THE CITY-COUNTY OF
Butte-Silver Bow

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Why I Accepted an Invitation to Join a Northwest Delegation to Israel

In recent days, I've received questions, and some criticism, regarding my decision to join a delegation of local officials from across the Pacific Northwest on a five-day study visit to Israel. I want to be transparent about why I accepted the invitation, what the trip is (and is not), and how it aligns with the long-term interests of Butte-Silver Bow.

First and foremost, this is not a political trip**.** Regardless of anyone's personal views about the Israeli government or the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, I am not taking, and will not take, any political position. The delegation is focused on community engagement, economic development, and knowledge-sharing**,** just as similar exchanges have been for decades. Chief Executives before me have participated in comparable visits to China, Japan, Germany and other global partners for these same purposes.

The invitation itself came directly from the Consulate General of Israel to the Pacific Northwest and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs**,** who are covering all program expenses. This is not funded by Butte-Silver Bow taxpayers, nor is there any outside influence or obligation attached to my participation. It is an honor to be selected for a delegation of local leaders helping shape municipal policy, innovation, and community development across our region.

So why does this matter for Butte-Silver Bow?

Because we live in a global economy**,** and our community is increasingly recognized as a player on that stage. Our critical minerals reclaimed mine lands, cutting-edge research at Montana Tech, and our Inland Port with Montana's only foreign trade zone have placed Butte in conversations far beyond Montana's borders. Being part of this Northwest cohort allows us to showcase Butte's progress while building relationships that can open doors for future partnerships, investment, and innovation.

Some have expressed concern that traveling abroad distracts from local issues such as housing, mental health, public safety, and economic development. These concerns come from a place of commitment to our community, and I respect that. But the reality is that my team and I work on these issues every single day. A five-day trip does not pause or diminish that work. Our departments remain fully engaged, and these local priorities stay at the forefront of everything we do.

In Israel, our delegation will participate in dialogues with city officials, community leaders, and innovators; visit municipalities working on resilience; and learn from urban innovation centers and economic development models, experiences that other communities have leveraged to inform their own local strategies. We will also visit sites affected by the October 7, 2023, attacks, which will undoubtedly add perspective to conversations about community response, trauma, and recovery.

Representing Butte-Silver Bow in settings like this is not a distraction, it is part of building long-term opportunity at home. The relationships formed among the delegation itself, with leaders from across the Northwest, may be just as valuable as the international connections we form abroad. These are conversations about jobs, investment, innovation, and community development—topics directly tied to the future of Butte.

I appreciate those who have raised questions; public accountability is essential. My commitment remains unchanged: transparency, responsible leadership, and working every day to strengthen Butte-Silver Bow.

Respectfully,

J.P. Gallagher – Chief Executive