

Regular City Commission Meeting

Mayor Winters presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Michael Winters, Bob Jones, Bill Bronson, Fred Burow and Bob Kelly. Also present were the City Manager, Deputy City Manager; Chief Prosecutor; Directors of Fiscal Services, Library, and Public Works; Interim Director of Park and Recreation; Police Chief; and the Deputy City Clerk.

AGENDA APPROVAL: No changes were proposed by the City Manager or City Commission. The agenda as submitted was approved.

PROCLAMATION: Mayor Winters read a proclamation for Paris Gibson Month.

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

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

1. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Kathleen Gessaman, NC 3, reported the council will hold a special meeting on July 10, 2014, at 7 p.m., Corpus Christi Church, regarding the Valley View Park.

CONSENT AGENDA

2. Minutes, June 17, 2014, Commission meeting.
3. Total Expenditures of \$1,785,736 for the period of June 6-18, 2014, to include claims over \$5,000, in the amount of \$1,667,082.
4. Contracts list.
5. Lien release list.
6. Set public hearing for July 15, 2014, on Resolution 10079, Intent to Increase Property Tax.
7. Set public hearing for July 15, 2014, on Resolution 10080, Annual Budget Resolution.
8. Set public hearing for August 5, 2014, on Resolution 10047, to Levy and Assess Special Improvement General Boulevard Maintenance District No. 3570.

9. Set public hearing for August 5, 2014, on Resolution 10048, to Levy and Assess Special Improvement Portage Meadows Maintenance District No. 1195.
10. Set public hearing for August 5, 2014, on Resolution 10084, to Levy and Assess the Street Maintenance District.
11. Approve the cancellation of City of Great Falls checks that remain outstanding and unpaid for a period of one year or longer.

Commissioner Kelly, seconded by Commissioner Burow, that the City Commission approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Mayor Winters asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners or any comments from the public. Hearing none, Mayor Winters called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

12. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

There were no miscellaneous reports and announcements from representatives of Boards and Commissions.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

13. VISITOR CENTER LEASE AGREEMENT.

Deputy City Manager Jennifer Reichelt reported that the Commission was provided a thorough overview of the proposed lease agreement and history of the Visitor Center at the June 17, 2014, City Commission Work Session. In the mid 1990's, the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce approached the City with a proposal, asking the City to build a Visitor Center. The City built the Visitor Center at its current location (15 Overlook Drive) in 1993 and entered into an operating agreement/contract with the Chamber on December 21, 1993. As part of that operating agreement, the City owned the property. For 11 years, the City and Chamber shared the operating costs of the Visitor Center. The Chamber's operating contract expired on September 1, 2004. In 2005, the City began operating the Visitor Center after the City and Chamber could not come to a mutual agreement on a new operating contract. The City has continued operating the Visitor Center since 2005 through the Park and Recreation Department.

The Visitor Center is open year round, seven days a week and is manned primarily by volunteers. There are three part-time employees who share two part-time positions (through job-sharing), but the bulk of the hours are covered by the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The annual budget of the Visitor Center is just over \$60,000, and annual payments of approximately \$12,000 are received from the CVB (funded through the bed tax).

The City's decision to not continue operating and managing the Visitor Center stemmed from the

stress the General Fund has been under, and departments were asked to focus on their core and essential services and to begin streamlining their programs.

Recognizing the essential service the Visitor Center plays in the community for the tourism and hospitality industries as well as residents, visitors and businesses, City staff began identifying other entities better equipped and experienced to market the Great Falls area than the local government. City staff contacted a number of tourism entities to find out if any of them would be interested in operating the Visitor Center.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), and the Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA) stepped up during the process and committed to help operate the center. During the process, it was determined that the CVB would serve as the lead agency in operating the Visitor Center, with both the TBID and GFDA assisting.

City staff from the City Manager's Office, Park and Recreation Department, and the City Attorney's Office, and representatives from the CVB, TBID and GFDA have been working on a lease agreement for the last three months for the Visitor Center – the goal has been to provide the CVB with a turnkey operation ready to go starting July 1, 2014.

The CVB will continue to utilize volunteers who come to the Visitors Center through RSVP. Plans also include hiring a part-time Visitor Information Center Coordinator to help manage the center.

