

**Stevensville Budget Workshop Minutes FY 2026/2027 for WEDNESDAY,
APRIL 22, 2026, 5:15 PM 206 Buck Street, Town Hall**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Crews called the meeting to order, Councilmembers Bailey, Wandler and Smith were all present. Councilmember Ross has an excused absence.

2. Discussion on the Following Items

a. Salaries & Wages

Mayor Crews: introduced tonight's budget workshop meeting.

Robert Underwood: got a chance to talk with the mayor about wages and cost of living adjustment and this is what we have come up with. Here is the spreadsheet and what we have added, for our work comp we have a factor and here are the costs, it is all added into the employee. I am going to start out with the wage allocation, based upon time and money spent in those funds. The biggest change is the finance officer spends most of her time with water and sewer, the most bills paid, most of the claims are water and sewer. The other change since the last time you saw this is the allocation for Stephen Lassiter, 20% coming out of the general fund for streets. I will have you look at those allocations before I go on if you have any questions. You can see how we come up these amounts. Talking with the mayor the inflation is 2.8%.

Gina Crowe: that is the standard rate for this year.

Robert Underwood: you can see what this does, it raises it to this. I added two more lines to this; these are increases based on certifications that you do for the job. Example would be if the town clerk gets a certification she would get a dollar raise. Same with the public works personnel. It is written in their contract so I wanted to show it here, not saying that everyone is getting this, the clerk might not get hers until next June, and for the water and sewer certifications they have to pass their tests. We tried to matrix that out, but it just did not pass, it was hard to say if you stay here for 25 years you will make this much. It is just not feasible. One thing that we have not talked about is the pool employees, they are at \$13.50 right now and we also have only had one applicant.

Gina Crowe: she is the manager that has applied and is requesting \$17.00 or \$18.00 per hour, I am not sure if we can handle that. When I talked to her I let her know that to have the pool open we have to have eight lifeguards for sure, if we do not have

eight we will not have any. If those eight can only work certain hours then we will have to have nine or ten. The pool makes all of their money from swim lessons. Even if we had just three lifeguards and no lessons, I do not think that we could keep the pool open. You have to have so many lifeguards on duty. Stephen do you know what the requirements are?

Stephen Lassiter: they have to change out every fifteen minutes. I think that it is 10-15 kids per lifeguard. Eight is the minimum so you really need ten. They go on vacation, have camps to go to.

Mayor Crews: right now, do we have anyone that is pool operator certified?

Stephen Lassiter: yes, I came here with that.

Robert Underwood: pool wise you can see our dilemma. Something that we used to do was reimburse the kids for lifeguard certification. And we used to have them come back for two years, right now we have no one certified and if they were to go out and get it, it would be \$350.00. That is basically their first months check to pay for it. one of the suggestions was that we paid for the certification, once again this is a deficit, the pool is a deficit. We can look at this when we talk about the general fund budget, it is a loss every year. The pool is a loss every year.

Jenelle Berthoud: how long will you take to decide if the pool is going to open, and the reason that I am asking that we are forwarding emails over to Gerry because they want swim lessons. I was going to sign up my granddaughter for swim lessons, also if this is not going to happen I also do not want to miss another location.

Mayor Crews: you might want to go to Hamilton.

Jenelle Berthoud: exactly, I do not want to miss out if Hamilton has an opening right now but not in three weeks, please keep that in mind and let Andrena and I know.

Mayor Crews: what is the cut off date if we had a full set of lifeguards, what is the cut off date to open the pool?

Stephen Lassiter: June 10th or 12th.

Mayor Crews: how long does it take to train lifeguards?

Stephen Lassiter: it is a one-day course. I really feel that if we do not reimburse them.

Mayor Crews: can we scrape together \$3,000 to pay for this.

Robert Underwood: that was the last number that I had. This is something for the future, Hamilton Pool has money from the county coming in, not sure if they have a district for it. People like to come to Stevensville; the greater Stevensville area uses the pool, and the taxpayers of Stevensville are paying for the pool.

Mayor Crews: if we do not have enough by the end of May that should be our deadline.

Councilmember Smith: we have one right now?

Gina Crowe: yes, and she only wants to be manager.

