

Stevensville Budget Workshop FY2026/2027 Minutes

for TUESDAY, JULY 07, 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, Ross, Wandler and Smith were all present. Along with department heads John Boe and Jeff Motley

2. Discussion on the Following Items

a. General Fund FY26/27

Robert Underwood: I will start with revenues compared with expenditures.

Councilmembers, Staff and Mayor discussed salaries, general fund line items, requests for the fire department and police department.

Robert Underwood: lets go through expenditures. Referred to the chart provided to the council, mayor and staff. Went through the items that are separated out per department, allocation. (Adobe, Netchex, dot gov etc.)

On the attorneys we are over, having two attorneys is costing us a lot. Right now, it is over budget, and we have not received last years, we are expecting around \$10,000 and we are already over budget, so I bumped it up to \$25,000.

Gina Crowe: is there any way to work on reducing that cost, because it has gone up a lot.

Councilmember Ross: do you think that is because we are using the service more.

Gina Crowe: when the mayor came in he had questions, when we had Greg, he would give us his opinion, and I think what is happening she is doing the research, even though we have already done the research to come up with something.

Mayor Crews: that may be the answer right there, we have to go back to doing the research. We need an opinion on our conclusion; we have a lot of things going on. We have has some instances with the real estate agencies that think they do not have to have a business license in the town limits. I asked the attorney if this is correct and that I needed a yes or no answer. She is currently researching the supreme court ruling.

Councilmember Bailey: what is the name of the man from the university that came out and did a workshop upstairs. Didn't he suggest that we change our attorneys to a salary rate instead of an hourly rate.

Mayor Crews: yes. We should look at that; she is in a contract with us right now.

Jenelle Berthoud: it has been asked in the past for a salaried rate, and they come back with an hourly rate.

Gina Crowe: I think we have to look at a \$75.00 business license and see if it is worth the fees.

Mayor Crews: maybe not but that decision is not only for one year, that is a long time. I did try to get the point across that we needed an answer.

Councilmember Bailey: I would like to know what Hamilton and Missoula are doing for their attorney rates.

Gina Crowe: I think that it is hard to compare towns that are not our size. They bill hourly.

Councilmember Bailey: how do we know that.

Gina Crowe: I know that they do in Missoula.

Mayor Crews: we can talk about it all night, but if we don't sit down and talk about it we won't know.

Councilmember Wandler: I think it is because she is new.

Jenelle Berthoud: I just looked up and the attorney for Hamilton is actually an employee, so she is salaried. Ours are not employees.

Gina Crowe: it makes a big difference.

(Continued discussion about attorneys for the town and fees associated with that.)

Robert Underwood: you can read through this and bring anything back tomorrow. We talked about the police truck I put in the \$80,000 and that is what draws us down. That is why this is a budget workshop. Fire department, \$23,000. We have not paid the one down from last year, this is an area that we can put in a non-voted levy. Some towns rent out their trucks.

Jeff Motley: we have our trucks on the list to rent them out, we don't have anyone to operate them.

Robert Underwood: that is something that we can look at and get \$17,000, 3 Mills. The council needs to look at raising the taxes. And that cost is going to keep going.

Jeff Motley: questions about the budget, on the telephone and internet, what did it go up.

Robert Underwood: it is based on the cost of phones, Spectrum, Century link. That is how you get the numbers.

Jeff Motley: why did it double.

Gina Crowe: spectrum did raise their rates; they used to not charge us for taxes and now they are. That increase came about 2 months ago.

Councilmember Bailey: so, it is going to double for everyone.

Gina Crowe: we have five lines.

John Boe: what does my department pay for a phone.

Gina Crowe: \$35.00 per month, but those are cell phones we are talking about Spectrum. And then you have hot spots and that is another \$35.00.

Jeff Motley: I have another question, number 140. We went from \$9,000 to \$16,000; my salary did not change.

Robert Underwood: that is the work comp for firefighters. Taxes. This is what you pay for your stipend, and Jessica and your assistant.

Jeff Motley: taxes.

