



Montana's Sunrise City

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

Budget and Finance Committee Meeting 5/12/26

May 12, 2026 5:30 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:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/7130805898?pwd=tJpmtgBdGbsjBXS0EAU50ANb4u7h3l.1&omn=87378491905>

Call: 1-346-248-7799

Meeting ID: 713 080 5898

Passcode: 4332809

1. Call to Order

Chair Christensen called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was stated by all.

3. Roll Call

Committee Members Present:

City Officials/ Staff Present:

Christensen, Buxbaum and DiFonzo

Mayor Norby, Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange, Interim CAO Chamberlin

4. Correction or Approval of Minutes

a. April 14th, 2026 Budget and Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve.

Motion made by Buxbaum, Seconded by DiFonzo.

Voting Yea: Christensen, DiFonzo, Buxbaum

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.

6. Monthly Reports

Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange reported attending Clerk/Treasurer certification training in Billings as part of the State certification process and noted additional training would be held in Wolf Point in June. She explained the training included approximately 30 to 40 new Clerk/Treasurers from across Montana and discussed ongoing efforts to continue professional development within the administration office.

Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange also discussed cross-training efforts occurring within the front office and complimented staff for assisting with revenue vouchers, swim passes, and other daily administrative tasks. She further noted the City's website is now ADA compliant through accessibility tools that allow users to adjust visual settings and contrast options.

An update was provided regarding TBID collections. Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange reported the Microtel has remained current on reporting and payments, the Holiday Inn completed its settlement payment, and the Wingate paid its balance in full.

Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange then reviewed the April Treasurer's Report and noted the General Fund was currently at approximately 71% expenditure for the fiscal year, Group Health was at approximately 61%, and Solid Waste and Sweeping were also tracking near 71%. She explained the City's overall budget remained in strong standing with no major concerns identified at this time. Committee discussion followed regarding larger anticipated year-end expenditures and remaining payments due later in the fiscal year.

7. New Business

a. 2026 Employee Handbook Update

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented the revised Employee Handbook and explained the document was substantially reorganized and streamlined from the previous version. She stated the prior handbook contained significant redundancy and was difficult to navigate, while the revised version was intended to improve clarity, organization, and employee understanding.

Interim CAO Chamberlin discussed several of the major updates within the handbook, including implementation of the Chief Administrative Officer structure, consolidation of overlapping policies, clarification of disciplinary and grievance procedures, revisions to probationary periods associated with transfers, updates to the sick leave donation process, and incorporation of longevity policies previously maintained separately. She also noted the City is separately developing a Public Works Safety Manual, which is why many safety-specific procedures were intentionally removed from the handbook.

During review, Interim CAO Chamberlin identified several remaining references to "at-will employment" that had been inadvertently left in the handbook and acknowledged those references would be removed to comply with Montana employment law. Committee members discussed the importance of carefully reviewing the revised handbook due to the substantial

rewrite and modernization effort. Interim CAO Chamberlin stated the handbook had already undergone review by MMIA, legal counsel, supervisors, and department management.

Additional discussion occurred regarding City-issued cell phones and concerns involving use of personal devices for police business. Committee members discussed liability and evidentiary concerns associated with employees using personal devices for City work and requested language clarifying that police employees should use City-issued devices for official business whenever possible.

Following discussion, motion was made to table the Employee Handbook Update for additional review.

Motion made by DiFonzo, Seconded by Buxbaum.

Voting Yea: Christensen, DiFonzo, Buxbaum

b. Employee Evaluation Policy 2026

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented the proposed Employee Evaluation Policy and explained the policy was intended to function as a standalone supervisory procedure that complements the Employee Handbook. She explained supervisors recently completed evaluation training and discussed efforts to strengthen chain-of-command accountability throughout the organization.

Discussion occurred regarding future merit-based compensation structures and the possibility of implementing a measurable step-and-scale evaluation system tied to employee goals and performance benchmarks. Committee members expressed concerns regarding traditional merit systems and discussed the importance of maintaining objective standards and measurable expectations to avoid employee conflicts or perceptions of favoritism.

Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the current fiscal year would serve as a baseline year with COLA-only adjustments while the City develops a more measurable evaluation and compensation structure moving forward. Committee members discussed the importance of establishing clear employee goals and expectations prior to implementing any future merit structure.

Motion was made to table the Employee Evaluation Policy for further review.

Motion made by Buxbaum, Seconded by DiFonzo.

Voting Yea: Christensen, DiFonzo, Buxbaum

c. Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy 2026

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented the Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy and stated the standalone policy was requested by MMIA. She explained the policy includes both DOT and non-DOT employees occupying qualifying safety-sensitive positions and addresses pre-employment, random, reasonable suspicion, and post-incident testing procedures.

Committee discussion focused heavily on post-incident testing procedures, including whether blood testing could be required in certain circumstances and how those procedures compare to DOT requirements. Members also discussed concerns related to employees operating vehicles, heavy equipment, or performing public safety duties. Additional conversation occurred regarding prohibited substances, including kratom and other mind-altering substances, and the City's responsibility to maintain a safe workplace.

Interim CAO Chamberlin stated she would further research questions regarding blood testing authority and procedures before the policy is brought forward again.

Motion was made to table the Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy pending additional information.

Motion made by Buxbaum, Seconded by DiFonzo.

Voting Yea: Christensen, DiFonzo, Buxbaum

d. Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy and Form

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented the proposed Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy and accompanying annual disclosure form. She explained many municipalities and boards require annual conflict disclosures and stated the policy would apply to elected officials, appointed officials, department heads, and administration staff.

Committee discussion included examples of financial conflicts involving contracts, employment relationships, and business affiliations. Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the purpose of the policy was to improve transparency, assist with identifying abstention requirements, and maintain public confidence in City decision-making. She further explained the forms would be completed annually at the beginning of each fiscal year and updated as needed when circumstances change.

Motion was made to recommend approval of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy and Form.

8. Unfinished Business

a. Public Works Operations Manager Job Description

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented revised job descriptions for the Public Works Operations Manager, Assistant Public Works Director, and Public Works Director positions. She explained the Operations Manager position was created following prior Committee direction to better address day-to-day operational oversight and long-term succession planning within the Public Works Department.

Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the Assistant Public Works Director position would function primarily as a succession-planning role, while the Operations Manager would oversee day-to-day operations and employee management responsibilities. She further explained all three job descriptions were updated to reflect the City's Chief Administrative Officer structure and reporting hierarchy. Public Works Director Jeff Hintz reviewed the revisions and supported the proposed changes.

Committee members discussed organizational structure, reporting relationships, long-term operational planning, and asked for the job description to be updated to reflect project tracking responsibilities, GIS systems, and budget awareness within the department. Additional discussion occurred regarding maintaining clear administrative authority while avoiding overlap in operational responsibilities.

Motion was made to approve the revised Public Works Operations Manager job description with updates, and the Assistant Public Works Director and Public Works Director job descriptions as presented.

b. Assistant Public Works Director Job Description

c. Public Works Director Job Description

d. FY26-27 Payroll:

Superintendent positions Exempt

2.9% COLA

No Merit Increase

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented updated FY26-27 payroll projections and explained the projections included a proposed 2.9% COLA adjustment, no merit increases for FY26-27, the City covering 85% of the projected 6% health insurance increase, and revisions associated with the Public Works restructuring.

Committee members reviewed projected departmental payroll impacts and discussed staffing within the Police Department, specifically the Drug Task Force Officer position partially funded through State grant reimbursement. Discussion centered on current staffing levels, officer training experience, the challenges of assigning less experienced officers to specialized investigative positions, and the financial risks associated with either maintaining or temporarily discontinuing the grant-funded position.

Interim CAO Chamberlin explained that if the City declines participation in the grant for a year, there is no guarantee the position would remain assigned to Sidney in future years, but Chief Kraft is hopeful. She recommended allowing Police Chief Mark Kraft to attend a future meeting to further discuss the matter and provide additional information regarding State coordination and staffing impacts.

Motion was made and seconded to table further payroll discussion pending additional information.

9. Comments and Questions from the Committee

Nothing.

10. Adjournment

Adjourned 6:44pm.

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.