

Regular City Commission Meeting

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

PROCLAMATION: Groundhog Job Shadow Day

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

NC 6 – Robin Baker sworn in.

1. Robin Baker was sworn in as a representative of Neighborhood Council District No. 6.
2. There were no miscellaneous reports or announcements from neighborhood council representatives.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Community Housing Needs. Public hearing conducted.

3. NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM (NSP) COMMUNITY HOUSING NEEDS.

CDBG Administrator Chris Imhoff reported that the State of Montana anticipates receiving one time funding of \$19,600,000 from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). The program was authorized through the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 in an effort to address the housing foreclosure crisis. In early February, 2009, the Montana Department of Commerce will be making funds available to local governments and their sub-recipients through a competitive application process. Activities eligible under the NSP funding guidelines will include: (1) establishment of financing mechanisms for purchase and redevelopment of foreclosed upon homes and residential properties, including such mechanisms as soft seconds, loan loss reserves and shared equity loans for low, moderate and middle income home buyers; (2) purchase and rehabilitation of abandoned or foreclosed upon homes and residential properties in order to be sold, rented or developed; (3) establishment of land banks for homes that have been foreclosed upon; (4) demolition of blighted structures; and, (5) redevelopment of demolished or vacant properties.

Because the Montana Department of Commerce feels public involvement can be a key factor in developing community understanding and support for the NSP projects, it is a requirement to hold a minimum of one public hearing prior to a jurisdiction submitting a formal proposal for the funds. The hearing is to be held prior to passage of a resolution by the governing body authorizing submission of an NSP application.

Ms. Imhoff encouraged citizens to provide ideas regarding the City of Great Falls' housing needs as related to foreclosure issues and how these needs might be addressed with NSP eligible projects.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson declared the public hearing open. Those addressing the City Commission were as follows:

Ron Duncan, Project Manager working with NeighborWorks to assist in this program, residing at 1821 Mountain View Drive, commented that NeighborWorks will refurbish blighted and foreclosed properties to make available to low income families. He recommended the City Commission participate in the program.

Sheila Rice, Executive Director of NeighborWorks, residing at 913 3rd Avenue North, thanked and encouraged the City to apply for the funds. The money is targeted on foreclosed and abandoned properties. Ms. Rice believes with the capacity provided by the City and NeighborWorks and the kind of projects they are already good at doing on a collaborative basis, that Great Falls can have a very competitive application. She encouraged the City Commission and City staff to consider: (1) purchasing foreclosed and abandoned properties; (2) land trust opportunities; (3) allow some homes to be sold to families up to 120% of median income; and, (4) a downtown redevelopment project.

Anthony Houtz, an architect with CTA Architects Engineers, 701 2nd Street South, and **Alan Henry**, Director of Operations, NeighborWorks, 509 1st Avenue South, submitted comments today via e-mail. Both Mr. Houtz and Mr. Henry expressed their support for NSP as a funding source for affordable housing and also to stimulate growth and development in the downtown area.

There being no one further to address the Commission, Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson declared the public hearing closed.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS

Res. 9810. Adopted.

4. RESOLUTION 9810, AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE'S NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM.

CDBG Administrator Chris Imhoff reported that the Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC) requires the passage of a resolution by a governing body authorizing the grant application prior to submission.

Commissioner Rosenbaum moved, seconded by Commissioner Jolley, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 9810, authorizing participation in the Montana Department of Commerce's Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Jolley inquired who would be submitting the application. Ms. Imhoff responded that the State will only accept applications from local jurisdictions. Commissioner Jolley inquired who would be deciding the rank of requested items. Ms. Imhoff responded that the State previously required a list of items from the City that it would be considering. The resolution authorizes the City Manager to submit the application.

City Manager Doyon commented that he would defer to Community Development's and NeighborWorks' expertise for the maximum benefit under the guidelines.

Commissioner Jolley added that she likes the idea of downtown projects, especially condominiums.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson stated that he was made aware of the details of this program at the MLCT conference in October. Based on his experience with federal programs, he is impressed with the flexibility in this program.

Motion carried 3-0.

**Consent Agenda.
Approved.**

CONSENT AGENDA

5. Minutes, January 6, 2009, Commission meeting.
6. Total expenditures of \$913,449 for the period of December 31, 2008 - January 14, 2009, to include claims over \$5,000, in the amount of \$777,098.
7. Contracts list.
8. Lien Releases.
9. Grant list.
10. Set public hearing for February 17, 2009, on Resolution 9804, on the 2009 Water, Sewer, Storm Drain Utility Service Rate Review.
11. Appoint Greg Doyon to replace Cheryl Patton as B.A.S.E. Trustee.

12. Approve Change Order No. 1 in the amount of \$14,382.80 to Kuglin Construction for the 2008 CDBG Handicap Ramps.

13. Award bid for six new 2009 police pursuit vehicles to City Motor Company of Great Falls in the amount of \$135,627.

Commissioner Rosenbaum moved, seconded by Commissioner Jolley, that the City Commission approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners or inquiries from the public. No one responded.

