

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
March 18, 2008

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Dona Stebbins presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:15 p.m.

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

1. EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

Human Resources Specialist Deb Reynolds Hamblock advised the Commission that 421 employees have now gone through the orientation program. Department heads introduced the following new employees:

Police Department - Laura McElhinney, Ed Correa and Ingrid Spera

Library – Tina Cowhick and Lorrie Rader

Fiscal Services – Jean Shanko and Lexi Coughlan

Park and Recreation – Jill Hunter and Mandi Ross

Business Improvement District – Tonya Jorgensen

2. WEED AND SEED PROGRAM

Patty Cadwell provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Great Falls Lower North/Black Eagle Weed and Seed Community. Ms. Cadwell explained that this program is funded through the Community Capacity Development Office and the Department of Justice. The Great Falls LNBE site is in its first year of the program and was so designated because of its high crime rate. Currently there are approximately 347 sites across the nation implementing the Weed and Seed strategy at some level. Ms. Cadwell explained the structure and stated that she recently became the Site Director. She stated that it was a great fit with her role as Neighborhood Council Coordinator. The strategies of the program are to prevent, control and reduce violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity in designated high crime neighborhoods. It is a link between federal, state and local law enforcement efforts with social services, private and community efforts. It also empowers the community residents to identify and solve their own neighborhood problems. The LNBE strategies are: Law Enforcement - enable information sharing

between the Great Falls Police Department and the Cascade County Sheriff's Office, and increase law enforcement presence to combat drug, code and safety violations; Community Policing – increase and enhance law enforcement and resident relationship-building and partnerships; Prevention, Intervention, Treatment – reduce juvenile illegal drug use and juvenile recidivism, enhance the community's capacity to provide pro-social opportunities for adults and youth in the designated Safe Havens, enhance the capacity of youth leaders to serve and impact the designated neighborhoods, decrease barriers of reentry for offenders returning to the designated neighborhoods; Neighborhood Restoration – increase community mobilization in the Weed and Seed site through community projects designed and implemented by Neighborhood Councils 7 and 8 and the Black Eagle Civic Club.

Ms. Cadwell discussed the pros of Weed and Seed. It enhances citizen participation in solving community problems; the strategies begun with Weed and Seed funding will be sustained within the community after two years; law enforcement entities work together to reduce crime; and, it brings businesses, organizations, citizens, government and law enforcement together.

Ms. Cadwell stated that she will eventually work with youth in the community. She would like to see a Youth Neighborhood Council to get the youth involved and give them a voice in Great Falls.

Mayor Stebbins inquired about the safe havens all located on the lower north side. Ms. Cadwell stated that the Black Eagle Club has a bar in it and, therefore, will not work. She will be contacting a church in the area.

Commissioner Rosenbaum stated that the Youth Neighborhood Council is a good idea and a step in the right direction.

Commissioner Jolley inquired if the site coordinator was a City position before. Ms. Cadwell stated that the position is now within the City and now that money can go towards strategies.

Interim City Manager Cheryl Patton added that Chief Grove has been involved since its inception. Chief Grove stated that the first site is still in effect, but no longer gets any grant opportunities. Extended sites can qualify for federal funds.

3. GIBSON PARK

Park and Recreation Director Marty Basta provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding Canada Geese. He explained that in the recent past there have been many complaints from people who use the walkway at Gibson Park. Mr. Basta discussed the problem with Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The Canada Geese are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The problem is that many Canada Geese are no longer migrating. Due to people feeding the geese at Gibson Park, they are becoming resident geese. The droppings are not only a nuisance to people who want clean grass and walkways on golf

courses and city parks, but can lower water quality in lakes and ponds. Mr. Basta discussed the options to control the Canada Geese. He stated that there are taste deterrents to spray on grass, spike or shock systems, harvest the eggs and put up fencing on the river banks, use decoy coyotes or owls, erect signs to prohibit feeding the geese during the winter months, or do nothing. He stated that if signs are erected to prohibit feeding the geese, it may also take a City ordinance to make it viable.