Mayor Crews: lets postpone conversation on opening the pool until May 15th, if we do not have lifeguards we will not open the pool.

Jenelle Berthoud: recertification for YMCA is \$210.00.

Mayor Crews: how many days?

Jenelle Berthoud: one day.

Mayor Crews: I find it interesting that we hire lifeguards do we know if they know how to swim and know CPR.

Stephen Lassiter: that is what they do the class for.

Mayor Crews: Jeff do you have a comment?

Jeff Motley: what do you get for the \$210.00, to be a lifeguard.

Jenelle Berthoud: certification, first aid and CPR.

Robert Underwood: I see what you are saying I have asked this before, what do we do to know that they can teach.

Mayor Crews: that was my question, do we check these kids as lifeguards that they know how to swim and CPR.

Stephen Lassiter: that is why they have to take the test to get the certification. Olivia says that it is \$90.00.

Jenelle Berthoud: it has gone up.

Robert Underwood: I think that the mayor is correct. There is a program that they follow.

Stephen Lassiter: and the kids have to pass that level to move on, that is why they come back every year.

Mayor Crews: lets put it on our schedule for May 15th.

Stephen Lassiter: I think that it too late.

Jenelle Berthoud: the next class is May 16th.

Robert Underwood: I think that we need to advertise that we will be paying for certification and then this wage. If we don't do anything we are not going to get anyone.

Councilmember Smith: is there a minimum age for a lifeguard?

Stephen Lassiter: 15 as far as I know. If we late to long to make a decision and then don't have the lessons to pay for opening the pool.

Robert Underwood: they fill up.

John Boe: why can't we take reservations and then if something happens we will reimburse monies.

Stephen Lassiter: we would not have to reimburse because we do not take money until the first day of lessons, and that is what I have been telling them and now that Gerry is taking over we are going to start scheduling them with the warning that it might not happen.

Mayor Crews: what is the deadline down in Hamilton, Jenelle do you know.

Jenelle Berthoud: I do not know, I was waiting for tonight's meeting to make a decision.

Mayor Crews: we do not want to get into a situation promise swim lessons, then we can't do it and then there is no room down south.

Stephen Lassiter: that is what I am afraid of.

Mayor Crews: I think that we need to speak to this at a special town council meeting.

Gina Crowe: when do the kids get out of school? Last year the kids did not come in until the last couple of weeks.

Councilmember Smith: how many lifeguards and teachers just to do the swim lessons?

Gina Crowe: eight, but it depends. The first year that I was here there were thirteen lifeguards and they were busy they could have done more lessons last year, but we only had eight lifeguards.

Mayor Crews: and they have to be able to rotate out.

Robert Underwood: eight is defiantly the number that we need, are we going to commit to paying for their certifications.

Mayor Crews: that is a question for the council, spending \$3,000.00.

Councilmember Bailey: I think I would like some more time to dig into this a little bit. What I am understanding is that our lifeguards are doubling as swim instructors and maybe we could raise their rate of pay if they are swim instructors. How many do we actually get enrolled. Maybe a special town council meeting next week should be in order.

Jenelle Berthoud: water safety certification would be on top of their lifeguard certification.

Councilmember Bailey: if they did all of that, they would still be getting \$13.50 an hour. It is nice to get the certification, and they can use it other places at the same time they are still getting \$13.50.

Gina Crowe: it was \$11.50 last year.

Councilmember Bailey: it is \$13.50 this year, they still have to dedicate their time to get these certifications and that is them not getting compensated for that, they get their cert for free, but it is a Saturday to go out to Missoula to get certified to be qualified for us for \$13.50 an hour. Is that an attractive offer for anyone if you can go to Super One for \$18.00 per hour.

Robert Underwood: I think it would be good to bring the pool back and just talk about the pool.

Councilmember Bailey: and operating costs for the pool. If we operate at a loss, how much is that loss each year.

Mayor Crews: 6th of May.

Jenelle Berthoud: I will be in Billings, but I can set this up for you or have a special meeting next week.

Mayor Crews: I am gone Thursday and Friday. We could do it Wednesday.

Karen Wandler: I cannot make it.

Mayor Crews: how about the 28th, 6:30pm.

Karen Wandler: I think a lot of the problem for the lifeguards is the certification, we cant get these kids interested if they have to pay for their certification.

