

# MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL

December 14, 2021

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Laurel, Montana, was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Mayor Emelie Eaton at 6:30 p.m. on December 14, 2021.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:           Emelie Eaton  
  Bruce McGee  
  Scot Stokes                   Irv Wilke  
  Richard Klose

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:                                   Heidi Sparks  
  Richard Herr

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:                   None

Mayor Eaton led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

Mayor Eaton asked the council to observe a moment of silence.

## MINUTES:

Motion by Council Member McGee to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 23, 2021, as presented, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

## CORRESPONDENCE:

- Fire Monthly Report – November 2021.
- Police Monthly Report – November 2021.
- Building Department Monthly Report – November 2021.

**COUNCIL DISCLOSURE OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS:** None.

## PUBLIC HEARING:

- Public Hearing: 306 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street Annexation (CANCELLED)

## CONSENT ITEMS:

- **Claims entered through December 10, 2021.**  
A complete listing of the claims and their amounts is on file in the Clerk/Treasurer's Office.
- **Approval of Payroll Register for PPE 11/28/2021 totaling \$239,209.62.**

The Mayor asked if there was any separation of consent items. There was none.

Motion by Council Member McGee to approve the consent items as presented, seconded by Council Member Klose. There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

## CEREMONIAL CALENDAR:

- Arbor Day Proclamation 2022.

Mayor Eaton read the 2022 Arbor Day Proclamation.

## REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

- Budget/Finance Committee Minutes of November 23, 2021.
- Emergency Services Committee Minutes of November 29, 2021.
- Tree Board Minutes of November 18, 2021.
- Park Board Minutes of December 2, 2021.



**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (THREE-MINUTE LIMIT):**

Carol Blades, 1809 DeNittis Lane, read the attached statement into the record.

Steve Krum, 249 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue W, requested that notices be placed in the Laurel Outlook instead of the Yellowstone County News.

Kasey Felder and Madalynn Felder, 1434 McMullen Lane, thank you for allowing the City to participate in the Arbor Day festivities next year.

**SCHEDULED MATTERS:**

- **Resolution No. R21-124: A Resolution Of The City Council To Accept The Southside Master Stormwater Plan Prepared For The City Of Laurel By KLJ Engineering.**

Motion by Council Member Stokes to approve Resolution No. R21-124, seconded by Council Member Wilke.

Mayor Eaton briefly asked the Public Works Director to clarify what the stormwater pond would look like. The Public Works Director briefly described that it would be a grassy area but an area to collect water. It will be a 10:1 slope so that it would drop one foot for every ten feet. It will only be a few feet deep. KLJ is working on a task order to amend the S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street project to add this to the project. This will be similar to what is in Murray Park.

There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

- **Resolution No. R21-125: A Resolution Of The City Council Authorizing The Mayor To Sign An Agreement With MCCi For Services Relating To Upgrading The City's Laserfiche System.**

Motion by Council Member Klose to approve Resolution No. R21-125, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

- **Resolution No. R21-126: A Resolution Approving An Encroachment Permit For The Installation Of A Trash Enclosure On A Portion Of South Montana Avenue Adjacent To 415 South 1st Avenue.**

Motion by Council Member Wilke to approve Resolution No. R21-126, seconded by Council Member Klose.

Public Works Director briefly explained this resolution. See attached pictures and memo. In the past, there have been issues with the trash cans would end up in the ditch and causing issues. This enclosure will help keep the trash cans from blowing over.

It was questioned if they could use one large dumpster instead of cans. It was clarified that these businesses would have food waste in their garbage cans. Their garbage is picked up six days a week.

A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

- **Resolution No. R21-127: Resolution Authorizing The Mayor To Execute An Agreement With Beartooth RC&D Economic Development District.**

Motion by Council Member McGee to approve Resolution No. R21-127, seconded by Council Member Stokes. There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.



- **Resolution No. R21-128: A Resolution Of The City Council Authorizing The City To Participate In The Low Income Home Water Assistance Program ("LIHWAP") And Authorizing The Mayor And City Clerk To Sign All Contracts And/Or Agreements To Implement The Program On The City's Behalf.**

Motion by Council Member Stokes to approve Resolution No. R21-128, seconded by Council Member Wilke. There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

- **Resolution No. R21-129: A Resolution Of The City Council Authorizing The Mayor To Sign An Agreement With Community Development Solutions For Software And Related Services For The Public Works And Building Departments.**

Motion by Council Member Klose to approve Resolution No. R21-129, seconded by Council Member Wilke.

