

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
May 7, 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; Public Works Director Chris Gaub; Park and Recreation Director Steve Herrig; Information Technology Director Todd Feist; Municipal Court Judge Steve Bolstad; Library Director Susie McIntyre; Fire Chief Jeremy Jones and Fire Marshall Mike McIntosh; Police Chief Jeff Newton; and, Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

1. DISCUSSION ON URBAN DEER PROGRAMS

City Manager Greg Doyon explained that previously it was decided not to pursue an Urban Deer Program; however, recently residents have expressed concern about the urban deer population to the City Commission. Tonight's discussion will be about available options to the City to manage its urban deer population.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Region 4 Wildlife Manager Cory Loecker read and discussed Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 87-2-101. FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker explained that he helped Lewistown, Fort Benton, White Sulphur Springs and Geraldine with their plan and would assist the City develop a similar plan for an Urban Deer Program. Upon adoption of a plan, it would go through the FWP Commission process. Options for eliminating nuisance deer include:

- Euthanize with a weapon, such as a 22 Magnum, by an officer or the Sheriff's Office.
- Trap and remove, as in euthanize, because trap and move does not work.
- A hunt within City limits.

FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker further explained that the plan could state who would euthanize or do the sharp shooting, which typically goes hand in hand with the Police Department. A plan could be modified anytime through the public meeting process.

Commissioner Wolff inquired if there is a problem with deer in the City.

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FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker responded that FWP receives multiple calls a week from homeowners, a subdivision within the city limits or HOA's outside the city limits. Long-term issues with deer are disease management and human safety. Currently, a homeowner can disallow enforcement staff to remove deer from their property; however, the City could implement a plan that gives enforcement staff the authority to remove deer from private property. FWP pays and tests for Chronic Wasting disease in every deer removed through them and are donated to a local food bank. The City would benefit by at least exploring options of an Urban Deer Program.

Mayor Reeves commented that he is in favor of an Urban Deer Program; however, he is not a proponent of is putting additional work on police officers. He inquired if there is a program where the City collaborates with FWP for dispatching the excess deer and about the fee for processing harvested deer.

FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker responded that FWP has the same issue with its enforcement staff. The City could state in the plan that enforcement staff could be FWP Wardens, Cascade County Sheriff's Office, City Police Department or designated sharpshooters. There is a list of meat processors in town that participate in the Food Bank Network program that could allocate funds for processing. The plan could also state that harvested deer will be donated to a family on the list, so there would be no cost to the City.

Commissioner Tryon mentioned that Helena's Urban Deer Program harvests over 300 deer a year and he inquired if there would be more or less harvested in Great Falls.

FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker responded that it would be much less than 300 a year in Great Falls. He explained that if the City were to do a hunt, it would have to be between FWP's authorization of August 15 through February 15.

City Manager Doyon inquired how FWP categorizes a deer that is being a nuisance to a property.

FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker responded that currently, it could remove a deer that is causing human safety concerns, harassing neighbors, dogs or children, and if it looks sick.

Commissioner Wolff inquired what the cost would be for the City to implement this program.

Mayor Reeves responded that the cost would be unknown until the City developed a plan that stated which entity would enforce this.

FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker suggested that City staff reach out to other cities similar in size; however, it would be difficult to tell immediately what staff time would cost.

Mayor Reeves mentioned that he does not support using a bow and arrow to harvest deer.

Manager Doyon inquired how the Commission would like to proceed.

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Commissioner Tryon suggested waiting until after the budget because he is concerned about personnel and budget issues.

Mayor Reeves inquired if there would be any significant impact to the general fund to look at a plan.

Manager Doyon responded that it would take staff time to look at a plan.

FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker commented that maintaining a healthy deer population is FWP's utmost concern. Chronic Wasting Disease is showing up more and more in Montana and he would send the Commission more information about that.

Commissioners McKenney and Wolff commented that they have not heard the public mention there is a deer problem in the City.

Commissioner Wolff added that she is looking at this from a practical standpoint and is concerned about the cost for personnel.

Commissioner Wilson commented that she has noticed more deer in town and it is a good idea to plan now to get ahead of it.

FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker explained that between the City and FWP process, it could take approximately six months to a year before a plan is implemented. Just because a plan is implemented, does not mean the City would have to act on it.

Mayor Reeves suggested that Manager Doyon proceed working with FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker about the details of a plan.

Manager Doyon responded that he would have FWP Wildlife Manager Loecker start outlining something and come back at another work session in a few months to revisit the topic.

