

Regular City Commission Meeting

Mayor Stebbins presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Dona Stebbins, Bill Bronson, John Rosenbaum, Bill Beecher and Mary Jolley. 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.

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

1. There were no miscellaneous reports or announcements from neighborhood council representatives.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

CDBG and HOME Grant/Consolidated Plan Community Needs. Public hearing conducted.

2. CDBG and HOME GRANT/CONSOLIDATED PLAN COMMUNITY NEEDS.

CDBG Administrator Chris Imhoff reported that the purpose of this public hearing was to allow citizens an opportunity to provide input regarding the City of Great Falls' community needs and how CDBG and HOME funds might be used to address those needs. Ms. Imhoff projected that the City will receive approximately \$917,000 in CDBG funds and \$394,000 in HOME funds from HUD for the 2009 program year. These federal dollars are designated for use in the community for projects that primarily benefit low and moderate income persons, or eliminate slum and blight. No action by the Commission is required tonight. Ms. Imhoff requested that the Commission consider the comments received when prioritizing and allocating the 2009/2010 CDBG and HOME grant funds.

Mayor Stebbins declared the public hearing open. Those addressing the City Commission were as follows:

Tim McKittrick, 2026 3rd Avenue South, Vice-Chairman of the Great Falls Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. Mr. McKittrick informed the Commission that his experience as a commissioner on the Great Falls Housing Authority Board has been very pleasant and an honor. He complimented Cheryl Patton and Kevin Hagar, as well as other staff for running the Housing Authority in a professional and very efficient manner. Mr. McKittrick stressed the need for decent, affordable housing that meets the minimal property standards for members of our community with limited incomes. The Housing Authority waiting list consists of 201 families and the most pressing need are for one and two bedroom homes. Currently, 1,040 clients are housed in the Housing Authority. Mr. McKittrick reported

that the average annual income for those families was \$10,000. He stressed the strong need to maintain and increase affordable housing for the Housing Authority. Mr. McKittrick urged the continued support of the use of CDBG/HOME funds to improve that supply of housing for the Great Falls community.

John Stephenson-Love, 300 40th Avenue South, on behalf of the Upper Lower River Road Water and Sewer District, reported that since 2001 the ULRR Water and Sewer District has been engaged in bringing water and sewer service to the District which lies immediately south of Great Falls. Two projects have been completed. Phase I was annexed two years ago and Phase II will be annexed to the City in the near future. Mr. Stephenson-Love reported that the District is now preparing for Phase III. The areas served have a large percentage of low and moderate income residents. An income survey is underway for Phase III. He expects that the results will show the area consists of more than 50% low and moderate income people. He reported that the District has been put on the recommended list for a DNRC grant for \$100,000 and the District has applied for a \$500,000 TSEP grant. Mr. Stephenson-Love stated that in 2001 when this project began, the City informed him that it would set aside \$1 million in CDBG funds spread through the District to help finance the project. One-third of that money was used for Phase I and one-third for Phase II. Mr. Stephenson-Love requested that the Commission consider funding Phase III to the same extent. He concluded that, by bringing water and sewer services to this area, it will revitalize an area of Great Falls that has been economically dormant.

Brett Doney, 3048 Delmar Drive, on behalf of the Great Falls Development Authority, requested the City's continued support of revolving loan funds in the amount of \$200,000 from this year's CDBG application. He also requested that two national priorities be used in the CDBG program statement – job creation for low and moderate income residents and slum and blight, so that the loan funds could be used for real estate purposes.

Sheila Rice, 509 1st Avenue South, NeighborWorks, reviewed with the Commission a survey conducted to assess the housing needs in Cascade County. Ms. Rice emphasized how important housing affordability was to people in the county. The next steps will be to complete the survey analysis, focus groups, and public comment meetings and then prepare recommendations and a report to the City and County Commissions. Ms. Rice thanked Chris Imhoff for helping every step of the way and others that donated time or money to conduct the survey. Ms. Rice thanked the Commission for its many years of support for affordable housing.

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

Res. 9805, Revise Land Development Application Fees. Adopted.

3. RESOLUTION 9805, REVISE LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION FEES.

Planning Director Ben Rangel reported that during development of the current Planning Department budget, it became apparent that costs have continued to increase, but that some revenue sources have remained the same for the past several years. Therefore, a review was made of all Planning Department revenue sources, including the basic fees the Department charges to process land development activities through the Planning Board, Zoning Commission and City Commission. These activities include the processing of annexations, subdivisions and zone changes. The current fees were established over 13 years ago.

