

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
July 6, 2010

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Winters presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:45 p.m.

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Michael J. Winters, Robert Jones, Bill Bronson, Mary Jolley and Fred Burow. Also present were the City Manager, Directors of Park and Recreation, Public Works, Library, and Planning and Community Development, the Executive Director of the Housing Authority, Police Chief, Fire Chief and the Administrative Secretary.

1. CENTRAL MONTANA DEFENSE ALLIANCE UPDATE

Central Montana Defense Alliance (CMDA) Chair Dave Weissman reported the group was formed about a year ago from the successes of the former Committee of 80. The Executive Committee consists of City of Great Falls City Manager Greg Doyon, Cascade County Commissioner Joe Briggs, Chamber of Commerce President Steve Malicott (CMDA Treasurer), Great Falls Development Authority President Brett Doney, and the former Committee of 80 Executive Committee (Dave Weissman, Chair; Dave Bertelsen, Vice Chair; Ken Van Sickle, 2nd Vice Chair; Owen Robinson, George Campanella, Al Hobbs, and John Hayes). Also, retired Brigadier General Rex Tanberg from the Montana Air National Guard (MANG) is on board as a “gray beard” or mentor.

Mr. Weissman explained CMDA’s mission is to maintain all current missions at MANG and Malmstrom Air Force Base (MAFB). He added that CMDA is also working to get involved with the Department of Homeland Security, the Army Guard, and RED HORSE. They also want to find new missions that enhance existing MANG and MAFB missions, as well as the capabilities of both bases and the assets of the Great Falls area. Mr. Weissman stated CMDA also wants to build strong and lasting relationships with local leaders and the local delegation field staff. They would continue on with relationship building with the Governor; the D.C. Delegation; Adjutant General Walsh, Commander of MANG; the Pentagon; Global Strike Command, which oversees the mission at MAFB; and anyone who can help secure, enhance and build CMDA’s mission in Great Falls.

Mr. Weissman noted CMDA representatives travel to D.C. at least annually. They have been there once this year and are working on a second trip with Governor Schweitzer and General Walsh regarding MANG issues. He added they also attend several conferences directly related to CMDA’s mission. Mr. Weissman reported he will attend an upcoming Association of Defense Communities conference, along with Greg Doyon and Brett Doney. Also attending will be officials from the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), and Pentagon officials involved with MANG and MAFB.

Mr. Weissman reported he also represents MAFB as one of two local members of Global Strike Command at their twice annual conferences. He noted there are three missile bases involved

(MAFB; F.E. Warren, Cheyenne, WY; Minot AFB, North Dakota).

Mr. Weissman explained CMDA is so involved because the economic impact on Great Falls and the surrounding area is huge. There are roughly 5,000 people employed in the military in Great Falls—MAFB and MANG represent 47% of the economy—and both are major players in a much broader area encompassing all of Montana and a big chunk of the Northwest. Nine surrounding counties have missiles in them from Malmstrom, and they benefit from monies for roads and jobs for roads. There are only two counties in Montana that don't have a Guard member in them. Contractors and vendors from the area benefit from both MAFB and MANG. Great Falls International Airport also benefits from the many military travelers. Many community volunteers come from both MAFB and MANG. Some of the best community leaders have been or are currently in the military. The community enjoys an additional employee base of highly qualified individuals (spouses or second jobs for those in the military). Both bases provide additional jobs to civilians that work on both bases (in addition to the 5,000 mentioned earlier).

Though President Obama has a zero nuke ideal, Mr. Weissman stated it is a difficult time to be in a nuke-free world and missiles must be protected. He believes they have been fairly effective; it looks like there will be a thirty missile reduction between the three bases (ten missiles per base). He noted the F-15's are definitely in jeopardy; they are funded through FY 2012. They could be lost to a base in California, and that is why Governor Schweitzer and General Walsh have been asked to travel to D.C. to help make headway in that battle. MAFB and MANG are too important. The CMDA is a group of volunteers who work because of their love of Great Falls and their appreciation for the men and women in service. In order to succeed, however, Mr. Weissman stated it is vitally important the community speaks with a unified voice. He explained there are twelve members of the CMDA Executive Committee ready to provide any information.

City Manager Greg Doyon, addressed a question from Commissioner Jolley regarding funding for the City Manager to attend the trip in San Francisco, California. He explained CDMA will pay for his trip. However, Mr. Doyon emphasized the importance for the City to continue that link with communities dealing with defense-related issues (base closures, expansions, contractions, changed missions, etc.). Mr. Weissman noted that is also an opportunity to find missions they don't know about. Mr. Doyon added they also can hear what has worked and what has not worked in other communities.

