

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
December 5, 2023

City Commission Work Session
Civic Center, Gibson Room 212

Mayor Kelly presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM

CITY COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Kelly, Susan Wolff, Joe McKenney, Eric Hinebauch and Rick Tryon.

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Greg Doyon and Deputy City Manager Chuck Anderson; Deputy City Attorney Rachel Taylor; Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman and Grant Administrator Tom Hazen; Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig, Deputy Director Jessica Compton, Recreation Manager Erica McNamee and Recreation Program Coordinator Jerry Jordan; Municipal Court Supervisor Morgan Medvec; Assistant Fire Chief Bob Shupe; Library Director Susie McIntyre; Police Chief Jeff Newton; and, Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

1. SHEELS AIM HIGH BIG SKY AQUATIC AND RECREATION CENTER PROGRESS

Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig reported that the City worked with Pros Consultant on a Park and Recreation Masterplan that was adopted in November 2016. The Masterplan identified a combined Recreation and Aquatics Facility. A \$10 million Defense Community Infrastructure Pilot (DCIP) Grant was awarded to the City. The project was awarded to Swank Construction and they have been great to work with. Change Orders to date have been \$809,000, with \$670,000 alternates and \$138,000 on a \$20 million project. Currently seven alternates have been added, with five more to come and four will be in house through the Park and Recreation Department.

Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig, Deputy Director Jessica Compton, Recreation Program Coordinator Jerry Jordan and Recreation Manager Erica McNamee reviewed and discussed the following PowerPoint:

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SCHEELS AIM HIGH BIG SKY AQUATIC AND RECREATION CENTER



JOINT FACILITY

Air Force
Air National Guard
Great Falls Unified School District



TIMELINE

Winter: Jan-March

- Tours
- FT Coordinators Interview/Hire
- Promotions

Spring: April-May

- PT/Seasonal Hiring
- Advertising/Promotions
- Facility operations training
- Staff training- EAP, Job specific, customer service
- Ribbon Cutting/Walkthrough Demo's



DEVELOPING BUDGET

Key factors:

- Staffing
- Utilities/Pool Chemicals
- Fixed expenses
- Indirect Costs



GOALS

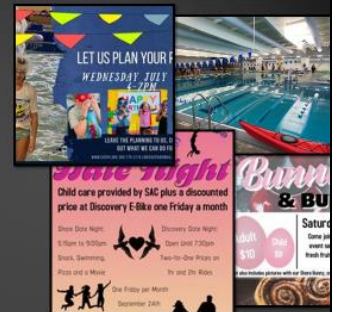
- Department Goals
- Be more proactive in the community.
- We will grow our programming and staffing for all divisions.
- Streamline our processes for more efficiency.
- Create a strong culture of service and engagement.
- Grow as professionals.
- **Recreation High Big Sky Goals**
- Promote community well being through programs and services that instill a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- Foster individual healthy living practices for the community with structured and unstructured activities, programs and play.
- Provide programming that meets the 4 types of recreation, Physical, Social, Camping & Outdoor and Arts & Crafts
- Diversify communication delivery to community using social media, physical signage, and word of mouth to market and promote the recreation facilities and services available.