The City has agreed to provide the CVB with all the furnishings, fixtures, merchandise inventory and equipment in the building as of July 1, with the understanding that they cannot dispose of any piece of furniture/equipment without the City's permission.

The lease is for three years for one dollar per year; other highlights include:

- CVB is responsible for all utilities, including electricity, water, gas, or other utilities servicing the property in a timely manner;
- The CVB will independently arrange with RSVP any continuation of assignment of volunteer workers in the Visitor Center building;
- CVB shall, throughout the term of this Lease Agreement, and at its own cost and without any expense to the City, keep and maintain the leased premises, including the building and improvements; and
- The City agrees to provide maintenance, repair and snow removal of the parking lot, sidewalks, and remaining parkland surrounding the leased premises, as the Visitor Center is located in a large park.

Deputy Manager Reichelt recognized individuals that helped put together the lease agreement, including CVB Vice President, Shane Etzwiler; CVB Executive Director Carol Lindseth; and TBID Administrative & Marketing Director Karen Venetz. She also thanked GFDA President and CEO Brett Doney, and Devin Hartley and Lara Tait with the CVB, as well as City Attorney Sara Sexe and Interim Director of Park and Recreation Patty Rearden, who were instrumental in getting the partnership done.

Mayor Winters declared the public hearing open.

Speaking in support of the Visitor Center Lease Agreement were:

Steve Malicott, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, 100 First Avenue North, applauded the City for a prudent financial decision to move the responsibility of the Visitor Center to the community. He believes the CVB, TBID, and GFDA will do an outstanding job representing the community.

Shane Etzwiler, CVB board member, stated the CVB is excited about the partnership with the TBID and GFDA, and there have been discussions beyond the three year lease term.

Karen Venetz, TBID, stated the TBID is also excited to be a partner and believes the process will rapidly move forward.

Ron Gessaman, 1006 36th Avenue NE, speaking as neither a proponent nor opponent, questioned how the partnership will be able to operate the Visitor Center for \$36,000 per year since the City was not able to operate it for approximately \$80,000. He discussed the \$2 Million liability insurance requirement and the new workman's comp insurance requirement for volunteers. He questioned that there would not be any costs for the City and requested more information on the value of the merchandise that will be transferred to the partnership. Mr. Gessaman also noted there is no address provided on the lease agreement.

No one spoke in opposition to the Visitor Center Lease Agreement.

There being no one further to address the Commission, Mayor Winters closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioner Kelly, that the City Commission approve the Visitor Center Lease Agreement with the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Mayor Winters asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Bronson requested staff respond to the inquiries made by members of the public.

Deputy Manager Reichelt responded that the liability insurance is complete and on file, and the worker's comp paperwork is in the process of being completed. She noted that the City is also working to get worker's comp insurance for all City volunteers.

Deputy Manager Reichelt explained that most of the equipment at the Visitor Center is old and will probably be returned to the City after a facelift at the facility is done. However, a merchandise inventory list has been maintained.

Commissioner Bronson commented that the City is prudent in requiring worker's compensation coverage for this situation and for all City programs.

Mayor Winters believes a value should be placed on equipment that is transferred under the Lease Agreement.

Commissioner Burow discussed an ongoing maintenance budget at the Visitor Center and agreed that an estimated value for the equipment should be provided. He also agreed that an address should be included for the Lease Agreement.

Deputy Manager Reichelt agreed there is a cost to maintain the park and parking lot at the Visitor Center that will be included in the City budget.

Commissioner Kelly thanked the partnership for stepping up to meet a need; he offered to be a volunteer and suggested the entire Commission consider volunteering.

Commissioner Jones also expressed appreciation for the efforts of the partnership.

There being no further comments, Mayor Winters called for the vote.

Motion carried 5-0.

14. RESOLUTION 10076, ESTABLISHING USAGE FEES FOR THE COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER.

Park and Recreation Interim Director Patty Rearden reported that this is a public hearing to consider establishing usage fees for the Community Recreation Center. The Community Recreation Center last set fees in 2002 and 2004 for facility use and program fees. The General Fund support for the Recreation Center was reduced in FY14, and was made up by utilizing cash reserves within the Recreation Fund.