Mr. Doyon referred to the draft Michigan Tentative Analysis. CDMA contracted with a consulting firm, BBPA, to review the last mission analysis done in 2005 and consider where the City is now. Their recommendations may affect the master plan. He added there is also a joint land use study being conducted. All that information interconnects to how and where the City is growing, how the space will be used around the two military installations, and what may help or hinder recruitment or retention of a mission. Mr. Doyon noted Homeland Security helicopters and F-15's flew over the 4th of July Parade; people were excited and that speaks to the pride in the community.

Commissioner Jolley asked if the thirty missile reduction will be ten each base. Mr. Weissman stated that is an educated guess that depends on the ratification of the treaty. Mr. Doyon noted

the disadvantage MAFB has is being a single mission base.

Mr. Doyon stated CDMA will keep the Commission informed when there are functions and distinguished visitors at MAFB. It is important those visitors meet elected officials and see they are appreciated. Sometimes they remember those times when they advance into leadership positions—what the community is like and does it support the installation.

Mayor Winters commented CDMB must try to get representatives in D.C. to come to Great Falls at every opportunity to show them MAFB and see the support from the community. He believes a large percentage of people in the community have had some contact with MAFB.

2. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

Alison Fried, Business Improvement District (BID), explained the general downtown BID boundaries go to 7th Street and to 2nd Avenues North and South. The BID is funded by property owners who are taxed and have chosen to be taxed in order to fund BID on a yearly basis at about \$158,000. Ms. Fried explained the \$158,000 is divided in the best ways to benefit the property owners in that geographical area.

Ms. Fried reported the BID presents a Work Plan and Budget each year. She noted last year the BID was renewed for another ten years. Ms. Fried reviewed the budget for FY 2010-2011. She noted the largest expenditures are for business grants, \$78,570. Those grants are façade grants for updating the exterior of buildings; interior grants for new businesses moving into downtown; and residential grants. However, the \$78,570 doesn't indicate all the progress because most businesses that move downtown have their plan in place before calling BID.

Ms. Fried added another large expenditure is the Tree Program, funded with money allocated to the BID from the ending of tax increment financing (TIF) funds from the City. The other two large expenditures are Advertising (\$20,000) and Special Projects (\$20,000). Ms. Fried explained BID wants to be involved with the Downtown Great Falls Association on a joint marketing plan of the area. She added that, though a downtown park project has been discussed, there are still plans to build a building on the empty lot at the corner of Central Avenue and Fourth Street.

Commissioner Bronson asked about the progress for the creation of a new TIF district. Ms. Fried reported that is an ongoing conversation at the Downtown Action Alliance and with the BID Board.

Mayor Winters questioned the Art Downtown allocation. Ms. Fried responded \$2,000 will be used for the Urban Art project. She commented the project has been a part of downtown for four to five years and should continue forward.

Ms. Fried stated this will be her last year on the BID board, as her eligibility has expired.

Commissioner Burow asked about the Johnson Hotel. Ms. Fried responded the Johnson Hotel was initially a BID project. All five floors were given to the BID for \$1 and condos were

developed. The BID is still involved in part of a Federal grant and has to control a percentage of that building, so the BID owns the third floor. Spaces are rented to United Way, several communication companies, and five to seven different incubator businesses. Ms. Fried added Cindy Cieluch was a news anchor who wanted to start her own photography business and rented a space (\$100-\$150/month). She is currently moving into a building and renting from a building owner on the street. Ms. Fried stated the BID will be involved with that grant for another five years.

Ms. Fried asked about progress to secure a downtown police officer. Police Chief Grove reported some special project officers were reorganized to provide opportunity to police the downtown. The first week two officers spent three days cleaning up people sitting around on benches and writing a number of alcohol citations. They are going to try to continue checking that area through the summer. Chief Grove stated six people are still in training; he does not have enough people to put an officer full time in the downtown business area.

Ms. Fried commented the BID will continue requesting a dedicated downtown police officer. She explained that as business owners and property owners, they see the ongoing safety and security problems every day. Police Chief noted he advised the Downtown Business Association a little over a year ago that if the Police Department ever gets up to the 81 allowable officers and vacancies are filled, a downtown police officer is still in the plan.

Commissioner Jones commented ideas are being discussed to provide a dedicated, full-time downtown police officer. However, there is a need to make an impact now and through the summer, while continuing to look at a larger plan through Weed and Seed for a permanent downtown officer.

Ms. Fried expressed appreciation for the extra manpower provided by the Police force; there are visible differences, but there is a constant issue. Commissioner Burow asked if the school officers could be used downtown during the summer. Chief Grove responded during the summer school resource officers have military leave and take vacations which they can't take during the school year. Additionally, they work juvenile crimes. Chief Grove explained that though the downtown has issues, the entire City has major issues that require officer dedication.

3. TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

Robert Dompier, Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), reported TBID is self-funded. All room guests are charged \$1 per room, and that money is paid to TBID twice a year (the first half in January and the second half in July).