Mayor Eaton briefly reviewed the attached memo from Planning Director Altonaga.

There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

**ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA:** None.

**COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS (ONE-MINUTE LIMIT):** None.

**COUNCIL DISCUSSION:**

This Saturday at 10:00 a.m. is Wreaths Across America, where they put wreaths on all the military headstones in national cemeteries.

**MAYOR UPDATE:**

The Planner position has been posted internally, and it will be posted externally very soon. We are actively trying to fill that position.

The Ward 4 position will expire at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, and all letters of interest should be submitted by that deadline.

Tomorrow at 5:35 p.m. is the Planning Board meeting.

There is a City Christmas party that will be going on at noon here at City Hall, and the offices will be closed during this time.

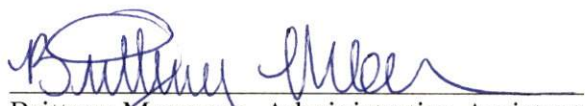
City Hall will also be closed on December 24<sup>th</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>.

**UNSCHEDULED MATTERS:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion by Council Member Wilke to adjourn the council meeting, seconded by Council Member Klose. There was no public comment or council discussion. A vote was taken on the motion. All five council members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

There being no further business to come before the council at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

  
Brittney Moorman, Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Mayor and passed by the City Council of the City of Laurel, Montana, this 28<sup>th</sup> day of December 2021.

  
Emelie Eaton, Mayor

Attest:

  
Bethany Langve, Clerk/Treasurer

To: Laurel City Council Members

From: Carol Blades

Re: Thanks and Two Handouts

Date: December 14, 2021

My name is Carol Blades, my address is 1809 DeNittis Lane, Laurel.

I spoke to you as did many others on November 23. It is my understanding that at that meeting you voted 7 to 0 to send the Northwestern Energy Gas Plant proposal back to the planning committee. Tonight I want to thank you for that vote. It is heartening that you have heard the distress and questions of citizens and that you are willing to gather data that has been overlooked.

I have two handouts for each of you. One is an article by Alex Blackmer, reviewing the philosophy and proposed plans of the Lower Yellowstone Coalition. That coalition is comprised of many city councils, chambers of commerce, economic development experts and conservation groups. They want to harness dollars from the Yellowstone River, but not by compromising the river or its communities. Please take time to read how your colleagues down river are working to gain income from the river and yet protect it.

My last handout is from the Yellowstone County Zoning Office. It lists the 11 criteria that must be met for any zone change. These may be in place here in Laurel with slightly different language, but it is my understanding that these 11 criteria are indeed state law when it comes to zone changes.

As we enter the season of religious holidays and the approach of a New Year, I again thank you and wish each of you a restful and rejuvenating holiday



# Floating towards a better future on the Lower 48's longest free flowing river

By ALEX BLACKMER

Somewhere between Livingston and Hysham – most likely at its confluence with the Big Horn River, though the spot changes depending on who you ask – the Yellowstone River gives way to the Lower Yellowstone. Here, as the swell of the Rocky Mountains slowly subsides into the Great Plains, the river slows and spreads out. Cottonwoods line the banks. Rocky beaches fade to sandbars. Paddlefish, pallid sturgeon, and walleye replace trout as the water warms, and diversion dams irrigate fields of barley, sugar beets, winter wheat, and rye.

The sky's bigger here, the river quieter, and the country more open. There are no drift boat swarms, raft flotillas, or wading anglers elbowing each other for prime position. Boat ramps and campsites are few and far between, and establishments catering to river users rare. Drive along Interstate, which parallels the river for 400 miles from Livingston all the way to Glendive, and then follow Route 16 to Fairview on the North Dakota border, and the river can start to feel like a piece of the furniture, an armchair that's been in the living room for as long as anyone can remember, reliable and steady, a companion more than a centerpiece.

Brenda Maas sees more. The director of marketing at Visit Southeast Montana, she's one of a growing number of people working to help the Lower Yellowstone achieve its enormous potential as the cornerstone of a revitalized and thriving eastern Montana.

