City of Sidney, MT
City Council Regular Meeting
August 17, 2026 6:30 PM
115 2nd Street SE |Sidney, MT 59270

1. Call to Order

   The Sidney City Council met in regular session on Monday, August 17, 2026, at City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

   Those present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Aldermen Present

   Christensen, Buxbaum, Larson, Kauffman, Rasmussen and DiFonzo

4. Correction or Approval of Minutes

   a. August 3rd, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
      Motion was made by Alderwoman Rasmussen and seconded by Alderwoman Larson to approve the August 3, 2026 Regular City Council Meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

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.

   Sidney High School: Brody Keysor, Ty Schepells, Terren Bright, Bordy Verhasselt, Graden Sukut, Ethan King, Zayda Wesley, Madison Rosaaen, Isabelle Doty, Eva Houchen, Lola Schillinger, Bynja Halvorson, Sidne Halvorson, Danica Denown, Hayden Miller and Clain Steinbeisser.

   Others Present: Shannon Wicks (Sidney Chamber), Jody Wells (Roundup), James Falcon (via zoom, Sidney Herald, Michael Miller (via zoom)

6. Public Hearing

a. August 31st, 2026 SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING at 6:30pm
Mayor Norby announced the budget special meeting that will be on August 31st, 2026 at 6:30pm.

7. Appointments/ Proclamations

a. James Meissel-Public Works Operations Manager
Public Works Director Hintz introduced James Meissel as the City's new Public Works Operations Manager. Director Hintz reported that Meissel has worked for the City for more than 20 years, beginning as a seasonal employee before becoming a full-time employee in 2005. During his tenure, Meissel has worked in or assisted nearly every area of Public Works, providing him with extensive knowledge of the City's infrastructure, equipment, departments, employees, and community. Most recently, Meissel served as Solid Waste Superintendent. Director Hintz stated that the new position is intended to strengthen Public Works operations, improve coordination among departments, develop employees, and provide strong leadership for the future. Meissel thanked the City for the opportunity and stated that his focus will be on rebuilding a team mentality within Public Works, getting employees on the same page, and addressing challenges as they arise. Council congratulated Meissel on his new position.

8. Mayor Norby

The Mayor had nothing to report.

9. City Council Comments

Alderman DiFonzo requested that the City begin investigating whether the former sand volleyball court near the pool could be used for construction of pickleball courts. He noted that the site has existing parking, is centrally located, and is currently underutilized.
Chief Administrative Officer Chamberlin explained that the proposed FY2026-2027 budget includes funding for a Parks Master Plan and recommended that major park projects be deferred until that planning process is complete. The plan will evaluate potential locations for improvements and include community engagement to determine recreation priorities. The plan is anticipated to be completed during the winter, allowing projects identified through the process to potentially move toward construction next summer.
The City currently has funding budgeted to convert a portion of the fitness court area into one pickleball court. Staff has not moved forward with that project because another location, including the former sand volleyball court, may prove to be a better long-term option. The Council discussed uncertainty regarding the subsurface conditions at the former volleyball court, including the remains of the old swimming pool located beneath the area. Public Works Director Hintz agreed to request utility locates and conduct an exploratory examination of the site to better determine its feasibility for future pickleball courts.

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 that the Budget and Finance Committee met on August 11, 2026.
The Committee received the Treasurer's Report, including information that approximately 600 pool passes were sold during the season. The Committee also received training on the City's CivicPlus meeting management system. The Committee discussed continuing issues with hotel participation and compliance within the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID). The Committee did not recommend discontinuing the TBID but agreed that improvements are necessary to reduce the administrative burden on City staff. No formal action was taken. The Committee also discussed an offer to purchase certain mineral interests owned by the City. The matter was tabled pending additional information and professional input regarding the value and long-term implications of selling the interests.

b. Budget and Finance Committee: Impact and Hookup/Connection Fee UpdatesThe Budget and Finance Committee recommended moving forward the Ordinance and Resolution to update the following fees:

- Water connection fee – $2,000

- Sewer connection fee – $2,000
- Sewer impact fee – $400
- Water impact fee – $2,500, with a tiered structure based upon meter size\

Motion was made Alderwoman Christensen and seconded by Alderwoman Buxbaum to approve the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee regarding the water and sewer connection and impact fee structure. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Budget and Finance Committee: Interstate Engineering Task Order - Montana Tourism Development Grant

The Budget and Finance Committee recommended approval of the engineering task order associated with the City's Montana Tourism Development Grant. Motion was made by Alderwoman Christensen and seconded by Alderman DiFonoz to approve the engineering task order and proceed with planning under the Montana Tourism Development Grant. Motion carried unanimously, with Alderwoman Buxbaum abstaining.