Mr. Dompier provided a handout of the budget for FY 2009-2010 because TBID will not receive funds for the first half of FY 2010-2011 until January, 2011. The budget for FY 2009-2010 is based on a half year's funding and is renewed. The goal of TBID is to put 'heads on beds' to bring and keep people in town who travel for tournaments, to fund and expand tournaments, and to help existing tournaments/groups with marketing.

Mr. Dompier noted the budget reflects larger allocations for wrestling, soccer, and basketball.

Sporting events bring large numbers of people to Great Falls every season. He commented TBID doesn't give funds to existing organizations to help fund their current program. Funding may be provided to an existing event that is struggling or is required to earmark the funds for marketing outside Great Falls to help bring more people to the City.

Mr. Dompier reported TBID coordinates with the Great Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), Russell County tourism region, and the State of Montana Travel Department. TBID co-ops with groups to work the same booths at trade shows, and to attract bus tours and regional groups that are looking for locations to hold annual meetings and trade shows.

Mr. Dompier noted TBID looks for opportunities such as the extensive damage to Billings Expo Center. Several scheduled events will have to be relocated. They will need a location for their large wrestling matches in February. TBID will help fund that event. The cost of the Four Seasons Arena could be in the range of \$7,000 - \$14,000 for that type of event.

Mr. Dompier reported TBID will be spending money in Canada to attract leisure tours. Money will also be spent on a web site this year. He reported TBID is looking for a full-time marketing and sales person to be hired by fall; that person will be the only paid staff person. That staff person will work hard attending trade shows, looking for business. That person will seek out sporting events/groups that may be struggling for marketing money to make their event more successful.

Commissioner Jolley questioned the type of help TBID provides groups. Mr. Dompier responded that an example would be the Walley Floen hockey tournament that was cancelled this year because not enough teams signed up. Possibly, with the current economy, some teams may not have been able to afford the fee to join the tournament. That could mean ten teams coming to the City; that could be 150-200 room nights – that is a lot of shopping, fast-food and restaurant business, gas, etc. If TBID can offset some of those costs and make it easier for those teams to come to town, maybe they would not have to cut that out of their budget.

Mr. Dompier added Blue Grass on the Bay asked for funding; TBID provided funds, knowing they would spend those dollars marketing outside Great Falls (on the Highline, Helena and Missoula) to try to get people outside of the City for that event. He noted TBID tries to help groups that lack funding make their event a two-day event so people stay longer; help a five-man hockey tournament have the staffing, referees, etc. to make a ten-man tournament; assist soccer clubs have enough funds to form a new tournament (with the needed referees, renting fields, equipment, ice time, etc.).

Commissioner Bronson asked what TBID's relationship is with CVB. Mr. Dompier responded there is a perception that TBID does not get along with CVB; he stated that is not true. TBID gave CVB \$10,000 this year. CVB's goal is very similar to that of the TBID. The two groups do not overlap, but they may join for trade shows and funding for certain projects. Both groups want to bring more people to Great Falls; TBID wants to work as closely with CVB as possible. TBID is made up of seven members who are managers of local hotels/motels. Most members have a director that sits on the local CVB.

Mr. Dompier noted by original statute the CVB and the TBID were to share the same executive director. CVB let that person go, and TBID has since learned a part-time person would not be helpful. TBID provided funds for CVB to find someone, and at the same time, TBID decided to look for a full-time staff person.

Commissioner Burow asked how TBID is funded. Mr. Dompier responded that in 2007 Billings submitted a bill to the legislature forming TBID's in Montana. The hotels within the City limits become self-funded. A petition must be signed by approximately 70% of the property owners of the hotels. He noted 92% of the owners in Great Falls signed. Those property owners then form a board, and the amount to be charged to guests is voted by the board. He added Billings charges \$.75. Great Falls and most TBID's statewide charge \$1.00. The fee is an assessment; it is not a tax. An independent accounting firm sends quarterly reports to all the hotels to record the number of rooms rented during the past quarter. Those assessments are included on hotel property taxes.

Commissioner Burow asked if the duties of the new staff person will include trying to bundle ads to save money. Mr. Dompier responded that is also how TBID will co-op with CVB, Russell Country, Travel Montana, etc. TBID will do a lot of advertising on the Highline and in Canada. Commissioner Burow asked if the staff person will try to bundle funds instead of giving dollars to each group. Mr. Dompier responded it is hard to bundle. Currently, a group that wants funding must come to a monthly board meeting. There can be four or five clubs for a certain sport. TBID is considering a sporting board what will have a representative for the soccer clubs, the high schools, the University of Great Falls, wrestling, basketball, men's softball, etc. to help determine better ways to spend the available dollars trying to form new tournaments for the City. He commented that whenever there is a basketball tournament in town, or the soccer fields fill up, the streets and stores are full; everyone benefits.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Winters adjourned the work session of July 6, 2010, at 6:35 p.m.