



City of Sidney, MT
Public Works Committee Meeting
July 15, 2026 5:30 PM
115 2nd Street SE | Sidney, MT 59270

1. **Call to Order**

Chairperson DiFonzo called the meeting to order.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

All present stated the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Roll Call**

Committee Members Present:

City Officials/ Staff Present:

Committee Members Present: Christensen, Larson, Difonzo, Harris

City Officials/Staff Present: Mayor Norby, PWD Hintz, Solid Waste Superintendent Meissel, Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange, Interim CAO Chamberlin,

4. **Correction or Approval of Minutes**

a. June 30th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve the June 30, 2026 Public Works Committee Meeting minutes.

5. **Public Comment/ Visitors**

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

None.

6. **Monthly Reports**

a. June 2026 Public Works Report

PWD Hintz presented the monthly Public Works report and advised that fuel and

mileage information was unavailable for the current reporting period due to an issue with the reporting software, which is expected to be corrected before next month's report.

Discussion centered on the continued increase in solid waste collected throughout the community. PWD Hintz reported garbage volumes continue to exceed the previous year's totals by approximately 80 tons and that the trend appears to be continuing into July. Committee members expressed concern that the increase cannot reasonably be attributed solely to population growth and discussed numerous reports of county residents and travelers disposing of garbage in City dumpsters and commercial containers. Members noted the additional waste ultimately increases costs borne by City ratepayers and discussed potential public education efforts, increased enforcement, coordination with law enforcement, and future conversations with Richland County regarding possible solutions. Committee members agreed to continue evaluating options to discourage unauthorized use of City refuse containers while recognizing the practical difficulties associated with enforcement.

PWD Hintz also updated the Committee on several ongoing Public Works projects. He reported City crews recently completed sewer improvements near Gem City Motors where a deteriorated sewer main was discovered. He explained the existing eight-inch main has significantly deteriorated over time and is heavily restricted with sediment and debris, making routine cleaning nearly impossible. PWD Hintz advised replacement of that section of sewer main is expected later this construction season to prevent future failures.

Street maintenance activities were also reviewed. PWD Hintz reported the City's paving program has experienced delays due to mechanical issues with the asphalt paver. A factory technician has inspected the equipment, and repairs remain ongoing. In the meantime, Public Works crews have continued spray patching, crack sealing, mastic repairs, and other roadway maintenance activities whenever equipment and staffing allow. He noted the mastic repairs have significantly improved several previously rough roadway sections resulting from settled utility trenches.

PWD Hintz further reported that water and wastewater operations remain stable despite increased seasonal demands. To reduce employee exposure during periods of extreme heat, Public Works employees have temporarily shifted to earlier work hours. An update was also provided regarding construction of the new elevated water storage tank. PWD Hintz reported pile driving operations have been completed successfully without receiving any public complaints. Committee members commended staff for the extensive public notification campaign conducted prior to construction, noting advance communication helped prepare residents for anticipated noise and construction activity. Staff advised foundation construction is expected to begin following completion of pile installation and site preparation.

7. New Business

a. Special Event and Street Closure Policy and Application

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented a proposed Special Events and Street Closure Policy and accompanying application. She explained requests for parades, festivals, downtown events, street sales, and other activities requiring temporary road closures have increased substantially in recent years. While individual requests had previously been managed informally, the growing number of events created a need for a consistent process outlining applicant responsibilities, departmental review, public safety requirements, and Council approval procedures.

Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the proposed application requires applicants to provide detailed information regarding the event, requested closure dates and locations, anticipated attendance, vendors or solicitors, alcohol service, parade activities, traffic-control needs, and any special circumstances affecting City operations. Applicants would also be required to notify affected businesses or residents and document that notification. She clarified that affected property owners would not have individual authority to approve or deny a closure; rather, the acknowledgment process would provide them an opportunity to communicate concerns for consideration by the Committee and/or City Council.

The proposed process would require review by the Public Works and Police Departments before an application could be placed on a City Council agenda. Interim CAO Chamberlin explained this requirement would allow staff to evaluate traffic control, emergency access, staffing needs, equipment requirements, and potential route changes before Council consideration. It would also place responsibility on the event organizer to develop a complete plan rather than requiring City staff to independently gather the necessary information after a request is presented.

Committee members discussed whether the application could discourage community events because of its length and the additional responsibilities placed on organizers. Interim CAO Chamberlin acknowledged the process is more formal than past practice but agreed the City must balance ease of use with public safety, proper notification, documentation, and reduced liability. Interim CAO Chamberlin noted applicants requesting multiple dates for the same recurring event could include all dates on one application rather than filing separately for each occurrence.

Significant discussion occurred regarding events held on Central Avenue, which is under the jurisdiction of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT).

Committee members expressed concern that obtaining an MDT permit may require additional time and could complicate longstanding community events, including homecoming and Parade of Lights activities. Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the City cannot authorize closure of an MDT-controlled roadway without the appropriate State approval and could incur unnecessary liability by allowing an event to proceed without it. She noted organizers unable to obtain an MDT permit could consider alternative routes using City-controlled streets. The Committee agreed the requirement should be implemented and evaluated as applications are processed, recognizing the policy may require future amendments based on experience and public feedback.

Members also discussed whether applicants should be charged a fee to offset City expenses associated with barricades, law enforcement, fire personnel, street sweeping, traffic control, and cleanup. Some members noted these activities require staff time and City resources, while others viewed those costs as the City's contribution toward supporting community events and local commerce. The Committee did not recommend establishing a fee at this time but agreed the issue could be reconsidered during the policy's annual review if the frequency or cost of events increases.

