - Organize an annual "Council of Councils" forum dedicated to discussing public safety, gathering feedback, and fostering collaboration among community groups.

5. Engage the Community and Address Misinformation

- **Community Education Campaigns:**
 - Educate citizens on city funding processes to correct misconceptions (e.g., funds for cultural projects like theater renovations versus public safety needs).
 - City Public Safety leadership should listen to citizen comments and concerns.
- **Foster a Culture of Listening:**
 - Actively listen to community concerns without dismissing them as uninformed, ensuring constructive dialogue and engagement.

•—Avoid Overreliance on Focus Groups:

- Broaden engagement beyond selective focus groups to ensure diverse input, avoiding bias from hand-picked participants or narrowly defined envisioning sessions.

6. Avoid Costly Taxpayer-Funded Promotion

•—Limit Taxpayer Spending on Promotion:

- Avoid using taxpayer money for campaigns perceived as promotional, which could alienate citizens and diminish trust.

•—Explore Non-Taxpayer-Funded Alternatives:

- Leverage community organizations and volunteer-driven initiatives for survey funding and public outreach.

7. Lobbying for Legislative Support

• Develop a Lobbying Agenda:

- Formulate clear lobbying recommendations for state and federal action on issues that impact public safety funding and policy, targeting the 2025 legislative session.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM COMMITTEE

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Al Rollo, City resident, expressed concern about 2.2 – Fire Department Priorities, with regard to contracted areas outside of the City limits taking away from coverage in the City.

With regard to 2.4, General Public Safety Recommendations, Mr. Rollo reported that there was a volunteer group that had a crisis center that was funded through grants. The PSAC might want to consider why the crisis center failed, and suggested it may be healthy to go back and learn from the past.

Referring to Section 3, Strategies for Funding Public Safety Priorities, Mr. Rollo commented that it would be helpful for the City to break out the budget of fire, police, courts and others in the tax list that goes out with the County tax bills so citizens know where their funding is being spent in those areas.

Referring to 3.6, State-Level Advocacy and Legislative Action - Taxation Reform, Mr. Rollo expressed he is most concerned about getting the City and this Committee to push through the legislators that we need to have a positive change to modify the taxes for the citizens that reduces the tax burden on the individual taxpayers so they can support public safety. He urged the City and Committee to go on record and support a way of resolving the equity issue.

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PSAC Chair Guynn responded that Mr. Rollo's request about property tax relief could be added under 7, Lobbying for Legislative Support.

PSAC Member Weissman further responded that 3.6, State-Level Advocacy and Legislative Action was eliminated because it was outside the purview of the PSAC.

PSAC Member Nikolakakos added that most of the discussion at the August 21, 2024 City, County and Local/Regional Legislators Meeting was about tax policy and legislators are aware of the issue.

It was the consensus of the PSAC to add 3.6, State-Level Advocacy and Legislative Action - Taxation Reform back into the PSAC Draft Summary of Recommendations.

Keith Duncan, City resident, expressed appreciation to the PSAC for their time, effort and thinking outside the box. Mr. Duncan suggested that the City Commission devise a program where citizens could be recruited to lobby the legislature. Mr. Duncan suggested the following for more consideration:

- A 7-mill drawback from library funding be redirected to public safety, because public safety is a higher priority.
- Retire or terminate TIF districts.
- Work with the legislature so non-profits that have revenue and property are paying a user fee or a payment in lieu of taxes.
- Work with the legislature to claw back some of the tax money from marijuana sales.

Susie McIntyre, Great Falls Public Library Director, expressed appreciation to the PSAC for its efforts with regard to improving public safety. Referring to one of the PSAC recommendations, Ms. McIntyre read from a prepared handout and expressed opposition to a 7-mill drawback from library funding to provide funding for public safety. Ms. McIntyre believes that a healthy City needs good schools, libraries, parks and public safety and that those important services should not be pitted one against the other. The City is currently negotiating with the Library Board with regard to the organizational structure and funding.

PSAC Chair Guynn inquired if the PSAC wanted to reconsider any aspect of the strategies of item 2, funding public safety priorities – library funding drawback.

PSAC Member Weismann expressed opposition to reevaluating library funding.

PSAC Member McKamey commented that negotiations are already underway and negotiations should be allowed to proceed.

It was the consensus of the majority of the Committee to keep the language “explore drawing back up to seven (7) mills from the Great Falls Public Library” as a recommendation.

Susan Wolff, City resident, thanked fellow commissioners for serving on the PSAC. She also expressed appreciation to city staff and Police, Fire, Court and Legal departments, who have given

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a lot of time after giving a year and a half of time on the public safety mill levy and bond issue, as well as to the PSAC for their dedicated service.

PSAC Chair Guynn commented it has been an honor and privilege to be the chair of this committee. She expressed appreciation for the PSAC members’ dedication to the community.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Public Safety Advisory Committee, PSAC Member Dodd moved, seconded by PSAC Member Wilson, to adjourn the regular meeting of August 21, 2024, at 9:04 p.m.

Motion carried 8-0.

Chairperson Sandra Guynn reviewed and approved _____, 2024.

Acting Secretary – Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea

DRAFT