PROGRAMMING

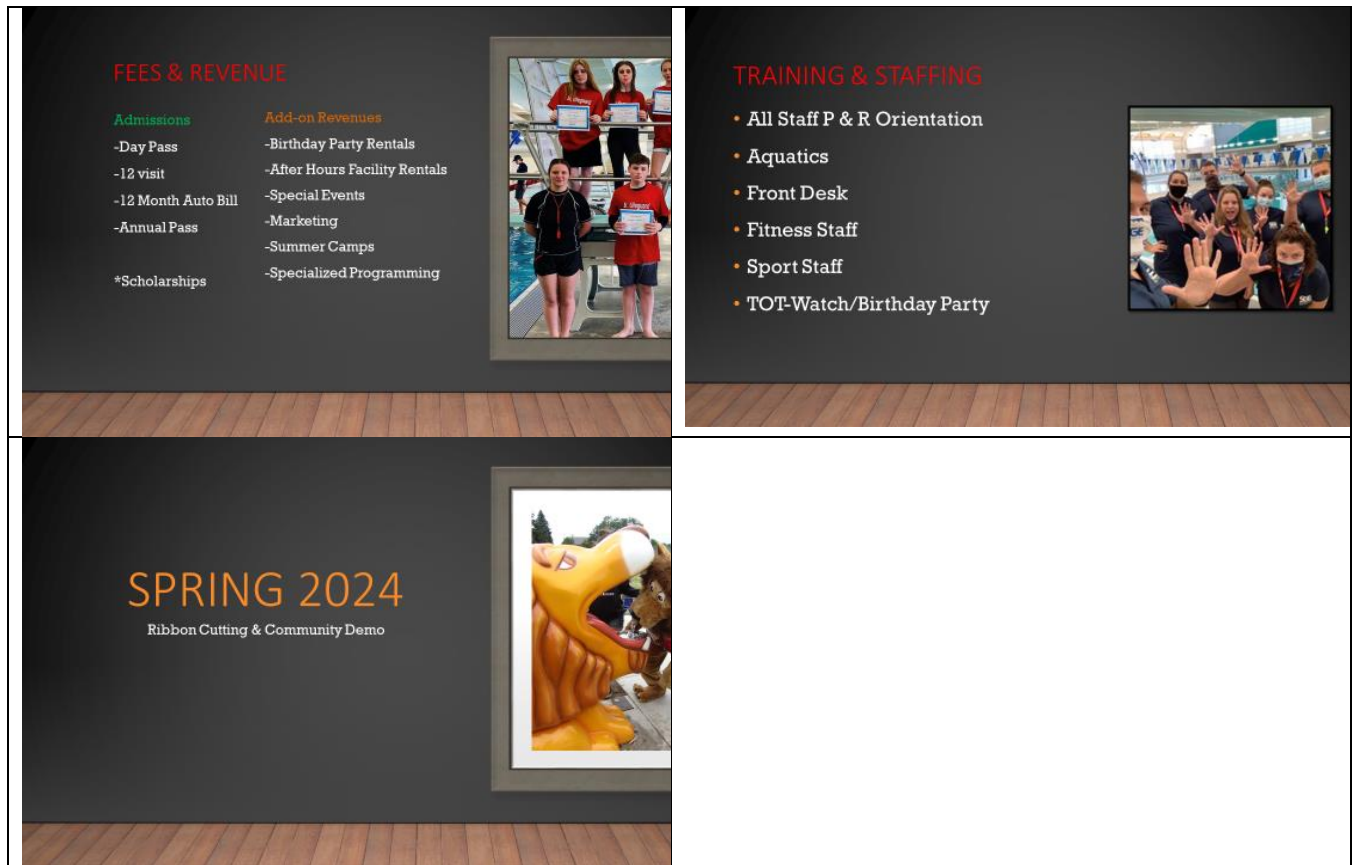
Providing a variety of programming for all ages meeting 4 types of recreation ...

- Watercise/Group Fitness
- Leagues-Youth and Adult
- Day Trips
- Speaker Series
- Parent/Tot
- Swim lessons
- CPR/FA Certifications
- Leisure and Learn Classes



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Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig explained that the Scheels Aim High Big Sky Aquatic and Recreation Center would be for the community, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana Air National Guard and Great Falls Public Schools. The fees are required by the State and will be brought forward to the Commission in February 2024. It will take two to three years of operation to level out a facility budget including revenue and expenditures based on programming and utilization. Fees will need some flexibility based on cost recovery. The Scheels Aim High Big Sky Aquatic and Recreation Center is scheduled to open in May 2024.

Mayor Kelly requested that Park and Recreation Director Herrig provide the Commission with a work chart for how the management would lay out once it is completed. He inquired about competitive wages with the private sector, membership fees, hours of operation, scholarships and how engaged MAFB is currently. Mayor Kelly concluded the City has seen great success with what CourseCo has done with the golf courses and hopes that City staff will communicate with them because they seem good at creating non-specific events.

Park and Recreation Director Herrig responded that the wages are competitive, especially at the coordinator level. Human Resources will send job descriptions to a consultant to determine a classification. Part-time and Recreation staff will be key and are non-union. City staff has reached out to the college, high schools and military spouses for employment opportunities at the new facility. Fit

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Republic Fitness Instructors became employed with the City when the facility closed last year. There would not be a joining fee; however, a membership fee would be required and offered prior to the opening in May. Hours of operation will vary depending on weekdays, weekends and summer months. Expenses will start before the revenues; however, there will be some revenue coming in before the facility is open. Scholarships would be available for anyone in the community who cannot afford the fees. Through the fundraising campaign, some individuals have dedicated some of their money specifically for scholarships. That money can go quickly and City staff is hoping to find an ongoing source for scholarships. City staff will work with the Great Falls Public School District (GFPS) to determine how to set that up. MAFB has not been extremely engaged yet; however, the Colonel has toured the facility. City staff will reach out to MAFB after January 2024 to discuss their programming needs.

Commissioner Tryon commented that citizens had expressed to him their concerns that the facility would not be available for the public because of the military and GFPS. He inquired if the military would be paying the same rate to use the facility as the citizens of the community, as well as why a tournament-length pool was not built. He further inquired about the impact of the usage of the current Recreation Center and other pools, subsidized transportation and security.

Park and Recreation Director Herrig responded that there is some justification for a military discount; however, that determination has not been fully determined yet. The military training would possibly be after hours so it would not affect the operation of the facility. As far as the GFPS District hosting swim meets, he sees it as a great partnership and rates would be determined later. A 50-meter pool was not built because high schools and colleges swim at 25 yards and the Olympics and Canada swim at 50 yards. Building a 50-meter pool would have doubled the cost of the lap pool and added under \$500,000 a year in operating costs. There would not be much impact on the other pools because citizens like to be outdoors during the summer months. The Recreation Center has been transitioning into a daycare facility and it could be agreed upon to allow the City to utilize the gym when needed.

With regard to subsidized transportation to the new facility, Recreation Program Coordinator Jordan responded that an after school program where transportation to the Recreation Center was provided; however, the program was shut down after COVID. Staff could consider possibly restarting transportation services to the new facility.

Park and Recreation Director Herrig added that he spoke with the Great Falls Transit about transportation to the new facility. Their route runs a few blocks from Lions Park; however, going to the new facility would affect the timing of their route. As far as security, another light along the front walkway and additional cameras in and outside would be added. A burglar alarm, keypad entry and dedicated security personnel could be added if needed.

City Manager Greg Doyon explained that the goals of the new combined facility is that it provide multiple uses to support multiple revenue streams to offset revenue coming in. Not only having a daycare facility in the current Recreation Center, but also leasing the building out to have a revenue stream that would ultimately support the new facility.

Commissioner McKenney inquired about the new facility being able to operate with the current subsidy

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received through aquatics and recreation, the number of full and part-time staff, competition with private facilities, hosting birthday parties and food services.

Park and Recreation Director Herrig responded that his department would work with Finance to determine how to build a maintenance fund for any unexpected expenses. Maintenance staff would work on mechanical parts and pumps daily, and having a service agreement with a local company is being considered. The number of full and part-time employees has not been determined yet; however, Staff would provide that information to the Commission later. There would not be competition with other fitness facilities because the models are different from the new facility. There would be a concession area open for events and busy hours, as well as grab and go items. There would be one large room for birthday parties or it could be divided into two smaller rooms. Staff is still working out details about whether the facility would provide everything for birthday parties.

Commissioner McKenney responded that there is a real need for facilities that host birthday parties.

Commissioner Wolff expressed appreciation to Park and Recreation Director Herrig for mentioning that the new facility would not only be utilized by MAFB, but also MANG. She inquired if the Recreation Center Custodial staff would go to the new facility, about the current Morony Natatorium site and if water would still be available if a splash pad was going to be included.

Park and Recreation Director Herrig responded that current Recreation Center Custodial staff would be able to come to the new facility. The Morony Natatorium Demolition project would include adding sidewalks and turf and the City may go out for another grant for a playground and pavilion. Having water available, a splash pad or an all-inclusive playground has not been determined yet.

