

MISSOULA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

CONDENSED BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 21, 2025

FINAL

A Regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency was held on Thursday, August 21, 2025 in the Hal Fraser Conference Room, 140 W. Pine St., and via Microsoft Teams at 11:00 a.m. Those in attendance were as follows:

Board: Karl Englund, Tasha Jones, Ruth Reineking, Melanie Brock, Jack Lawson, Mike Nugent - City Council Ex-Officio Board Member

Staff: Ellen Buchanan, Annie Gorski, Annette Marchesseault, Michael Hicks, Ashley Warren, Lesley Pugh

Public: Matt Ellis, Peter Davis, Jed Easterbrook, Jonathan Pedersen, Eli Field, Jared Petrino, Shanti Devins, Katie Fairbanks, Jeremy Drake, Daniel Lebsock, Summer Nelson, Brian Chaffin, Mark Gahagan, Beata Reintjes, Alison Reintjes, Lauris Reintjes, Alba Bonilla Fernandez, Beth Ammons, Mary Mulcaire-Jones, Melody Cunningham, Liz Ametsbichler, Vicki Watson, Taag Peterson, Griffen Smith, Marie Ducharme, MCAT

CALL TO ORDER

11:00 a.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[July 17, 2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes](#) were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no public comments or announcements for items not on the agenda.

ACTION ITEMS

(30 minutes was allotted for Public Comment on Ogren Park at Allegiance Field – Field Replacement)

[Ogren Park at Allegiance Field – Field Replacement – 700 Cregg Lane \(URD II / Ward 3\) – TIF Request \(Marchesseault\)](#) | [Public Comments received via MRA email](#)

Englund started the meeting off by saying Ogren Park at Allegiance Field – Field Replacement was discussed in length at the last Board meeting and no action was taken. He summed up where MRA is and what it needs to do and the limits of the Board's authority. He said the baseball stadium is located within an Urban Renewal District (URD)

as designated by the City Council. When the City Council designates an URD and an Agency to administer that district, which is the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA), then certain tax dollars that are generated in the URD go to the Agency for use only within the district and only for specific purposes. The Missoula elected officials have leased the baseball stadium to Big Sky Professional Baseball (BSPB) for use for baseball and other purposes. Part of what baseball is leasing is a field suitable for playing professional baseball. The field at the baseball stadium is 20 years old and is at the end of its expected life. Next year it will no longer be suitable for playing baseball. The City needs to either build a new field or have the experts at BSPB contract to have a new field built and for the City to pay for the cost of that. Englund said there is no maintenance fund set aside for that purpose and a new field is shockingly expensive until you look at all that needs to be done. The City has a lot of demands on its general funds and the policymakers of the City have asked MRA, through the budgeting process, to pay for the cost of the new field. It is an appropriate request and something MRA can do because it falls within the categories of things MRA money can be used for like improvement of a public facility. Englund said MRA knew this was coming and have planned for it. The time to do it is now because the field needs to be replaced before next year. At the last meeting there was a proposal from MRA staff that MRA pay the cost of a natural grass field which is the least expensive of the very expensive options for a new field. At that time, MRA learned that BSPB had done some studies and looked into it and would prefer an artificial turf field. They preferred an artificial turf field, in summary, for a more consistent playing surface, ease and cost of maintenance, and extension of the time period when the stadium can be used by others which increases the public value. BSPB was looking into the feasibility of them paying the difference between the cost of a natural grass field versus the cost of an artificial turf field. Englund said there is another complicating factor here which is that under state law redevelopment districts end. When they end the money stops coming in and the ability of the MRA to pay money, even the money that is saved, ends too. This district, URD II, ends in 2031. Englund said this is hopefully the last investment in the baseball stadium that will be paid for with this special kind of fund. As MRA discussed what to do, consistent with what they've discussed what to do throughout URD II, they are not only looking at what is good for redevelopment but also how to keep an eye on the future so that the district is best positioned in the future to continue on with MRA's investments protected. He said the Board asked BSPB and MRA staff to come back to this meeting with any ideas they have for how MRA can make an investment in the field and also establish a maintenance fund so that when this happens again there is money set aside to do this. That is the purpose of today's discussion.