The Planning Board feels that local tax revenues provided to the Planning Department budget should help fund the Department's various core programs, but that user fees should continue to be applied toward specific services, including land development activities. The Planning Board also feels that the costs for these services should be shared on a 50/50 basis between the local taxpayers and the service users.

On December 2, 2008, the City Commission set public hearing for this evening. After conducting the public hearing, Mr. Rangel requested that the City Commission adopt Resolution 9805, which would revise the current land development fee schedule.

The Planning Board unanimously recommends City Commission approval.

Mayor Stebbins declared the public hearing open. No one spoke in support of or opposition to Resolution 9805.

Mayor Stebbins declared the public hearing closed and asked for the direction of the City Commission.

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioner Beecher, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 9805.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Jolley asked if it was the Planning Department's recommendation to the Planning Board that the fees be higher. Mr. Rangel responded that Planning staff compared current fees with fees of similar type activities charged in other communities, as well as by Cascade County, and used that as the basis to increase current fees. In most cases it was a doubling of those fees. Commissioner Jolley responded that the Planning Board thought those fees were too high. Mr. Rangel stated that staff determined what the general costs were for the various types of activities and recommended attempting to recoup 100% of the costs. The Planning

Board felt that development activities were beneficial to the overall taxpayer as well, and felt the general funds should pay for the general core programs and recommended the developers involved in the subdivision development should pay an equitable split of 50/50.

Commissioner Jolley stated that she would have liked to see additional information and would have then considered 75/25 split.

Commissioner Bronson added that discussions about raising the fees and rates started a few years ago. It has been 13 years without an increase. In the future, Commissioner Bronson thought it critical to assess the fees and rates every year, not necessarily with the idea of having an increase every year, but that the City would be in a better position to bring about needed increases on an incremental basis as time goes on. Commissioner Bronson further stated that he takes pleasure in the comparison with the other cities that Great Falls is extremely competitive and fair.

Motion carried 5-0.

Res. 9784, Creating Special Improvement Lighting District – City-Owned Residential Lighting District 1305, Water Tower Park Addition. Voided.

4. VOID RESOLUTION 9784, CREATING SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT LIGHTING DISTRICT – CITY-OWNED RESIDENTIAL LIGHTING DISTRICT 1305, WATER TOWER PARK ADDITION.

Fiscal Services Director Coleen Balzarini reported that this item is a request to void Intent to Create Resolution 9784 that was previously approved. The reason is that once the final plat was complete, the structure of the platting for each of the parcels provided a need for additional lighting above and beyond what was originally intended. Ms. Balzarini requested that this resolution be voided and that staff would propose a new resolution of intent and public hearing so the Commission would be approving what would actually be installed.

Mayor Stebbins declared the public hearing open. No one spoke in support of or opposition to voiding Resolution 9784.

Mayor Stebbins declared the public hearing closed and asked for the direction of the City Commission.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Bronson, that the City Commission void Resolution 9784 creating Special Improvement Lighting District – City-Owned Residential Lighting District 1305, and void the scheduled public hearing.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners. No one responded.

Motion carried 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS**NEW BUSINESS**

Blended Energy Rate Offer from Southern Montana Electric G&T. Pulled.

5. BLENDED ENERGY RATE OFFER FROM SOUTHERN MONTANA ELECTRIC GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION.

Mayor Stebbins reported that Item 5 had been pulled from the agenda.

FY 2007-2008 CAFR and Independent Auditor's Report. Approved.

6. FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008 COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT.

Fiscal Services Director Coleen Balzarini reported that this is an audited financial report of all the various activities within the City. JCCS was the independent audit firm that performed the audit. Loran Stensland, a partner from JCCS, would provide the independent auditor's report. Ms. Balzarini further reported that the audit findings, audit report, the special emphasis report, as well as the annual report to the citizens are posted on the City's website. The audit committee met on December 10th and recommended City Commission acceptance of the 2007-2008 Comprehensive Report.