Motion carried 3-0.

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

**Aaron Kueffler
reappointed and Adam
Gill, Carrie Koppy and
Sandie Wright appointed
to the Community
Development Council.**

14. APPOINTMENTS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Rosenbaum, that the City Commission appoint Adam Gill to fill the remainder of a three year term through January 31, 2010; reappoint Aaron Kueffler to a three year term through January 31, 2012; and, appoint Carrie Koppy and Sandie Wright to three year terms beginning February 1, 2009, through January 31, 2012, to the Community Development Council.

Mayor Pro Tempore asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners or inquiries from the public. No one responded.

Motion carried 3-0.

15. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

CITY MANAGER

16. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

City Manager Gregory Doyon reported that the City received word that it was eligible to receive the SAFER grant to bolster firefighter services. Due to the timeline of this and if the Commission is interested, a meeting will be scheduled next week to take action to direct staff whether or not to accept the grant. Fire Chief Randy McCamley reported that last spring the Fire Department applied for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant. The grant is administered by the Department of Homeland Security under FEMA. It is awarded through a competitive process with grants being awarded to communities with the most urgent need to add front line firefighters. The goal of the SAFER grant is to enhance the local fire department's ability to comply with staffing, response and operational standards established by the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) and Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA).

Chief McCamley reported that the additional staffing would result in a budget savings of approximately \$80,000 on call back of off-duty firefighters during second alarm fires. Due to current staffing levels, the Fire Department is put in a position that it has to pay overtime on an almost daily basis.

The SAFER grant is a five year program. The federal government's share starts out at 90% of the salaries the first year down to zero percent the fifth year. The grant does not pay for health insurance, retirement or workers' compensation benefits. The City's portion for the first year would be \$259,632. A condition of the grant is to keep the new hire positions for the five years.

Mr. McCamley reported that more front line firefighters were on duty in 1969 than in 2009. The responsibilities of the Fire Department have gone from 900 calls for service in 1969 to well over 5,000 calls for service in 2008.

The timeline involved is that by the end of the month the Fire Department has to either return its acceptance package or notify DHS.

Chief McCamley concluded that he looks forward to discussing funding ideas, department savings on overtime and other cost saving measures to help get through the first and second years.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Jolley commented that the overtime being reduced would provide some breathing room before discussing a public safety mill levy. Chief McCamley responded that the overtime budget could conservatively be reduced by \$80,000 the first year.

Commissioner Jolley inquired about the first quarter payment from DHS on October 1, 2009. Chief McCamley answered that the grant stipulation is that DHS reimburses quarterly after the fact.

Commissioner Jolley asked if it would be difficult to find 16 new firefighters in this timeframe. Chief McCamley answered that Great Falls is one of 11 fire districts across Montana that uses a consortium that tests once per year in June. Typically there are between 400-500 applicants, about 300 applicants actually take the test, and about 250 get through the testing process. The cities of Bozeman and Missoula already received grants and are filling positions. He is confident that Great Falls could find 16 qualified firefighters.

Commissioner Rosenbaum commented that public safety is a main mission of the Commission. He suggested a discussion occur with all of the Commissioners present.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson inquired when that meeting would occur. City Manager Doyon responded next Wednesday at 5:00 p.m.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

17. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson opened the meeting to Petitions and Communications.

Letter of Support-Senate Bill 88.

17A. George Littlefield, 4225 Morningside Circle, requested a letter of support for Senate Bill 88 to add the definition of a school zone in the State codes. The bill already passed the Senate. Director of Transportation Jim Lynch stood in support at the last hearing. Mr. Littlefield requested letters of support before he goes before the House in two weeks. Mr. Littlefield was instructed to provide an initial draft of said letter to the City Clerk.

Recycling CFL bulbs, conservation.

17B. Ron Gessaman, 1006 36th Avenue N.E., reported that he contacted Ace Hardware and was informed that both locations continue to collect CFL bulbs for recycling for the foreseeable future as long as the economy permits. Mr. Gessaman also read a portion of an article in the *Missoulian* newspaper regarding Helena reducing its energy usage by 22% between 2001 and 2007, resulting in a savings of \$640,000 and a drop in carbon dioxide emissions. Mr. Gessaman inquired what the City of Great Falls is doing to reduce energy consumption.

Recession, global warming and over taxation.

17C. John Hubbard, 615 7th Avenue South, discussed City staff requesting new police cars and more firemen and reminded the Commission about the recession/depression. Mr. Hubbard also discussed Armageddon, global warming and over taxation.

SAFER grant.

17D. Dave VanSon, President of Great Falls Firefighters Union, 2404 1st Avenue North, reported that the union is in support of the award of the SAFER grant and encouraged the Commission's support as well.

CITY COMMISSION

18. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourn.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, **Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Rosenbaum, that the regular meeting of January 20, 2009, be adjourned at 7:55 p.m.**

Motion carried 3-0.

Mayor Pro Tempore Bronson

City Clerk

Minutes Approved: February 2, 2009