

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
October 1, 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, Rick Tryon, Joe McKenney, Susan Wolff and Shannon Wilson.

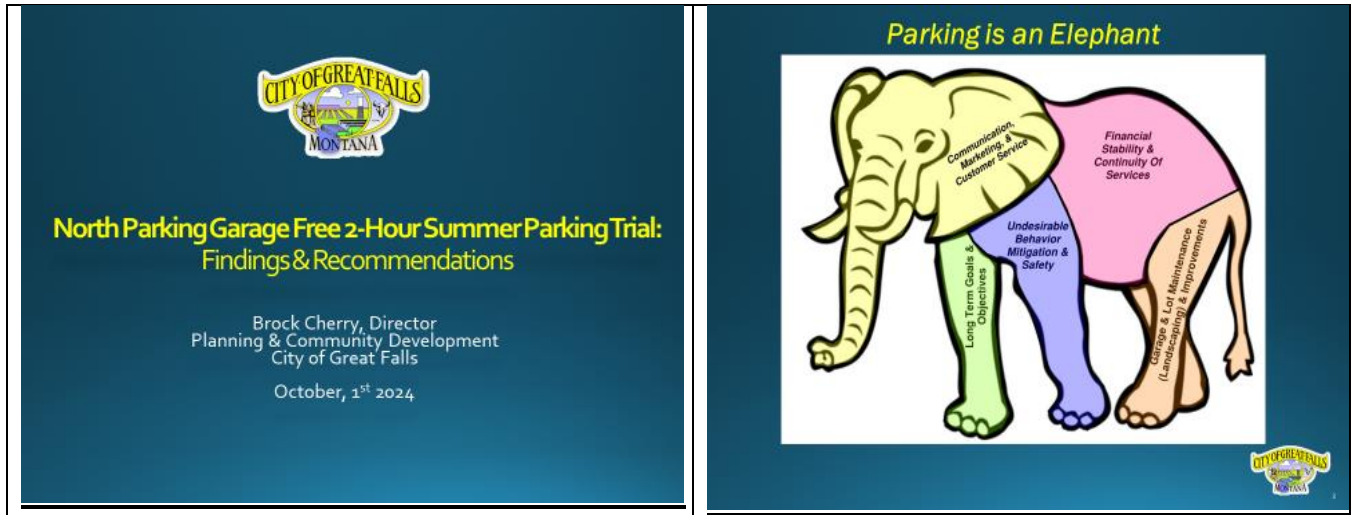
STAFF PRESENT: Acting City Manager/Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry; City Attorney David Dennis; Finance Director Melissa Kinzler; and, Deputy City Clerk Darcy Dea.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

1. **NORTH PARKING GARAGE FREE 2-HOUR SUMMER PARKING TRIAL – FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Planning and Community Development Director Brock Cherry reviewed and discussed the following PowerPoint slides:



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It takes a team!
Parking Administration Team