Loran Stensland, JCCS, provided background information on the audit process. JCCS contracts with the City of Great Falls and the State of Montana to perform compliance testing procedures for the State of Montana as part of the audit procedure. The field work commenced on September 15th and significantly ended the first week of October. Mr. Stensland congratulated City management for receiving the Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for the June 30, 2007 year. He expects said document will also be awarded for the 2008 year.

Mr. Stensland summarized the auditor's report which concluded that there was a clean audit opinion on the financial statements. He also reported that there were no findings or questioned costs of the administration of federal funds expended by the City of Great Falls.

Mr. Stensland reviewed portions of the management letter and noted the City was not in compliance with Ordinance 2925. Two comments were also noted with regard to the prior year's audit. One had to do with outstanding accounts and checks over one year old. Recommendations were made and implemented by City staff. The other comment was a carryover from 2001 that the City was not in compliance with the golf course revenue bond covenants.

Mr. Stensland also summarized the Independent Accountant's Report regarding the special emphasis audits and the appendixes. He explained that

the accountant's responsibility is to provide an opinion on whether the financial statements are materially stated. The electric utility fund is a major fund of the City. That fund received a clean audit opinion.

Mr. Stensland concluded that all City staff was forthcoming during the audit process and thanked the Commission, City Management and Fiscal Services.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Beecher, that the City Commission accept the FY 2007-2008 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Independent Auditor's Report as presented, as well as approve the responses to the Audit Management Letter recommendations as presented, the Special Emphasis Audit as presented, and authorize staff to submit the responses to the State of Montana, Department of Administration and other government agencies as necessary.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Jolley stated she thought last year the documents were submitted to the State first. Ms. Balzarini responded that the Commission has to first accept it and then it is sent to the State. Commissioner Jolley stated she has gone through the CAFR and appreciates that there is more information and detail this year.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there were any inquiries from the public.

Larry Rezendes, 2208 1st Avenue North, objected to the large losses being sustained by the City as a result of the operation of Electric City Power. Mr. Rezendes noted the losses in the CAFR and that Electric City Power is operating in violation of Ordinance 2925. Mr. Rezendes expressed that he does not doubt the accounting was done properly. The issue is the large losses while the City has had to reduce expenditures for essential services. It troubles him that the City has violated its own laws, but that it enforces the laws and obligations on the public. Mr. Rezendes concluded that the ECP program should be terminated to avoid continuing losses to the citizens of Great Falls. The alternative would be for him as a citizen to seek legal standing to file suit to force the City to do what its obligations are under its own laws.

Ron Gessaman, 1006 36th Avenue N.E., concurred with Mr. Rezendes' comments. Mr. Gessaman pointed out that the auditors responsibility is only to express an opinion whether the financial statement prepared by management is fairly presented in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. Mr. Gessaman commented that the audit report proves nothing except that the presentation is in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles.

Motion carried 5-0.

ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS

Ord. 3027, Development Project proposed by West Bank Properties, LLC, and Associated Public Improvements. Adopted.

7. **ORDINANCE 3027, APPROVE A DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PROPOSED BY WEST BANK PROPERTIES, LLC, AND ASSOCIATED PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS AS AN URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT, AUTHORIZE FINANCING THE PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS WITH TAX INCREMENT REVENUES IN A PRINCIPAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$900,000, AND AUTHORIZE CITY STAFF TO DEVELOP AND NEGOTIATE A DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT.**

Planning Director Ben Rangel reported that Brad Talcott, doing business as West Bank Properties, LLC, has submitted an application for the use of West Bank Urban Renewal District tax increment funds. In conjunction with several area property owners, the City Commission created the West Bank Urban Renewal District in March of last year to help revitalize and redevelop the area generally located along the west bank of the Missouri River, both north and south of Central Avenue West. Because the District was found to be deficient of streets, sidewalks, curbs and gutters, resulting in poor traffic and pedestrian access and to be deficient of some public utilities, a tax increment financing provision was established to help encourage private sector investment and reinvestment in the area.

West Bank Properties has requested tax increment funds for several activities and improvements associated with a mixed use commercial development project to include a Staybridge Suites hotel and future sites for a restaurant, office building and retail shops.

On December 2, 2008, the City Commission conducted a public hearing on the subject project and accepted Ordinance 3027 on first reading. Mr. Rangel requested that the City Commission adopt Ordinance 3027 on final reading which would approve tax increment financing not to exceed \$900,000, and would authorize City staff to develop and negotiate a development agreement for Commission future approval.