Commissioner McKenney commented that tonight's discussion was an icebreaker to the topic and the Commission will need to pay attention to feedback from the community.

Commissioner Wolff commented that Manager Doyon knows the best use of his time right now and the right time to discuss this topic further.

Mayor Reeves clarified that he had no expectation that implementing a plan would be done soon; however, he is just trying to anticipate down the road so the City does not end up like Helena, Fort Benton or Missoula.

2. FIRE DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION ON PROPOSED CODE CHANGES – TITLES 5, 9 AND 15 – CHAPTER 9.

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Fire Chief Jeremy Jones explained that what is being presented tonight is a collaboration that has been the mission of the Commission and City Manager’s Office to streamline development review, work together to be more effective with processes and address public safety.

Fire Marshal Mike McIntosh reviewed and discussed the following PowerPoint:

ADDRESSING PUBLIC SAFETY BY STRENGTHENING GFFR'S CODE ENFORCEMENT & FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION

GREAT FALLS FIRE RESCUE

OVERVIEW

- GFFR ADMINISTERS THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS SAFETY INSPECTION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM
- GFFR WORKS COLLABORATIVELY WITH PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND CITY ENGINEERING IN THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS
- GFFR MUST FOCUS ON ADDRESSING FIRE PREVENTION AND CODE ENFORCEMENT AS THE CURRENT RESPONSE POSTURE CANNOT MEET OPERATIONAL RESPONSE TIMES AND STAFFING REQUIREMENTS
- GFFR INSPECTS MOST ALL PUBLIC SAFETY EVENTS FOR LIFE SAFETY ISSUES, CURRENTLY THERE IS NO FORMAL PROCESS, GFFR IS LOOKING TO ESTABLISH ONE

SAFETY INSPECTION CERTIFICATE (SIC)

- FOR YEARS THE CITY HAS USED THE SIC IN PLACE OF A BUSINESS LICENSE
- THE SIC NAME CREATES CONFUSION AMONGST BUSINESSES, SPECIFICALLY OUT OF STATE CORPORATIONS
- WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH PCD, FISCAL AND LEGAL, GFFR IS WORKING TO STREAMLINE THE PROCESS TO MAKE IT MORE USER FRIENDLY AND TRANSPARENT
- GFFR AND THE CITY WILL TRANSITION THE SIC PROGRAM INTO A BUSINESS LICENSE PROGRAM

GFFR IS LOOKING TO STRENGTHEN FIRE PREVENTION EFFORTS IN THE COMMUNITY BY ADOPTING PROACTIVE FIRE CODE ENFORCEMENT AND PREVENTION BENEFITS:

- GFFR HAS WORKED WITH LEGAL AND PCD ON CITY FIRE CODE REQUIREMENTS AND PROPOSE THE FOLLOWING CHANGES TO THE OFFICIAL CODE OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS (OCCGF):
 - TITLE 45 BUSINESS LICENSES, PERMITS, AND SAFETY INSPECTIONS CERTIFICATES
 - TITLE 45 BUILDINGS AND CONSTRUCTION (CHAPTER 9) FIRE CODE
 - TITLE 9 PUBLIC PEACE, MORALS AND WELFARE (CHAPTER 9) FIREWORKS
- GFFR LOOKING TO ADD OPERATIONAL PERMITS FROM SECTION 105 OF THE IFC
- ADDRESSING CERTAIN CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES THAT HAVE CAUSED PROPERTY LOSS IN THE CITY
- GFFR HAS WORKED WITH THE BUILDING OFFICIAL AND LEGAL ON STEPS TO ADDRESS NUISANCE PROPERTIES



DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

- INTERNATIONAL FIRE CODE (IFC) IS A MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS
- IT TAKES MANY CITY DEPARTMENTS WORKING TOGETHER TO CONTINUE TO REFINE AND IMPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS FOR OUR COMMUNITY
- THIS PROCESS IS A JOINT COLLABORATION BETWEEN GFFR, PCD, ENGINEERING, LEGAL, AND THE CITY MANAGERS OFFICE

CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

- WITH THE INCREASE OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, THE FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION (FPD) HAS BEEN BURDENED WITH AN INCREASED WORKLOAD
 - THIS HAS RESULTED IN TIMES WHEN FIRE PLANS REVIEWS TAKES A SECONDARY PRIORITY OVER OTHER BUSINESS SUCH AS FIRE INVESTIGATIONS, ALARM SYSTEM TESTING, ETC.
- TO ADDRESS THE INCREASED WORKLOAD, ADDRESS THE DELAYS IN THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS, AND THE LACK OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN FIRE PREVENTION, GFFR IS LOOKING TO ADD AN ADDITIONAL FTP POSITION.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GFFR WILL ADDRESS THIS NEED THROUGH THE FY2025 BUDGET PROCESS AND UPDATES TO THE GFFR FEE SCHEDULE FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE FPD• THE ADDITIONAL FTP POSITION WILL:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HAVE AN EMPHASIS IN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND KEEP TIMELINES MOVING• THIS POSITION, WILL ALSO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND EFFICIENCY IN THE REVIEW PROCESS AMONGST OTHER CITY DEPARTMENTS• ALLOW FOR FIRE PREVENTION EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC EVENTS• ASSIST DURING TIMES OF INVESTIGATION OR BUSINESS INSPECTIONS WITH OTHER FPD PERSONNEL <p style="text-align: center;">7</p>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">GFFR PROPOSED FEE SCHEDULE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• THE LAST TIME GFFR ADJUSTED ITS FEE SCHEDULE WAS 2022 BEFORE THAT, GFFR FEES WERE ADJUSTED ON AVERAGE EVERY 2.87 YEARS• THE 2022 ADJUSTMENT WAS TO ADD FEES FOR EMS REIMBURSEMENT AND FALSE ALARM VIOLATIONS• THE REST OF GFFR'S FEES WERE LAST ADJUSTED IN 2019, SIC'S WERE LAST ADJUSTED IN 2017• FROM 1999 TO 2005 THE MAJORITY OF FEES SAW NO ADJUSTMENT• GFFR IS PROPOSING FP FEES BASED OFF COMPARISONS OF THE FEES THAT OTHER MONTANA CITIES CURRENTLY CHARGE• GFFR IS PROPOSING A FEE INCREASE TO EMS REIMBURSEMENT BASED OFF OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAIDE REIMBURSEMENT RATES• GFFR IS PROPOSING ALL OTHER FEES INCLUDING BUSINESS LICENSES BE ADJUSTED BASED OFF OF THE CURRENT WESTERN CPI PERCENTAGE <p style="text-align: center;">8</p> 
<h3 style="text-align: center;">CONCLUSION</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• TO ADDRESS THE LACK OF OPERATIONAL RESPONSE POSTURE FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES PROTECTION IN THE CITY, GFFR WILL CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN IT'S FIRE PREVENTION/CODE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN THE COMMUNITY BY:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WORKING IN CONJUNCTION WITH PCB, FISCAL AND LEGAL TO MAKE THE CITY BUSINESS LICENSURE PROCESS MORE USER FRIENDLY AND TRANSPARENT• WORKING WITH PCB AND ENGINEERING TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS WITHIN THE CITY• ALLOW FOR PERMITTING OF ALL PUBLIC ASSEMBLY EVENTS <p style="text-align: center;">9</p> 	

Fire Marshal Mike McIntosh explained that with the adoption of the new fire code, mobile food preparation vehicles are now required to have suppression systems.

Mayor Reeves received clarification that the cost for mobile vendor suppression systems depends on the vendor's current setup and what they are cooking.

Commissioner Wolff received clarification that a vendor coming into the City to conduct business must have a business license. She mentioned that the math was incorrect under the renewal section of Resolution 10444.

Commissioner Wilson noted she is a board member for the Sons of Norway and the cost was approximately \$7,000 for its mobile food preparation vehicle suppression system.

Commissioner McKenney received clarification that the process of applying for a business licenses would remain the same by having applications signed off from the Zoning, Building, Environmental and Fire Departments, and City County Health, if it is applicable. He further received clarification that there was collaboration with the private sector for the development review process. The City is approximately 20 years behind with regard to not keeping up with the cost of doing business. The requested Full-time Permanent (FTP) position would assist with the additional required permits.

Commissioner Tryon commented that the occupation certificate and some of the new language could have an impact on people doing business in the City.

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Fire Marshal Mike McIntosh responded that with the way the City is currently growing and expanding, people are coming here and doing business regardless. Montana is approximately 10 to 15 years behind the times with the rest of the nation and this is the nature of how business is done today.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that a 2025 budget kick off and BID business and expansion update will be topics for the May 21, 2024 work session.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of May 7, 2024 at 6:46 p.m.