

City of Missoula Lobbyist Report for Week of March 14

Committees and Bills Testified:

Senate Local Government, HB 181: Allow condo unit to be individually counted towards municipal zoning protest. Elsie Arntzen bill we initially opposed due to concerns of over-representation of condo owners. Bill was amended with Jim Nugent's help. Testified in support. Bill quickly passed executive action. HB 542: Revise subdivision and platting act. Continued to testify in opposition. This bill has been substantially changed from the original version, and many of the onerous provisions are now gone. However, the "impacts to agriculture" change to "impacts to surrounding agriculture operations" remains in the bill and we cannot support it. The bill passed committee action and is headed to the floor. HB 516: Limiting local ordinances to state protected classes. Testified in opposition, along with city council members Pam Walzer and Stacy Rye. This bill passed executive action and is headed to the full Senate as early as Monday.

House Taxation: Rep. Arntzen's TIF bills. HB 560: Increase public involvement in urban renewal areas. Chris Behan testified in opposition. Along with MLCT, Billings' reps and Missoula reps, we lobbied this hard for more than a month to get the worst language removed. Which we did. It passed out of the House. While not very onerous, it's questionable whether this does much to assist the public, which was the intent, while potentially creating more work for local governments. HB561, Revise terminology and criteria for factors in urban renewal districts. Chris Behan testified against at the same hearing. Similar to HB560 in how this came about, the heavily amended bill passed out of committee with most of the suggested changes Arntzen wanted now removed. HB 562: Require notification of local governments and schools of urban renewal district. Behan also testified against. Also heavily amended, this bill passed out of committee on a narrow margin. HB 564: Requiring urban renewal districts not supplant municipal services. This was the bill we worried about most because it could have created serious roadblocks for the use of TIF money. Again, we lobbied hard against this bill over the past month and it was tabled in committee.

Senate Judiciary, HB 446: Address homeless prevention for people under Dept. of Corrections supervision. Testified in favor in House and signed in as proponent in Senate judiciary. Also spoke with the chair and committee members. It passed the committee unanimously, then passed the full Senate on second reading, but was tabled on third reading. A motion to reconsider also was denied. HB 384: Revise carrying concealed weapon in prohibited places. Testified in opposition. We opposed in the House and I provided similar testimony in the Senate Judiciary, specific to the city's concern about concealed firearms in government buildings.

House Transportation, SB 111: Limit noneconomic damages in motor vehicle accidents. Signed in as proponent. Was unable to attend due to conflicts.

Senate Local Government, HB 211: Revise laws relating to municipal general obligation bonds. Testified in favor. HB 538: Providing for sale of bonds at public or private sale. Testified in favor. Passed out of committee. HB403: Revise cluster-development law. Generally provides new alternatives to putting land into open space. We supported in the House and testified in support in Senate Local Government. It passed committee.

House Appropriations, HB 10: Long-range information technology appropriations. Committee vote passed. HB 11: Treasure state endowment program and transfers of money to the general fund. We lobbied against and testified against earlier. Committee tabled. HB 351: Treasure state endowment appropriations and transfers to the general fund. We have supported and testified in favor. Watched action in Approps.

Direct Lobbying

I spent most of the week attempting to confirm “no” votes for HB516, but Republicans on the committee who had initially said they would vote “no” ended up switching. We believe this was due largely to heavy pressure from “morality” groups who recognized several of the lawmakers as vulnerable.

Also spent a great deal of time working on additional amendments to HB542, recognizing that it was very likely going to get out of the Senate committee, and we wanted to get rid of as much as we could. Due to willingness by the bill sponsor and other interests, we were able to get nearly all of the most offensive language out, but the “agriculture impacts” language remains, as we were pretty certain it would. We still opposed the bill.