Englund said MRA heard from folks that were concerned about an artificial turf field and said MRA does not decide whether there will be a natural grass or artificial turf field. MRA doesn't manage the stadium, MRA simply has to decide how much it is going to invest in this public resource. He said MRA understands that their decision may impact whether that field is natural grass or artificial turf and appreciates getting the comments and the tenor and thoughtfulness of the comments. Even though it is not MRA's decision what kind of field is eventually built, the Board does recognize their decision may have some impact on it. MRA also recognizes they can learn more about that. He said he wanted to take approximately 30 minutes and hear people's comments about the artificial turf with an understanding that MRA does not make that decision, but could impact it. He wanted to give 20 minutes to those concerned about it and about 10 minutes for the baseball folks to

respond. Then the Board will need to get back to its decision-making process and decide how much MRA money will be given to the field and do it in a way that will protect the investment. Englund also noted that MRA has read the public comments that have come in online and through email and appreciates them.

Members of the public including Mary Mulcaire-Jones, Liz Ametsbichler, Vicki Watson, Dr. Melodie Cunningham, Beth Adams, Lauris Reintjes, Allison Reintjes, Brian Chapman and Jeremy Drake spoke to express their concerns of an artificial turf field. Their concerns included, but were not limited to, no requests for public input on the field, the research on the dangers of plastics and microplastics and toxicity of artificial turf, health of the environment and athletes, heat/temperature, potential impacts to the Clark Fork River and the Missoula aquifer, physiologic aspects artificial turf can impact on children, who will carry the burden of the plastics if artificial turf is used, exceeding six of the nine planetary boundaries of the Earth's safe operating space, having healthy soils to help with climate mitigation and resilience, recyclability and disposal costs of turf, and investing in artificial turf is in opposition to Missoula's Zero by Fifty goal that was adopted unanimously by City Council in 2016.

Jones asked if all the signatures provided by Plastic Free Missoula are by Missoula city residents. Plastic Free Missoula said there could be a couple on there from Lake County, but they do use the facilities here.

Chapman asked if there are other municipal checks and balances on the environmental impacts, or if that decision is left up to BSPB and within their lease of the field they can do whatever they please. Englund said the answer depends upon whether or not the people who run the City consider it an administrative decision or City Council decision. Nugent said it is a little bit tricky in that the City doesn't have a policy on this right now. The City has fields that have turf on them, for instance at Fort Missoula. It is further complicated because it is less money for the MRA to approve the artificial turf than the natural grass, so that would be a negotiation between BSPB and the administration. He said based on all of the comments he thinks it is a discussion that would end up at City Council. Nugent said since they have heard from the public he has started to get questions from department heads who want more information about other places where there is turf and want to know if they have seen any of the environmental impacts. He said the University of Montana has had turf on the football field for 25 years. The UM softball field was just replaced with turf. Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS) has turf on their football field as well. He said there is a broader policy conversation that would have to occur at the City Council level. Drake said MCPS did hear comments from the public about the toxicity and carcinogenic concerns of turf before they installed it. They did due diligence and found a field that they thought would be beneficial and less toxic. That was ten years ago and there is more science and research now. The particular material MCPS chose, Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer (EPDM) rubber, has research that has recently shown the nanoplastics from it are toxic to aquatic life. Drake said they have more information now and decisions can be made from a more informed standpoint.

Matt Ellis, BSPB, introduced members of his team including Peter Davis - BSPB Chairman, Jared Petrino and Jed Easterbrook - Turf Target Sports and Eli Field - Frenchtown High School Activities Director. Ellis said the decision on artificial turf or natural grass has not

been made at this point, but will be making a case for turf. He said he really respects everybody in the room and BSPB are big advocates on a lot of the things they are working on. They just switched their water bottles to aluminum at the ballpark and are trying to do their part to help the environment. He spoke to the community benefits of artificial turf which include extending the season and hours in a day the field can be used, more community groups and organizations that can use the field, more events on the field, water conservation, no fertilizers or pesticides, and less yearly maintenance costs.

Ellis said twenty years ago they wouldn't have talked about artificial turf because the technology wasn't there. As with a cell phone, the technology is totally different from year to year. The same goes for turf, it is continuing to evolve to the point where BSPB are excited about what they can do to make it one of the most environmentally friendly fields in the state. The turf upgrades they are proposing with the field are Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)-free turf. BSPB is also proposing a CoolPlay system that helps cool down the field based on what is in the infill. The infill doesn't have to be rubber and they are looking at organic materials. Petrino spoke about "carbon catch" which is something that just came out within the last year and a half. There isn't a field in Montana with it yet, but "carbon catch" is a mineral they put in the infill and it reacts to water. It is the same process farmers have been using for over 25 years to lock carbon away. It is a benefit for the environment and has gotten good reviews. It allows for the carbon footprint to significantly be addressed. Ellis said the other two things they are proposing on the turf is a sewer drainage system and fully recyclable products. Easterbrook said technology has come a long way in the synthetic turf world and within the last five years they are now able to fully recycle synthetic turf fields into different products. By the end of 2025 they will have a zero install to where nothing will go into the landfills as well. All of Turf Target Sports fields are fully recyclable if the owner opts to do that. Ellis said they are very confident they are putting in a PFAS-free product for the community and noted that studies have shown that natural grass actually has more PFAS than PFAS-free turf. He said water conservation is huge and they currently use well water to water the field. They can eliminate the well needs and keep the water system abundant. They will also ensure there is no runoff into the Clark Fork River. Ellis spoke to injuries and the turf technology and said in some cases the players prefer it over the natural grass. BSPB also consulted their professional ball players and looked at the top new technology on turf including the field in Glacier and they said they prefer playing on it, for the most part.

Field said when the Montana High School Association took on school baseball three years ago, Frenchtown School joined right in. Last year MCPS also joined in, so there are now four local schools with baseball programs. Spring in Montana brings many challenges with weather, scheduling games and facility access. Field said they couldn't have done it without BSPB's help. The extension of the season with artificial turf would be crucial to high school baseball's success. He said an aspect of his role as Activities' Director is keeping the athletes safe and it is a big deal to them. They play most of their high school football games on turf throughout the state and most Activity Directors bring in people to have them certify the fields and make sure they are safe to play on, and so when they send their athletes off they know they are on safe fields. He said in Montana the resources to maintain the football, softball and baseball fields as natural grass isn't there, so turf does provide a safer facility.

Ellis said their organization has always been very socially and community responsible and they will continue to be so. They feel that putting in the most environmentally friendly turf field in the state is a priority for them. BSPB's ownership is committed to the extra cost to do the additions to make the field amazing and hope it will influence future development of fields in the community as well. The extended life of the seasons for community groups will make this City asset that was designed for community use, which they support and push for every day, grow. Ellis said they are excited about it and are committed to having a great playing surface and maintenance plan in the future.

Buchanan said she came away from the last meeting understanding that the Board wanted staff to do some internal brainstorming about how to address the creation of a maintenance fund. They know regardless of what the deal is, it is going to have a lifespan and will have to be replaced after URD II no longer exists. Staff have come up with a number of different possibilities, some of which will need to be vetted with Administration and City Council. Some simple things include Big Sky doing a ticket surcharge on all tickets to events with the exception of Paddleheads baseball games. Buchanan estimated it would generate tens of thousands of dollars, maybe more. She said there was a \$1.00 surcharge on the tickets sold for the Mumford & Sons concert and it generated \$14,000. Other concerts like Paul Simon and Allison Kraus generated around \$8,000.