Alderman Kauffman asked how the grant work will interact with future Montana Department of Transportation improvements on Central Avenue. CAO Chamberlin explained that MDT's anticipated Central Avenue work does not include general sidewalk replacement, although ADA accessibility ramps are included. Because Central Avenue is located within the state highway right-of-way, the City must obtain MDT approval before completing work within the right-of-way. The engineering task order includes coordination with MDT so the City's proposed work can be aligned with MDT's construction schedule.

Alderman Kauffman also asked about the type of downtown plaza contemplated under the grant. Staff explained that the concept is currently envisioned as an open-space or pocket park-type plaza, with the ultimate design and location to be determined through community engagement and the required property review process.

d. Budget and Finance Committee: Preliminary Budget Presentation CAO Chamberlin presented the City's FY2026-2027 Preliminary Budget.

The City's taxable valuation is $9,816,791 resulting in a value of approximately $9,816 per mill.

The State's allowable inflation factor for the fiscal year is 2.97%. Property tax revenues are projected to increase approximately $57,000, bringing total property tax revenue to slightly more than $2 million distributed among the City's various mill levy-supported funds.

CAO Chamberlin explained that the City's required statutory estimate indicates potential property tax increases ranging from approximately $51 for property valued at $100,000 to approximately $307 for property valued at $600,000. She cautioned that the statutory calculation is based upon mill figures and may not fully reflect changes in mill values.

General Fund

The General Fund anticipates approximately $3.9 million in revenue and $4 million in expenditures, with the City intentionally using approximately $157,000 in General Fund cash reserves.
Major planned expenditures include:

- Approximately $40,000 for Police Department capital planning;
- Approximately $100,000 for the Parks Master Plan; and
- Approximately $62,000 for improvements to the City's impound fence.

The General Fund includes the Police, Fire, Building and Parks departments as well as general City expenses.

Large Taxpayer Reserve

Changes in state property tax law allow the City to receive only a portion of property tax revenue generated by growth. To receive the full amount available, approximately $4,274 will be transferred into a newly created Large Taxpayer Reserve Fund. The reserve will accumulate over time and may be used under qualifying circumstances if a large taxpayer leaves the City's taxing jurisdiction, helping mitigate the resulting effect on other taxpayers.

Capital Improvement and Special Revenue Funds

CAO Chamberlin reviewed the City's major capital and special revenue funds.
The Tennis Court Capital Improvement Fund is anticipated to receive a $65,000 transfer from the Oil and Gas Fund, resulting in approximately $375,000 available toward future tennis court rehabilitation.
The Tourism Business Improvement District anticipates approximately $145,000 in revenue and $164,000 in expenditures, with existing cash reserves covering the difference.
The City's Storm Disaster Fund will continue receiving one mill annually to build reserves for future emergency needs.
Approximately $28,000 remains available within the Local Government Review Fund for election and related expenses. Remaining funds following completion of the review process will eventually transfer to the General Fund.
The City currently has approximately $330,000 in street and park impact fee funds. Because recent legislative changes no longer authorize those impact fees, staff will evaluate legally permissible uses for the remaining restricted funds. Council asked whether a portion could potentially be applied to the 22nd Avenue project, and CAO Chamberlin agreed to research the applicable restrictions.
The Citywide Street Maintenance Fund anticipates using approximately $80,000 in cash for planned capital purchases.
The Snow Removal Fund anticipates approximately $60,000 in cash-funded capital

