

# RAIL PARK FUNDING, ALCOHOL SALES ON TAP FOR COUNCIL

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The Kalispell City Council could approve expenditures tonight for a building renovation, travel and work on the Glacier Rail Park.

The largest measure in terms of dollars is a local contribution to the rail park project. The proposed \$4.5 million expenditure would come from the city's West Side Tax Increment Financing District.

The Glacier Rail Park project has been in the works for years. The city is working with various private and public entities to construct a 40-acre industrial area in east Kalispell that would serve as a centralized freight rail hub.

As part of the project, the city would be able to pull up the rails that run north of Center Street and around the mall. There are plans to develop that area for better business, pedestrian and vehicle access.

The city's contribution would be a match for a \$10 million federal infrastructure grant. The Flathead County Economic Development Authority has applied for the grant twice before without success. The authority, as well as private businesses, are also providing matching funds.

According to city documents, the \$4.5 million contribution would go toward construction of the new rail park, as well as design and street upgrades for the "core area" at the north end of downtown Kalispell. Once approved, the money could be distributed periodically throughout the life of the federal grant, which is five years.

A separate smaller expenditure measure is also on the council's agenda.

This would earmark \$2,000 for Mayor Mark Johnson or a designee to travel to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the grant. In March, five council members and some city officials made the trip with the same goal. They met with elected representatives and transportation officials over two days.

The mayor is scheduled to travel in early August with local representatives from other agencies. By that time, the U.S. Department of Transportation will be considering grant applications from across the country.

The council will also consider another spending measure from the West Side Tax Increment District. This would be a redevelopment expenditure for the building at 7 Main Street, formerly the Kelly Main Street Furniture location.

According to city documents, renovation has been ongoing since the building came under new ownership in 2012. The latest plan involves restoration of the building's facade at a total cost of \$64,834.

The request from the TIF fund would cover half of that — \$32,417. The city's Urban Renewal Agency has recommended approval of the measure.

Also before the council meeting is consideration of alcohol at 2015 Thursday!Fest events. Organizers of the weekly summer event have submitted a special permit to allow consumption at the Second Avenue East location.

According to city documents, the measure has been given the OK from various department heads.

The Kalispell Downtown Association is the main sponsor for Thursday!Fest. It's scheduled for weekly events from June 25 through Aug. 27.

The council meeting starts at 7 p.m. today at City Hall.

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