

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION**  
**October 20, 2009**

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Stebbins presiding

**CALL TO ORDER:** 5:45 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** City Commissioners present: Dona Stebbins, Bill Bronson, John Rosenbaum, Bill Beecher and Mary Jolley. Also present were the Assistant City Manager, Acting City Attorney, Directors of Fiscal Services, Park and Recreation, Planning, Public Works, the Acting Library Director, Police Chief, Fire Chief and the City Clerk.

**1. PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR TENNIS FACILITIES**

Park and Recreation Director Marty Basta discussed maintenance of the 60 year old courts, unplayable conditions and closure of many City tennis courts. He introduced Ben Rangel and Dave Crum with the Great Falls Tennis Association. Mr. Crum discussed watching his daughter play at the MSU tennis complex, and noticed about 1,000 people watching the matches. He thought then, "Why not Great Falls." "Why not put those people in our hotels and restaurants by hosting a tournament." A committee was formed and has been working on this project for about one year.

Mr. Rangel thanked the Commission for allowing him to put forth a proposal regarding how a public/private partnership would benefit the local tennis community, as well as benefit the City of Great Falls overall. The committee consists of tennis enthusiasts, players (recreation and competitive), members of the Great Falls, Montana and Unites States Tennis Associations, tennis coaches, athletic directors, and the Montana High School Association. These members are all committed to Great Falls, making Great Falls a better community and giving back to the community.

Mr. Rangel provided a PowerPoint presentation. He reported that during the 1970's and 1980's there were a dozen tennis locations throughout the City, with about 30 courts available. He discussed the dire condition of many of the courts now with only six useable locations and half the number of courts. Mr. Rangel discussed trends and conditions. He feels that tennis is at a critical stage in Great falls. If current trends continue, there could be additional closures of public courts, resulting in an exclusive Country Club only state of tennis.

Mr. Rangel discussed national trends. He reported that tennis is one of the fastest growing sports in the United States. Seventy percent of all tennis is played on public courts. With the national epidemic of obesity, the association feels that tennis could be a means of helping fight that situation, realizing that 15% of children are considered obese. Tennis programs and tournaments benefit local economies through players and families staying in hotels, eating at restaurants and shopping. Participation in tennis is multi-cultural, multi-generational and tennis is, in essence, a lifetime sport.

Their goals, through a public/private partnership with the City, are to promote, advocate and facilitate Great Falls tennis. He discussed several ways to accomplish that. Mr. Rangel suggested that a multi-site tennis venue be established to include 16 courts at three sites. Specifically, that the courts at CMR be resurfaced, and reconstruct four existing courts at Riverside Park, for a total estimated cost of \$300,000. He also discussed suggested upgrades at the Meadowlark Country Club so that indoor courts would be available during inclement weather for tournaments. He proposed that, under the public/private partnership, the City make a commitment for half of the total estimated costs - \$150,000. He explained that anticipated funding sources are the City of Great Falls (Park Trust funds/CDBG funds), United States Tennis Association grants, National Recreation and Park Association grants, School District #1, Foundation grants, Federal/State grants, facility naming rights, and public and private fundraising. His understanding is that bids could go out for tournaments as early as 2011, with two to three Montana/U.S. Tennis Association tournaments in Great Falls each year. Mr. Rangel also discussed the long-term benefits to Great Falls if the stated goals were accomplished.

Mayor Stebbins noted that R.J. Langevin submitted written questions to the Commission, and that Mr. Rangel had addressed his concerns.

Commissioner Rosenbaum commented that, with that type of expansion, a parking plan should be kept in mind for the proposed four additional courts in the area east of the Skate Park.

With regard to bidding for tournaments, Principal Fred Anderson commented that, typically, tennis tournaments are minimal or close to zero. Generally, it is based upon the available facilities. Basically, it is an agreement to sponsor the event.

Regarding ownership of the refurbished courts, Mr. Rangel responded that the committee would help come up with the funds, but the facilities are and would continue to be owned by the City.

Naming rights for a court for contributions would fall under the terms of City policy.

Mayor Stebbins suggested exploring the use of CDBG funds for Elk's Riverside Park.

Commissioner Beecher asked if this has been done in other cities. Mr. Rangel responded that his research found a couple of public/private instances with similar circumstances.

Mr. Fred Anderson added that the demographics of Great Falls High contribute to the need factor. This would provide availability and facilitate student participation.

## **2. CASCADE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT UPDATE**

Toni Neslen, District Administrator for the Cascade County Conservation District (CCCD), provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the history of the CCCD. She reported that the CCCD has been in existence for 65 years. Montana legislation passed in 1939 creating Title 76, Chapter 15. There are 58 conservation districts in Montana. Ms. Neslen reported that the watershed councils, DNRC, NRCS, FWP and DEQ are some of the partners of the CCCD.

Some of the programs provided by CCCD are tree sales, landowner maps, small acreage workshops, 310 permits and streambed preservation. It also provides maps of Montana's noxious weeds, riparian areas and posters for the River's Edge trails. CCCD also hosts Ag Days and provides camp scholarships for youth.

Ms. Neslen reported that there are also 15 members on a Junior CCCD Board. These members adopted Wadsworth Lake are in the process of putting together a work plan. The Junior Board plans on buying and installing a handicap boat ramp, a vault toilet, and installing new picnic tables at Wadsworth Lake.

In conclusion, Ms. Neslen discussed the areas not within the Conservation District. Her office cannot offer assistance to those not within the confines of the District. She requested support to incorporate all of Great Falls into the District. She further discussed a proposed mil levy to the voters at a cost of \$1.15/\$100,000. She is researching how to get that on a ballot, and requested the City's support of that proposal.

### ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Stebbins adjourned the work session of October 20, 2009, at 6:50 p.m.