

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSIONS
September 5, 2006

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Stebbins presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 P.M.

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

1. CTEP OVERVIEW

Andrew Finch, Planning Department, explained that the CTEP (Community Transportation Enhancement Program) is a federal program funded through the Montana Department of Transportation. The State received 10 percent of all surface transportation funds and these funds must be spent on projects that enhance the State's systems of roadways. Allocation levels vary from year-to-year, depending upon Federal transportation authorization amounts. Great Falls has received \$257,664 for the past two years.

Some projects funded with CTEP funds include: Giant Springs Road Trail Tunnel, North Entry Landscaping, Fairgrounds sidewalk and landscaping, River Interpretive Trail, Oddfellows Park Trailhead and parking lot, and River Drive landscaping.

Mr. Finch added that the Planning Board reviewed the projects submitted for CTEP funding and prepared a recommendation to the City Commission. The Commission would be asked to consider that recommendation at the regular meeting. The projects included: the fountain at the Library, some streetscape improvements on 1st Avenue South and 5th Street, the Civic Center, and Bay Drive Trail.

2. FIREWORKS

Chief McCamley provided a brief history of the fireworks ordinances in Great Falls and the State of Montana. He explained that the current ordinance is difficult to enforce because the timeline for the sale and discharging of fireworks as well as the types of legal fireworks differed from State law. He provided information about the injuries and fires related to the discharge of fireworks as well. He explained that this year, members of the community expressed intolerance for fireworks expressing frustration that fireworks were being discharged late into the evening and those discharging fireworks did not clean up after themselves leaving the parks, streets and other people's property fraught with debris.

In order to address the complaints received, Staff reviewed four possible options for the Commission to consider.

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1. To continue with the current City regulations governing fireworks, recognizing that enforcement will always be extremely difficult and citizens will continue to express frustration.
2. Enact a total fireworks ban for sale, possession and discharge within the city limits, except for licensed pyrotechnic shows approved by the Fire Marshall and plan to strictly enforce the ban. This option would take aggressive enforcement until the community was educated that fireworks usage would not be tolerated.
3. Repeal current City ordinance and revert to regulations provided in State law to match the regulations in the rest of Cascade County and save enforcement resources.
4. Restrict the sale, possession and discharge of fireworks within the City to July 4th from 8 am until midnight. Prohibit use of fireworks on public property including parks and streets. Exempt licensed pyrotechnic shows approved by the Fire Marshall. This option would need aggressive enforcement until the community was fully educated on the change.

Chief McCamley reported that staff preferred options two and four. He suggested that the City solicit public input first, then staff would prepare and submit an ordinance for Commission consideration.

Mayor Stebbins asked if this issue should be addressed at the State level. She added that, in her opinion, the issue was with the fact that the County could not enact an ordinance similar to the City's.

Commissioner Rosenbaum stated that the ultimate question was how much citizens were willing to spend on zero tolerance.

Following a brief discussion between the Commission and audience members, the Commission asked staff to put a survey in the utility bill and begin the public process to help determine which option was favored by the community.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Stebbins adjourned the work session of September 5, 2006, at 6:50 p.m.

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