

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION**  
**March 3, 2026 -- City Commission Work Session**  
**Civic Center, Gibson Room 212 -- Mayor Reeves Presiding**

**CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM**

**ROLL CALL/STAFF INTRODUCTIONS:**

City Commission members present: Cory Reeves, Joe McKenney, Rick Tryon, and Casey Schreiner. Commissioner Shannon Wilson was excused.

Also present were City Manager Greg Doyon and Deputy City Manager Jeremy Jones; City Attorney David Dennis; Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, Grant Administrator Tom Hazen and ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman; Acting Fire Chief Jeremy Virts; Police Captain Doug Otto; and, Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**WORK SESSION ITEMS**

- 1. UPDATE ON ARPA FUNDED COMMUNITY PROJECTS INCLUDING A PRESENTATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARPA FUNDS AWARDED TO GREAT FALLS COLLEGE MSU FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Finance Grant Administrator Tom Hazen reported that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law on March 11, 2021. ARPA was a unique funding mechanism through which federal dollars were allocated directly from the United States Department of the Treasury to federal departments, states, countries, and local governments. Allocation amounts were determined by a formula similar to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) calculation. The City received two deposits, one in May 2021 and one in May 2022, totaling \$19,472,737.00. Currently, the City has spent approximately \$18.5 million. Recipients were given a lot of flexibility under this program and allowed to fund a variety of projects provided that those projects met certain eligibility requirements. Great Falls College Montana State University (GFCMSU) was one of the City subaward recipients.

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Finance Grant Administrator Hazen and ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman, and Great Falls College Montana State University Executive Director of Career and Technical Education Quincy Jones reviewed and discussed PowerPoint slides (available in the City Clerk's Office). Highlights included:

- American Rescue Plan Funding:
  - Total Allocation - \$19,472,737.
  - Funds had to be Obligated by 12/31/2024 and Expended by 12/31/2026.
  - Four Eligible Uses:
    - Responding to public health emergency and negative economic impacts.
    - Provide pay to workers.
    - Provide Government Services.
    - Make necessary water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure improvements.
  - Great Falls City Commission opted to issue ARPA funded Subawards to Community partners in September of 2021.
  - Application Process:
    - Applications accepted from February 2, 2022 to July 15, 2022.
    - Scored by Internal Committee.
    - Committee recommendation approved by City Commission on December 6, 2022.
    - 14 projects totaling \$2,884,557.00.
- Great Falls College Montana State University Career and Technical Education One-Time Funds, Ongoing Impact Workforce Results from ARPA:
  - Workforce pipeline – The Who:
    - Justice Involved: Youth court referrals; Pre-release residents.
    - Veterans.

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- Under-employed adults: Job Service; Vocational rehabilitation; Opportunities, Inc.
- Workforce pipeline – The Foundations:
  - Technical Training: Construction; Flooring Installation.
  - Safety Training.
  - Job Site Ready Training.
  - Essential Skills Training.
- Workforce Pipeline – The Impact:
  - 73 – OSHA 10 Certifications.
  - 20 – first Aid/CPR Certifications.
  - 11 – Job Site Ready Certifications.
  - 4 – Flagger Certifications.
  - 7 – NCCER Core Level 1 Certifications.
  - 3 – HiSET (High School Equivalency) Earned.
  - 13 – Basic Flooring Installation Certifications.
  - Community Impact – reduced barriers; alternative pathways; labor supply; supported housing construction capacity; increased social stability.
  - A job is not just income it is behavioral intervention: Recidivism for adults with job training is reduced to 15-20% vs. 25-40 %. Montana DOC community corrections outcomes and RAND Corporation correctional education meta-analysis.
- Estimated Community Impact: Youth (Lifetime) \$500,000.00; Adult (First Year) \$80,000.00; Underemployed \$30,000.00; Veterans \$35,000/00.
- Workforce Pipeline – The Future: Operations Model: Short-term workforce credential program and employer connected training – Employer demand; Blended funding model; Community partnerships.

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- Workforce Pipeline – The Partners: Habitat for Humanity; Youth Court; Job Service; Vocational Rehabilitation; Opportunities Inc.; MT Contractors Association; Floor Covering Education Foundation; Great Falls Public Schools; Accelerate Montana; Floors and More; Pierce Flooring; Sletten Construction; Dick Anderson Construction; United Materials; RDO; Tractor and Equipment; Torgersons; TC Glass; Tri-State.
- Workforce Pipeline – The STARS: Future Build and Basic Flooring Installation.
- ARPA Projects Status:
  - The Tier 1 ARPA projects are all completed, except for the Police Dept. Evidence Building.
  - Major projects completed in 2025 include the Transformer/Boiler Replacement and the Court Relocation.
  - Final budget allocations had to be made in December of 2024. At that time, staff allocated all remaining dollars to existing project budgets to cover any construction overages.
  - Allocated budgets have been met, with all ARPA dollars being accounted for and no overages have occurred as of yet.
  - The Police Department Evidence Building construction is going well, with most of the infrastructure already in place. Most of the remaining work is in finishes and security items. Construction is likely to be substantially complete in May.
- Impact:
  - Understanding that these ARPA dollars would be a one-time infusion of money, projects were selected based upon their potential for operational impact and their inability to be funded by other revenue sources in the future.
  - Smaller projects that were completed early on and were more administrative in nature include IT Network Security, Animal Shelter Cattery, Library Internet Expansion, and Parking Garage Security Improvements. These projects were quick, easy wins that provided last-mile or bridge funding to enhance existing projects or provide services that benefited the City's operational potential.