"I came out here as a kid, and I remember it," says Maas. "I remember almost nothing else, but I remember the river. It was iconic for us. It's a great river that flows out of a great national park, and the opportunity in front of us is as special as the name [Yellowstone]."

The opportunity Maas refers to is the plan to invest in recreation infrastructure and new public lands along 175 river miles between Hysham and Fairview. This investment, which has earned praise from a who's who of decision makers across the state, will support a high quality of life in the region, strengthen eastern Montana's economy, and protect significant stretches of unique riparian habitat.

## A Unique Opportunity

While public river access is ubiquitous on the Upper Yellowstone, access sites are few and far between east of Billings as crumbling infrastructure, diversion dams, and private holdings render the river all but inaccessible for long stretches.

In 2020, Wild Montana helped mobilize community leaders, business organizations, economic development experts, and conservation groups to develop plans to improve river access, protect habitat, and support eastern Montana's economy. Coming together under the banner of the Lower Yellowstone River Coalition, these folks identified four major access gaps along the river and developed a proposal to establish or improve existing boat ramps, improve



Photo courtesy of Chrisan Sawicki/Wild Montana

access roads, develop small campsites and interpretive sites along the corridor, build toilet facilities and potable water sources, and create portage trails for boaters to safely skirt diversion dams.

Their vision is straightforward: by making the river easier to enjoy and protecting its beauty, cities and towns along the river will improve the lives of locals and encourage more visitors to come, stay, and spend money, supporting more prosperous communities.

An increasingly accessible river, as they say, lifts all boats.

The Lower Yellowstone River Coalition's plans garnered endorsements from over 30 city councils, county commissions, mayors, businesses, economic development experts, two governors, and ultimately the Montana State Legislature, which allocated an initial \$4 million dollars to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to pursue the first stages of the project.

Sidney's Joel Krautter represented House District 35 during the 2019 Legislature and was an early supporter of the Lower Yellowstone project in the Capitol.

"I really see the project as being a win-win for everyone," he says. "It allows more access for more people to really enjoy the outdoors we have [in

eastern Montana], and we'll see the economic benefits it could have for small communities as well. Of course, we also want to make sure we strike the right balance between improving access and maintaining the character of the river."

Follow the river west along I-94 and you'll find the same sentiment. Like Krautter, Forsyth mayor Dennis Koptzke is enthusiastic about how better access and more public lands along the Lower Yellowstone could benefit communities like his.

"Times have been tough, especially with Covid," he says. "We're always looking for ways to improve our community, and this would be a great improvement. [Better access] is just going to bring more people into our community and help our local businesses. They'll come here and they'll say 'What a great place to bring my family, what a great place to run or start my small business.'"

"[The river] can be a great resource for the community," he adds, "and having people come into town to use our facilities – motels, restaurants, gas stations, those sorts of things – can be a great economic benefit."

## Pride of Place

Across the board, there's optimism

that the Lower Yellowstone project will bring more than economic growth to places like Forsyth. Boosters see the river as a thread that can stitch far-flung communities together, reinforcing regional pride and strengthening the tapestry of identities that hard times often fray.

"I grew up in a small town," says Maas, "and in tough times, that (local) identity gets stretched. We can help it evolve and enrich our lives by building on the strong foundations we already have. There's so much more to the story of eastern Montana: Indigenous history and culture, Lewis and Clark, state parks, and the Lower Yellowstone can be the next chapter in that story."

Like Maas, Christine Whitlatch is eager to make the case that investing in the Lower Yellowstone isn't about making eastern Montana special: it's about elevating everything the region already has to offer. Since the early days of the project, she's been crisscrossing the eastern half of the state, pitching the idea to anyone who'll listen and finding supporters everywhere from city hall to main street.

"Right now, there's all of this energy (about the project)," she says. "The people of eastern Montana are so special, and they'll be so happy to share their

hospitality. There's so much beauty here, and everyone's excited to share what they love about the area."

To capitalize on that energy, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has convened a citizen advisory committee to explore how best to put the Legislature's initial \$4 million investment to work. Comprising folks who know the river, the committee will build on the Lower Yellowstone River Coalition's initial work to provide FWP with recommendations about how to implement the project to best meet the needs of the communities along the river.

"We can balance interests by talking to people with different perspectives and making sure different stakeholders are at the table," says Krautter, a committee member. "We have a great group of people and opinions, and I think we're in a great place right now."

