

# City of Miles City Downtown Urban Renewal Agency

## CITY OF MILES CITY, MONTANA

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Tom Clarke \* Ren Gardner \* Todd Gillette \* Chris Grenz \* Brandon Janshen

Kenneth Stein \* Jason Strouf

### Miles City Downtown Urban Renewal Agency Board of Commissioners

### Meeting Minutes April 23, 2026

#### CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M. by Board of Commissioners Chair Gillette; a quorum was established.

**Members Present:** Tom Clarke, Ren Gardner, Todd Gillette, Chris Grenz, Brandon Janshen, and Jason Strouf. Also present: guest Murray Brown and Miles City Star reporter Keenan Stites.

**Minutes** of the March 26, 2026 meeting were reviewed. A motion was made by Commissioner Gardner, seconded by Commissioner Clarke, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as reported.

**Financial Reports:** TIFD Financials for March were reviewed. TIF funds on deposit as of month end were little changed from recent reports, at \$1,425,159. Commissioner Gillette updated the Board on unfunded grant commitments.

The preliminary TIFD 2026 – 2027 fiscal year budget was reviewed. After discussion, it was determined that a \$200 supplies budget should be added to operating expenses, and that clarification is needed as to what expenses are represented by accounts #350 “Professional Services” and #360 “Contr R & M.”

No action required.

#### CITIZEN REQUESTS

None

#### REPORTS

None

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### 1. TIFD Business Assistance Grant Application: Ole Mae Apartments, LLC

The commissioners reviewed an application for TIFD business assistance from Ole Mae Apartments, LLC related to “Phase 2” of a multi-phase multifamily housing project. The Ole Mae Apartment building is located at 719 Washington Street. When completed, Phase 2 will add six main floor apartments to the eight second floor apartments completed last year. (TIFD funds were not involved in the second floor “Phase 1” work.) The project qualifies for TIF participation under MCA 7-15-4233 (i) and further serves the Agency’s mission to expand affordable housing within the district.

Noted within the contractor's proposal is \$40,000 for "New kitchens and appliances." Kitchen appliances do not qualify for TIF funds. The Board agreed that 25% of the contractor's kitchens budget, or \$10,000, should be deducted from the request total to effectively remove appliances from the application.

After discussion, a motion to award a TIF grant to Ole Mae Apartments, LLC in the amount of \$49,845, or 25% of the adjusted project cost of \$195,380, subject to City Council approval, was made by Commissioner Janshen, seconded by Commissioner Strouf, and unanimously carried.

**2. TIFD Business Assistance Grant Application: 1885 Entertainment, LLC d/b/a Trails Inn**

The commissioners reviewed an application for TIFD business assistance from 1885 Entertainment, LLC related to façade improvements at its 607 Main Street facility, including a custom sign (\$4,500), a new pool hall door (\$3,900), and installation of 3 fixed public benches in front of the building (\$1,950). The three project items, totaling \$10,350, will enhance the aesthetics of the building, improve business security, and provide additional public seating in the district. The project qualifies for TIF participation under MCA 7-15-4233 (i).

After discussion, a motion to award a TIF grant to 1885 Entertainment, LLC in the amount of \$8,280, or 80% of the total project cost, subject to City Council approval, was made by Commissioner Clarke, seconded by Commissioner Strouf, and unanimously carried.

**3. TIFD Business Assistance Grant Application: City of Miles City**

The commissioners reviewed an application from Kelsey Merritt, submitted on behalf of the City of Miles City, for TIFD business assistance related to the development of a Downtown Masterplan. Based on three preliminary estimates provided by consulting firms, the projected cost of the project is \$75,000 to \$99,999. A CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Planning Grant application will be submitted to the Montana Department of Commerce by Mrs. Merritt to further cover costs. The CDBG Planning Grant requires a 3 to 1 match (25%), which would be provided and documented by the approval of this TIF request. The Planning Grant is estimated at \$50,000, and the TIFD business assistance grant is requested in the amount of \$35,000. The project qualifies for TIF participation under MCA 7-15-4288 (9).

After discussion, a motion to award to the City of Miles City a TIFD grant representing a percentage of total project costs according to URA/TIFD policy guidelines up to a maximum dollar amount of \$35,000 and subject to City Council approval, was made by Commissioner Strouf, seconded by Commissioner Clarke, and carried, with Commissioner Janshen abstaining.

Commissioner Strouf thanked Commissioner Janshen for providing Mrs. Merritt the time and latitude for her extensive and valuable work on behalf of the City.

**4. Management of Application Discussions Outside of Noticed Meetings**

The Commissioners discussed methods to manage email communications with the object of preventing any violations of those laws regulating noticed/open Agency meetings. After discussion, it was agreed that “bcc” should be used in emails to the group to prevent their using the “reply all” function, and that in any event the “reply all” function should never be used in response communications. This will prevent accidental quorum discussions.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. TIFD Business Assistance Grant Policies/Documents**

Commissioner Janshen discussed the continuing development of the TIFD application package. He recommended dividing the current package, as used in the 1885 Entertainment application, into two documents: a brief “pre-application” package and a comprehensive package. The pre-application would be used by the Board for preliminary review and as a tool for customized information requests.

The Board agreed to defer further discussion until the May meeting. No action required.

### **2. Officer Elections**

Commissioner Gillette discussed options for the Agency’s Chair and Secretary positions, following up on February’s Board action. Procedural protocol for a transfer of an officer position, outside of the normal annual election process, was discussed. No action taken.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

## **MEMBER ROUND TABLE**

1. Commissioner Clarke updated the Board on efforts in Billings to consolidate the management of the City’s three TIF districts. The current administrative cost for the three districts is in excess of \$600,000 annually and the City Council is anticipating a consolidation could lower this cost substantially. The Billings City Council received considerable pushback from the community, but is still scheduled to be discussed further at a May working session.
2. Commissioner Strouf reported that he has heard many positive public comments related to recent improvements in the Agency’s methods and communications.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Gardner and seconded by Commissioner Grenz to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:15 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Todd Gillette, Chair URA Board of Commissioners