

Great Falls Citizens Council Minutes

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.

Civic Center – Gibson Room

Chair Sandra Guynn opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Neighborhood Council representatives in attendance: NC1 Mike Parcel; NC2 Tim Croft; NC3 Garri Mauch (arrived after 8:00 p.m.); NC4 Sandra Guynn; NC5 Tom Kotynski and Howard Plouffe; NC6 Rick Cornelier; NC7 Allison Tangen; NC8 Karen Grove; NC9 Alicia Hamilton. **City Commissioners:** Mayor Cory Reeves and Commissioner Joe McKenney.

Old Business: The minutes of the October 22, 2024 meeting were approved as presented.

Officer Elections: Motions were made and seconded and unanimously passed to elect Sandra Guynn as chair and the official delegate; Allison Tangen as vice-chair; Alicia Hamilton as secretary.

GFPD update: Chief Newton reported that there are 92 sworn officers with two to three retirements this year. It takes about six months from the time an officer is hired to work independently. Crime trends have been somewhat falling since 2023. Shoplifting is down, likely due to high visibility patrolling. Heroin is down 44% and 36,000 fentanyl pills were seized. The analytics of the Crimemapping tool have changed, which nobody can understand. Captain Black is scheduled to attend a conference in April and will be able to give an update at the May Council of Councils meeting. In response to questions: The department still needs more resources and there needs to be a community advocacy group to help with this; marijuana dispensaries are not creating problems, and the department cannot determine the number of DUIs from marijuana use.

Great Falls Fire and Rescue update: Assistant Fire Chief Mike McIntosh reported that there was a decrease in call volume in 2024, but that the workload is up, including transport. There has been a recent increase in residential fires from the improper use of heaters, disposing of cigarettes in flowerpots – the soil is flammable – and chimney fires. Because of the shortage of personnel, it is getting harder to get off-duty personnel to come in when there is a ‘call back’. The state legislature is looking at capping public safety mills, which is how the police and fire departments are funded, and due to the overall shortage in housing, the legislature is also looking at ways to accommodate less expensive housing without considering the consequences. The department is studying the feasibility of ‘special fire districts’ which businesses would fund. Because the fire training center is condemned and can no longer be used, the department is looking at ways to fund improvements. Two stations are needed to improve response times on the north and south side of town. Burn permits are in front of the City Commission. The department continues to improve public engagement and has hired four new firefighters.

Municipal Court: Judge Mark Dunn reported that the department is down one staff person, which is not a new position, and that another court clerk is needed. Homelessness and mental health issues continue to create challenges. