

AGENDA REPORT

DATE July 19, 2005

ITEM Montana 20/20 Economic Development Planning Study Contribution

INITIATED BY Randy Gray, Mayor

ACTION REQUESTED Approve Contribution to Montana 20/20

PRESENTED BY Randy Gray, Mayor

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the City Commission approve the following motion:

MOTION: I move the City Commission approve an annual contribution of \$2,500 for a two-year period to the Montana 20/20 Economic Development Planning Study.

SYNOPSIS: Under Montana 2020, the mayors of Montana’s seven largest population centers, in partnership with some of the state’s largest employers, economic development organizations, and major newspapers, propose a comprehensive planning study aimed at better positioning Montana’s major cities and their surrounding regions for greater economic prosperity in the future. A two-year study costing \$500,000 is proposed. Costs of this planning study would be shared by Montana 2020’s membership and a federal appropriation request totaling \$250,000.

The City of Great Falls is proposing a \$2,500 annual contribution for a two-year period. Monies will be deposited and held in an account established by the Montana League of Cities and Towns to be used as a match for the anticipated federal appropriation to pay for the cost of the study.

BACKGROUND: Montana is at a critical juncture in its historical development. After economic stagnation in the 1980s, new patterns of economic growth emerged in the larger region in the 1990s. The economy of the Rocky Mountain West became one of the nation’s fastest growing. Portions of Montana are participating in this growth. But, they are doing so almost blindly, absent well-conceived strategies for fully considering key aspects of this newfound growth. New drivers for growth have emerged that are not adequately considered in state-level policy in Montana.

Montana’s cities, once too small to participate in many facets of a more urban-based economy, are seeing increased income growth. They have become “economic engines” – places where economic growth, diversification, and advancement are centering and spreading into surrounding communities. But the needs of cities are not heavily considered in economic development deliberations in Montana. A refocused study of economic change in the region and what this change requires for greater economic prosperity in the future is needed. A new framework for economic development in Montana is needed, constructed from the bottom-up, region by region, not top-down. New thinking and approaches are needed if Montana is to take advantage of emerging growth patterns and better position itself for future economic prosperity.