

Here is the BECON for December 2, 2022

Guests:

Sheila Wilson was in attendance today to get another view of the club. She is thinking of joining. Joey Lucara was here with his dad, Lanny. Our speaker was Billings City Administrator, Chris Kukulski. He was accompanied by Victoria Hill, the Billings Information Officer.

Announcements:

We will have our Holiday breakfast on December 16th. And mark your calendars for breakfast on December 30th.

Tim Crowley mentioned that there will be a Kids & Cowboys event this Saturday from 7pm to 8:30pm. It will be at The Tap Inn and Tim said it will be an open bar.

We received a patch and plaque from the National Exchange Club for sponsoring the new Special and Capable club.

Cavin handed out pins and certificates to our newest members, Mike Hennessy, Stephanie Bond and John Bennett. (John has recently rejoined our ranks.)

Stacy Dreessen passed on the sad news that Gary Crick passed away. Gary has been a long time CMS employee at the Metra. If you remember Gary, in recent years, had been confined to a scooter.

Upcoming Events:

12-3-2022: Season's Beatings

12-17-2022: Chase Hawks Rodeo

Speaker:

Chris Kukulski came to Billings as the City Administrator in 2018. Before he came here he had the same job in Bozeman for 15 years and Kalispell for 5 years before that. Chris is originally from the Flint, Michigan area. Chris said people ask him what is the difference between Bozeman and Billings. He said that Billings is better. (I have always known that. Fun to visit Bozeman but don't want to live there.)

His and the Billings staff's priority is to make Billings better. They want to retain and attract the best talent for our town. Jobs follow people now so you have to give them amenities like Alberta Bair, Dehler park, walking trails, etc. They have 5 Priorities:

1. Public Safety
2. Invest in Infrastructure: Streets, Sewer, Water, etc
3. Increase investment in amenities
4. Function as a high functioning organization
5. Invest in Building sites where people gather, work.

He talked at length about Public Safety. The 2020 and 2021 safety mill levies have helped to hire more police officers and civilians. Medical response teams have been implemented at the Fire stations. Instead of sending a large \$700K fire engine out to help with a medical emergency, they will send out the smaller trucks with paramedics and sometimes a Crisis team will go out with a paramedic and a behavioral specialist to help people. The city has also hired more attorneys to battle the high number of domestic violence cases. Code Enforcement is on the move to get properties cleaned up and

less a haven for crime. As Rich St. John told us a couple of months ago, the number one issue is jail space. People have no consequence if they commit a crime. The state will leave people in our county jail for over 2 years. This needs to end. Legislative efforts are being planned to tackle these issues.

There were a few more questions. Both about facilities. They are in the process of moving to the Stillwater Building but building costs have increased 48% to 53% throughout the whole Rocky Mountain region (largest increases in the country.) This is a significant challenge to completing this move. The new water treatment plant on the west end will increase our water supply to near 40 days. Construction on the water plant will start this coming summer and last about 24 months. Costs on this went up too. It can be easier to hide this expense with an increase in water rates that are then spread across the whole city.

That is it for now.