Robert Underwood: taxes, work comp. we have to pay all of the work comp on the volunteers.

Jeff Motley: I can understand that, but you have a \$16,000 number. Work comp on 24 people, PERS, all that stuff. Last year it was only \$9,000. If you look back it was lower.

Robert Underwood: I think that they paid it out of other areas, and I caught it this year. We have changed workers comp.

Jeff Motley: why did we change.

Robert Underwood: we had to go to the state fund because MMIA does not have that coverage anymore. So, we have to go to the state fund.

Jeff Motley: and we can't shop around for coverage?

Jenelle Berthoud: we did, but we do not have enough employees.

Mayor Crews: other parts of the employee contributions are we are paying 100% of the health care and 50% of the dental and vision. We can't change that this year, maybe we can next year. We have to give notice.

Jeff Motley: information technologies, we doubled that one again. #356.

Robert Underwood: I would have to show you the sheet, it shows where everyone pays.

Jeff Motley: we spent \$1,100 last year and now we are spending \$3,000. Another question, machinery and equipment, 940. \$11,500.

Robert Underwood: didn't you get five more radios?

Jeff Motley: I got three.

Robert Underwood: that is the information that we did not have.

Jeff Motley: the radios should have been the last budget cycle.

Robert Underwood: we have not paid for them yet, when the year ends, and you don't spend your money we start over, it does not mean the cash goes away we just now have to reallocate it.

Jeff Motley: what we are paying on these extra radios is exactly what we were billed for from the rural fire district this month. June bill. I just got a message from Gina about some more information.

Robert Underwood: so, three extra radios is \$10,000.

Jeff Motley: yes, that is the amount left from the original grant from last year.

Robert Underwood: so, we are paying the \$10,000.

Jeff Motley: no, we are not, we are paying the match for the \$10,000 worth of radios.

Robert Underwood: this grant thing never works out.

Jeff Motley: how can you say it never works out, we got \$17,000 worth of radios and we did not pay over \$10,000.

Robert Underwood: the bill may still come in, and if it does we will put it into June, but if I don't put this in the budget and we pass the budget and then we have to pay it.

Jeff Motley: is the other one paid off, is it already done.

Robert Underwood: I do not see it.

Jeff Motley: that should already have been done and gone. It is.

Robert Underwood: this happens every year, on June 30th if the bill is not there, we do not cover for the next year so that is why we have to put it into the next year. I was told that it was five more radios. We did not take it to council to buy these five more radios, it is something outside the office here, so I do not know, if it was three, then it is three.

Jeff Motley: we got eleven radios; I am not sure how we got them.

Robert Underwood: then how did you get them.

Jeff Motley: we got eleven, we bought wisely and that turned into fourteen.

Robert Underwood: I get the great buying portion of it; I need to know how much she paid. We will look at radios.

Jeff Motley: if the fire department budget was not spent then we should be able to move the money, should we not.

Robert Underwood: the fund is done by the council, the budget is done by the mayor and the code is done. Let's say that we really needed fire hoses, \$5,000 and they did not get ordered and then you spend the money on something else, you still need those fire hoses the next month. You said that you are going to buy a fire hose and then you did not buy it and spent it on something else and the next month in July pops up and you still really need the fire hoses.

Jeff Motley: so, when the fire head prioritizes that we need these, you should be trusting me that I can do this, and if you are not then I will take a job as a lifeguard and make more money because your lifeguards are making more money then your fire chief does in a year. I spend way more time and way more responsibility then your lifeguard.

Robert Underwood: I understand, but nothing goes over into the next year. Except for the turnout gear and the grant writer.

Jeff Motley: we will pay for the grant writer so that will not be a cost.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vicki Motley: I was looking, this kind of goes back to the police department is where it started, the Netchex amount that the police department pays is \$710.00 and the salaries are \$182,000.

Gina Crowe: it does not go by salaries; it goes by check.

Vicki Motley: there are three checks that are written.

Gina Crowe: it goes by payroll check, Netchex charges by payroll checks.

