

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION SPECIAL WORK SESSION**  
**July 15, 2015**

City Commission Special Work Session  
Civic Center, Gibson Room

Mayor Winters presiding

**CALL TO ORDER:** 3:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** City Commissioners present: Michael J. Winters, Bill Bronson, Fred Burow, and Bob Jones. Commissioner Kelly was excused.

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Manager and Deputy City Manager; City Attorney; Directors of Fiscal Services, Library, Planning and Community Development, Park and Recreation, Public Works; Executive Director of the Housing Authority; Fire Chief; Police Chief; and the City Clerk.

**\*\* *Action Minutes of the Great Falls City Commission. Please refer to the audio/video recording of this meeting for additional detail.* \*\***

**1. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Winters asked if there were any comments from the public.

**Richard Liebert**, 289 Boston Coulee Road, discussed privatizing some City services. He provided and discussed a handout on library information. He also discussed the current lack of compliance of the Great Falls Public Library to the state standard for weekly hours to be open.

**Jamie Ford**, 1232 Alpine Drive, commented that after visiting more than 200 schools around the country, he believes ebooks may not be as popular as real books. He believes Sunday is a critical day for children to have access to books at the Great Falls Public Library.

**Ken Robison**, 315 Lamplighter Lane, believes the discussion should involve seven-day-a-week Library service, possibly six days this year and seven days next year.

**Gary Goettel**, 200 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Apt. 5, noted that, as a member of the Great Falls Genealogy Society located in the Great Falls Public Library, it is important for the public to have access to the genealogy library, and he urged budget resources be directed to reopening the Library on Sunday and Monday.

**Ron Gessaman**, 1006 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, agreed with the need to provide budget resources to the Library. He believes some of the tax dollars directed into TIF funding should be used to support police and fire.

## **2. FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION, RE: CITY MANAGER'S JULY 7<sup>TH</sup> PROPOSED BUDGET PRESENTATION**

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that the proposed 2015/2016 budget reflects a pivot towards public safety. Consideration for privatizing a golf course cannot be done until the two revenue bonds mature in the fall.

Fiscal Services Director Melissa Kinzler reported 80% of the Library's budget comes from City taxes, 14% from Cascade County, and 7% from the State.

Library Director Kathy Mora reported the Library also receives funding through donations and the Library Foundation.

Manager Doyon expressed concern that there are public safety needs with very little capability to cover those needs with the taxes that are generated. An ISO rating was lost, which translates into a direct cost impact for commercial fire insurance and residential properties.

Manager Doyon reported the projected Library fund balance is \$488,000. The estimated cost to reopen the Library on Sunday is \$25,000 for the season when the Library has historically been open. The Library's target fund balance was \$217,000; \$126,000 of the fund balance is reserved for capital improvements. The Library has the ability to reopen on Sundays.

Director Mora agreed the reserves could fund reopening the Library on Sundays for three or four years, but she does not believe it is a sustainable model as the reserves must also cover increased expenses. The Library Board is not in favor of using reserves and would like a commitment from the Commission to reopen the Library on Sundays, now and for the future.

Manager Doyon discussed options and suggested that the Library Board and staff continue to evaluate current trends and different areas of support that might help provide more stability than general fund revenue fluctuations.

Commissioner Bronson noted Manager Doyon expressed concern that the City's budget was stretched pretty thin when he was interviewed for the Manager position over seven years ago. Commissioner Bronson commented that cities, towns, and counties are becoming more constrained in their ability to provide essential public services. He supports looking at the business model for Library services to more effectively manage public resources.

Commissioner Burow expressed support for the Library, but believes departments may have to consider new funding sources in the process of rethinking what services can be provided.

Commissioner Jones noted the drop in the ISO rating was predicated on the number of fireman and dispatchers available to respond. The proposed budget includes two dispatchers for the 911 Center and the Fire Department is requesting two paramedic class firemen. If the Library Board will use funding reserves for another year, as every department has done this past year, maybe next year City funding can improve.

Manager Doyon noted the Pools fund is being asked to offset expenses over the next year, leaving very little in that fund. He stated the Natatorium is a very aged facility that is a single-use purpose that does not allow diversifying revenue streams.

Manager Doyon reported the golf courses owe the General Fund over \$1 Million, and \$100,000 has been directed to debt service repayment rather than to other service areas in the budget.

Manager Doyon also noted that a couple years ago the cost to repair the facade of the Civic Center was \$4 Million, and that debt service would probably use the majority of any new taxes.

Mayor Winters believes the Library should be open a certain number of hours on Sundays. If possible, he supports use of Library reserves to serve the community in this way.

Manager Doyon reviewed additional proposed budget support documents provided to the Commission.

Director Mora noted that in 2000, the Montana State Library Commission implemented standards for public libraries, including being open a minimum number of hours depending on the size of the service area. The service area for the Great Falls Public Library is the population of Cascade County, with a minimum number of hours to be open as 50 hours per week.

Director Mora reported that she applied for a deferral from the State Library in June, and received a three-year deferral. She believes that at the end of the three years, the Library could be faced with losing state funding (approximately \$28,000).

Manager Doyon questioned if the Commission believes funding priorities should include Library roof repairs and the bookmobile.

Commissioner Burow questioned additional revenue options. Director Mora responded that because it is a public library, charging fees is a very sensitive option.

Commissioner Bronson noted the budget request for additional civil assistance in the Legal Department and the cost of outside assistance this past year. He questioned consideration of part-time assistance that could grow into full time.

City Attorney Sara Sexe responded the request was submitted to help with the civil overflow in her office and the criminal overflow in the City Prosecutor's office. She believes it would be difficult for part-time assistance because of the intensive nature of the two offices.

Manager Doyon reported the projected amount for the Assistant City Attorney was approximately \$110,000 for the first year. Efforts were made to assist the City Attorney by providing an assistant with legal background. He noted that both the civil and criminal offices have been understaffed when comparing with other cities. He discussed the difficulty in finding a prosecutor with a civil edge, and the additional office space concern.

Discussion followed on the use of deferred prosecution agreements.

Commissioner Bronson questioned the revenue impact from the reappraisal of property by the Department of Revenue.

Director Kinzler responded that once the taxable valuation is received, the number of mils will either increase or decrease. She does not believe there will be a significant effect.

Deputy City Manager Jennifer Reichelt noted the approximate \$700,000 balance that will be used for the West Bank Park TIF application that was recently approved by the Commission, as well as the annual bond payment.

Park and Recreation Director Joe Petrella noted that privatizing golf courses would still require an allocated budget to operate the course.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Winters adjourned the special work session of July 15, 2015, at 4:40 p.m.