purchases, including equipment associated with snow removal operations.
The Oil and Gas Severance Fund anticipates approximately $650,000 in revenue, with much of that funding transferred to various City capital improvement accounts.
Approximately $55,000 remains in ARPA funding and is being used for accessibility improvements associated with the City Hall remodel.
The City Hall Capital Improvement Fund has approximately $103,000 available, with funding anticipated for drainage improvements in the rear City Hall parking lot.
The Pool Capital Improvement Fund is anticipated to receive a $45,000 transfer, resulting in approximately $191,000 available for future pool needs and unforeseen repairs.
The City's various park capital accounts have been consolidated into a single Parks Capital Improvement Fund. The Veterans Park irrigation system is the primary park project authorized to proceed while other major park projects await completion of the Parks Master Plan.
The Police Capital Improvement Fund is anticipated to receive a $60,000 transfer. The Police Investigative Capital Improvement Fund will continue funding specialized investigative needs and software, including the Secure Warrant system considered later in the meeting.
The Fire Equipment Capital Improvement Fund now contains more than $1 million toward the eventual replacement of major fire apparatus.
Approximately $188,000 is planned for expenditures associated with the city's portion of the 22nd Avenue bike path extension.

Enterprise Funds

The Water Utility anticipates slightly more than $2 million in operating revenue, with approximately $1 million budgeted for existing debt service. The City's North Park Water Tower replacement represents a significant capital project during the fiscal year.
Approximately $319,000 in Water Impact Fee funds will be used toward the City's required match for the water tower project.
The Sewer Utility anticipates slightly less than $2 million in operating revenue, with expenditures primarily associated with operations, debt service, and approximately $650,000 in capital expenses. Staff is also evaluating creation of a stormwater utility fund that could shift certain costs currently borne by the Sewer Utility.
Approximately $161,000 in Sewer Impact Fee funds remains available for qualifying expansion-related sewer projects.
The Solid Waste Utility anticipates approximately $1.2 million in revenue and $1.3 million in expenditures. A major anticipated capital expense is a replacement garbage truck. Because delivery can take more than a year, the purchase is included in the budget even though the truck may not arrive until the following fiscal year.
Overall, the proposed budget intentionally uses approximately $3 million in existing cash reserves, primarily for major capital projects and equipment purchases.
No formal action was taken on the preliminary budget at this meeting. Final budget

consideration is scheduled for the August 31 special meeting.

11. Chief Administrative Officer Update/ Report

CAO Chamberlin reported that City staff and Mayor Norby met with the Montana Department of Transportation regarding safety concerns at Seventh Avenue and Central Avenue.
MDT is evaluating potential improvements, including adjustments to vehicle detection equipment and the possibility of installing a mirror to improve pedestrian visibility.
Staff noted that pedestrian and bicycle behavior remains a significant concern at the intersection, particularly involving youth riding bicycles on sidewalks. The City reminded motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians to use caution and follow applicable traffic laws.
CAO Chamberlin also intends to explore opportunities to provide bicycle safety information to middle school students.

Due to the Labor Day holiday, the next regular City Council meeting following the August 31st special meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 8, 2026.

12. Department Head Comments/ Reports

Public Works Director Hintz reported and gave update for the several public works departments, including the completion of the paving on Sunflower and valley gutter/alley approach work that has been completed.

13. Unfinished Business

14. New Business

a. Resolution No. 3985-Calling for Local Government Review Ballot Item in November 2026 Election
City Attorney Kalil presented Resolution No. 3985, which places the recommendation of the Local Government Review Committee on the ballot for voter approval or rejection.
Motion was made by Alderwoman Buxbaum and seconded by Alderman Kauffman to approve Resolution No. 3985. In discussion Alderwoman Rasmussen asked how the election costs are paid and Interim CAO Chamberlin stated the costs come out of the Review fund. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Ordinance No 606: Updating Solicitor's License Code (First Reading)
City Attorney Kalil presented Ordinance No. 606, updating the City's solicitor licensing regulations. The ordinance updates licensing fees and background check requirements and streamlines the City's licensing process.