Englund asked how the money works in terms of the City putting that money into a maintenance fund, or if BSPB would do it. Nugent said it would depend on what the terms of the agreement are and who is collecting it. Ellis said it is a complicated negotiation with the City. BSPB's lease is going to go up from \$40,000 to \$120,000 to help supplement the loss of Logjam on the lease. That also opens up their ability to do more events like they did prior to Logjam joining them. They are committed to doing that and doing it responsibly and safely for the facility and hope the extra revenue from events will help contribute to a maintenance fund as part of that whole process. Buchanan said MRA staff will be involved in the creation of the lease. She said staff discussed investing more TIF funding into the facility and refinancing with a lower debt service payment to figure out if there is anything to be gained by that. For instance, they refinance for \$80,000/year versus \$120,000/year and the difference of \$40,000 can then go into maintenance. The debt on the stadium is not tied to the life of the district.

Jones said she is hearing that negotiations will continue with a mind toward creating solutions for a maintenance fund, but that is beyond the purview of MRA's decision making. Buchanan said loud and clear MRA has said they think it is important to create a mechanism to create a maintenance fund moving forward because the district will not be around after 2031. Jones said to the extent one of the solutions includes MRA funds it will come back to the Board for approval. Buchanan said yes, they are brainstorming at this point. Davis said BSPB understands the need for a maintenance fund and that resources will not be there in the future. They are more than happy to contribute what they can to make it a viable fund. Ellis said their commitment is to get this playing surface in good shape going forward and come up with a program that has a long-term maintenance fund, working with the MRA and City of Missoula. He said it is too complicated to be done in this meeting and they don't even know how many days the facility will be available to the public to figure out models on how much a maintenance fund can generate. It changes the game if they go turf.

Englund said the staff memo recommends BSPB get \$x.xx amount if it's natural grass and \$x.xx amount if it's artificial turf. At the last meeting, BSPB said they were in the process of determining if they could make the investment to make up the difference to get artificial turf. He asked where they are with that process. Ellis said it goes back to the lease negotiation and what they are required to do. He said BSPB is committed to seeing turf happen and did say they will fill that gap. If the community says they need to pay another \$50,000/year to the maintenance fund he does not know how they will pencil that. If the MRA, for example, says they will help contribute to the maintenance fund within the budget approved and the field, then BSPB can focus on the maintenance fund and the turf discussion more. Englund said he does not think MRA can contribute to the maintenance fund because it spends tax increment money after the sunset of URD II. Buchanan said she understands Englund's concern, but thinks it needs to be looked into more. Jones said there is no action item before the Board right now for a maintenance fund contribution and thinks this is premature until an action item is placed before them.

Ellis said the turf discussion changed over the last two weeks and they needed to hear from the community. He said for them to make that decision prior to this meeting was not a smart move. BSPB is still of the mind that turf is the best solution and will work towards that, although they do not know whether or not that will happen. Brock asked if BSPB is willing at this moment to be guaranteed a lesser amount and have that gap to get turf if they so choose to go that route. She said they will not be able to come back with another request so it is better right now to know that \$1.49 million in TIF funding will be guaranteed with this recommendation. Buchanan said with this being a City-owned facility, saying they can't come back for seconds doesn't really apply. She said this is already seconds on the stadium because the Board approved paying for the HVAC and other upgrades this spring. She said there could be another request between now and 2031 because if a system fails it is the City's facility and responsibility. Buchanan said this is not one and done like a public/private partnership is. Discussion ensued regarding modification of the suggested motion in Marchesseault's memo. Ellis said he was hearing that it is \$1.6 million to put in artificial turf, but wanted to state that it is actually closer to \$2.2 million. It is a \$700,000 gap and he said he doesn't want the Board to think \$1.6 million will pay for turf. Marchesseault said the \$1.6 million covers the natural grass with a large contingency. Buchanan said if the Board can give BSPB the assurance that MRA will fund what they think is going to be the cost of a grass field, they at least know they will have something out there that is playable.