Vicki Motley: how many police are there.

Gina Crowe: three.

Jeff Motley: three in fire.

Gina Crowe: Jessica and two more.

Vicki Motley: the fire department is paying more.

Gina Crowe: we are charged by pay roll.

Vicki Motley: the fire department is budgeted for \$710, and they have three employees and the police department has three employees and you have budgeted \$600.00 that does not seem to be right.

Robert Underwood: the grant writer is in there, even if we are getting it paid back. If you have not paid it yet, it still comes out of cash. This cash number will change depending on what bills we get.

(continued to go through general fund lines)

Robert Underwood: Parks, Gerry comes out of general fund. Nothing really pops out in parks, the pool, we have lost some revenue in the pool.

(continued to go through training, travel and court)

Councilmember Smith: if we don't do the training money where does it go?

Robert Underwood: back in the general fund. Part of the money that is carried over. Example would be that we are 90% spent in the general fund and the 10% will carry over. If we don't spend it, it will stay in the fund. Looking at this, I figure that we need to find about \$170,000.00.

Jeff Motley: we like to have about \$200,000.

Robert Underwood: by law you do not have to have any money in reserve, but not a good idea if we need to fix something. Training, physicals those are always in discussion.

Jeff Motley: what that represents is two sets of bunker gear, if we went on a fire tonight and contaminate two sets of bunker gear we cannot decontaminate it, and then in the budget we have the funds to replace those two sets of bunker gear.

Gina Crowe: isn't that what the grant is for?

Jeff Motley: no.

Councilmember Bailey: so, you don't have actual plans to replace it but would like to have the money available.

Jeff Motley: it is an insurance type of a thing. If I don't ask for it then I have to go back and ask for it.

Robert Underwood: if you put \$8,000 in there then, not saying that this is going to happen, then you have that money to do something else with.

Jeff Motley: that could happen, but as a manager of the fund that has not happened in 31 years.

Gina Crowe: can I recommend something for the training, can we just have someone come here to do the training, and maybe share with some others.

Mayor Crews: we have already done one of those this year and I also attended another one outside of here, I think that if we can keep them on track it is a good idea, we could look at that.

Gina Crowe: I think that is a good idea for them to come here so that we do not have to travel and spend money on rooms and fuel.

Mayor Crews: we need participation, people have to make time to attend the training.

Gina Crowe: even if we did not have participation it would still be worth it to have them come here.

Mayor Crews: I do not have a problem with that.

Councilmember Bailey: I think that it is a good idea and it makes sense.

Mayor Crews: for those of you that attended the mini summit we had here did you get anything out of it. (all said yeah). If you got something out of it then it is worth it. I encouraged the department heads to attend, and Jeff Motley could not because he has a job, I think that we entertain compensating his wages for that day. He is a volunteer.

Jeff Motley: since we are here, let's talk about this list. The fire physicals, 24 volunteers on the roster, \$4,000.00 is what I have. We have a criteria list that we want them to go through, that doctor gives us a thumb up or thumb down on if they are physically fit or not. They are volunteers, at least we could give them that physical they do not get a stipend. The training, a chance to get to learn about many topics so for \$2,000 I can get a lot of people to go. The signs, I would negotiate the signs. Scene lights, they will be on the list next year if they are not on the list this year, kind of a safety thing. Radios. Clothing for \$8,000.00. we get a volunteer and we don't have something that fits then we do not have a volunteer.

Robert Underwood: on this list we just added four used trucks for public works. (reviewed where the %'s come from). I had to go back to this number because we have not paid the \$23,000 for the relief fund for last year. Look at the general fund and look at what you can cut.

Jeff Motley: wouldn't the relief money come out of the cash reserve from last year.

Robert Underwood: yes. the hard work of this whole thing, I have been preaching we are slowing going down the tubes, this year, if you look at the individual amounts.

Gina Crowe: we did get a donation from First Security for \$1,500 for the pool certifications.