The Planning Board unanimously recommends City Commission approval.

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioners Beecher Rosenbaum, that the City Commission adopt Ordinance 3027.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

Ord. 3028, Federal Courthouse/4th Avenue NW Project as an Urban Renewal Project and Tax Increment Financing of Certain Public Projects. Adopted as corrected.

8. ORDINANCE 3028, APPROVE THE FEDERAL COURTHOUSE/4TH AVENUE NW PROJECT AS AN URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT AND AUTHORIZE THE TAX INCREMENT FINANCING OF CERTAIN PUBLIC PROJECTS.

Fiscal Service Director Coleen Balzarini reported that this project is also located within the West Bank Park/Brownsfield area. The action requested is to approve the public improvements necessary to gain access to the Federal Courthouse building, as well as installation of the water and sewer pipelines, to be approved as tax increment projects, in addition to the improvements to West Bank Park. These improvements will also be paid for from the incremental dollars generated from the taxes that are paid by this property, as well as other properties within the District.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Beecher, that the City Commission adopt Ordinance 3028, to approve the Federal Courthouse/4th Avenue NW project as an urban renewal project and authorize the tax increment financing of certain projects, subject to project 3 of said Ordinance being corrected to state 3rd Avenue NW reconstruction project.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Rosenbaum asked for clarification on 3rd and 4th Avenues. Community Development Director Mike Rattray answered that it will be named 3rd Avenue NW.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there were any inquiries from the public.

Ron Gessaman, 1006 36th Avenue NE, commented that he opposes tax increment financing projects. With regard to Items 7 and 8, Mr. Gessaman stated that he doesn't believe the public is aware that over the next 25 years \$8.4 million dollars of taxpayers' money will not be going to support City services.

Brett Doney, Great Falls Development Authority, residing at 3048 Delmar Drive, commented that tax increment financing makes projects work that otherwise wouldn't happen. It is a great economic development tool. Mr. Doney also noted that the addition of the road will increase the value of the County property and increase the likelihood of attracting a developer.

John Hubbard, 615 7th Avenue South, commented that he thought federal monies were paying for the Federal Courthouse. Mr. Hubbard stated that the City should leave West Bank alone. Mr. Hubbard made derogatory comments regarding the Commissioners and was asked to moderate his language. He was subsequently removed from the Commission Chambers.

Motion carried 5-0.

Res. 9806, Creating a Board of Trustees for the Great Falls Tourism Business Improvement District No. 1307, Appointing the Initial Trustees, and Specifying the Powers and Duties of the Board. Adopted.

9. RESOLUTION 9806, A RESOLUTION CREATING A BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE GREAT FALLS TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO. 1307, APPOINTING THE INITIAL TRUSTEES, AND SPECIFYING THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD.

Assistant City Manager Cheryl Patton reported that the Great Falls Area Lodging Association requested that the City Commission name trustees for the Tourism Business Improvement District. The recommendations of the Lodging Association were provided to the City Commission.

Commissioner Rosenbaum moved, seconded by Commissioner Bronson, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 9806.

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

Motion carried 5-0.

Consent Agenda. Approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

10. Minutes, December 2, 2008, Commission meeting.
11. Total expenditures of \$2,050,629 for the period of November 26-December 10, 2008, to include claims over \$5,000, in the amount of \$1,880,416.
12. Set public hearing for January 6, 2009, on Ordinance 3026, adopting 40 CFR Part 403, to update the legal authority required by the EPA.
13. Set public hearing for January 6, 2009, on Resolution 9803, for Conditional Use Permit to allow a Contractor Yard, Type 1 on Lot 3, Block 754, Great Falls Tenth Addition (1308 6th Avenue South).
14. Award bid for one new 2009 wheel loader to Western Plains Machinery of Great falls in the amount of \$104,351.45, including trade-in.
15. Award bid for five new 2009 single axle dump trucks to I State Truck Center of Great Falls in the amount of \$352,890.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Beecher, with the exception of Item 11, that the City Commission approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion carried 5-0.

With regard to Item 11, Commissioner Jolley inquired about a payment for the West Bank Urban Renewal/BNSF 4th Avenue NW grade crossing and maintenance agreement. Public Works Director Jim Rearden responded that the sum of \$20,000 for a perpetual easement and \$244,439 for

equipment for the crossing was committed to in the construction and maintenance agreement.

