

Neighborhood Council #7 Minutes
Monday, January 13, 2025 7:00 P.M.
Gibson Room, Great Falls Civic Center

Call To Order:

The meeting was brought to order at 7:00 p.m. by chair Trevor Mikkelsen with the Pledge of Allegiance. Neighbor Council #7 members in attendance were Trevor Mikkelsen, Troy Lane, and Bill Wadman. Members absent were Sandy Rice and Allison Tangen. City Liaison Rob Mocassin was present. Roll call was completed and a quorum established. Community members present were Sandy Whitaker, Jim Whitaker, Rose Schuster and Ron Paulick. Also attending were Charles Goodman from NeighborWorks Great Falls, and Great Falls Police Chief Jeff Newton.

Old Business: Troy Lane made a motion to accept the December minutes with one amended change to a street number. Bill Wadman seconded. The December minutes were approved.

Committee Reports:

Downtown Development Partnership: The downtown light study is moving forward. Bids are being taken for lighting the alley murals; six murals are targeted to be lit. Clearwater Credit Union is planning to start construction the summer of 2025. The project will greatly improve the old Hardees property at the corner of 1st Avenue North and Park Drive North. New wayfinding sign kiosks have been installed at the Dog Park and Civic Center. TIFF money has been allocated to replace sidewalks by the Sip and Dip Lounge.

Brownfield Committee: A grant has been awarded to help the sale of Steve's Sport Center by assessing any possible problems with the site.

Downtown Safety Alliance: No report.

Council of Councils: No report.

Strategic Planning: No Report.

City Safety Funding: Nothing to report.

New Business: Great Falls Police Chief Jeff Newton addressed the council on the current situation of the Great Falls Police Department (GFPD), and the challenges he sees moving forward. With the defeat of the Safety Levy, the department has to work within current funding, which is allocated from the city's general fund. Currently there are 136 employees. The Safety Levy would have funded more officers, allowing the department to more adequately staff for the future. Retirement, terminations and resignations are all challenges to staffing, as well as finding people to apply or qualified applicants. About 93 daily calls for service are the average for winter with an average of 120 in the summer. Drugs continue to be a problem and are not expected to go away. Meth, cocaine, Fentanyl, and hallucinogenic drug seizures have gone up significantly. Cash and gun seizures have gone up. Most, if not all, violent crime is tied to drugs. A new evidence storage facility has had to be revamped due to the need to keep physical evidence for some crimes forever. City growth and the expanded city court will require more staffing. Currently the department is assessing crime mapping software to determine if the data is worth the cost.

Other Business: Charles Goodman, Director of the Baatz Permanent Supportive Housing project, reported delays in construction, but believes the building will be done in April with residency starting in May and June. Charles also reported the Point in Time (PIT) count of the city's homeless will be sunset January 30th to sunrise January 31st.

Neighborhood Petitions and Communications: Troy Lane noticed sidewalks on the Central underpass had not been shoveled. Who is responsible? Is it the State or the City? Residents of the new Milwaukee Station Apartments could be adversely affected. He will follow up with MDOT.

Neighborhood Council: Nothing to report.

Next meeting February 10, 2025 at the Civic Center.

Agenda suggestions: Todd Symanski, City Forester, February.

Troy Lane made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bill Wadman seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m. on unanimous vote.

Submitted by Bill Wadman, Neighborhood Council #7.