

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSIONS**  
**September 4, 2007**

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Dona Stebbins presiding

**CALL TO ORDER:** 5:30 P.M.

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

**1. PARK AND PONDER UPDATE**

Park and Recreation Director Jim Sullivan provided a history of Park and Ponder, and discussed the leases throughout the years. In the Fall of 2005, improvements in the amount of \$60,000 were made to the building. The lease holder was to pay rent in the amount of \$850 each month, plus utilities that averaged \$1,000 per month. The building improvement loan was amortized over time. In January of 2006, the lease holder began paying \$500 per month for rent, and has not paid the utilities.

City Forester Jon Thompson discussed estimates he received last March for insulation, new ceiling, floor, roof, bathroom, electrical and plumbing that totaled \$60,000. This project does not qualify for CDBG funding. Mr. Thompson discussed an option to separate the electrical outside the building for City usage versus restaurant usage.

The lease holder spoke about the Robertson family running Park and Ponder for the past eight years. He stated that they have built the business up, but are lucky to make 5%. He stated that they have cleaned up the area, and take food to the elderly across the street in the wintertime. He stated that they negotiated for approximately four months regarding the rent, improvements and utilities, but were unsuccessful. He wants to see the utilities separated.

There was discussion about requests for proposals or putting this back out to bid due to the City losing money each month. The current lease holder wants to extend the lease, but not within the parameters of \$850 per month, plus utilities.

Commissioner Rosenbaum inquired what the average square footage lease price is for the downtown area and suggested that an audit be done on the appliances, etc. All agreed that \$1,000 per month for utilities seemed excessive.

City Manager John Lawton stated that the first contract formula was convoluted and the parties negotiated a businesslike, commercial contract. At that time, the Commission approved working the \$60,000 loan for improvements in the rent amount.

Commissioner Hinz stated that if the restaurant wasn't there, the building would deteriorate and become a place the homeless might hang out.

Mayor Stebbins stated that she does not want it to go back to the way it was and would prefer to negotiate.

All agreed before anything was decided that the City would obtain the average square footage rent amount for the downtown area, and obtain an audit on the electrical.

## **2. SKATE PARK OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Park and Recreation Director Jim Sullivan presented a power point slide show about the Skate Park vandalism and graffiti problem. Since the Skate Park opened in 2004, there has been a continual problem with damage to the property and graffiti, resulting in a major cost to the City for materials and manpower. The Great Falls Pre-Release Center is assisting with the clean up now, but is still not able to keep up. Mr. Sullivan and the Park Supervisor Giles Salyer discussed proposed options to invite artists to a graffiti art program, offer a reward for tips resulting in an arrest and conviction, or fence the Skate Park.

Jaycee Broughten stated that she would like to take on this project and talk to kids to determine what they would like to see happen. Ms. Broughten discussed partnering with the Weed and Seed Program and Skyline School.

Joel Clum stated that he has been involved with youth groups and that he and his wife are willing to spend time at the Skate Park and try to help stop the vandalism. Mr. Clum opined that it needs to be done in a positive way, but the negative side needs to stop.

Mr. Robertson stated that he has witnessed the kids destroying property and that someone needs to be there and make sure the codes are being followed and, if not, call the police.

Commissioner Rosenbaum inquired what the total amount of destruction and clean up costs was, and that money could possibly be used for a "gatekeeper."

Sandy Hinz suggested that the City start with the most desirable outcome – work with community groups.

## **ADJOURN**

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