Commissioner Jolley inquired if those amounts were included in the \$2 million dollar tax increment funding. Fiscal Services Director Coleen Balzarini responded that it was part of the \$2 million. She reminded the Commission that it approved a reimbursement resolution. In order to keep the project moving forward, the City is funding it with existing cash fully acknowledging that the City has the intent to finance and reimburse for the expenses.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any further discussion amongst the Commission. No one responded.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioners Beecher and Bronson, that the City Commission approve Item 11 of the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion carried 5-0.

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

**Anthony Houtz
Reappointed and
Timothy Peterson
Appointed to the Board
of Adjustment.**

16. APPOINTMENTS, BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT.

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioner Beecher, to reappoint Anthony Houtz and appoint Timothy Peterson to three-year terms through September 30, 2011, to the Board of Adjustment.

Commissioner Jolley asked for a short explanation what the Board of Adjustment does. Community Development Director Mike Rattray responded that the Board of Adjustment hears citizen's appeals to determine if City code was accurately applied, and it also considers variance requests.

Motion carried 5-0.

**Bryan Thies
Reappointed and James
McCarvel and Karen
Harant Appointed to the
Park and Recreation
Board.**

17. APPOINTMENTS, PARK AND RECREATION BOARD.

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioners Beecher and Rosenbaum, to reappoint Bryan Thies and appoint James McCarvel and Karen Harant to three-year terms beginning January 1, 2009, through December 31, 2011, to the Park and Recreation Board.

Motion carried 5-0.

**Carl Donovan
Reappointed to the
Mansfield Center for the
Performing Arts
Advisory Board.**

**18. REAPPOINTMENT, MANSFIELD CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS ADVISORY BOARD.**

Commissioner Beecher moved, seconded by Commissioner Bronson, to reappoint Carl Donovan to a three-year term through December 31, 2011, to the Mansfield Center for the Performing Arts Advisory Board.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners. No one responded.

Motion carried 5-0.

**Arthur Bundtrock and
Wyman Taylor
Reappointed to the Great
Falls Planning Advisory
Board.**

**19. REAPPOINTMENTS, GREAT FALLS PLANNING ADVISORY
BOARD.**

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioner Rosenbaum, to reappoint Arthur Bundtrock and Wyman Taylor to three-year terms through December 31, 2011, to the Great Falls Planning Advisory Board.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners. No one responded.

Motion carried 5-0.

**Fred Thiel Reappointed
and Darren Brown,
Philip Kiser and John
Godwin Appointed to the
Parking Advisory Board.**

20. APPOINTMENTS, PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION.

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioners Beecher and Rosenbaum, to reappoint Fred Thiel to a term ending April 30, 2010, and appoint Darren Brown and Philip Kiser to terms ending April 30, 2011, and appoint John Godwin to a term ending on April 12, 2012, to the Parking Advisory Board.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners. No one responded.

Motion carried 5-0.

21. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

CITY MANAGER

22. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

City Manager Gregory T. Doyon appointed Coleen Balzarini as Acting City Manager on December 24, 2008. Mr. Doyon stated that this is Ben Rangel's last meeting. During the short time that he has worked with Mr. Rangel, he has demonstrated that he is an exceptional professional in his

line of work. He has a tremendous amount of dedication and commitment to the City. Mr. Doyon thanked Mr. Rangel for his years of service and stated he would be deeply missed.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

23. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Mayor Stebbins opened the meeting to Petitions and Communications.

HGS, Blended Rate Offer.

23A. Tim Gregori, General Manager of Southern Montana Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative, 3521 Gable Road, Billings, Montana, apologized that the blended energy rate offer was not ready to be presented this evening in written form. Mr. Gregori reported that the outcome of the zoning hearing with Cascade County was favorable and that the air quality permit has been validated. Mr. Gregori summarized what the blended rate means. He believes that it seems prudent to fold the City's needs in with the needs of the other member systems. Mr. Gregori concluded that the Board is very much behind working with the City of Great Falls, giving a rate that he believes will be a savings to the member systems. He urged the Commission to give serious consideration to the blended rate offer.

Lawsuit, Blended Rate Offer, and Water Credits.