Boek Cherry,
PCD Director



Luisa Hill,
Deputy PCD Director



Andrew Finch,
Senior Transportation
Planner



Alaina Mattiello,
Assistant
Transportation Planner



Jodie Marks,
Deputy Booking Official



Melissa Minter,
Finance Director



Kristen Wilson,
Deputy Finance
Director

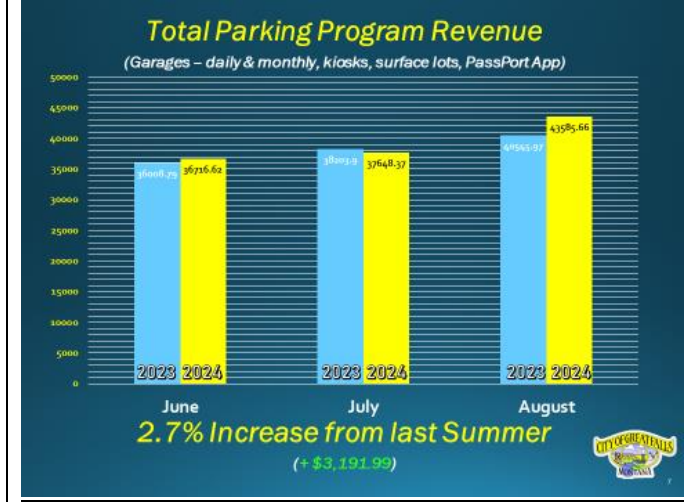
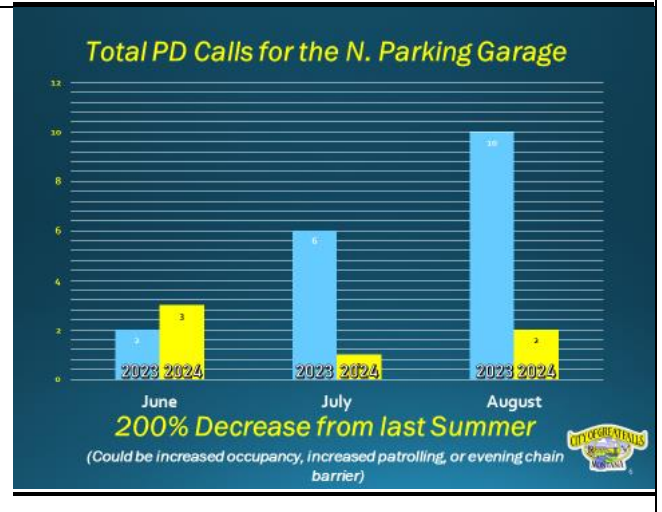
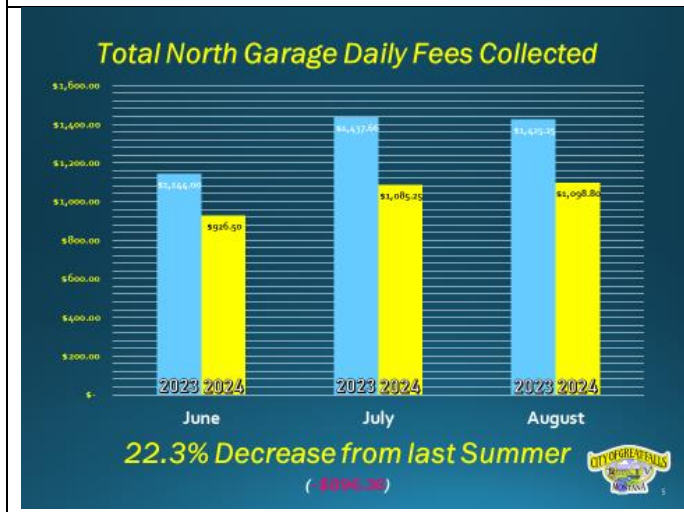
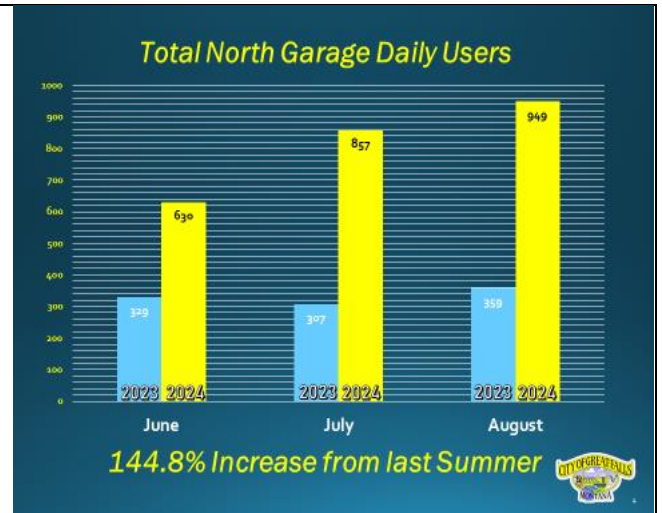


Tara Grigsby,
SP+ Parking Manager



City of Great Falls
Parking Advisory
Commission

We can do it!

What went well?

- The 2-Hour Free North Parking Trial **didn't cost the City money**—in fact, we made more than last year.
- Summer utilization in the North Garage **increased by 144.8%**.
- Safe to say that **awareness of the North Parking Garage has increased.**


FREE 2 HOUR PUBLIC PARKING

NORTH PARKING GARAGE
174TH STREET NORTH

- FIRST 2 HOURS FREE (5:00 AM - 8:00 AM)
- UPDATED SECURITY CAMERAS AND LIGHTING
- EASY ACCESS


JUNE 1 - AUGUST 31

FOR MORE INFO: 406-727-XXXX



KUDOS TO CHUCK!

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<p>Next Steps – Updating the North Parking Garage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep Tracking the Data!<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will Fall utilization be higher because of the new “converts” to the north parking garage—even without the two-hour free parking?• Continue to find the “Goldilocks Parking Rate.” What rate can we charge that allows the parking program to succeed (pay our bills—minimum or no general fund subsidy) while incentivizing maximum utilization?• Updating the North Parking Garage<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signage—The North Parking Garage is poorly advertised and needs new signage to communicate to users that it is a public garage.• Minor Immediate Structure Improvements – Stairwell ceiling improvements, façade issues, etc.• Gate Replacement – Existing gates are antiquated and need to be replaced with a gate system that allows for modern forms of payment when the attendant is not present – no more honor system. <p><small>*Previous granted TIF monies will be used for these improvements.</small></p>	<p>Staff Recommends the following to the Parking Advisory Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommend that the City Commission continue with regular fees. Staff and the PAC intend to make further recommendations in the Spring of 2025. <u>Let's see what story the data tells us.</u>• Recommend to the City Commission that we commence improvements to the North Parking Garage, including new signage, structural improvements, and a new gate system. 
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Commissioner McKenney received clarification that downtown curb parking decreased during certain months; however, there was no data to determine if small business owners noticed greater access to curb parking during the free north parking trial.

Planning and Community Development Director Cherry explained that City staff is working with signage companies that have various package options for illuminated versus non-illuminated signage. He is hoping to have a better idea of the cost by the end of this month. A temporary banner placed on the North Parking Garage was a huge improvement and received positive feedback.