Commissioner Bronson asked if the taste deterrents were environmentally safe and if others were using it now. Mr. Basta responded that it is a grape flavor that geese do not like. It has a limited life and would be costly. The park supervisor has talked to other park supervisors who say it is expensive for large parks and golf courses.

Commissioner Rosenbaum inquired if the geese count is increasing due to human behavior or the weather. Mr. Basta responded that it is a combination of both. It is a national problem. Due to the water not being frozen as long and people feeding the geese, they are becoming resident geese.

Commissioner Rosenbaum stated that the goslings crossing Lower River Drive are an accident waiting to happen. It is a safety concern. The vehicles are backed up and an emergency vehicle could not get through. However, people look forward to seeing the geese with their babies and would be upset if a fence was put up.

Commissioner Bronson explained the treaty and looking at it as a national issue and working with Canada and Mexico.

Commissioner Rosenbaum stated that doing nothing is not a good option and requested that Mr. Basta get fencing prices.

Mayor Stebbins inquired if egg harvesting would be conducted by Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Mr. Basta responded no, staff will have to be trained.

Commissioner Bronson stated that he was interested in an ordinance to prohibit feeding the geese and looking at safe taste deterrents, if cost effective.

Commissioner Jolley stated that eastern cities had the same problem and asked Mr. Basta if he checked the internet. He responded that the most successful were the taste deterrents and prohibit feeding.

The consensus was to prohibit feeding wild waterfowl during a certain period.

4. SOUTH ARTERIAL PROJECT - UPDATE

Sr. Transportation Planner Andrew Finch provided a PowerPoint presentation update on the Great Falls South Arterial project. Mr. Finch stated that this topic has been on the table for a long time. He explained that in the 1960's there was a boom in Great Falls. However, the population hasn't grown as anticipated. It was also not taken into account

that vehicle travel increased. The project was stagnant until the late 1990's. When 10th Avenue South began experiencing congestion, Great Falls and Cascade County adopted resolutions supporting a process to solicit commitments to secure funds for the South Arterial, and to dovetail it into a broader need for upgrading the trade corridor highway between Great Falls and Billings. Mr. Finch discussed the development strategy and stated that nos. 1 and 2 have been completed. They are now in the process of no. 3, which is to conduct a route location study and environmental review process. The feasibility study concluded that there were positive benefits to a southern arterial. It would improve an international and regional trade corridor, reduce congestion along 10th Avenue South and numerous other urban area arterial and collector streets, improve safety and mobility throughout the Great Falls transportation network, improve air quality by reducing congestion as well as stopping and idling times, and provide additional Missouri River crossing essential for efficient emergency vehicle access.

Mr. Finch stated that \$150,000 of the \$4 million earmarked for the next phase of development has been used, and that an alignment study is currently being performed. The route location software Quantm is being used to aide in the selection process through consideration of various engineering inputs, topographical considerations, bridge distances, social impacts, environmental impacts, historical impacts and other possible limiting factors. The software also provides an overall cost for each route as a baseline comparison.

Local officials and the State Department of Transportation are meeting in April to discuss proceeding to the next step. A public draft document should be available in late April or early May, and a final document should be completed in June.

Commissioner Rosenbaum commented that people's impression is that this will be a truck bypass. He stated that an educational process is needed to advise the public that the primary objective is to facilitate local traffic. People will have an option of not having to travel 10th Avenue South. He suggested that a meeting take place prior to the meeting with the DOT to get information to the media to educate the public.

Commissioner Jolley inquired if the purple route shown on the map would go fewer or more houses. Mr. Finch stated that the purple route avoids a landmark district and would go over more houses. He explained that consideration has to be given to avoiding landmark districts pursuant to federal regulations.

Commissioner Bronson inquired about the route previously presented at the Interpretive Center. Mr. Finch stated that four lane option was \$50 million. The lowest option was \$115 milltion. The \$4 million dollars that Senator Baucus secured took them through the environmental and design process.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Stebbins adjourned the work session of March 18, 2008, at 6:30 p.m.