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- The Fire Station renovations included various HVAC updates, boiler replacements, as well as living quarter and bathroom remodels in all four Fire Stations. These stations had never received this scale of major renovations since they were built in the 1970's.
- The Garage Door replacement at each Fire Station enabled the stations to rely on newer technology and better operation of the doors for the fire response calls. It also saved the department from having to make multiple service calls to fix aging equipment and searching for obsolete parts to fix them.
- The Fire Engine Refurbishment project replaced the engine and other various parts, on three of the City's older fire engines. This enabled the City to avoid the cost of total replacement of these engines (estimated at approximately \$1 million at a time), and allowed us to extend the useful life of these three trucks another 10 years.
- The miscellaneous Fire Equipment project allowed for purchase of equipment to support fire operations, including a hose washer, various PPE gear, and SCBA equipment. The operational impacts include time saving activities and purchase of gear that was otherwise difficult to fund all at once.
- The HR remodel was completed in 2023. This project remodeled a space that had been rearranged and made to work numerous times over the years. This remodel gave the staff better functional offices, a kitchen area, and common spaces.
- The HVAC Project was also completed in 2023. This project replaced the buildings original boilers, which were over 80 yrs old and also in need of constant repair. It also replaced the transformer and moved it outside of the building, to comply with modern code and safety regulations. The project also replaced the main electrical distribution panel for the building which was from roughly the 1970's, and will ensure future reliability and additional electrical capacity.
- The Court remodel project was completed this last October. This project not only effectively moved the Courts out of the basement; it gave them 2 large functional courtrooms, a consolidated office space with future capacity, and also upgraded the audio/visual components to bring them up to date with the current virtual needs of municipal court operations.
- The Evidence Building project has been a need for the Police Department (PD) for over 20 years. The project went through an in-depth design

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phase to understand how to best support the growing retention requirements, space availability, and funding opportunities. Construction began in August 2024, and is currently scheduled to be complete in May. This addition gives the Evidence staff dedicated office space, with room for additional evidence staff in the future; as well as a dedicated meeting space. It also optimizes the Evidence processing flow to accommodate the needs of Evidence staff, officers, and any potential legal staff that needs access. The building has numerous security features, designed for safe and secure processing of vehicles and other sensitive types of evidence. The addition provides over 8,000 square feet of additional storage and processing space for the police department, which is estimated to give the PD sufficient storage capacity for the next 15-20 years.

- ARPA Sub Awards:
  - Great Falls Voyagers - \$600,000.00 for Centene Stadium Field Repair. Funds will be used to make repairs to the playing surface. This will ensure the ongoing viability of a facility that is used by professional, amateur, and local school teams. Also, maintains a valuable tourism draw and local business partner in the Great Falls community.
  - NeighborWorks Great Falls - \$496,810.00 for increased Owner-Built Home, or Mutual Self-Help Program (MSHP), Operations. This award will allow for increased and future-looking operations associated with the MSHP. These funds will contribute to the eventual construction of 100 new homes. The proposed development is located at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South and 13<sup>th</sup> Street South.
  - Peace Place - \$375,000.00 for building renovation. Funded the renovation of an existing (and currently empty) downtown location to include classrooms, rest rooms, offices, a kitchen, and other faculties as needed.
  - Alliance for Youth - \$287,278.00 for improving mental health and reducing violence by strengthening parent-child relationships. Funds used to enact evidence-based practices at the Alliance for Youth Headquarters designed to directly address abuse in our community and is anticipated to benefit hundreds of residents. To date, ARPA funding has provided therapy services across a variety of programs to 2,729 individuals.
  - Ideal Option - \$228,980.00 for increasing access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT). Ideal Option offers substance use disorder

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treatment in Great Falls. Ideal Option used these funds to offset the expenses incurred in the first six months of this new location.