Mayor Reeves suggested illuminated signage and to consider a gate system like the Great Falls International Airport has.

Commissioner Wolff expressed appreciation to SP+ Parking Manager Tena Grigsby for her efforts.

2. GREAT FALLS DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE (GFDA) PROJECT UPDATE

Great Falls Development Alliance Senior Vice President Jolene Schalper reported that GFDA is working on a project that is the largest business attraction deal that it has worked on. The business attraction process includes the company and City vetting each other.

The City is under-represented in the manufacturing sector for an economy of its size, which affects the cost of living and average wages. The City’s cost of living is 86% of the national average and some peer Cities are 120%. Housing and childcare are the biggest contributors to the cost of living. The City’s average wage is \$54,365 a year, 77% of the United States average wages and the average across the nation is \$70,857 a year. Manufacturing jobs average \$63,000 a year and the company GFDA is currently working with lowest average wage is \$55,000 a year with benefits. Many community members work in entry-level service positions earning \$23,000 to \$30,000 a year. Families cannot live off that and most have two jobs. If the City increases its manufacturing, it increases economic prosperity for the community members.

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Ms. Schalper explained that the tools needed that the City currently has to attract manufacturers and make projects work are Tax Increment Financing (TIF), tax abatement, loans and concierge services. GFDA has a loan portfolio that it can put towards projects; however, the loans have many restrictions on them. GFDA's loan tool is the Montana Board of Investments for manufacturing projects. A separate loan fund can go in higher amounts and is the only low financing tool that GFDA has available. Currently there is \$30 million with a 4.5% interest rate.

TIF's and tax abatements are incentives that should only be used if they are needed and without them, this project will not happen. The use of the City's TIF's to grow industry and the management of it has received accolades across the State in legislative committees and sub-committees. TIF is for public infrastructure and the City would not be giving up anything because the company has to show the need that they cannot do the project without it, find a way to upfront cover the cost and would only get paid back if the tax revenue is successfully applied to them. If the company cannot proceed without TIF, the City would not be losing anything by granting the company TIF. The City would have to wait to receive the tax benefits; however, it would gain employment, high-wage jobs, business and residential incomes when these tools are applied as they should be.

Ms. Schalper concluded that entities from Team Great Falls are working together as a whole with regard to economic development and projects being vetted together.

Mayor Reeves received clarification that the capital investment in Phase 1 would be \$600 million, Phase 2 would be \$500 million and 300 jobs would be created.

Acting City Manager Brock Cherry explained that there would be no City staff direction needed at this time and the presentation was just an overview to provide the Commission with awareness about the magnitude of this opportunity, as well as to understand that there may be macro significant decisions forthcoming. The City leadership team had discussed that if this is going to be one of the greatest economic development efforts, the City should consider hiring a consultant to navigate TIF and other discussions to ensure that this is in the best interest of the community and company. It is important that the Commission is impartial and aware of what could be forthcoming.

Mayor Reeves commented that there could be a special work session if the Commission needs to provide direction to Staff.

Commissioner Wilson commented that she would like to know more before directing City staff to proceed.

Commissioner Wolff commented that she remembered the long process when ADF International was exploring Great Falls and as a community, we keep our options open.

Mayor Reeves inquired about a timeline.

Ms. Schalper responded that the company plans to make a decision on the location in the first quarter of 2025. The name of the company has never been disclosed, is not an industry that the Commission is aware of and the City is a finalist.

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Commissioner Tryon inquired about the purpose of this update.

Ms. Schalper responded that the purpose of this update was to discuss business attraction, the state of the City's economy with regard to manufacturing and the tools utilized when working with manufacturers.

Commissioner Tryon commented that it has been known for a long time that the City has a service industry economy, a 77% national average wage and about the tools utilized when working with manufacturers. He is confused why there was discussion about this right now if there is no Commission consensus to proceed with anything.

Acting City Manager Cherry responded that the purpose of this update was to be transparent about the magnitude of what this could be and that the City may need to be agile in response because it is so significant.

Mayor Reeves added that the Ms. Schalper and City staff were attempting to get an anticipatory leadership with regard to what may potentially be forthcoming, as well as the potential of being able to turn the page on TIF's and wages with the proposed company coming to the community.

Commissioner Wilson inquired if the City needs to attempt to entice the company before they come here.

Ms. Schalper responded that GFDA had discussed with the company about the potential that they can apply for tax abatement and TIF, but only if it is necessary. However, there would be a TIF component for this project because public services for that area of town would need to be increased. The Commission would not have to do any approvals beforehand and the company would follow the processes laid out. There is still a lot of vetting that has to happen, the Commission would find out who the company is and there is a short time period for this deal with regard to the need for public infrastructure.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that Great Falls AgriTech Park would be the location.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

Mayor Reeves reported that budget and legislative land use updates would be topics for the October 15, 2024 work session. He commented that there would also be a Team Great Falls update at the October 15, 2024 work session.

Commissioner Tryon received clarification that Team Great Falls attended an Economic Development Conference in Denver, visited other communities and include the Chamber, Tourism, GFDA and the City.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the informal work session of October 1, 2024 at 6:22 p.m.