Nugent said to him this is the right direction because MRA's role is to protect the investment. They would be saying whatever the City decides, the MRA is willing to do up to \$x.xx amount and it puts the onus on the conversations between the entity and the City. If that ultimately ends up at City Council then that is where it ends up, but he thinks it takes away the part of the conversation that really isn't MRA's to decide, which is the policy part. Reineking said she thinks the proponents for a natural grass surface made some compelling arguments for long-term community benefit. She said she would eliminate the first two conditions of the staff recommendation and simply say MRA would pay the \$1.616 to replace it with a natural grass system. She said if she makes that motion she has a feeling it would not be approved and understands that. Brock said she was going to drop the natural grass system. Englund said that takes MRA out of the decision that it doesn't have the authority to make.

Jones wanted to say, as a citizen of Missoula, that her experience gives her a certain perspective about this. She is a huge sports advocate, has family members in sports, ran the Missoula Youth Football organization for over a decade, was involved in Little League and three times went to the Little League World Series which was played on turf fields in California. Both of her sons played for the Missoula Mavericks, youth hockey, and now one plays at the collegiate level on a turf field at Montana State University (MSU). A \$26 million indoor facility was just opened this week at MSU with a turf field. She said her experience with youth sports revealed to her that there is a very significant absence of field space in Missoula. The wear and tear on the grass fields in Missoula is quite significant. A way to offload the wear and tear on the grass fields is to have all of the communities use turf fields which preserves our green space. She said to her this isn't just a financial decision, it is providing access to a very healthy outlet for kids and that outlet is sports. It is far more complicated than that, and the science is beyond her, but she knows there are always pushes and pulls and pros and cons in everything they do, which is what makes this policy decision so difficult for MRA. She said it is not just about sports because she was there at the Mumford & Sons concert and it was one of the most impactful concerts as a lover of music in her adult experience. To enjoy that experience in Missoula among her friends and neighbors was very powerful and she would like to see more of that in the space along with the use of it to bring in more cultural events that would also benefit the community. Jones said this is a very complicated issue and they can't just draw a line where science is on one side and financial is on the other, it just isn't that clear and there are lots of things that come into play in this decision.

Nugent said he appreciates the conversation, comments and thoughtfulness from everybody. If the policy conversation comes up in his world he said he will have a lot more thoughts. He said however somebody makes a motion and whatever the Board decides, he cautioned against setting it up so the Board has to potentially have this conversation again. If that scenario plays out where BSPB negotiates with the City and artificial turf is said yes to, and BSPB would have to come back to MRA and ask for permission to change from natural grass to turf, it would be misleading to the community on who the final decision maker is on the turf versus grass at the stadium. MRA should not be held responsible for that decision. Discussion continued regarding wording of the motion.

Englund suggested the motion:

THE MRA BOARD APPROVES UP TO \$1,616,040 TO REPLACE THE PLAYING FIELD AT OGREN PARK AT ALLEGIANCE FIELD WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- 1. REIMBURSEMENT WILL BE MADE UPON COMPLETION OF WORK AND FINAL INSPECTION BY THE CITY, AND**
- 2. BSPB WILL PROVIDE PROOF OF PAYMENT AND LIEN RELEASES FOR WORK PERFORMED.**

BROCK: SO MOVED.

Jones seconded the motion.

Lawson said he will be abstaining from voting because Clearwater Credit Union has a significant investment in the Ballpark which depends on Ballpark revenues.

Davis thanked the Board for their consideration. He said he wished the folks that made public comment were still there because he agrees with almost all of them and has exactly the same concerns. He has kids of childbearing age with kids on the way and has the same environmental concerns. The turf BSPB is looking at is actually more environmentally friendly than the grass field and is a better answer for the community environmentally and for access to the Ballpark. Both are critical in this discussion. Ametsbichler said she doesn't necessarily agree with everything she is hearing, but does appreciate the thoughtful consideration and back and forth to try to figure things out. She is very skeptical about plastic no matter how ecofriendly it is supposed to be and said there is no way that plastic is friendly. She thanked everyone for their time.

Englund said the comments the Board received were very helpful. The thoughtfulness and respectfulness were well done and a great example of how things are done when approached with good will. Reineking said she appreciates the materials from BSPB that answered some of the concerns.

No further discussion. No public comment.

Motion approved (3 ayes, 1 nay, 1 abstention with Reineking voting nay and Lawson abstaining).

