

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
March 19, 2024

City Commission Work Session
Civic Center, Gibson Room 212

Mayor Reeves presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM

CITY COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Cory Reeves, Susan Wolff, Joe McKenney, Rick Tryon and Shannon Wilson.

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Greg Doyon and Deputy City Manager Chuck Anderson; City Attorney David Dennis; Finance Director Melissa Kinzler, ARPA Project Manager Sylvia Tarman and Grant Administrator Tom Hazen; Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry; Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig; Information Technology Director Todd Feist; Municipal Court Judge Mark Dunn; Library Director Susie McIntyre; Fire Marshall Mike McIntosh; Police Chief Jeff Newton; and, Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Written correspondence was received from **Terry Bjork**, via March 15, 2024 email, expressed concern that there was no public call for applicants or posting on the City's website for the Public Safety Advisory Commission.

Charlie Mesler, City resident, provided a handout pertaining to a land swap proposal and he requested to be added to an upcoming work session to discuss it further.

Commissioner McKenney inquired if it would be ex parte communication to discuss Mr. Mesler's proposal via telephone.

City Attorney David Dennis responded that he would look into that and report to the Commission.

City Manager Greg Doyon added that if the proposal were to come before the Commission, there should not be ex parte communication. Based on the information that the Commission previously received, it would be up to them to decide whether it warrants a work session.

It was the consensus of the Commission to review the material first to determine if it should be added to a work session.

Ben Forsyth, City resident, read and provided a prepared handout pertaining to Initiative-190 (I-190) and the harms of high levels of THC and marijuana use.

Jeni Dodd, City resident, expressed opposition to the format of the annual library board update because it does not allow the public to receive answers to their questions. Ms. Dodd inquired if Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 22-1-303 was ever followed with regard to establishing the Great Falls Public Library and about the original resolution. She opined that the 1993 Agreement between the City and Library

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
March 19, 2024

Board is invalid because it was not signed by the mayor or voted on by the City Commission. She commented that MCA 22-1-304 codified a method by which free libraries are funded, which is through tax levy by resolution of the governing body to put the question of a levy to the voters; however, this did not happen with the 1993 agreement. She expressed concern about the legality of levying mills through the 1993 agreement.

Ms. Dodd further expressed concern that the library continues to hire, because she was under the impression that the Library Director was advised by City staff to pause hiring. She pointed out that there is a conflict between the 1993 agreement giving the City the authority and responsibility for personnel matters and MCA 22-1-310 giving the Library Board those duties. The library levy increased annual library revenue from \$1.5 million to an estimated \$3.45 million according to this annual update. The original ask was to increase the library budget to \$2.7 million total, not \$3.45 million.

Ms. Dodd commented that she was victim of viewpoint discrimination at the last Library Board meeting and feels her rights were violated when she was threatened to be thrown out of the meeting unfairly. She added that the Library Board should not be taking its direction from members of Great Falls Rising and she requested the City Commission, as governing body of the Library Board, to put an end to that organization's undue influence. Ms. Dodd urged the Commission to listen to the recording of that Library Board meeting.

Referring to Agenda Item 2, **Nicholas Sudan**, City resident, recommended that the Commission determine the purpose, duties and members of the Public Safety Advisory Committee so there could be substantial public comment.

1. ANNUAL UPDATE FROM LIBRARY BOARD

Library Board Members Jessica Crist, Anne Bulger, Whitney Olson, Noelle Johnson and Samantha DeForest, as well as Library Foundation Executive Director Brianne Laurin, discussed their responsibilities, experiences and backgrounds, as well as some of the programs offered at the Great Falls Public Library. Library Board members explained that they are committed to making the community a better place and libraries are vitally important. The Library Foundation has supported programs and services at the library since 1968. The library offers many programs and services such as the Wowbrary newsletter, early literacy, story time, Dolly Parton's Imagination, Linkedin Learning, Mango language, book clubs, book sales, Memory Café and a young adult book section. Library staff assists citizens with advanced training for school, personal growth, business and jobs. With the passing of the Library Mill Levy, the library is keeping its promise to the community to expand its services. A proposed library remodel design contract will be on the March 26, 2024 Library Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

Commissioner Tryon inquired if the Library Board considers its job description/responsibilities document to be the criteria by which the City Commission must adhere when appointing Library Board members. He further inquired about a new policy recently adopted by the Library Board, which programs and resources it intends to use to fulfill the new policy and the meaning of "dismantle systemic individual biases."

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
March 19, 2024

Ms. Crist responded that the Library Board's criteria does not supersede the City Commission and the board simply wants applicants to understand what would be expected of them, which is why there is an overly verbose job description.

Referring to Commissioner Tryon's inquiry about the new policy, Ms. Deforest responded that the library has long included the American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics as part of its policy manual. A wide variety of people attended focus group discussions and indicated what they wanted to see in the library. The board wanted them to feel like they were being represented at the library. Dismantling biases means opening people's eyes to the wider world.

Commissioner McKenney commended the Library Board for their efforts with regard to exploring ways to make changes at the library and raising money from the public sector. He recommended that the Library Board think outside the box with regard to the library remodel design.

Commissioners Wolff and Wilson expressed appreciation to the Library Board for their efforts with regard to the update.

Mayor Reeves expressed appreciation to the Library Board for their dedication to the library and community.

Ms. Olson reported that the next Public Library Board of Trustees meeting is on March 26, 2024 in the Cordingley Room at the Great Falls Public Library.th

2. PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMISSION – ESTABLISHMENT OF PURPOSE AND DUTIES

City Manager Greg Doyon explained that there was previous Commission discussion and consensus to establish a Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) in the wake of a failed public safety levy and bond. A draft resolution outlines the purpose, scope, duties and period related to this effort.

Mayor Reeves asked Commissioner McKenney to explain how and why PSAC members were selected.

Commissioner McKenney explained that it was important to select individuals that bring different thoughts. The members include: two Neighborhood Council members; two City Commissioners; two community activists for the public safety levy and two against the levy; and, one legislator from the Senate and one from the House who served on either local government or tax. The timing of the PSAC recommendations needs to be considered because of the November 2024 election and 2025 legislative session. The PSAC's recommendations should be conceptual.

Commissioner Wolff inquired if the PSAC or City Commission would determine the purpose and duties. She commented that property reappraisals would also need to be considered with regard to the timing of the PSAC's recommendations.

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
March 19, 2024

Commissioner Tryon inquired if the purpose of establishing a PSAC is to make recommendations on public safety funding, service reduction or another public safety levy.

Commissioner McKenney responded that he does not want to put restrictions on a committee that has such serious decisions to make. He suggested that the PSAC determine broad priorities for public safety; priorities for the public safety departments; recommend strategies for funding public safety priorities, consider timing of a future levy, if a levy is considered; strategies to engage a broad spectrum of community members and businesses; and, provide draft recommendations by Labor Day.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that a utility/sanitation rate review and growth management plan RFP will be a topics for the April 2, 2024 work session. A quarterly budget review, transit district update and ARPA-project scoping will be topics for the April 16, 2024 work session.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of March 19, 2024 at 6:50 p.m.