

**JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION**  
**June 21, 2016**

City Commission Work Session  
Civic Center, Gibson Room 212

Mayor Kelly presiding

**CALL TO ORDER:** 5:30 p.m.

**CITY COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bob Kelly, Bill Bronson, Bob Jones, Tracy Houck and Fred Burow.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Acting City Manager/City Attorney; Directors of Fiscal Services, Park and Recreation, Planning and Community Development, and Public Works; 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**

There were no comments from the public.

**2. INTRODUCTION AND UPDATE FROM NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL # 6**

Mayor Kelly reported that the northern boundary of Neighborhood Council 6 is 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, the southern boundary is the City limit line, the eastern is 20<sup>th</sup> Street South, and the western is the Missouri River.

Chairman Carl Donovan introduced fellow council members present: Cherry Loney and Julie Parker. He reported that both ladies have been instrumental in getting the Neighborhood Watch program going in their district.

On behalf of NC 6, he extended an invitation to attend a gang activity workshop on Wednesday, July 13, 2016, 7:00 p.m. at the Sunnyside School gym.

Secretary Cherry Loney complimented City staff for its responsiveness in mitigating problems with the Upper Lower River Road drainage problems. She also expressed appreciation to Patty Cadwell, Neighborhood Council Coordinator; NeighborWorks, for its support with the Neighborhood Watch Program; and, Lance Boyd of Sunnyside School.

Other members of NC 6 not in attendance are: Vice Chairperson Robin Baker and Police Advisory Board Representative Darrell Beauchamp.

Neighborhood Council 6 meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Sunnyside School library.

Commissioner Bronson reported that on June 8<sup>th</sup> NeighborWorks Great Falls recognized the members of NC 6 as the “volunteers of the year.”

### **3. GREAT FALLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (GFDA) UPDATE**

Mayor Kelly noted that City Manager Greg Doyon is in Washington, D.C. attending the Association of Defense Communities. Sitting in his behalf is City Attorney Sara Sexe.

**Ted Lewis**, 1000 East Fiesta, Board Chairman of the Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA), discussed GFDA's partnership with the City, County and private investors. Growth highlights included a significant increase in tax base, increased wages and several projects brought to completion including ADF, Loebro expansion, Centene, Pasta Montana and the AgriTech Park which has Helena Chemical and the Fed Ex expansion in construction now, and Montana Specialty Mills and Pacific Steel on the drawing board.

Chairman Lewis handed out information on GFDA's growth highlights, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2016 index and Forward Great Falls Investor Honor Roll. He encouraged everyone to sign up for GFDA's weekly newsletter.

**Allan Frankl**, 90 Dune Hill Lane, GFDA Board Member, discussed growing the tax base, limited resources and providing services, infrastructure, deferred maintenance, progressiveness, public safety and park and recreation as some of the challenges in the community.

Mr. Frankl discussed statistics and commented that GFDA's common goal is to increase tax revenues. He suggested that, by supporting GFDA and its efforts to promote economic development, is what makes Great Falls a great place to live. Mr. Frankl urged the City's support and investment in GFDA and the mission of Forward Great Falls.

**Ron Nelson**, 538 Goon Hill Road, GFDA Board Member, discussed the City's and County's financial contribution to GFDA on an annual basis. From the beginning that public-private partnership has been characteristic of a joint effort and the strategies are paying off. There is momentum in economic development. He reported that this is the last year of a five year cycle. Next year GFDA will be asking current investors to re-up and will be seeking new investors to participate. As chair of the investment committee, he will have a significant role in that. A question is whether the City will be directly and financially contributing to GFDA. The County indicated that it will continue its \$50,000 per year contribution. Looking back, the City contributed \$100,000 until four or five years ago. He asked the City to renew that contribution/investment and participate again at that level.

Mayor Kelly inquired what GFDA's budget was, and what it spends its money on.

Mr. Nelson responded that private investment is roughly \$400,000, and the City formerly contributed \$100,000, and the County contributes \$50,000.

**Jolene Schalper**, GFDA, 300 Central Avenue, added that 20% of GFDA's budget expenses are for business expansion and retention and 20-30% for business recruitment. GFDA provides business consulting services free of charge. She concluded that economic development is very competitive and GFDA is operating on a shoestring.

**Dan Rooney**, 1726 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, representing ADF and GFDA as an investor, discussed GFDA's involvement when the ADF Corporation was looking for a place to land. GFDA got a

contingent of public and private individuals, who not only met with ADF here, but took the time to travel to Terrebonne, Quebec, to make sure that ADF understood the commitment the community of Great Falls would show to support ADF. ADF is going to continue to support GFDA. He sees GFDA as an integral part of economic development in Great Falls.