- Great Falls Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) - \$215,000.00 for development of Tourism Master Plan. This plan utilized assessments conducted by professional consultants to evaluate Great Falls' current and potential status as a tourism destination.
- Great Falls College Montana State University (GFCMSU) - \$197,350.00 for job training and education for at-risk youth.
- Opportunities Inc. - \$97,750 for mitigation improvement to facility. Funds used to expand the entry/waiting area and create a safer and healthier environment for people seeking appointments.
- United Way - \$85,000 for Early Education Assistance. Funds used to coordinate the availability of early childhood education, bridging gaps for children through kindergarten enrollment, and increasing access for underserved populations in conjunction with Great Falls Public Schools.
- YWCA - \$75,000.00 for Rental Assistance. The YWCA provided women the financial resources to place first/last month deposits when entering into a new rental agreement. The YWCA has been able to help 45 victims of domestic violence secure housing through their rental assistance program.
- Great Falls Scottish Rite Childhood Language Disorders Clinic - \$70,894.00 for early intervention speech/language/feeding outreach support. Increased access to speech/language/feeding therapy on site in daycare centers, homes, or other youth focused locations.
- Cascade County Historical Society - \$56,595.00 for technology upgrades to Ozark Club at Cascade County History Museum. Funds used increase the remote gathering capacity of the museum.
- Helping Hands - \$49,900.00 for operation of a food pantry in Downtown Great Falls. Helping Hands is located in the downtown area and provides food, hygienic items, and clothing to individuals facing financial hardship.
- Discovery Family Counseling Services - \$49,000.00 for expansion of services. Funds used to expand the mental health therapy services available for children as young as three years old. Specifically,

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discovery implemented programs designed to treat behavioral health concerns in youth through “play therapy”.

Grant Administrator Hazen added that \$500,000 was distributed to the Great Falls International Airport to support its Small Community Air Service Development Program grant, \$1.4 million of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) was distributed to Great Falls Development Alliance (GFDA) to establish a revolving loan fund, \$5,854,585 was used to support Lift Station 1 improvements and \$3,729,200 was used for the Central Avenue 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Stormwater project.

Mayor Reeves received clarification that the subaward for GFCMSU must be expended by December 2026.

Chad Swift, Floors and More, reported that through the GFCMSU, two cohorts of students have graduated and there are 10 people in Montana under 30 years old who are in the program and going to be flooring installers. The funding for this program has impacted the local economy. There are 21 of these schools throughout the nation; however, this school works specifically well with the help from Ms. Jones and is being nationally recognized for the work being done and the population being served in the City.

Mike Chouinard, Pierce Flooring, explained that it is rewarding to see younger people interested and excited about the program and proud of the work they are doing. The Education Foundation set this up in four silos including two weeks of carpet, hardwood, resilient and ceramic tile. The program is working well and is successful.

Commissioner McKenney received clarification that the program is scholarship based, students support themselves while going to school by working evenings or weekends and sometimes a stipend is provided to help supplement while a student is attending the class.

Commissioner Schreiner inquired about the opportunity to leverage additional funds to maintain this program and if employers recognize NCCER Core Level credentials.

Ms. Jones responded that the Floor Covering Education Foundation (FCEF) is a national organization that has scholarships students can apply for, is an eligible training program through the Department of Labor and Industry and if students go to Job Service, they can oftentimes get the training paid for. The GFCMSU has some funds internally from philanthropy and manufacturers have offered significant discounts on supplies, materials and tools. Most of the construction industry accepts the NCCER Core Level credentials; however, residential construction is not a registered apprenticeship.

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Commissioner Tryon inquired if this outstanding program would be eligible for Community Block Development Grant (CDBG) funding through the City in the future.

ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman responded that there is a possibility it could be done under professional services on a scholarship basis; however, it would require City staff to do more research to see if the program would be eligible for CDBG funding.

Mayor Reeves inquired why Park Maintenance District funds were used for the Centene Stadium repairs instead of the remaining funds from the \$600,000.00.

Grant Administrator Hazen responded that these funds had to be obligated to specific projects identified going into December 2024. The project identified was specifically related to the playing surface and under the ARPA rules, the remaining funds could not be used beyond the scope of that.

Commissioner McKenney expressed appreciation to ARPA Project Manager Tarman and Grant Administrator Hazen for their efforts with regard to the deferred maintenance projects.

Commissioner Tryon inquired about the audit process for monitoring funds spent for the subawards, if it meets requirements of the City in terms of conflict of interest, and if audit reports for expenditures for subawards are available to the public.

Grant Administrator Hazen responded that funds spent for the subawards are audited at multiple levels including the City and the City's annual single audit. It is required in the contractual language that any funding recipient meet the City purchasing requirements and financial policies. With regard to whether audit reports for expenditures for subawards being available to the public, Grant Administrator Hazen stated that he did not have a definitive answer at this time, and committed to looking into the matter and reporting back.

City Manager Greg Doyon expressed appreciation to Grant Administrator Hazen and ARPA Project Manager Tarman for their efforts with regard to managing ARPA funds, the transformational projects and CDBG program.

### **DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS**

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that a strategic capital investment reserve (SCIR) update and parking summit update will be topics for the March 17, 2026, work session.

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**ADJOURN**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of March 3, 2026 at 6:35 p.m.