City Manager Doyon reiterated that the Morony Natatorium Demolition project is underway because of a façade failure in 2018, second pool failure structurally and deed that required it to be used as a public park. Building a third indoor pool knowing that it would structurally fail on that location was never a consideration and it made no sense to invest any more into that site.

Mayor Kelly commented that it is important to make the new facility a successful operation financially and great for all of the military and civilian community. The facility would be eligible for maintenance dollars from the Park Maintenance District. This is a big capital investment and there is a revenue stream to keep it in shape.

Park and Recreation Director Herrig added that the City set aside year four park district funds that were eligible; however, there has not been a need for it yet.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that there would not be an increase in the assessment for the Park Maintenance District and current park maintenance funding would be available for maintenance of the new facility.

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2. POST LEVY VOTE DISCUSSION

City Manager Greg Doyon expressed appreciation to Police Chief Jeff Newton, Captains Doug Otto, Rob Moccasin and John Schaffer and Volunteer Coordinator Adrienne Ehrke; Fire Chief Jeremy Jones, Fire Marshall Mike McIntosh, Community Risk Specialist Kate Brewer and Staff; City Attorney David Dennis and Prosecutors; Deputy City Manager Chuck Anderson and Executive Assistant Krista Artis; Municipal Court Judge Steve Bolstad and Court Supervisor Morgan Medvec; and, Communications Specialist Lanni Klasner for their efforts with regard to the educational process of the Public Safety Levy. He further expressed appreciation to the Great Falls Development Authority; Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce; Neighborhood Councils; Great Falls Public Schools Superintendent Tom Moore; and, Great Falls Association of Realtors CEO Terry Thompson for their efforts with regard to publicly supporting the Public Safety Levy.

City Manager Doyon explained that the Wendt Agency was not brought on earlier because of the high sensitivity of crossing the line from education to advocacy. The citizen's perception of City needs are different from library or school needs. He expressed appreciation to the City Commission for attending a town hall meeting and the voters for making their voices heard. The next steps would include reviewing the election results. He did an internal debrief with the primary and educational presenters and would have an external debrief with the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, Great Falls Development Authority, Great Falls Public School District and advocacy groups that supported the levy. The City will maintain the Safety in the Falls website to continue to educate citizens about public safety matters until the transition of ownership. City staff would continue to do their best to serve the City residents and build on the prior education effort and apply it to the next effort.

Moving forward, the Police, Fire, Municipal Court and Legal Departments are regrouping with their leadership teams to look at their current needs and challenges, evaluate how to be efficient with their current resources and look at policies and practices. There would not be any immediate changes; however, there would be a reprioritization of services because current resources need to be reallocated or allocated to the most pressing issues facing the community. As a result, something would have to give and there would be changes ahead until some of the deficiencies could be addressed. The departments' involved expressed concern about employee retention, as well as recruitment.

City Manager Doyon further explained that the issue of public safety in the community has been a priority of every Commission since he has been with the City in 2008. Public safety will continue to be an issue because if it is not prioritized, there will be a residual impact on the community, development and growth. Timing of the Public Safety Levy was terrible because of the county and library levies that had already passed, inaccurate information about taxes from the Department of Revenue and the current economic time. Unless someone is directly impacted, the public appeared to be unaware of the issues with regard to responses from Fire, Police, Court and Legal. City Manager Doyon added that he was shocked by the public's lack of awareness and incredible disconnect that public safety had been an ongoing issue for years.

Mayor Kelly commented that not only is there better citizen awareness of the realities of the resources the departments have to operate the City with, but also the limited resources that tax payers have. Like any

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big effort that fails, one learns from it, moves forward and does the best they can.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that there will not be a work session on December 19, 2023; however, there will be a meet and greet for newly and outgoing elected officials. The January 2, 2024 work session will consist of a library levy implementation update. A semi-annual budget review will be a topic at the January 16, 2024 work session. A park and rec fee update will be a topic at the February 6, 2024 work session. House Bill 355 award & funding recommendation will be a topic at the February 20, 2024 work session

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Kelly adjourned the informal work session of December 5, 2023 at 6:50 p.m.