MRA Street Tree Memorandum of Understanding with Missoula Parks & Recreation (All URDs) – Request for Approval (Buchanan)

Buchanan said MRA has a relationship with Public Works & Mobility (PWM) for sidewalk and water main projects. Staff is now proposing MRA do something similar with Parks & Recreation's Urban Forestry Division with respect to street trees. She said one reason for wanting to do this with street trees is that in the past when the street trees were in the construction contract on sidewalk projects it required two years of maintenance warranty where they water and fertilize until the tree is established. It gets cumbersome because those are people who do concrete work and they subcontract to landscapers to do the tree work which is more expensive and there is less control over what happens with the trees. Trees are Urban Forestry's business so staff has put together a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Parks that mirrors what MRA is doing with PWM. Buchanan said PWM is also doing a MOU with Parks to do a similar thing on their sidewalk projects. Parks is also offering the service to developers when they have street trees that need to go in sidewalk boulevards with their developments. It will all be centralized and Parks will be in control of watering, pruning, fertilizing, etc.

Buchanan said the unit price per street tree is \$1,000 per tree plus \$25 for project management. PWM is paying the same amount for their projects. The price includes tree purchase, storage if needed, maintenance until it is installed and two years of maintenance warranty service. There will also be a 2.5% charge on top of the unit price for Parks' project management which is what MRA pays PWM for managing sidewalk and water main projects. Buchanan said any project that involves street trees going in will come to the Board for approval.

Reineking said this makes sense and she hopes it provides Parks with the funding for the capacity it will take to do this. Marchesseault said she sat in on the conversations with some of the folks from Urban Forestry and the number provided to Parks for maintaining the program is thought to be a reasonable number by them and they are thinking about the long-term consistency and sustainability. Buchanan added the MOU will be for a three-year contracted period.

LAWSON: I MOVE THE MRA BOARD APPROVE THE PROPOSED MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE MISSOULA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND THE MISSOULA CITY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR TO SIGN THE MOU.

Reineking seconded the motion.

No further discussion. No public comment.

Motion passed unanimously (5 ayes, 0 nays).

MRA Sidewalk Network Projects – Street Tree Installation (URDs II & III) – Request for Approval & TIF Request (Dunn/Buchanan)

Buchanan said there are roughly 150 trees that have not yet been installed on prior and current sidewalk projects in URD II and URD III. Staff said the trees were pulled out of the contracts with the concrete folks and there has not been capacity to get them in the ground yet. Parks has a number of trees stored and ready for planting. The remaining trees will be ordered this fall for planting in the spring of 2026. Staff is requesting funding for 150 trees plus another 10 in contingency in case there are changes or additional needs. At \$1,025 per tree the total amount requested is \$164,000.

Reineking asked if there is already space/places designated for the trees. Buchanan said yes, and they are either going in boulevards or behind the sidewalk. Marchesseault added that street trees were planned for with the sidewalk projects.

REINEKING: I MOVE THE MRA BOARD APPROVE TAX INCREMENT FINANCING FUNDING FOR UP TO 160 STREET TREES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$164,000 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN MRA AND MISSOULA PARKS & RECREATION FOR THE INSTALLATION OF STREET TREES NEEDED FOR MRA SIDEWALK NETWORK PROJECTS IN URD II AND URD III. STAFF REQUESTS THE FLEXIBILITY OF ADJUSTING THE NUMBER OF TREES PLANTED IN EACH DISTRICT BASED ON FINAL NEED AFTER FIELD INSPECTION, NOT TO EXCEED THE TOTAL \$164,000.

Lawson seconded the motion.

No further discussion. No public comment.

Motion passed unanimously (5 ayes, 0 nays).

NON-ACTION ITEMS

STAFF REPORTS
Director's Report

Communications Update

Brock said the update was incredibly impressive and Warren is doing a great job.

Ravara Contingency

FY25 Budget Status Reports

FY26 Preliminary Budget

FY25 Staff Activities Reports (1/11/25 – 5/3/25)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

OTHER ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 12:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lesley Pugh