City of Sidney, MT
City Council Regular Meeting
July 20, 2026 6:30 PM
115 2nd Street SE |Sidney, MT 59270

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1. Call to Order

Mayor Norby called the Regular Meeting of the SIdney City Council to order at 6:30pm and welcomed those in attendance.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was stated by all present.

3. Aldermen Present

Christensen, Buxbaum, Larson, Kauffman, Rasmussen (via Zoom), and DiFonzo.
Also present were Mayor Norby, Interim CAO Chamberlin, Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange, PWD Hintz, Chief Kraft

4. Correction or Approval of Minutes

a. July 6th, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
Motion was made to approve the July 6th, 2026 Regular City Council Minutes. Motion was made by Alderwoman Christensen, seconded by Alderwoman Larson. All council members present voted yea.

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.

Visitors: Troy and Heather Cotter, Kelcey Hart (Sunrise City Association), Curtis and Heidy MacGrady, Dexter Thiel (Thiel Bros. Roofing), Jody Wells (The Roundup). Via Zoom: James Falcon (Sidney Herald), Laura Christofferson, and Shadd Cullinan (The Depot Casino & Grill).
Kelsey Hart, representing Sunrise City Association, appeared before the Council requesting approval to temporarily close the first block of East Main Street on **August 21, 2026**, for a rescheduled downtown community event. She explained the original July event had been postponed due to logistical issues and outlined the proposed schedule, including vendors, live music from 8pm to 11pm, and the possibility of an outdoor beer garden in coordination with The Cattle-Ac.
Interim CAO Chamberlin advised the request had not yet completed the newly adopted Special Events and Street Closure application process, including review by the Police Department and Public Works Department. She further explained that because the request had not been listed as an action item on the published agenda, Council could either defer consideration until the next meeting or take no action.
Following discussion, motion was made by Alderman DiFonzo and seconded by Alderwoman Rasmussen to table the request until the first City Council meeting in August, allowing staff to complete departmental review under the new application process and provide recommendations regarding traffic control, barricades, and alcohol service. All council members voted yea. Motion carried unanimously.
Interim CAO Chamberlin encouraged the applicant to complete the new application as a practical test of the process and to identify any areas requiring future refinement. Ms. Hart indicated she was agreeable to doing so.

6. Public Hearing

7. Appointments/ Proclamations

   None

8. Mayor Norby

   None

9. City Council Comments

Council Members Christensen, Buxbaum, Larson, Kauffman, and DiFonzo had no comments.

Council Member Rasmussen shared that she had been contacted by a resident regarding the pedestrian bridge near the Richland County Fairgrounds and concerns that it would not be completed prior to the upcoming Richland County Fair. PWD Hintz reported he had spoken with the Montana Department of Transportation earlier that day and advised the remaining delay involved required welding certifications for the handrail system. The handrails had since been delivered to the contractor, installation was scheduled to begin on Wednesday, and the bridge was expected to be completed and reopened before the fair. Council Member Rasmussen thanked PWfor the update and indicated she would relay the information to the resident.

10. Committee Meeting Work

Budget and Finance – Chairman Christensen – DiFonzo, Buxbaum, Skinner Public Works – Chairman DiFonzo – Larson, Christensen, Harris Public Safety – Chairman Buxbaum – Rasmussen, Kauffman, Creek

a. Budget and Finance Committee: Update and Report

Alderwoman Christensen reported the Budget and Finance Committee met on July 14, 2026.

The Committee reviewed the preliminary FY2026-2027 budget and received an update on the City's Impact Fee Study for water, sewer, streets, and parks. No formal action was taken regarding the impact fees at this time.

Interim CAO Chamberlin advised the preliminary budget is substantially complete; however, final budget preparation remains on hold pending receipt of the City's certified taxable valuation, which is anticipated during the first week of August. Once taxable valuations are received, staff will finalize the proposed budget, publish it for public review, and continue the statutory budget adoption process. She also noted that copies of the preliminary budget are available electronically upon request for anyone wishing to review the document before formal publication.

b. Public Works Committee: Update and Report

Alderman DiFonzo reported the Public Works Committee met on July 15, 2026.

