

Petitions and Communications:

I recently learned that Parks & Rec Director Steve Herrig seemingly acted on his own to approve a private franchise for a kayak rental kiosk in a Great Falls city park.

The Park & Rec Board's November 13, 2023 minutes state, *Director Herrig was working with a group to bring in a cage system to rent kayaks from the riverfront out of our park systems.*

The December Park & Rec board meeting was cancelled. The minutes for the January state, *Art wanted to know why the Board wasn't more informed on this discussion/process. He noted that the proposal/project was presented to the board, but wasn't aware that the project had been finalized and gone to the Commission and been approved.*

But it seems it hadn't been approved by the commission. I found no vote by the city commission to approve it. Maybe I missed it but I couldn't even find an instance where Herrig presented this to the commission at a work session.

Since the City of Great Falls has apparently granted a franchise to Treasure State Outdoors to operate its business within a city park,

The Montana Code Annotated Title 7, Local Government; Chapter 5, General Operation and Conduct of Business; Part 43 Municipal Contracts and Franchises appears to claim that this franchise should be voted on by the people.

MCA § 7-5-4321 states:

An exclusive franchise for any purpose, except contracts for solid waste management systems as defined in 75-10-103, which may not exceed 10 years, may not be granted by any city or town or by the mayor or city council to any person, association, or corporation without first submitting the application for an exclusive franchise to the electors of the city at an election.

Now maybe that reference doesn't apply for some reason, but shouldn't Parks & Rec Director Herrig at least sought approval from the Parks & Rec board and the City Commission before moving forward?

I want to remind the commission that when they entered a contract with the sewer insurance company to use the city's logo and get kickbacks for each policy sold, the commission voted on that franchise. It seem like that should have been done in this instance as well.

Where is the contract between the city and the private company Treasure State Outdoors? Treasure State Outdoors claimed on FB that their company, the City of Great Falls and Rent.Fun.

Also, the city apparently poured a concrete pad for this kayak kiosk at the end of January. Who paid for the concrete pad? City taxpayers? I opine that use of city resources to benefit a private business is in violation of the MCA.

This is a glaring example of crony capitalism. No other business was able to compete for this opportunity to run a kayak kiosk in a city park.

Mayor Reeves, you promised transparency to the citizens of Great Falls from the city. There has been no transparency in this action.

Commissioner Tryon before you joined the commission, you organized a group to oppose the Park District levy. Funny how now that you are on the commission, you allow Parks and Rec get away with partnering with a private business without commission approval and how, after leading the charge against the park levy, you vote every year to fund it with the maximum allowable mills.

Agenda Item #14

TIF funds are meant to be used in blighted areas to effect an overall public benefit not merely benefit one property owner and his business

interests. But here again, the City of Great Falls does whatever it wants — city staff and/or the city manager (who just got a raise to over \$197,000 plus bennies) tell the commission what they want and the commission mostly rubber-stamps it (despite Commissioner Tryon’s insistence that they don’t).

Agenda Item #15

WOW, that’s a lot of taxpayer money, over a third of a million dollars, just to UPDATE the Growth Policy.

Agenda Item #16—Growth Plan Update Committee Appointees

Your application for this committee stated you want an “inclusive conversation.” This committee is far from inclusive.

The stated purpose of the three “GF Citizen Interest Representatives” is to ***“provide representation of the "typical Great Falls resident. To help point out "blind spots" that may not be visible to the City or other organizations.***

But then you go and chose folks that aren’t typical Great Falls residents. Instead you chose folks that have had extensive dealings with the city, like Spencer Woith or folks that were or are heavily involved with so-called city “partners” like Carol Bronson.

Is city staff so delusional that they believe someone like Carol Bronson, a former longtime employee of city “partner” NGO NeighborWorks and spouse to former City Commissioner Bill Bronson, could represent the typical Great Falls resident?

Woith, a business owner, for which you have a separate category of representatives already, is the developer who recently ignored the valid concerns of more than 100 residents of the area of his Bay View Development. The typical GF resident is not a developer. How can this city claim he speaks for the typical Great Falls resident?

You know who you don't have to represent typical Great Falls residents? You don't have anyone to represent young families whose breadwinners are each working multiple service industry jobs just to get by in this town. You don't have anyone to represent seniors or elderly people on a fixed incomes that maybe have lived here most or all of their lives and now may have to move because they can't afford to live here anymore. **THOSE ARE TYPICAL GREAT FALL RESIDENTS!**

In addition, there are at least two, maybe more, members of Great Falls Development Alliance on this committee, which is stacking the deck in that organization's favor.

Further, everyone on the list will support more city-funded/assisted rental housing starts under the guise of workforce housing. In my opinion, that's why they were chosen.

Let's look at the facts. City officials and the commission seem to lack the critical thinking skills to recognize the invalidity of the Great Falls Development Alliance housing study, which is based on a flawed premise of using pandemic-era data and then projects the unprecedented growth and housing demand of that era, into the future. When Bret Doney preaches his "study" as the gospel truth, you all quote it like a bible.

This city and its "partners" have also named the Sentinel Project as the impetus for a housing shortage, while ignoring the fact that the Air Force Representative for the Sentinel Project told the city commission that he didn't anticipate the project would have any impact on housing demand in GF.

In my opinion, the make-up of this committee, the flawed housing study being pushed, etc are all part of a calculated plan to benefit developers, builders and associated businesses by creating a manufactured, so-called critical demand that isn't there, and will eventually be used to utilize taxpayers money to help fund it all.

List of members:

- 1. Commissioner Tryon*
- 2. Bret Doyon, Great Falls Development Alliance*
- 3. Heather Hoyer, soon to be Superintendent of GF Public Schools*
- 4. TBD, Malmstrom Air Force Base Representative*
- 5. Katie Hanning, Housing & Development, listed employment: Executive Officer, Home Builders Association of Great Falls*
- 6. Kris Cron, Business & Industry #1, listed employment: Area Product Sales Manager, Builders FirstSource*
- 7. Michael Hallahan, Business & Industry #2, listed employment: Partner in Enbar*
- 8. Brian Kaufman, Business & Industry #3, listed employment: Retail*
- 9. Tom Heisler, Agriculture & Environment, listed employment: Self employed and farmer. also listed himself as a GFDA board member and Tavern Assoc. member*
- 10. Abigail Hill, Public Health & Medical, listed employment: Health Officer/Director Cascade City-County Health Dept*
- 11. Dr. Stephanie Erdmann, Higher Education & Adult Training, listed employment: CEO/Dean*
- 12. Spencer Woith, GF Citizen Interests #1, listed employment: Civil Engineer/Business Owner/Developer, I believe he is also a GDA board member*
- 13. Carol Bronson, GF Citizen Interests #2, listed employment: Retired, formerly NeighborWorks*
- 14. Wayne Klind, GF Citizen Interests #3, listed employment: Risk Manager, Pacific Steel and Recycling*

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Josh Butterfly

Elder Abuse - Great Fall, Montana

