

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
June 5, 2012

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Winters presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Michael J. Winters, Bill Bronson, Fred Burow, Mary Jolley, and Robert Jones.

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager; Directors of Fiscal Services, Planning and Community Development, and Public Works; Police Chief; and the Administrative Secretary.

1. DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

Planning and Community Development Director Mike Haynes provided a PowerPoint presentation to update the Commission on the Downtown Partnership (DP). The DP has begun forming, and a group has been meeting fairly regularly.

Mr. Haynes explained the DP is an umbrella organization being formed primarily to implement the Downtown Master Plan, with a goal to promote, stimulate, and affect community and economic development downtown. The DP will develop an annual work plan and proposed budget for tax increment financing (TIF) funds and submit them to the Commission for approval and allocation of funds. Over time, the DP will implement, monitor, evaluate, and update the work plan.

Mr. Haynes reviewed the organizational structure of the DP. Commissioner Jolley questioned if the City Commission approved the by-laws of the DP. Mr. Haynes responded he wasn't sure and would let her know.

Mr. Haynes discussed the DP relationship with the City. Pending Department of Revenue approval within 90 days, the TIF district will be backdated to January 1, 2012, with the first increment the end of 2013.

2. DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Great Falls Builders Exchange Manager and Great Falls Society of Architects Executive Secretary Krista Smith, along with a large group of architects, responded to recent issues presented by the Building Coalition Group (BCG). Ms. Smith emphasized one of the issues that the Design Review Board (DRB) serves no useful purpose that isn't already addressed in City Code and zoning policy and leaves too much room for personal preference and conflict of interest.

Ms. Smith reported there is very much a need for the DRB. There have been recent conversations with the BCG regarding misunderstandings of the purpose of the DRB, and work has begun on issues of concern.

L'Heureux Page Werner PC President and one of the founders of the DRB Steve L'Heureux reviewed the beginning of the DRB, and noted the DRB does not affect residential or industrial properties. He reported the DRB provides positive suggestions and free design services.

Ms. Smith introduced Jule Stuver of CTA Architects and current DRB member, Mary Klette of Nelson Architects and current DRB member, and Jean Price, current DRB member. She reported there was a perception from the BCG that there is no public input on the DRB. She noted that current DRB members Jean Price and Todd Humble represent citizens at large, and meetings are open to the public.

Mr. Stuver noted the DRB enforces City Code and encourages professional application in an aesthetically pleasing way.

Ryan Smith of Nelson Architects noted the Great Falls Society of Architects supports the DRB and the aesthetics of the community. He believes there should be a task force of architects, homebuilders, BCG members, and City staff to address the issues and provide education.

Commissioner Jones believes there must be a process of appeal for a contractor who doesn't like suggestions of the DRB.

Ms. Smith reported the City Forester no longer attends DRB meetings so landscape questions are answered by DRB member Bruce Forde. If the City Forester were to attend the meetings, there would not be a conflict of interest concern.

Deputy City Manager Jennifer Reichelt stated she would follow up with the Park and Recreation Director to have the City Forester attend the DRB meetings.

Ms. Smith reported there is general confusion on the process of going through the Planning and Community Development Department. She is working with Great Falls Homebuilders Association Executive Officer Katie Hanning and Planning and Community Development Director Mike Haynes to create a list of frequently asked questions.

Commissioner Burow questioned an appeal process when the DRB does not have the authority to stop a project.

Commissioner Jolley questioned the part of the City Code that states the DRB can deny or approve a project.

Mr. Haynes noted that part of the City Code is not well written.

3. CITIZEN'S CONVENIENCE CENTER

Public Works Director Jim Rearden presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Citizen's Convenience Center (CCC). He reviewed previous presentations and the history of the CCC.

Mr. Rearden reported the current facility is not functional for proper handling of household garbage or recycling, however, the facility is in a prime commercial area.

Mr. Rearden reported CCC customers include City customers (58%), Montana Waste System, Inc. customers (15%), and County customers (27%). He also compared sanitation rates statewide.

Mr. Rearden reviewed City efforts to aid the CCC. He noted facility losses over \$1 million for the past 20 years.

Mr. Rearden reported County customers in 2012 varied from 30%-45%. He added the CCC customer base since 2006 has dropped from 22,290 to a little over 14,000 projected for the current fiscal year.

Mr. Rearden presented three options including closing down recycling and transfer programs. He believes recycling will find its way to private operators and customers with transfer needs could go to the landfill, rent an additional container, or leave material as extras. Also, the property could be leased for an estimated \$75,000 per year which would negate the \$60,000+ average operating losses over the last two years.

Commissioner Jones noted the sanitation fund has been supplementing the CCC.

Mayor Winters believes CCC issues should be resolved and the CCC should stay open.

Ms. Reichelt stated the City is losing a lot of money at the CCC. Other options must be considered to provide the service to citizens.

Mr. Rearden believes recycling is better handled with private operators who regularly work the markets. He reviewed re-use-it non-profit area organizations and transfer station waste options. A market analysis in January 2012 recommended a lease on the facility that could provide \$5,500 to \$6,000 per month, as opposed to selling for \$771,780 with a 1% investment.

The second option presented by Mr. Rearden would be to increase transfer fees. To create a break even, charges would have to increase by 54%, which has caused decreased usage in the past. The increase does not take equipment needs into account.

Mr. Rearden stated that if the Commission should choose the second option, he would recommend building a facility at a new site. The City has property on 33rd Avenue NE, which could be a combined area of transfer, recycling, and composting.

The third option would enact an assessment to pay for the transfer and recycling operations. Mr. Rearden believes the most equitable way to assess would be county-wide, since the users of the facility are county-wide.

Commissioner Burow recommended requesting proposals to operate the CCC and transfer to the landfill.

Commissioner Jones stated the Commission would consider the information and provide direction.

Commissioner Jolley stated support for closing down recycling and transfer programs at the CCC.

Mayor Winters stated support for keeping the CCC open.

Ms. Reichelt noted a decision must be made for the upcoming budget. A discussion may be scheduled during budget talks or a separate work session.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Winters adjourned the informal work session of June 5, 2012, at 6:55 p.m.