Whitlatch, a self-professed "eastern Montana girl," leaves her pragmatism with a bit of poetry.

"Anything that brings people to the region, and not through the region, will be a huge benefit," she says. "Eastern Montana is where God goes to rest, and that's available to everyone."

(Alex Blackmer is communications manager for Wild Monana.)

## Laurel Outlook Tri-County Business Directory

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## COUNTY ZONE CHANGES AND REGULATIONS

### 11 REVIEW CRITERIA

Before making a decision for an amendment to the official map or text of this chapter, the the board of county commissioners shall consider, among other things, the following:

- (1) Whether the new zoning is designed in accordance with the growth policy;
- (2) Whether the new zoning is designed to secure from fire and other dangers;
- (3) Whether the new zoning will promote public health, public safety and general welfare;
- (4) Whether the new zoning will facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements;
- (5) Whether the new zoning will provide adequate light and air;
- (6) Whether the new zoning will effect motorized and non-motorized transportation;
- (7) Whether the new zoning will be compatible with urban growth in the vicinity of cities or towns;
- (8) Whether the new zoning considers the character of the district and the peculiar suitability of the property for particular uses;
- (9) Whether the new zoning will conserve the value of buildings; and
- (10) Whether the new zoning will encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout Yellowstone County; and
- (11) Whether the new zoning will, as nearly as possible, be compatible with the zoning of nearby cities and towns.



CITY HALL  
115 W. 1<sup>ST</sup> ST.  
PLANNING: 628-4796  
WATER OFC.: 628-7431  
COURT: 628-1964  
FAX 628-2241

# City Of Laurel

P.O. Box 10  
Laurel, Montana 59044



Office of the City Planner

December 14, 2021

Regarding the Encroachment Permit for a Trash Enclosure on S. Montana Avenue

Mayor and City Council,

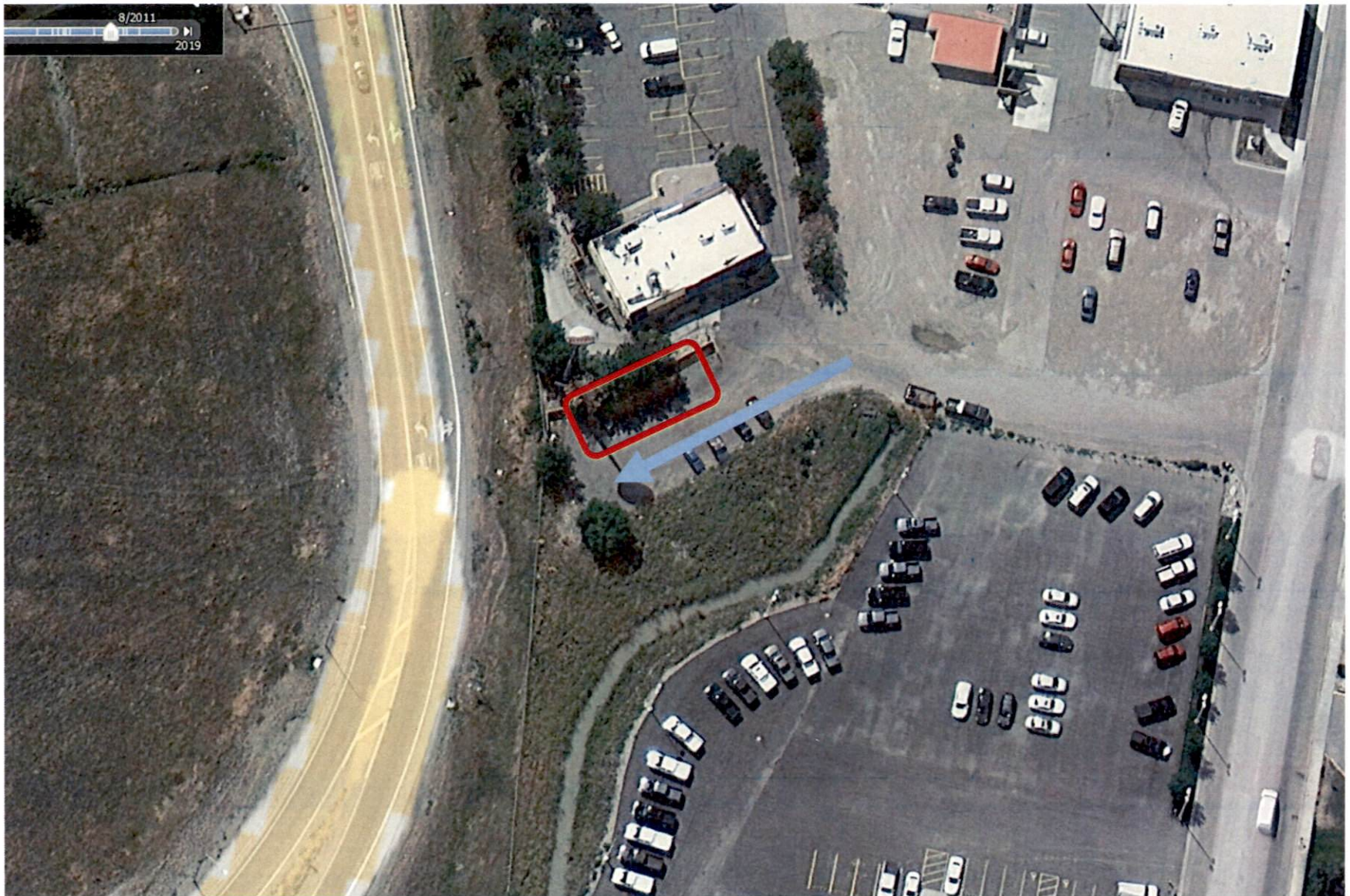
An encroachment permit has been applied for by the developer of the Parcel at 415 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Ave for a trash enclosure. The enclosure would be located on city-owned property on S. Montana Ave. The Enclosure is a three-sided structure created to house the garbage containers for the businesses located on 415 S 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.

