

## MEETINGS MINUTES

### NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL #2

Wednesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Great Falls West Elementary School Library

5:30 pm

#### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. A quorum was established with Chair Shyla Patera, Secretary Frank Speidel, Members Fred Fairhurst. Member Ashley Benefiet arrived a few minutes later. Vice Chair Tim Croft was excused. Also present were City of Great Falls Communications Specialist Lanni Klasner, and GFPD Animal Control Officer Jessica Becker. Kelly Quick from the community was also in attendance.

#### OLD BUSINESS

- Approval of the April 2023 minutes
  - Secretary Speidel made a motion to accept the April 2023 meeting minutes. Member Fred Fairhurst seconded the motion. The council unanimously approved the April 2023 meeting minutes.

#### NEW BUSINESS

- Great Falls Police Department Animal Control Officer Jessica Becker answered questions from the Council and Community on animal control.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS (Public comment on any matter that is not on the agenda of the meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the Neighborhood Council. In the interest that all parties can be heard, please limit your comments. When addressing the Council, state your name and either your address or whether you are a Neighborhood Council 2 resident for the record).

- Neighborhood Concerns
  - A member of the community expressed their frustration with a burned structure at 721 4<sup>th</sup> Ave SW that caught fire on Feb 17<sup>th</sup> and caught the neighbor's house on fire. The neighbor cannot live in their house due to the structure next door and wants it knocked down. It is the neighbor's belief that the burned structure is an environmental hazard. According to Zillow the structure was put up in 1890 and the neighbor believes it may contain asbestos and other harmful products that are now exposing the entire neighborhood to hazardous pollutants. The neighbor has been to the city which stated that they will take care of it, and it will take about a year. The neighbor would think that the city

was mindful of the hazardous material that is most likely polluting the air as well as bring property values down and what not. The hangup is that this structure is owned by a property management company out of Nebraska whose contact information the neighbor reported to the city. The neighbor has complained about the structure when it was occupied by individuals and then this property management company paid the back taxes, took the deed, going through a quiet title, they evicted the residences, took them a year to get them evicted but they evicted in Aug of last year but they didn't secure the structures, the doors didn't close, vagrants, you would see footprints of them going into the house, into the garage from the alley, and it was a vagrant who set the structure on fire. The city has a file of their correspondence with this property management company pre fire. The neighbor is trying to work the system here and this is the first level, individuals have elected positions who are connected to city government who might be able to say we really need to get on this sooner than a year, to get it knocked down. Chair Patera requested from Lanni Klasner what steps we can take as Neighborhood Council. Lanni Klasner advised reaching out to Heather Rolf. Member Fairhurst stated that he brought this to the meeting prior to the fire and that is when they made their first contact with Heather, and he gave her the specifics and at that point she said she would send someone out. After that he does not know what happened. The resident stated somewhere in between Heather investigating that, the ownership of the property changed hands and that reset the process. Lanni Klasner stated that Heather Rolf has an abatement process that she has to follow which is a long process that has to go to the City Commission. Some of it does not move quickly, unfortunately, but Bruce Haman who is Heather's boss is the building inspector. The resident asked if City County health, due to its an environmental hazard, is that a different direction or tact to take that would light a fire under this abatement process. Member Fairhurst couldn't understand why the company didn't immediately go in and level the property after the fire just so the property value wouldn't go down and they could put a new structure on there. By letting it sit there this is going to end up in court. Chair Patera wanted to know if there are people here from the company to contact. The resident said the company has a lawyer in Billings and that is the only representation that Guardian Tax Montana has as a legal footprint in the State. Lanni Klasner stated there was another house in a different neighborhood that burned, and it took about a year for them to go through the abatement process and court. It's unfortunate for the neighbors that lived next to them, but there is due process. They can't just go and tear down something but if there is a health hazard that would be a potential question for Bruce Haman. Lanni Klasner offered to provide Haman's number to the resident. The resident requested that a Council member talk to Bruce Haman on her behalf. Chair Patera will reach out to and follow up with Bruce Haman for the resident. The resident also requested that Chair Patera contact Nate Besich, Public Works (Environmental Division Manager).

## OTHER BUSINESS

- Neighborhood Watch
  - None reported due to Vice Chair Tim Crofts absence.
- Council Facebook Page
  - Secretary Frank Speidel reported posts reached 434 people. 119 page visits. 29 new likes. 81 followers. 31 new followers. 20 content interactions. Most if not all are related to the Spring Social Event. He will repost the event on Fri or Sat.
- Neighborhood Council 2 Spring Social Event May 13<sup>th</sup>.
  - Ashley Benefiet reports that she did just get back the last approval from Parks and Recreation. She has one possible two food vendors and Frosties coming. She talked with the VR club downtown and they offered to bring out their equipment. Chair Patera emailed flyers of the event to various churches, businesses and some major apartments, Housing authority, and Opportunities. Member Benefiet says the school has it and NeighborWorks has been sending it out.

## NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (Miscellaneous reports, announcements, and agenda suggestions from Neighborhood Council #2 members)

- May Council of Councils – May 23, 2023.
  - Member Ashley Benefiet will attend for Council 2
    - Member Fairhurst suggested the issue of Abatement time length as well as what can the Councils do when a complaint like this is brought to them.
    - Chair Patera suggested road work and potholes. Lanni Klasner said that the city wants you to report the potholes.
  - Election Filing Deadline – June 19, 2023. Lanni Klasner reports that every other year the Neighborhood Councils are up for reelection. It is a two-year term that starts in January. There are no filing fees. Fill out the oath candidacy and get it notarized through the election office. The election office has a notary there. Member Fairhurst ask about filling a vacancy that occurs midterm, could the Council appoint someone. Lanni Klasner said that the Council could appoint. The Council would vote on it. Lanni Klasner gave Member Fairhurst information on how the filling of Council vacancy occurs, elections, write-ins, etc.

## ADJOURNMENT

- Agenda Suggestions
  - City Animal Shelter
- At 6:17 pm Chair Shyla Patera made a motion to adjourn. Secretary Frank Speidel seconded the motion. The next scheduled meeting will be on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 5:30 pm.