The Committee received the monthly Public Works report from PWD Hintz, including updates on solid waste collection, street maintenance activities, sewer infrastructure, and the ongoing water tower construction project. Particular discussion centered on increasing solid waste volumes, which continue to exceed the previous year's totals. Committee members discussed concerns that unauthorized dumping by non-city residents may be contributing to the increase and agreed staff should continue evaluating potential solutions while monitoring future collection trends.

Alderman DiFonzo also reported that the Chamber of Commerce sewer connection request remains tabled pending additional information and is expected to return to the Public Works Committee during August. No Council action was required.

c. **Public Works Committee: Special Event and Street Closure Policy and Applicaiton**
The Committee reviewed the proposed Special Events and Street Closure Policy and accompanying application developed by Interim CAO Chamberlin. The policy establishes a standardized process for temporary street closure requests, including departmental review, business notification, public safety considerations, and City Council approval. Following discussion regarding MDT permit requirements, parade safety, and future annual policy review, the Committee unanimously recommended approval of both the policy and application.
Alderman DiFonzo therefore moved that the City Council adopt the Special Events and Street Closure Policy and accompanying application as recommended by the Public Works Committee. The motion was seconded by Alderman Kauffman. All present council members voted yea.

d. **Public Works Committee: American Tower Lease**
The Council reviewed an annual proposal from American Tower to purchase the City's leased cellular tower interest through a one-time payment. Council members concluded that continuing the existing lease agreement provides substantially greater long-term financial benefit than accepting the proposed buyout.
Council Member DiFonzo moved that the City Council decline the American Tower proposal and retain the existing lease without modification. The motion was seconded by Alderwoman Christensen. Following brief discussion regarding the City's recurring lease revenue and the financial advantages of maintaining the current agreement, the motion carried unanimously.

11. Chief Administrative Officer Update/ Report

a. **CivicPlus Agenda and Meeting Management**
Interim CAO Chamberlin reported that she had planned to demonstrate the City's new CivicPlus agenda management system; however, technical issues prevented the presentation. She explained the agenda had not published correctly to the City's website due to the ongoing software implementation and apologized to both the Council and the public for the inconvenience. A demonstration of the new agenda management system will be provided at a future meeting once the issues have been resolved.

12. Department Head Comments/ Reports

Chief Kraft had no report.
Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange had no report.
PWD Hintz reported that City crews responded to a water main break the previous morning. He and public works staff were notified before 8:00 a.m. and completed repairs, cleanup, and restoration by approximately 2:00 p.m., minimizing service disruption to residents. He noted the break occurred on the same water main that experienced a failure approximately one year earlier, approximately 100 feet from the previous repair. He will continue monitoring the line and evaluating whether additional infrastructure improvements should be considered in that area.
Council members commended Public Works staff for their quick response and also recognized the City's improved communication with residents during emergency utility repairs. Members specifically noted the effectiveness of the City's TextMyGov notification system, website updates, and Facebook announcements in keeping the public informed.
Interim CAO Chamberlin reported approximately 1,200 residents have now subscribed to the City's TextMyGov notification system. Council discussed the continued growth of the service and agreed the system has become an effective tool for quickly communicating emergency repairs, construction updates, and other important public information.

13. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

14. New Business

a. **Cotter Variance**
PWD Hintz reported the Zoning/Board of Adjustment met during the previous week to consider a variance request submitted by Mr. Cotter regarding relocation of a fence. After reviewing the request and determining it would not adversely affect neighboring properties or surrounding development, the Board unanimously recommended approval of the variance.
Motion was made by Alderman DiFonzo and seconded by Alderwoman Christensen to approve the Cotter variance request as recommended by the Zoning/Board of Adjustment. There being no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously by all voting council members.

b. **MorningStar SWD-Request for Objection at August 12th Hearing**
Interim CAO Chamberlin introduced discussion regarding the upcoming August 12, 2026 Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation hearing on Morningstar's revised Saltwater Disposal Well application. She reminded Council that earlier in the year the City had submitted an objection to the original proposal; however, Morningstar subsequently revised the application by relocating the proposed disposal facility, resulting in questions regarding whether the City's previous objection remained applicable. She further advised that Morningstar representatives had previously met

with the Public Works Committee, but no additional direction had been provided by the Council following those discussions.