Mayor Crews: I guess I come from a different branch of the world, if I wanted a job I paid for my own training. I do understand that these are kids and this might be their first attempt at a job in the real world. We have to also look at the economy right now, gas at almost \$4.00 a gallon.

Jeff Motley: how about a partial reimbursement?

Mayor Crews: that is something that council should consider, that is a good idea.

Jeff Motley: even if you looked at a payment plan, if they could pay back whatever that portion over the summer, another thing that could happen is we cover the cost , they are here for a month and now they are gone.

Councilmember Bailey: there would have to be some sort of retention agreement, just like we do for the police. We pay for their training, and they are obligated to give us some many hours.

Karen Wandler: if we have the kids sign we have to have the parents sign.

Mayor Crews: this is all contingent on people wanting to sign up to be lifeguards.

Councilmember Smith: Jeff do you have any fireman that could help out?

Jeff Motley: you mean volunteers that have a day job already.

Councilmember Smith: I do not know what their day jobs are. There would not be any certification there.

Mayor Crews: well, you have to understand that fireman normally do have a day job and their employers are gracious enough to allow them to respond to a call. I would love to see the chief at our training next week, but if he takes off from his job he losses a day of pay.

Councilmember Bailey: not related to the pool, step up in an hour in the pay raise is that included, are we anticipating them to get their certifications and each person is due to get one.

Robert Unnderwood: if they get their certs.

Councilmember Bailey:” and they will in this fiscal year?

Robert Underwood: if they do, it is built in. if they do get it, it is in there.

Stephen Lassiter: so, you have Ian in there with no change?

Robert Underwood: he just got hired.

Stephen Lassiter: is that fare.

Robert Underwood: you don't when you first get hired. I am not sure if it is right or wrong. I see where you are coming from, we do the COLA to keep the rate adjusted. Whatever that base rate is, each year. The problem with that pay matrix. Ian worked for us before; he is at \$22.00 an hour when that usually starts at \$20.00. any questions on how these figures work. This is how we put in the wages and the benefits into the budget. Come across here to the funds, here is how much comes out of each fund per person. In the general fund, this is where it breaks out per the accounts. Mayor, council, court.

Mayor Crews: can you explain the cash in lieu of health care.

Robert Underwood: when someone comes along, a couple of things. If you are a veteran and have veteran health care, or you are married and that spouse has great health care, but they still have to pay into that program for their spouse, we give them cash in lieu of. What we would pay them, it is not the whole amount, there is a factor, we have to pay SS and PERS, they do not get a benefit, and we do not have to pay that out. Right now, we pay for the employee \$946.00 cost to the town. When you add that across with PERS, Medicare, unemployment we have to pay that all when we give them cash in lieu of and they have to pay taxes on it. They do not get the full amount, and that is the number that we came up with this year.

Mayor Crews: how many employees do we have getting that.

Gina Crowe: three.

Jeff Motley: do we pay 100% of their insurance?

Robert Underwood: yes, for the full-time employee. Some times MMIA changes the package, we keep the same plan. age, we keep the same plan.

Jeff Motley: we pay the 100%, my company I have to pay a percentage of mine.

Mayor Crews: this is the first company that I have ever seen where we do cash in lieu.

Gina Crwoe: I have seen it several places in the private sector, if a company is paying their employee and half of their spouse. It is set up to help pay for that spouse.

Mayor Crews: more and more companies are moving for the employees to pay for their health coverage.

Gina Crowe: I do not see that at all, you couldn't recruit anybody if you didn't pay for it.

Mayor Crews: Jeff's company does it.

Jeff Motley: I pay \$45.00 per month for my health plan, my company pays almost \$790.00 of my health plan it is a great deal.

Gina Crowe: you company pays for it, if your company did not pay for your insurance that would be tough.

Jeff Motley: the teachers pay for some of their health plan.

Robert Underwood: that would be something to look at, one thing about pay benefits is the town does not pay all of that other portion of it, PERS, taxes. The benefit of a raise it does save the town, you don't want to say that it is part of their pay, but it is that we the town do not pay taxes on that. and one of the good things about working here is that we pay for this compared to the wages that we pay.

