

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
February 21, 2017

City Commission Work Session
Civic Center, Gibson Room 212

Mayor Kelly presiding

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

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Greg Doyon, City Attorney Sara Sexe, Fiscal Services Director Melissa Kinzler, and City Clerk Lisa Kunz.

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

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

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

3. **UPDATES FROM NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL 5**

Chairman Eric Ray was pleased to report that three concerns: noxious weeds, voles/gophers, and lack of care of undeveloped property, expressed to the Commission on March 8, 2016, regarding Benefis Hospital, have been addressed. He further noted that a fourth concern, a \$15,000 grant to extend the path within Russell Park was also completed with the assistance of City staff, Andrew Finch and Kenny Jorgenson working with Benefis.

Chairman Ray expressed concerns about snow removal on sidewalks of corporate neighbors. He requested the City further advertise the City's ordinance regarding snow removal and the property owner's obligations.

He reported that Interim Park and Recreation Director Patty Rearden gave a presentation to the council in January regarding implementation of the Park and Recreation Master Plan. Neighborhood Council 5 agrees that funding via reasonable assessments against property owners is a great concept that should be followed through with. He also recommended Patty Rearden as the Park and Recreation Director.

Other representatives of Neighborhood Council 5 are Gloria Bedker, Marcia Anderson, Mac McFadden and Terry Albrecht. The council meets on the third Monday of the month in the Great Falls Clinic Specialty Center at 7:00 p.m.

4. **FIREFIGHTER PRESUMPTION PRESENTATION**

David Van Son, Battalion Chief and President of Great Falls Firefighters Local 8, discussed Presumptive Legislation for Firefighters, Senate Bill 72. He explained that a presumptive disability law links a particular occupation with a disease or condition that has been shown to be

a hazard associated with that occupation. As a result of this linkage, if an individual employed in the occupation covered by the presumption contracts a disease or condition that is specified in the presumptive law, then that disease or condition is presumed to have come from that occupation. The burden of proof shifts from the employee to the employer to demonstrate that the condition was not in fact associated with the occupation but with another cause.

At the present time, Montana is only one of six states that have no presumptive illness coverage for firefighters.

Mr. Van Son reported that studies use epidemiologic methods to establish whether or not an exposure leads to the causation of the disease. Exposure to almost any chemical or biological substance can cause disease given a large enough dose. He discussed what firefighters are exposed to at work. Due to the uncontrolled and unpredictable nature of the work, firefighters are exposed to a wide variety of known carcinogens. He further discussed studies that documented increased respiratory cancers, other cancer diagnoses and cancer related deaths among firefighters.

He reported that seven prior attempts for presumptive legislation failed. Senate Bill 72 is limited to lung diseases right now. Presumptive disease benefits will have a separate funding source and will not be paid through Workers' Compensation. A concern firefighters have with the bill is Senator Fitzpatrick's amendment that, in order to be qualified for presumption legislation, the firefighter needs to prove that he inhaled smoke or particles in sufficient quantities to have reasonably caused a presumptive disease. It puts the burden of proof back on the firefighters.

Commissioner Bronson commented that the way SB 72 is currently structured it really doesn't provide a lot of benefit. He can foresee problems down the road.

Mr. Van Son responded that this is the eighth session that the firefighters attempted presumptive legislation. They are trying to get their foot in the door. The bill should be considered as Workers' Compensation.

Commissioner Burow inquired about the funding source.

Mr. Van Son explained that the first two years is based off of a fire insurance premium tax on home owners' insurance to start the fund. After two years, there is a surplus in wildland fire funding that will be utilized until the fund reaches a cap at a certain amount.

Mr. Van Son concluded that they are feeling pretty good that the bill made it out of the senate finance committee. All Montana professional and volunteer firefighters would fall under this legislation.

5. 2017 SECOND QUARTER BUDGET REVIEW

Fiscal Services Director Melissa Kinzler provided and discussed the attached PowerPoint. She reviewed a general fund unreserved fund balance three year comparison. Due to the reevaluation process and property tax bills being sent out a month later than usual, the ending fund balance on December 31st was \$214,129. At the end of March after additional property tax revenues are received she will have a better idea of where the city is at with regard to the fund balance.

She reviewed the general fund three year revenue comparison. The City is much lower in revenue right now due to not receiving the tax payments yet. Also, last year at this time, the City took out an issuance of debt of about \$900,000 for fire trucks.

The general fund three year tax revenue comparison is much lower this year for the same reasons.

City Manager Greg Doyon noted that the general fund three year expense comparison is higher this year in personal services due to meeting contractual obligations with collective bargaining groups. Those exempt employees received a cost of living adjustment. He reminded the Commission there is a compression issue that the new Human Resources Director will be looking into.

Director Kinzler discussed subsidies provided to the golf courses. The revenues are less this year compared to last year, which may be seasonal or due to weather. Expenses were down this year due to no debt service payment, but were more this year compared to last year.

Manager Doyon added that, during the last budget conversation, the Park & Recreation golf subsidies would be put on a 10 year repayment plan to repay the loan to the general fund. That probably is not going to work as initially thought. Even though the debt service revenue bonds are retired, there are still operational expenses that have been deferred for quite a period of time, such as golf carts, facility maintenance and grounds maintenance that continue to accrue. When the consultant did the master plan, there was some dismay that a community this size would have two municipal golf courses. This issue will need to be talked about until a decision is reached by either figuring out a way to make it work within this market and pay the general fund back, or close the golf course, or retire what is owed and right it off. Staff will provide the Commission additional information on what it would look like to have one golf course. The golf course liability impedes the ability to maximize the general fund. Director Kinzler explained that the \$996,000 loan is booked as a receivable that the City will probably never receive. So it is really overstating the general fund balance. The cash deficit in the golf fund has had a negative balance since 2002.

Director Kinzler reported that the City increased its subsidy to the swimming pools. Revenues for the swimming pools are more this year as compared to the two previous years. Manager Doyon added there is more a subsidy to the pools fund due to a broader range of aquatics users. Director Kinzler noted that the wave rider lease was paid off in 2016.

There is a fund balance in the parking fund due to deferred maintenance. The Planning and Community Development Director is working on addressing the deferred maintenance. The revenue in the parking fund is in a declining trend.

The subsidy to Civic Center Events was increased this year to \$223,000. The revenues in the events fund are up significantly this year. There have been more events going on in the Civic Center than in the two previous years.

Manager Doyon commented that discussion has suspended about use of the Gibson Room for additional office space. The rehab is cost prohibitive, and it is very likely that the space needed

for future operation will outgrow the size of this room. Staff is going to utilize existing meeting room space in the Civic Center. Options will be explored later on down the road.

Mayor Kelly requested that Director Kinzler provide a list of the funds that can lend money to other funds at 1% interest.

Commissioner Jones noted that in 2002 a lot of the indebtedness was built up by the interest rate in which it was borrowed for. The 1% rate is more realistic than what it was in the past.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS

Mayor Kelly commented that he has not yet approached the School for the Deaf and Blind about presenting at a work session. CDBG funding recommendations will be presented at the March 7th work session. No one had any topics to add or modify on the work session topic list.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Kelly adjourned the informal work session of February 21, 2017 at 6:35 p.m.