



Montana's Sunrise City

115 2nd Street S.E., Sidney, Montana - 406-433-2809

Public Safety Committee Meeting 6/23/26

June 23, 2026 4:30 PM

Committee meetings are held in a hybrid format, allowing both in-person and Zoom participation. Councilmembers will attend in person unless remote attendance is necessary. Consistent with the Montana Constitution's Right of Participation and Right to Know, the City is committed to open and accessible meetings. Public participation via Zoom or phone is available using the information below:

Zoom Link: (Need to edit every meeting)

Call: 1-346-248-7799 **Meeting ID:** 713 080 5898 **Passcode:** 4332809

1. Call to Order

The Public Safety Committee Meeting was called to order at 4:30pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was stated by all present.

3. Roll Call

Committee Members Present:

City Officials/ Staff Present:

Committee Members Present: Kauffman, Rasmussen, Creek, Buxbaum

City Officials/ Staff Present: Mayor Norby, Interim CAO Chamberlin, Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange, FM/BI Rasmussen, Chief Kraft

4. Correction or Approval of Minutes

a. May 26th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Correction to May 26th Meeting Minutes: remove Creek as a voting member of the committee.

Motion was made to approve the May Public Safety Committee Meeting Minutes with corrections.

Motion made by Rasmussen, Seconded by Kauffman.

Voting Yea: Kauffman, Buxbaum, Rasmussen

5. Public Comment/ Visitors

Your opportunity for the public to address the Committee on items not included on the agenda, no action will be taken during this time.

None.

6. Monthly Reports

a. May-June Compliance Officer Report

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented the Compliance Officer Report. She noted the report covered activity from May through June in order to capture the full period of nuisance mowing enforcement activity. During that period, 123 properties received notices and 97 properties were brought into compliance. She further reported that the Nuisance Committee continues to work through several active nuisance properties. No additional questions were raised regarding the report.

b. May 2026 Police Department Report

Police Chief Kraft presented the May 2026 Police Department Report and offered to answer questions from the Committee. No questions were raised.

c. May 2026 Fire Run Report

Fire Marshal Rasmussen presented the May 2026 Fire Run Report. No additional discussion occurred.

7. New Business

a. FY 2026-2027 Proposed Budget Expenditures

Interim CAO Chamberlin reviewed the proposed FY 2026-2027 Public Safety budget and explained the City's budget review process. She noted that the Public Safety Committee reviews Police Department, Fire Department, and related public safety budgets before forwarding recommendations to the Budget and Finance Committee.

For the Police Department budget, Interim CAO Chamberlin explained payroll expenditures show a significant decrease due to the anticipated loss of the Drug Task Force Officer position for the upcoming fiscal year. She noted the City hopes to regain the grant-funded position in a future fiscal year. Communications expenditures were increased to better reflect the City's share of dispatch costs based on recent expenditures. Capital purchases remain consistent with prior approvals, including the replacement patrol vehicle and continued implementation of Axon body cameras and tasers.

Additional discussion occurred regarding capital planning. Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the budget includes approximately \$65,000 in capital outlay expenditures from General Fund cash reserves to assist the Police Department with equipment planning and replacement schedules. She noted the General Fund is expected to utilize cash reserves for several capital needs and that the City anticipates ending the year with a lower cash balance as a result.

The Committee also reviewed the Compliance Officer budget, including a proposed \$61,000 capital expenditure for replacement of the Police Department impound lot fence. Chief Kraft

explained the current fence is in poor condition, portions have been cut open, and evidence of unauthorized access to impounded vehicles has been discovered. The proposed replacement fence would improve security and protect City property.

Discussion then turned to the Fire Protection budget. Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the proposed budget includes a new \$15,000 allocation for fire department supplies. Historically, the City has provided support through insurance, equipment, and administrative services, but had not maintained a dedicated budget line for fire department supply needs. Fire Marshal Rasmussen explained the funding would be used for equipment subject to replacement schedules, including helmets, lights, and other firefighting gear that must be maintained and replaced on a regular basis.

Committee members discussed Capital Improvement Plan funding levels and whether minimum funding requirements established through City policy were being maintained. Interim CAO Chamberlin confirmed all CIP accounts currently meet required minimum funding levels with the exception of Parks, where significant planned expenditures have temporarily reduced balances.

Additional discussion occurred regarding General Fund cash balances, property tax revenues, and shifting mill levy allocations between various City funds. Interim CAO Chamberlin explained changes in liability insurance, retirement contributions, health insurance costs, and other dedicated mill levy expenditures can affect the amount ultimately allocated to the General Fund.

Motion was made to recommend approval of the proposed FY 2026-2027 Public Safety budget expenditures to the Budget and Finance Committee.