Councilmember Bailey: public works assistant number 3, we are currently hiring for that position.

Robert Underwood: that position is not being hired, we used to hire two kids to mow and then we had one guy that did 30 hours and now we have a parks person. I kept that on there because there is always that option that we might have to.

Gina Crowe: we want it to be there incase you have to hire, and it is in the budget. If you take it off it would not be there if it needed to be filled.

Jeff Motley: does that person get a raise.

Councilmember Bailey: would the on call be in there also for that position.

Robert Underwood: well, they might just be the mower.

Gina Crowe: or they could be wastewater certified. If they are wastewater certified that \$22.00 goes up to \$30.00.

Robert Underwood: we would have to bring that back for approval.

Councilmember Bailey: we right now have a wastewater and a public works 1 listed on the website. It looks like we have two positions, but we are not sure if we have any.

Gina Crowe: the public works assistant should not be up, but it is closed. We do have a wastewater operator position open.

Councilmember Bailey: are we building that into the budget or we would bring that back. Would that person all take call.

Robert Underwood: we would then divide that by three. It is one person budgeted and then split.

Gina Crowe: it is budget at \$160.00 and that number does not change.

Robert Underwood: when all of the numbers are thrown in here and the revenue is put in, and this is pretty solid, and if something came up we would maybe have to relook at it.

c. Court

Robert Underwood: in front of you will see this, I highlighted areas that are not put in yet, Black Mountain and our Insurance. The actual department heads do not have a say in it; we just have to plug those numbers in. I plugged in the wages here based off of what you just saw for Jessica half time court. (continued to review past budget amounts compared to current, historical knowledge) Went through each line item. I need to talk about this one, the judge has asked for a raised bench each year, it is in MCA code. We have not passed that for the past six years.

Mayor Crews: she has been asking since 2016.

Robert Underwood: it is in MCA, but our court room is shared with the council. It would be a raised bench. On a side note, Hamilton has an old, raised bench system that they are looking to get rid of. You might want to talk mayor to mayor about that. (continued to go through line items, postage) One new thing, the judges contract is coming up this June. She did get a pretty large increase during the last negotiation. We will need to look at a contract, that number could change. Training is for both the clerk and the judge that go to two conferences. The judge has to go to both of them and the clerk goes to one.

Mayor Crews: we are looking at \$3,000.00 for four nights.

Robert Underwood: actually, eight nights.

Gina Crowe: the reason for that is that the conferences are on different days, so they cannot travel together.

Mayor Crews: we are talking \$3,000.00 for hotel fees. How many nights does the judge have to be away.

Gina Crowe: judge is gone for three or four nights and Jessica is three.

Mayor Crews: so, ten nights at \$300.00 at the Fairmount, maybe we should not be staying at the Fairmount.

Jeff Motley: that is where the conference is at.

Mayor Crews: does not mean that you have to stay there.

Gina Crowe: they give you a special rate if you go somewhere else the rate is higher.

John Boe: plus, there is no other place to stay up there.

Gina Crowe: that could go down, we do estimate on the higher side.

Mayor Crews: as long as we know that is our limit.

Robert Underwood: look at what we have spent last year. I don't think that it is going to go over. Jury fee is the next one, if you have a jury trial you have to pay the jurors. If you have a trial the cost goes up. We have spent so far this year \$58,000 and now they are budgeting \$82,000. They have really tightened their budget up; this is a preliminary budget until we have that contract for the judge. This is what they have asked for, when we come back there will be somethings on the side that we know about, you guys will decide. On a side note, if you have a police force you have to have a court, you can't base the revenue on the police and the court. Over the years the revenue has gone down.

Mayor Crews: so, I need to go down to Hamilton and talk to the mayor about that bench.

Councilmember Bailey: publicity negative \$125.00.

Robert Underwood: I owe you an answer to that one, publicity number.

Councilmember Bailey: what is it normally for.

Robert Underwood: when you have these codes, and change the name of the code, we have had an issue with this publicity code, and I will have to get you an answer.

Gina Crowe: we have so many things that are annual payments, I am going to start to track those differently because every department has annual fees.

Councilmember Bailey: printing budgeted last year for \$1,000 and now budgeting for \$400.

Robert Underwood: that was last year the printer and now they have traded that.