**Dr. Susan Wolff**, 2226 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, Great Falls College-MSU, commented that Great Falls College-MSU is proud to be investment partners with GFDA. It has made a difference having GFDA's professional support. GFDA serves as a legislative voice for the college. She commented that GFDA is the entity that leads the effort to diversify the local economy. She discussed the college reprioritizing the resources that it had to build a future instead of supporting the past. She encouraged the Commission to consider taking that view, and to consider how it can help grow the economy to make it even better.

**Brad Livingston**, President of Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, 100 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, reported that in 2002 he invested in GFDA when he was in the military, and again after he retired from the military in 2015. GFDA is in the recruiting business and the Chamber is in the retention business. The two are working on a mutual strategy for the community. As a business owner and investor in both organizations and as President of the Chamber, he stands in support of GFDA.

**Brad Talcott**, 2801 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, commented that businesses compete for business. Timing is everything. GFDA has hit its stride and Great Falls has been doing better. He asked for the City's support and contribution to GFDA because it will help the community.

**Tammy Lacey**, Superintendent of Schools, 1500 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW, reported that the school district partners with GFDA as one of the public investors and has done so for many years. The leadership at GFDA understands that an important factor and important tool for economic development is a strong school system. GFDA has voted unanimously to support and endorse the current bond levy before the voters in October. As one public entity to another, Superintendent Lacey urged the Commission to join and be together as one for GFDA.

**Spencer Woith**, 1725 41<sup>st</sup> Street South, noted that GFDA also helps with the redevelopment of contaminated property. He discussed the redevelopment of West Bank as an example.

#### **4. RIVER'S EDGE TRAIL – RIVER DRIVE SOUTH TRAIL SEGMENT**

Senior Transportation Planner Andrew Finch reviewed and discussed the attached PowerPoint slides regarding a new trail segment along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South or Broadwater Bay to the connection to the Electric City Water Park. The project could be complete in one construction season.

After discussion, it was the consensus of the Commission for staff to proceed with the feasibility investigation.

#### **5. DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS**

Acting City Manager Sara Sexe reported that the Manager's proposed 2017 budget will be presented at the next work session.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Kelly adjourned the informal work session of June 21, 2016 at 6:33 p.m.

# Proposed River Drive South Trail

*Andrew Finch  
Senior Planner*



**River Drive South Trail Segment Proposal**  
June 21, 2016

# What is the intent of this presentation?

- **Receive project background and specifics**
- **Consider opportunities and constraints**
- **Discuss options**
- **Give staff direction**





# Project History and Background

- **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Trail**
- **Among the first segments identified for construction**
- **Hit some regulatory snags with Fish, Wildlife & Parks**
- **Segment was then to be built when River Drive was widened – but, this has not happened, is not on the radar as a project**
- **“Temporary” route was built through Police Station parking lot and behind Energy West**
- **Recently, some safety concerns with segment through Police Station parking lot**



# Project History and Background

- **Reoccurring theme in local plans**
  - connectivity for active transportation (bikes/pedestrians)
  - Connections to Riverfront
  - Most popular recreational facility is the Trail
- **Desire by River's Edge Trail Foundation to finally complete this segment**
- **Looked at east side of River Drive, deemed infeasible due to likely impact upon railroad switch**
- **River's Edge Trail Foundation paid for an engineering study to determine “do-ability”**





# North side of underpass





# North side of underpass





# South side of underpass





# South of underpass along guardrail



# Project Specifics

- Approximately 1,900 feet of new trail
- Retaining wall (riverwall) option preferred by staff
- Combination of retaining wall and piers an alternative (180' of bridging)
- Protective canopy over trail (with solar lighting) would protect from debris from railroad cars
- Trail surface would dip down to 2' below base flood elevation to allow for 8' clearance under bridge
- Existing crossings of River Drive would remain, to provide continued connections between Downtown and the River
- Estimated Cost
  - \$1.3 million (seawall option)
  - \$1.6 million (pier option)





