

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSIONS
December 4, 2007

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Dona Stebbins presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 P.M.

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Mayor Stebbins, Bill Beecher, Sandy Hinz and Diane Jovick-Kuntz. Also present were the City Manager, Acting Directors of Park and Recreation and Fiscal Services, Directors of Community Development, Planning and Public Works, the Fire Chief, Police Chief, City Attorney and the City Clerk.

1. ANIMAL FOUNDATION DOG PARK PRESENTATION

Acting Director of Park and Recreation Marty Basta discussed the Animal Foundation's request for donated City owned property to develop a dog park in Great Falls. Mr. Basta explained that a Memorandum of Understanding will be prepared setting forth the responsibilities of the Animal Foundation and the City of Great Falls. Mr. Basta introduced Mitch Tropila, a member of the Dog Park Committee, and Melanie Lattin, a trustee of the Animal Foundation of Great Falls.

Mr. Tropila discussed the Foundation's vision of an attractively fenced and landscaped dog park where dogs can run un-leashed. He compared the dog park to the Great Falls Symphony and Electric City Water Park as positive amenities to the community.

Mr. Tropila explained that the Animal Foundation of Great Falls was formed in 2002. Since that time representatives of the Animal Foundation and the City have met to discuss potential sites. A two acre parcel of undeveloped City owned property adjacent to River Drive North between 6th and 9th Streets North was determined to be the best location. The Foundation will develop the land. Construction is anticipated to begin this May and be completed by August.

Commissioner Jovick-Kuntz asked for an explanation of how this location was chosen for the dog park. Melanie Lattin responded that in 2004 a site selection committee was formed consisting of four people. They looked at all options and chose five sites each for the proposed animal shelter and dog park. Those sites were reported to another committee that included Jordan Love and Cheryl Patton. That committee gave priority to the 9th Street property location.

City Manager John Lawton commented that, pursuant to an inquiry by Mary Jolley, Cheryl Patton looked up the land transaction of the property located across from North Junior High School. He reported that the City exchanged 55 feet of land with the property owner to create straight boundaries. That document mentions it was for the shelter and dog park. However, that location was only intended for the shelter. The shelter needs four acres. There is no room for a dog park too.

Melanie Lattin reported that an overwhelming number of people have requested the location of the dog park be adjacent to River's Edge Trail. That location is centrally located and convenient.

Commissioner Jovick-Kuntz inquired if there was adequate parking. Ms. Lattin answered that there is a developed lot for 30 cars close by.

Ms. Lattin reported that she talked with Neighborhood Council 7 and they don't have any concerns regarding the location, but they suggested the park be lighted. Ms. Lattin stated the Foundation is looking into the cost involved in lighting the park. She added the Great Falls Dog Training Club and veterinarians are very supportive.

Commissioners Jovick-Kuntz and Hinz inquired who would be responsible for liability issues, monitoring, development, maintenance and repairs. Mr. Basta responded that a Memorandum of Understanding will be prepared addressing those issues. Commissioner Beecher added that if no user group or oversight committee exists and the park is not used responsibly, the Memorandum of Understanding should outline that the City could step in.

Several audience members discussed their dog park experiences in other cities and states and shared their enthusiastic and positive feelings for a dog park in Great Falls.

2. PRESENTATION OF UTILITY RATE ANALYSIS

Public Works Director Jim Reardon presented a power point slide show of the City of Great Falls' 2008 Utility Rate Analysis. Mr. Reardon explained the 5% increase recommendation for water and sewer utility services, and no increase in the storm drain utility service rate. The requested increase in fees is impacted by inflation and he discussed the construction cost increases. Mr. Reardon explained the anticipated upcoming projects and the financial summaries.

A public hearing will be set January 22, 2008. If approved, the average residential utility bill will increase \$1.79, and will take effect February 1, 2008.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Stebbins adjourned the work session of December 4, 2007, at 6:35 p.m.