Mayor Crews: this is the very reason that I put my foot down getting repairs done by some of these contractors. We are not going to pay these outrageous fees to fix items that our guys can do. These trucks at public works have been beat to pieces. We have to start holding our people accountable, if we get new trucks there will need to be daily checks. I do not mind not going to training.

Councilmember Wandler: we seem to have so much money in the bank in savings and bonds where does some of that money come back into our account.

Robert Underwood: the money is in different funds, here is our cash right now, most of our cash is in water and sewer. Lets look at the one million in water asset, but it will not fix anything, does not replace a water tank, or a road. Everything is so expensive. In the big picture for water and sewer it is a lot of money, but it has to stay there because you have to have money in reserve. Water and sewer are looking good right now, but in the big picture if anything goes down we won't have enough.

Mayor Crews: we need safety equipment for our guys. They need safety gear, cones, work lights.

Robert Underwood: when you look at the funds, the airport has \$5,000. Water and sewer are okay. Lighting districts are their own fund. The general fund, where do we cut. The 2.8% COLA, we may have to look at that. Close the pool and save about \$30,000.00. These are the tough decisions.

(side discussions around wages, benefits)

Councilmember Bailey: how long has that public works position been posted and open, and vacant.

Mayor Crews: a while. We lost Kevin and then we lost the other guy.

Councilmember Bailey: this assistant position has been vacant for some time, and the work has been absorbed do we need to replace this position. We need to cut money.

Mayor Crews: we have to have licensed operators.

Councilmember Bailey: how many.

Mayor Crews: we have to have at least one, we have a contractor that has a sewer license and Stephen has water.

Councilmember Ross: she is talking about the assistant.

Councilmember Bailey: this position has been vacant for five months and the work has been getting done for five months. Do we need to replace them.

Mayor Crews: you do not understand how strapped the guys are.

Councilmember Bailey: I believe you, and we need to cut so I am asking about it.

Mayor Crews: if someone wants to go on vacation we are screwed. I have a supervisor that is supervising one person, and I just started supervising the park manager.

Gina Crowe: you have to have a certified operator, so if I go and take the test and pass it, I still have to have two years of experience. We have to have Glenn because he has to be the one that is going to train the next one.

Councilmember Bailey: we need to make sure cuts .

Mayor Crews: the fact is that the work that needs to get done is not getting done, we need the two people back, if we get one water leak it takes everyone. We are not even into wintertime yet.

(continued discussion around wages and positions in public works)

Councilmember Bailey: my question is would they like to have a new car, additional help or additional money. I am curious.

Robert Underwood: look at public works, only 10% of their salaries come from the general fund.

Councilmember Ross: it is only \$6,000.00.

Mayor Crews: we are supposed to have five guys to do everything around town. Can we cut this off tonight and resume tomorrow.

John Boe: I know that it is a little different from where I came from. we would get a stipend if we used our own cell phone, if we drop the phone, I don't even know if it is possible.

Robert Underwood: the freedom of information act.

Gina Crowe: if something goes on chief you do not want them to take your phone.

John Boe: I am just thinking of where I need to cut my budget.

Gina Crowe: we need to really look at the holidays, if they are going to work a holiday.

John Boe: I would agree.

(conversation around access fees)

3. Public Comment

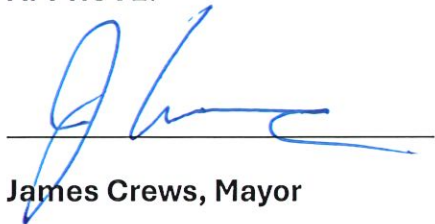
NONE

4. Adjournment

Councilmember Ross: motion to adjourn.

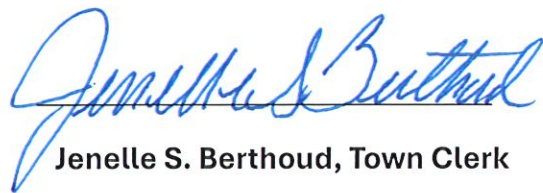
Councilmember Wandler: 2nd.

APPROVE:



James Crews, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jenelle S. Berthoud, Town Clerk