



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

BIANCA L. TIRADO, CITY CLERK

PERSONNEL & FINANCE

SEPTEMBER 3, 2025 5:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

Sheila Niezgodski, Karen L. White, Rachel Tomas Morgan

Committee Members Absent:

Dr. Oliver Davis

Councilmembers Present:

Canneth Lee, Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers, Sharon McBride*

Others Present:

Bianca L. Tirado, Jasmine Jackson, Matthew Neal, Veronica Pitt-Payne, Bob Palmer

Presenters:

Eric Horvath

Agenda:

2026 Department of Public Works Budget Overview

Members marked with an asterisk (*) are in virtual attendance.

Please note the attached link for the meeting recording:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/browse.aspx?dbid=0,0&mediaid=399401>

Please note the attached link for the meeting presentations:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/0/edoc/399382/Public%20Works%202026%20Budget%20Presentation%20FILED.pdf>

Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski called to order the Personnel & Finance Committee meeting at 5:30 P.M.

Committee Chair Niezgodski noted that Committee Member Dr. Oliver Davis will be absent for the remaining Wednesday budget meetings due to a previous teaching engagement.

Committee Chair Niezgodski provided information regarding the 2026 Budget Overview process. City Residents can access the City Budget Survey to provide their input using the following link: <https://southbendin.gov/budget>. Additional questions pertaining to this meeting or the budget hearing can be emailed to the Personnel and Finance Committee Chair, Sheila Niezgodski, at

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Jasmine Jackson
CHIEF DEPUTY CITY CLERK / CHIEF OF STAFF

Matthew Neal
DEPUTY CITY CLERK / DIRECTOR OF POLICY

Margaret Gotsch
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

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sniegod@southbendin.gov and they will be directed to the appropriate department. The Final Budget Hearing is scheduled for October 13, 2025.

Eric Horvath, Director of Public Works, with offices on the thirteenth (13th) floor of the County-City Building South Bend, IN 46601, presented a PowerPoint providing an overview of the proposed 2026 budget for the Department of Public Works. The presentation gave a detailed breakdown of projected expenses in the Engineering, Streets & Sewers, Solid Waste, Water Utility, and Wastewater Utility portfolios. The presentation highlighted personnel changes in the Department including a net reduction of three (3) full-time exempt roles. The twenty-point-two percent (20.2%) year-over-year budget increase was primarily driven by capital improvements to public works infrastructure, including a federally-funded traffic signal upgrade project with a required five-hundred-thousand dollar (\$500,000) match from City funds.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked if the federal grant for traffic signal upgrades has already been secured.

Eric Horvath confirmed that the federal funding is programmed, but subject to any changes made at the federal level. Eric Horvath continued the presentation, highlighting other planned capital investments and changes in operational expenses.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked Eric Horvath to clarify the reason for the budgeted increase in professional services.

Eric Horvath answered that the regulatory process for the planned water utility rate increase requires additional legal and financial services. Eric Horvath finished the presentation, noting that the proposed budget will allow the Department to continue to operate facilities with the same level of service while investing in infrastructure that is important for the City.

Committee Chair Niezgodski opened for questions from Committee Members and Councilmembers.

Council Vice President Rachel Tomas Morgan asked how many personnel will be eligible for the proposed four-thousand dollar (\$4,000) annual professional licensure bonus.

Eric Horvath responded that eight (8) professional licensure bonuses have been budgeted for.

Council Vice President Tomas Morgan inquired about the status of the Cloverleaf project.

Eric Horvath responded that the City received a federal planning grant for the Cloverleaf project and that the environmental analysis process is ongoing. Eric Horvath called upon Jitin Kain, Deputy Director of Public Works, with offices on the thirteenth (13th) floor of the County-City Building South Bend, IN 46601, to provide a more detailed response. Jitin Kain stated that the planning phase of the project will be complete next spring, at which time additional federal funding will be sought for the construction phase of the project.

Councilmember Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers asked what two (2) solid waste trucks will be replaced in 2026.



Eric Horvath replied that the three (3) trucks purchased in 2013 will be decommissioned in the upcoming year.

Councilmember Gooden-Rodgers asked Eric Horvath to explain the reason for budgeting twenty-thousand dollars (\$20,000) for hydrant and valve replacement.

Eric Horvath explained that hydrant and valve repairs are needed to keep valves and hydrants in good working order and prevent disruptions in water utility service.

Council President Canneth Lee asked if the Council will receive a report of graded alleys and paved streets by district.

Eric Horvath confirmed that these reports will be available to the Council, and that the Department's goal is to have this information available in an online map by next year.

Council President Lee asked if the City will be repaving alleys that have already been paved.

Eric Horvath responded that the City maintains all alleys they have paved and will eventually repave these alleys when necessary.

Committee Member Karen L. White asked Eric Horvath to confirm that the allocation for curbs and sidewalks will be the same in 2026 as it was in 2025.

Eric Horvath confirmed that is correct.

Committee Member White inquired about the outcome of the safe alleys pilot program.

Eric Horvath confirmed that the pilot program was successful and the City has continued to budget fifty-thousand dollars (\$50,000) annually to cut back overgrown alleys.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked if the City is on track to replace the aging trucks in the solid waste fleet in a timely manner.

Eric Horvath confirmed that the trucks are being replaced at an appropriate pace. He noted that the typical service life of a solid waste truck is eight (8) years and the central garage performs maintenance to extend the service life beyond that. He said that the current turnaround time for truck replacement in the City is ten (10) years.

Committee Chair Niezgodski noted that one (1) of the eliminated Wastewater Utility positions has a similar description to the newly created position. She asked if there has been background work done related to the digital twin project that will be overseen in the new role.

Eric Horvath explained that the eliminated position involved overseeing the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) sensors at the wastewater treatment plant, but clarified that integrating SCADA sensor data into the digital twin for predictive analytics requires a higher level of technical proficiency than the work performed in the previous role.

Councilmember Sharon McBride inquired about the reason for the water utility rate increase.



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Eric Horvath responded that the rate increase is necessary for the City to have sufficient revenue to replace aging assets and keep up with rising operational costs.

Councilmember McBride asked if residents can still report streetlight outages by calling three-one-one (311) and asked if cuts to the lighting budget will allow the City to keep up with all City-owned streetlights.

Eric Horvath confirmed that streetlight outages should be reported through three-one-one (311) and said he is confident that sufficient funds have been budgeted for streetlight maintenance.

Committee Chair Niezgodski opened the public hearing.

Taylor Greene, 439 S. Illinois Street, South Bend, IN 46619, asked Eric Horvath to confirm which three (3) schools are receiving sidewalk improvements.

Eric Horvath replied that Kennedy Academy, Muessel Elementary School, and Holy Cross Elementary School are receiving sidewalk improvements.

Committee Chair Niezgodski closed the public hearing.

Committee Member White thanked Eric Horvath for his attention and responsiveness to community issues, citing recent instances where residents were impressed with the rapid response from the Department of Public Works.

With no further business, Committee Chair Niezgodski adjourned the Personnel & Finance Committee meeting at 6:55 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheila Niezgodski".

Sheila Niezgodski, Committee Chair

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