RESOLUTION NO. 2026-28

A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OF THE CITY OF BELGRADE FOR THE 2027 MONTANA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, actions of the Montana Legislature directly affect the services, finances, infrastructure, and personnel of local governments and the residents they serve; and

WHEREAS, the City of Belgrade is a growing first-class municipality with substantial responsibilities for public infrastructure, planning, public safety, and efficient delivery of essential services; and

WHEREAS, the City of Belgrade works with other municipalities and the Montana League of Cities and Towns to support effective municipal government and productive relationships between state and local governments; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to identify priorities that recognize the unique needs of Belgrade and its residents while supporting responsible statewide policy solutions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELGRADE, MONTANA, that the following priorities are adopted for the 2027 Montana Legislative Session:

1. **INFRASTRUCTURE AND MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**

    a. Support legislation streamlining water-right place-of-use changes and related approval processes when property is annexed into a municipality or connected to a municipal water system, while protecting existing water rights.

    b. Support changes to statutes and administrative rules enabling first-class cities with qualified utility and engineering personnel to self-regulate municipal water and wastewater systems to the greatest extent allowed by federal law, including local review, approval, inspection, and certification of system designs, extensions, alterations, and construction, without duplicative state review, unnecessary delays, or

needless expense, while maintaining applicable public-health and environmental standards.

c. Support funding and legislation improving the safety, efficiency, and connectivity of Belgrade's transportation network, including major road corridors, railroad crossings, and interstate connections.

2. REGULATORY EFFICIENCY

a. Support elimination of duplicative local and state permitting, plan-review, and approval requirements when equivalent review has already been performed by a qualified public agency.

b. Support predictable review deadlines, coordinated state-agency decisions, and simplified administrative processes that shorten public infrastructure and private development timelines without compromising public safety or environmental protections.

3. LAND USE AND HOUSING

a. Support practical amendments to the Montana Land Use Planning Act (MLUPA) to resolve implementation ambiguities, reduce unnecessary administrative burden, preserve meaningful local planning, and clarify a municipality's authority to require essential infrastructure and public-safety improvements.

b. Support measures that facilitate workforce and attainable housing while allowing municipalities to address actual water, wastewater, transportation, drainage, and emergency-service capacity.

c. Oppose legislation that unnecessarily preempts local zoning, land-use decisions, or reasonable public-safety and infrastructure standards.

d. Support impact-fee laws and other mechanisms that allow municipalities to recover the costs associated with new development, ensuring that growth pays its fair share rather than shifting those costs to existing taxpayers and utility ratepayers.

4. TAX FAIRNESS AND LOCAL FINANCIAL AUTHORITY

a. Support legislation allowing municipalities, with local voter approval, to impose a local-option sales tax and to dedicate up to 100 percent of the revenue collected to direct property-tax reduction, with the percentage determined locally.

b. Support legislation allowing municipalities to establish and administer local-option tourism taxes, including hotel occupancy, rental cars, and other tourism-related activities, to help recover the costs and impacts of tourism on municipal infrastructure, public safety, and community services.

c. Oppose changes in state tax policy that shift costs to municipal taxpayers or reduce local revenues without a fair and sustainable replacement source.

d. Oppose reductions to the municipal entitlement-share allocation.

e. Support preservation of tax increment financing as a redevelopment tool.

f. Support legislation restoring the 25% of newly taxable property value excluded from municipal property-tax levy calculations during the 2025 Legislative Session, allowing municipalities to recover the full revenue associated with new development and growth.

g. Oppose legislation that modifies or diminishes the existing legal rights of municipalities concerning railroad crossings, utility infrastructure, easements, and railroad rights-of-way. Support voluntary agreements that preserve municipal authority, protect existing legal rights, and allow individual municipalities to independently determine whether to participate.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

a. Support restoration or replacement of municipal public-safety revenues lost as a result of property-tax changes enacted during the 2025 Legislative Session.

b. Support reliable funding for law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical response, emergency communications, and behavioral-health crisis services.

c. Support legislation that enables cities and counties to directly establish regional partnerships, consolidate services, and maximize the efficient use of public resources while ensuring appropriate oversight and accountability by their respective governing bodies. Further support the authority of cities and towns to independently determine how best to organize, manage, and deliver services to their communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body, its City Manager, and authorized City representatives may communicate and advocate these policy priorities with legislators, state agencies, and municipal partners. This Resolution expresses legislative policy positions and does not independently authorize any tax, expenditure, debt, or regulatory action.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Belgrade, Montana, this 17th day of November 2026.

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Michael Meis, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Camille Gregory, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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Kyla Murray, City Attorney