Councilmember Bailey: software, computers.

Robert Underwood: we try to break out the computers and software, they have Zoom.

Gina Crowe: I can tell you why it is \$150.00. Two years ago, we were charged two times for Zoom and it took me two years to get a refund on that.

Councilmember Bailey: you are basing that on one software should we add more.

Gina Crowe: that is going to keep changing until we get the final numbers.

Councilmember Bailey: salaries and wages for the court, we are budgeting that amount.

Robert Underwood: you guys need to worry about the 1000 fund; this is just the accounts. If you have a line that spends over and another one goes under you are still okay it is within that number.

b. Airport

Councilmember Bailey: on the airport budget salaries, the two salaries that would come out of that are going to be the airport manager and the mayor 5% where is the other 5%.

Brian Germane: it is mayor and finance.

Councilmember Bailey: what is 5%.

Brian Germane: about \$3500.00.

Robert Underwood: if you look over here it is Brian, mayor and finance. Any questions about the airport. Lets go down to the bottom of this report. We are jumping up a bit because of the sale of fuel. They sell more fuel this number goes up. You can see last year current budget and Brian has done a good job breaking this down. Postage for sending out leases.

Gina Crowe: there are the subscriptions in there also.

Brian Germane: thank you for putting that in there.

Robert Underwood: there are legal expenses. We do not know for sure, if you end up spending over one million in grant money this year we have to get a federal audit and that audit costs us \$45,000.00. This year we are going to build that into the grant.

Gina Crowe: the threshold is one million dollars right now we do not have any federal grants on the table, if we do it could be like this year.

Brian Germane: we do have three inspections a year, so this could be a little high. Every four months.

Robert Underwood: there is nothing that we can do about that, a government program that we got and had to abide to it.

Brian Germane: that is our weather system, if you do not maintain it you lose it.

Robert Underwood: so, you have to do it for the length of the contract.

Brian Germane: we always want to have an AWOS, we have seven years on it. the low bid is what got us this one, but it turned out to be the most expensive in the end to run.

Robert Underwood: we are going to talk about debt, the airport got a loan from Montana Aeronautics, and this is our last payment, and we are going to pay it early and we will bring it back as a budget amendment for the airport to refund this year and last year for the loan payment out of the TEDD money. It is an accounting glitch, the auditor said to reimburse the airport from the TEDD fund. They have gone up and the airport will be over budget and that is because of the fuel, there will be a budget amendment coming forth to correct this.

Brian Germane: we expected to sell 10 thousand gallons, and we are probably going to sell about 17,000 gallons.

Robert Underwood: airport project fund, this is for the airport, money that comes in from the feds to pay for projects we either get this money from the feds or Montana Aeronautics. Right now, in the master plan, fed and MA is going to be billed to them for \$19,000 for the master plan. We have the taxi way. Engineering cost at about \$80,000 and construction is about \$340,000. All in all, if you look at it, we already have federal funds over \$400,000 this year. If we get another grant we are going to get another audit so that is why we are going to build that into the grant.

Gina Crowe: make sure that Tyler knows about that.

Robert Underwood: the airport owes \$2,600 and that is what they owe on the master plan, 5%.

Jenelle Berthoud: is the tractor grant part of this fiscal year or next fiscal year?

Brian Germane: 2026/2027 those will be grant funds that we will receive in July. \$57,000.

Robert Underwood: you can see how that money comes up. Next meeting we will be doing the rest of the general fund, then water/sewer public works. somewhere in there we will do the revenue.

Mayor Crews: when is the next meeting.

Robert Underwood: you guys need to determine when is the next meeting.

(side conversations took place about possible dates for the next budget workshop meeting)

Robert Underwood: I would propose that we send out the general fund in an email to show you the numbers.

Mayor Crews: that sounds good to me.

Councilmember Bailey: I am available April 27th for the pool meeting.

Councilmember Wandler: 6:00pm?

Mayor Crews: 6:30pm. I am sure when we post that we will have some people show up.

3. Public Comment

NONE

4. Adjournment

Councilmember Bailey: make a motion to adjourn.

Councilmember Smith: 2nd.

APPROVE:



James Crews, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jenelle S. Berthoud, Town Clerk