Motion was made by Alderwoman Christensen and seconded by Alderwoman Larson to approve Ordinance No. 606 on first reading. Roll call vote was taken. All Council members present voted in favor.

c. Ordinance No 607: Updating Alcohol in Public Places Code (First Reading)
City Attorney Kalil presented Ordinance No. 607, updating the City's regulations governing alcohol in public places. The ordinance updates the application and approval process and removes the existing restriction limiting approved alcohol in public places to beer. Glass containers will continue to be prohibited.
Motion was made by Alderwoman Buxbaum and seconded by Alderwoman Rasmussen to approve Ordinance No. 607 on first reading. Roll call vote was taken. All Council members present voted in favor.

d. Secure Warrant Contract
Chief Kraft presented a proposed contract with Secure Warrant, a Montana-based software company providing electronic warrant services to law enforcement. The system allows law enforcement officers to electronically submit affidavits of probable cause and search warrant requests to available District Court judges and to electronically complete required returns following execution of a warrant. Chief Kraft explained that the technology has been available for a number of years but has not previously been necessary for the department. Recent discussions with Judge Savage and potential changes involving access to District Court judges prompted the department to consider implementing the system.
The annual contract will be funded through the Police Investigative Capital Improvement Fund.
Motion was made by Alderman DiFonzo and seconded by Alderwoman Buxbaum to approve the Secure Warrant contract. Motion carried unanimously.

e. Kohl Lot Aggregation (Lots 27 and 28, Block 4, Fischer Estates to Lot 27A)
The City Planner Sanderson presented a request from Tim Kohl to aggregate Lots 27 and 28, Block 4, into an amended residential lot. The application was submitted by Big Sky Surveying and claims the applicable subdivision exemption. Staff recommended approval subject to the standard conditions identified in the staff report.
Motion was made by Alderwoman Christensen and seconded by Alderwoman Larson to approve the lot aggregation subject to the conditions contained in the staff report. Motion carried, with Alderman Kaufman abstaining.

f. Kohl Lot Aggregation (Lots 26 and 27A, Block 4, Fischer Estates to Lots 26A and 27A)
The City Planner next presented a boundary line adjustment involving Lot 26 and the newly aggregated Lot 27A. The application was submitted by Big Sky Surveying and claims the applicable boundary line adjustment exemption. Staff found that the proposal does not represent an attempt to evade subdivision review and

recommended approval subject to the City's standard conditions.
Motion was made by Alderwoman Buxbaum and seconded by Alderwoman Larson to approve the boundary line adjustment resulting in Lots 26A and 27A, subject to the conditions contained in the staff report. Motion carried, with Alderman Kaufman abstaining.

g. NPWTR SRF Draw #5 for $887,666.00
Public Works Director Hines presented North Park Water Tower Replacement Draw No. 5 in the amount of $887,666.00.
Motion was made by Alderwoman Rasmussen and seconded by Alderman DiFonzo to approve Draw No. 5. Motion carried unanimously, with Alderwoman Buxbaum abstaining.

h. Chamber Fall Festival: Special Event, Street Closure and Alcohol in Public Approval
Sidney Area Chamber Executive Director Shannon Wicks requested approval for the Fall Festival scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2026. The daytime portion of the event is scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and will include vendors, children's games and activities, food trucks, downtown business participation, and agricultural activities. The Chamber requested closure of East Main Street and portions of Second and Third Streets for the daytime activities. The evening portion will include a locally sourced Field to Fork social and supper in partnership with the Sidney Moose Lodge, followed by a street dance and live music. The Chamber requested continued closure of Third Street from approximately 5:00 p.m. to midnight and approval of an open-container variance for the designated event area.
Chief Kraft reported that the Chamber completed the required application and provided the additional information requested by the Police Department.
Motion was made Alderwoman Rasmussen and seconded by Alderwoman Christensen to approve the Fall Festival special event request, associated street closures, and alcohol/open-container approval for the designated event area. Motion carried unanimously.

15. Consent Agenda

Interim Clerk/Treasurer Lange presented claims for approval totaling $266,419.78, along with an intermediary claim to WEX in the amount of $3,691.64 and three County building permits.
Motion was made by Alderman Kauffman and seconded by Alderman DiFonzo to approve the claims, intermediary claim, and building permits as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

a. Claims to be approved: $266,419.78

Intermediary Claims: WEX $3691.64

b. Building Permits to be approved: RC2027-3, RC2027-4, RC2027-5

16. Adjournment

at 7:31pm.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]