Motion made by Rasmussen, Seconded by Kauffman.
Voting Yea: Kauffman, Buxbaum, Rasmussen

b. Review/Update City Code 5-6-3: Solicitor's License Fee's

Police Chief Kraft presented proposed revisions to the City's solicitor license fee structure. He explained the current fee schedule no longer reflects the actual cost incurred by the City to conduct required criminal background checks. The Montana Department of Justice currently charges approximately \$20 per criminal history search, while the City's ordinance establishes outdated fees that may not fully recover costs.

Chief Kraft also recommended eliminating the reduced background check fee currently provided to Richland County residents and replacing it with a flat fee of \$25 per name listed on an application. He explained the current distinction between local and non-local applicants may fail to identify criminal history originating outside Richland County.

Committee discussion focused on how the proposed fee structure would impact businesses, nonprofit organizations, fireworks stands, and other temporary vendors. Questions were raised regarding background check requirements for nonprofit organizations, community events, and recurring vendors. Members also discussed potential liability concerns related to denying permits based on criminal history and whether additional clarification should be added to the ordinance regarding exemptions.

Interim CAO Chamberlin noted that several provisions of the ordinance may need additional review and clarification, particularly regarding exemptions and whether background checks should continue to apply to exempt organizations. Committee members agreed additional work was needed before making a recommendation.

Motion was made to table the proposed solicitor license fee revisions for further review.

Motion made by Rasmussen, Seconded by Kauffman.

Voting Yea: Kauffman, Buxbaum, Rasmussen

c. Review/Update City Code 6-10-4: Alcohol Permits in Park

Police Chief Kraft and Interim CAO Chamberlin discussed provisions within City Code relating to permits for gatherings involving alcohol consumption in City parks and public areas. CAO Chamberlin noted the ordinance is outdated, cumbersome, and does not accurately reflect the City's current administrative process. Questions were raised regarding the use of the term "beer" rather than "alcohol," permit approval procedures, deposits, and restrictions on glass containers.

Committee members discussed the need to modernize the ordinance and better align the code with current practices. Interim CAO Chamberlin agreed to review how other communities administer similar permits and bring revised recommendations back to the Committee.

Motion was made to table the discussion of the Permit for Gathering ordinance pending additional review and recommendations.

Motion made by Kauffman, Seconded by Rasmussen.

Voting Yea: Kauffman, Buxbaum, Rasmussen

8. Unfinished Business

Alderwoman Rasmussen raised concerns regarding recent pedestrian accidents occurring near the intersection of South Central Avenue and Gem City Street. Discussion centered on multiple incidents involving children and concerns about visibility, pedestrian crossings, and driver awareness.

Committee members discussed possible improvements including additional signage, pedestrian warning devices, and coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation due to the location's proximity to a state highway. Interim CAO Chamberlin suggested meeting with MDT representatives to discuss potential options and determine what improvements may be feasible.

Committee members emphasized that community concerns regarding the intersection continue to grow and agreed the matter warrants further discussion with MDT and the Public Safety Committee.

9. Comments and Questions from the Committee

Chief Kraft provided an update regarding recent Police Department operations. He reported annual employee evaluations had been completed and focused heavily on individual goal setting,

leadership development, and training objectives. The department currently remains one officer short of full staffing and continues recruiting efforts. Chief Kraft reported recent testing efforts produced limited applicants but expressed optimism regarding upcoming interviews.

Chief Kraft also discussed upcoming training opportunities, including First Amendment Auditor training for both law enforcement personnel and local government officials. He noted additional officer wellness and resiliency training had recently been provided by former Sidney Police Officer Franklin Swain. He further summarized topics discussed at the Montana Association of Chiefs of Police Conference, including recruitment and retention challenges, wage competition among agencies, the use of artificial intelligence in policing, and emerging concerns involving electric bicycles and their regulation.

Chief Kraft reported the department recently opened applications for a Patrol Sergeant position and anticipates filling the vacancy during July. He explained the addition of a first-line supervisor will provide valuable support for officers and improve departmental operations. Chief Kraft also discussed challenges officers face while carrying out their duties, including allegations raised during criminal proceedings that can place significant personal and professional stress on law enforcement officers. He emphasized the importance of supporting officer wellness, retention, and recruitment while recognizing the difficult circumstances officers sometimes encounter in the course of their work.

Fire Marshal Rasmussen thanked the Police Department for its continued support of EMS and Fire Department operations. He noted officers routinely assist EMS crews with difficult calls, patient lifts, and emergency response situations throughout the community.

Additional discussion occurred regarding a recent residential structure fire. Committee members noted that several City employees, including the Solid Waste Superintendent, Chief Kraft, a Police Captain, and Fire Marshal Rasmussen, arrived quickly and assisted occupants during the emergency. Staff indicated recognition efforts for those involved were being considered.

10. Adjournment

at 5:41pm.

Meeting Guidelines

- We ask that all participants be respectful and courteous.
- Please direct comments to the Council as a whole.
- When speaking, please state your name for the record.
- Be mindful of others by keeping comments concise and avoiding repetition.
- The presiding officer may guide speaking time to help the meeting run smoothly.
- Disruptive behavior may result in removal from the meeting.