The Planning Department sees no issue with the proposed location of the enclosure. This location has been amended from its original location within the middle of the S. Montana Avenue right-of-way after discussions with the developer. The Planning Department finds this to be a major upgrade and fulfills the needs of the developer and answers the concerns of the Department regarding traffic flow and erecting structures within the right-of-way.

We believe that this location also allows adequate turning radius for the city garbage vehicles to properly back-up and access the enclosure. This point was discussed when city staff (Building, Planning, Public Works) met with the development team last month. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments about this letter or the encroachment permit itself. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Nicholas Altonaga, CFM

Planning Director



Burger King's trash can location prior to closing. Garbage truck had to drive in forward and then back out.





Garbage truck will have to turn North and then backup to pick up the trash from the new City Brew. This location will require a wall to keep the trash cans from blowing into the ditch.



CITY HALL  
115 W. 1<sup>ST</sup> ST.  
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# City Of Laurel

P.O. Box 10  
Laurel, Montana 59044



Office of the City Planner

December 14, 2021

## Regarding the Adoption of Muncity-5 Software by the Planning, Building, and Public Works Departments

Mayor and City Council,

It is a pleasure to have Muncity-5 in front of you for approval. Muncity-5 is a public sector-focused software that manages work orders, building permits, complaints, variances, and fees in a centralized online interface accessible by City Staff. The Muncity interface allows staff to generate standardized letters, notices, permits, licenses, and other items to be used by city staff as well as developers, property owners, businesses, and others working within the city. Muncity-5 also integrates this document creation and management with GIS mapping capabilities to allow for city staff as well as members of the public to easily look up and review open or ongoing projects.

This software can be used on tablets and smartphones for use in the field for inspecting properties, preparing violation notices, as well as recording videos or images of projects. The information collected in the field automatically syncs with the office system and files it under a specific property or owner file. Muncity-5 will also be able to integrate with the proposed update to our Laserfiche software by depositing the generated notices, letters, permits, forms, and other media (images and/or videos) into the Laserfiche file system. The system within the proposal can also be updated with Muncity Connect, which is a public portal that allows residents, builders, and developers to view, apply, and track open permits, forms, and other licenses.

The current proposal covers the Planning, Building, and Public Works Departments. Other departments can be added over time. We hope to utilize Muncity to streamline and standardize departmental operations and provide transparency for the public for the many different permitting and licensing processes used by the City. We are excited about the prospect of adopting this to better our work. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Regards,

Nicholas Altonaga, CFM

Planning Director