Parade safety received additional consideration. The proposed policy prohibits candy, toys, promotional materials, or other objects from being thrown from moving vehicles or floats. Items may instead be distributed by participants walking alongside the parade route. Committee members discussed the danger of children entering the roadway to retrieve thrown items and referenced other parade-related incidents involving vehicles and remote-controlled equipment. Interim CAO Chamberlin explained the application process would allow the City to educate organizers before an event and require repeat applicants to demonstrate how prior violations or safety concerns would be addressed. Members agreed that consistent written expectations would improve safety even though City personnel cannot monitor every participant throughout an event.

Interim CAO Chamberlin reported the proposed documents had been distributed to City Attorney Kalil, City supervisors, and Police Department personnel for review, and no substantive objections had been received. She also noted the policy requires annual review, allowing the City to revise fees, procedures, or safety requirements as practical experience is gained.

Motion was made by Alderwoman Christensen and seconded by Alderwoman Larson to recommend City Council approval of the Special Events and Street Closure Policy and accompanying application. The motion passed unanimously.

b. American Tower Proposal

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented a proposal from American Tower concerning the cellular tower located on City property behind City Hall. She explained the City currently leases the property to American Tower and receives slightly more than \$1,300 per month in recurring revenue. American Tower periodically contacts the City offering a one-time payment or perpetual easement in exchange for the City's future lease revenue.

The current proposal offered the City approximately \$85,000 as a one-time payment. Committee members compared the offer to the approximately \$15,000 in annual revenue generated under the existing lease and noted the payment represented only about five to six years of current lease income. Members expressed concern that accepting the proposal would eliminate a dependable long-term revenue source and reduce the City's future control over the property.

PWD Hintz noted the recurring lease revenue effectively offsets a substantial portion of the City's monthly telecommunications expenses. Discussion also occurred regarding competing companies that have previously approached the City seeking to

purchase or assume the lease interest. PWD Hintz stated the City has maintained a satisfactory working relationship with American Tower and has declined those outside proposals.

During discussion, Alderwoman Christensen located documentation showing American Tower had made a substantially larger offer during the previous year, further reinforcing the Committee's concern that the current proposal did not provide adequate value. Committee members agreed retaining the existing lease and recurring revenue remained the most financially beneficial option for the City.

Motion was made by Alderwoman Christensen and seconded by Alderwoman Larson to recommend that the City decline the American Tower proposal and retain the existing lease without modification. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Unfinished Business

- a. Chamber Sewer (tabled at the 6-30-26 meeting, keep tabled until 8-19-26 meeting)
Interim CAO Chamberlin provided an update regarding the Chamber of Commerce sewer connection request that had previously been tabled to allow additional information to be gathered. PWD Hintz advised the Chamber continues to work with Olson Plumbing to obtain the information necessary to evaluate the proposed connection, associated construction costs, and available alternatives before returning the matter to the Committee.

Committee members agreed it was appropriate to delay consideration until all necessary information is available, allowing the Committee to make an informed recommendation while ensuring the City's infrastructure and financial interests are adequately protected. The item will return to a future Public Works Committee meeting upon completion of review.

9. Comments and Questions from the Committee

Chairwoman Larson posed the question on the history of the train in Veteran's Park and options available for salvaging or removing it. PWD Hintz updated the Committee regarding the Veterans Park train and ongoing maintenance needs. Committee members discussed the need for weighing the cost of rehabilitation of the train versus removal with its current condition of disarray becoming serious. The Committee further discussed ways to seek public input on which option they feel is best, once cost estimates are supplied. CAO Chamberlin gave options for public involvement which included a public survey, that does not usually have large response rates, or putting the question on the ballot. The Committee recognized this is going to be a process that they need to start evaluating and investigating now and asked for city staff to start gathering cost estimates and ways to seek public input.

Committee members engaged in a broader discussion regarding long-term Public Works planning and the importance of coordinating future infrastructure improvements across departments. PWD Hintz and Interim CAO Chamberlin discussed continued implementation and improvements of the City's Capital Improvement Plan, emphasizing that recent investments in GIS mapping, the pavement assessment program, equipment replacement planning, and departmental budgeting will provide better information for future project prioritization.

Discussion also included future sidewalk improvements, trail connectivity, utility coordination, and maintaining flexibility to pursue grant opportunities as they become available. Members agreed continued long-range planning will improve the City's ability to maximize available funding while reducing emergency repairs and unexpected expenditures.

Committee members discussed several operational items affecting Public Works. Discussion occurred regarding vegetation encroaching into public rights-of-way and intersections. Members noted overgrown trees, shrubs, and landscaping can create visibility concerns for motorists and pedestrians. Staff advised these issues are routinely addressed through the City's nuisance enforcement process and will continue to be monitored throughout the growing season.

Members also discussed the importance of maintaining communication with residents regarding ongoing construction projects, utility work, and seasonal maintenance activities. Committee members commended Public Works staff for proactively informing the public during the recent water tower pile driving project, noting the City's communication efforts significantly reduced public concerns and demonstrated the value of providing timely information before major construction begins.

PWD Hintz also thanked Public Works employees for their continued efforts throughout the busy construction season. Committee members recognized the department's ability to maintain daily operations while completing numerous capital projects and responding to seasonal maintenance demands.

10. Adjournment

Adjourned at 6:58pm.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]