# Constraints

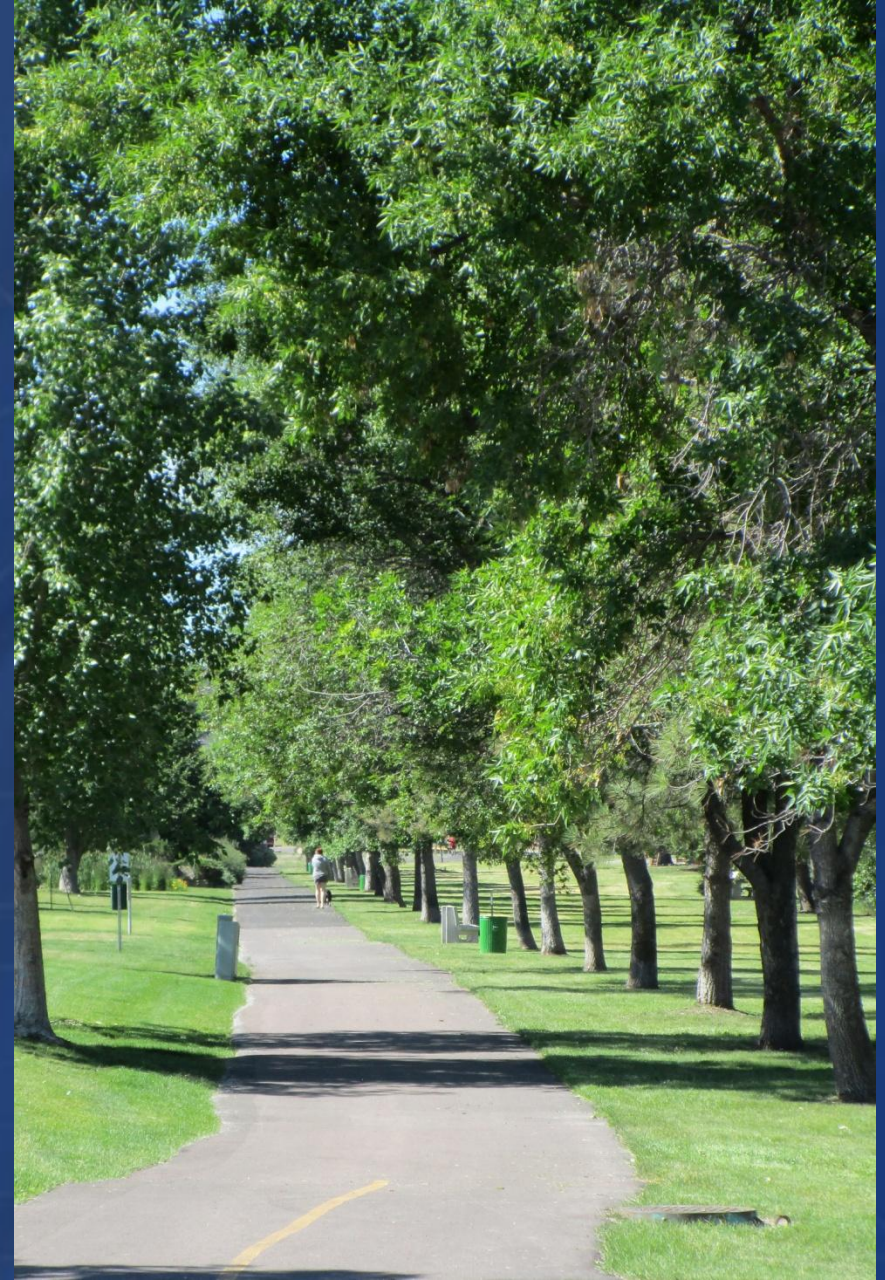
- No easement for trail from BNSF Railroad
- Elevation of trail surface under bridge would be prone to flooding
- Will need to be built into the bank - impacting river bottom, riverside vegetation and flow of water. Regulatory agencies may have objections or concerns
- Project is estimated to be at least \$1.3 million, if not more, and no funding sources have yet been identified





# Benefits

- **Trail continuity**
  - Clear connection from hotels to full Trail
  - Completes “loop” connection to Warden Bridge
  - Completes connection to Warden Park and Prospect Heights neighborhood



# Benefits

- **Safety**

- Eliminates unsafe segment through PD parking lot
- Provides safe facility for bikes and pedestrians that are currently using roadway under RR
- Expected to reduce unsafe at-grade crossings of RR
- Eliminates the need for through-travel to cross River Drive (twice)





# What has been done to-date?

- River's Edge Trail Foundation has paid for a consultant to prepare 2 options – pier option and riverwall option
- Staff has reviewed options, prefers **riverwall option** as more sustainable – lower long-term maintenance cost, less chance of damage due to flood
- Staff has met with first responsible agency – the Montana Department of Transportation – and found they do not oppose the project



# Existing Seawall at Weissman Bridge



# Next Steps

- If supported by Commission, the next step would be continued feasibility investigation, including:
  - Meet with regulatory agencies, including Fish, Wildlife & Parks, to determine comfort level with project
  - Have discussions with BNSF to determine comfort level with project, likelihood of obtaining an easement, and comfort with trail adjoining RR bridge pier
- If feasible, next step would be to investigate sources of funding.





# Questions?