23B. Larry Rezendes, 2208 1st Avenue North, commented in response to Mr. Gregori that the zoning decision is going to be appealed. He is interested in learning more about the blended rate. With regard to eliminating the water credit, Mr. Rezendes stated it is unclear from the agenda report if the City would owe the \$1 million immediately.

Housing Authority's Late Fee Policy.

23C. Tina Cole, 5107 2nd Avenue South, voiced concerns about the Housing Authority's late fee policy. She stated that the current policy is too harsh and suggested that it be changed to be more accommodating.

ECP.

23D. John Driscoll, Helena, Montana, stated that he regulated the electric utilities in Montana for 12 years prior to deregulation. During that time he worked on strategic electricity issues at the national level. He also advised the Electric Power Research Institute on electricity technology related issues for seven years. He pointed out that the reason he was here was because he cares. He thinks the City of Great Falls is in a situation and needs to make some important decisions. Mr. Driscoll pointed out, from his experience, that the nature of a municipally-owned utility is very good for the people who are served by that utility. One of the few good things that came out of the restructuring of Montana Power and the sale of its assets was the creation of Electric City Power. Mr. Driscoll urged the Commission not to end ECP as requested by some. It is too valuable to the City and the City's ratepayers and the State in his view. He also pointed out that the reasons the City got involved with Southern Montana are all still valid reasons. Mr. Driscoll noted the problems in the financing arena. He urged the

Commission to use this valuable structure that will allow the City to provide service cheaper than any other combination of organizations, and try to provide some pumped hydro-electric storage in the region for the wind. He referred the Commission to his website: www.stewardmagazine.com.

Volunteerism.

23E. Karen Grove, Chairperson of NC 8, residing at 1816 1st Avenue North, thanked the Commission for its support. Ms. Grove recapped what was accomplished during the year. She also thanked NeighborWorks for everything it has done for Great Falls. Neighborhood Council 8 qualified for a second grant from Weed & Seed. The Council is working on beautification projects in Black Eagle. Ms. Grove commented that she had the privilege of attending the Police Academy and encouraged attendance. She concluded that it was a great year of volunteerism, and she wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Recycling, SME.

23F. Ron Gessaman, 1006 36th Avenue N.E., referred to a December 14 article in the *Great Falls Tribune* regarding recycling. He quoted DEQ Recycling and Marketing Development Specialist Dustin Johnson stating that he has yet to meet a person who doesn't want to recycle; they just want it to be convenient. Mr. Gessaman commented that moving the Citizens Convenience Center will prove not to be very convenient. Mr. Gessaman also stated that he would like to know whether each of the Commissioners had reviewed the privileged SME documents. Commissioner Jolley responded by affirmatively nodding her head. Mr. Gessaman read a paragraph of a lawsuit between one of the coop members of SME and SME regarding the blended rates and commented that it is familiar with the issues raised at ECP meetings by members of the public. Mr. Gessaman stated he was curious if John Driscoll was now an employee of any utility company in Montana, or if he was here on his own like the rest of the speakers. Mr. Driscoll answered that he was not an employee of a utility company.

CITY COMMISSION

24. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Mayor Stebbins read a Resolution of Commendation, Appreciation and Gratitude to Ben Rangel for his dedication and years of service. Mr. Rangel stated that it has been a privilege the past 35 years to serve this community. He thanked this Commission, Mayor Stebbins, previous Commissioners he worked with, former Planning Directors Bob Roberts and John Mooney, and former City Manager John Lawton. Mr. Rangel appreciated the support and encouragement over the years. He stated it has been an honor to work with the City Planning staff. He also thanked the *Tribune* for the editorial in the newspaper.

In addition to Mr. Rangel's retirement, Mayor Stebbins acknowledged City employees who also have announced their retirements and have over 30 years of service: Rick Burton, Larry Mogstad, Jim Palagi and Rick Schott.

Mayor Stebbins congratulated them for their dedication and years of service.

Commissioner Jolley stated that, with all due respect, she believed Mr. Hubbard was removed prematurely this evening.

Mayor Stebbins wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourn.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, **Commissioner Beecher moved, seconded by Commissioner Rosenbaum, that the regular meeting of December 16, 2008, be adjourned at 8:40 p.m.**

Motion carried 5-0.

Mayor Stebbins

City Clerk

Minutes Approved: January 6, 2009