Staff is proposing a range for fees for the Community Recreation Center to allow the flexibility to set fees based on cost recovery and market comparisons. Program costs will be determined and fees reviewed following the completion of each program. The goal is to keep fees as affordable as possible, serving families and community members, while endeavoring to be fiscally responsible. Recommendations of fee increases are not made lightly and are based on market comparisons, impact on participation, and the ability to cover expenses.

At its June 9, 2014, meeting, the Park and Recreation Advisory Board recommended the City adopt the usage fees for the Recreation Center.

Mayor Winters declared the public hearing open.

No one spoke in support of Resolution 10076.

Speaking in opposition to Resolution 10076 was:

Ron Gessaman, 1006 36th Avenue NE, believes that a range for fees is poor policy because the public does not know what the fee will be when they arrive at the facility. He discussed the possible \$8,800 fiscal impact that the fee increase will generate and the \$100,000 decrease in funding support. He questioned the part of the range for fees that is associated with the \$8,800 in additional revenue. Mr. Gessaman also discussed some of the proposed fees listed on Resolution

10076 that he believes are confusing. He is concerned that the proposed fees are related to ECP losses and that the children in our community will bear that burden.

There being no one further to address the Commission, Mayor Winters closed the public hearing and asked the will of the Commission.

Commissioner Kelly moved, seconded by Commissioners Bronson and Jones, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 10076.

Mayor Winters asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Bronson requested a further explanation for using a range for fees, the consideration given to affordability, and the impact on participation.

Interim Director Rearden noted there is great concern for keeping the Recreation Center affordable for users, while still covering expenses. She explained that most programs have a waiting list.

Commissioner Burow believes the public will be confused with a range for fees.

Interim Director Rearden responded that all fees are listed on the City website, in the annual Summer Guide, and messages are put out on Facebook. Staff also stays in communication with users and makes them aware of any upcoming changes. She noted that all publicity states exact fees, not ranges.

Commissioner Bronson stated the goal has been to provide a reasonable range for the department to work within when costs increase so a public hearing will not be required to increase fees.

Commissioner Burow believes these rates could be adjusted annually, as with other rates.

There being no further comments, Mayor Winters called for the vote.

Motion carried 4-1 (Commissioner Burow dissenting).

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

15. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- A. John Hubbard**, 615 7th Avenue South, discussed City concerns with the use of his yard for his hobby in restoring and working on cars.

- B. **Jolene Bach**, 124 13th Avenue South, noted that recent numbers released by GFDA with 11 other benchmark cities for economic rankings showed Great Falls has risen from a 10th ranking in 2006 to a current 4th ranking. She believes that the good news is a result of everyone working together.

CITY MANAGER

16. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that future pending work session topics include Parking Revenue Options, Licensing Fees, Development Process Task Force, Emergency Disaster Management Public Awareness, Risk Management Annual Report, MTDA Update, Child Abuse, USAF Community Partnership Initiative (P4), and year-end budget discussion with the Commission.

Commissioner Bronson believes there will be a request to address the downtown parking issue in the near future.

Mayor Winters requested that the important issue of public response to an emergency incident be addressed in the very near future.

Manager Doyon reported exercises are ongoing for the MAFB table-top exercise and will continue after the exercise is completed.

He also mentioned that the recruitment process will begin for the Director of Park and Recreation.

He expressed appreciation to the Commission for supporting his recent opportunity to attend the state and local government senior executive three-week program at Harvard.

He thanked Melissa Kinzler, Krista Artis, and Jennifer Reichelt for their budget assistance. He also expressed appreciation to Department heads for adhering to the guidelines that were provided.

Manager Doyon presented Chief Bowen with the Great Falls Public Schools Good Apple Award, associated with education and the educational field, as an expression of appreciation and esteem for his accomplishments.

CITY COMMISSION

17. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

18. COMMISSION INITIATIVES.

There were no Commission initiatives.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, **Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioner Jones, to adjourn the regular meeting of July 1, 2014, at 7:53 p.m.**

Motion carried 5-0.

Mayor Michael J. Winters

Deputy City Clerk Lucy Hallett

Minutes Approved: July 15, 2014

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