Mr. Shadd Cullinan, owner of the Depot Casino and Grill, addressed the Council and requested that the City again formally oppose the revised proposal. He explained neighboring property owners, including businesses located near the proposed site, continue to have significant concerns regarding public safety, emergency response, and the proximity of industrial operations to existing commercial development. He advised that numerous neighboring property owners had joined together in filing objections and encouraged the City to continue participating in the process. Mr. Cullinan also explained that because the proposed facility location had changed approximately 300 feet from the original application, he believed previously submitted objections may no longer apply to the revised proposal.

Council discussed several options, including joining an existing legal objection filed by neighboring property owners or submitting an independent objection through the City's legal counsel. Interim CAO Chamberlin advised City Attorney Kalil, although unavailable for the meeting, had indicated he was prepared to draft a formal objection on behalf of the City if directed by the Council. She further advised that PWD Hintz was willing to attend the August 12 hearing to represent the City's interests and provide testimony if requested.

Council members agreed maintaining the City's involvement throughout the hearing process would best represent the interests of Sidney residents while allowing concerns regarding public safety and future development to be presented directly to the Board of Oil and Gas Conservation.

Motion was made by Alderwoman Buxbaum and seconded by Alderman DiFonzo directing City staff to file a formal objection to Morningstar's revised Saltwater Disposal Well application and to have City representatives attend the August 12, 2026 public hearing on behalf of the City. Motion carried unanimously by all voting council members.

Following Council action, Dexter Thiel of Thiel Bros. Roofing addressed the Council in support of the City's decision to formally object to the proposed facility. He expressed concern that many residents remained unaware of the proposal and encouraged additional public outreach so community members would have an opportunity to learn about the project and participate in the public hearing process if they wished. Council thanked Mr. Thiel for the comments.

c. **Nexus FY26, 27, 28 Audit Contracts**

Interim CAO Chamberlin presented the proposed three-year audit services agreements with Nexus, formerly Denning, Downey & Associates. She explained that although the firm's name has changed following a business acquisition, the City will continue working with the same audit professionals who have conducted the City's annual audits in previous years.

Interim CAO Chamberlin advised the Council that the proposed agreements include

two separate contracts: one for fiscal year-end closing entries and financial statement preparation, and a second for the City's annual independent audit. She noted the audit services agreement includes annual increases over the three-year term, with the audit fee increasing from approximately $36,000 for the current fiscal year to $38,900 for FY2026-2027, $40,800 for FY2027-2028, and $42,900 for FY2028-2029.
She further explained that because of the City's federally funded projects, including State Revolving Fund (SRF) projects with federal participation, the City will continue to require a Federal audit for at least the next two fiscal years.
Interim CAO Chamberlin stated the City has been pleased with the quality and thoroughness of the audit services provided over the years and recommended approval of the proposed contracts to ensure continuity of service throughout the upcoming audit cycles.
Motion was made by Alderwoman Christensen and seconded by Alderwoman Buxbaum to approve the FY2026-2028 audit services agreements with Nexus. There being no further discussion, the motion carried unanimouslyby all voting council members.

15. Consent Agenda

Motion was made by Alderman Kauffman and seconded by Alderwoman Buxbaum to approve payment of the claims in the amount of $560,351.37 and to approve City Building Permit number 2027-003 through 2027-007 as presented. Motion carried unanimously by yea votes of all council members..

a. Claims to be Approved: $563,351.37

Intermediary Claims: NONE

b. Building Permits to be approved:

- City of Sidney: 2027-003 through 2027-007
- Richland County: None

16. Adjournment

Mayor Norby thanked Council members, City staff, and those in attendance for participating in the meeting. He also thanked members of the public who appeared before the Council to provide comments and participate in the City's decision-making process. Council meeting was adjourned at 6:55pm.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]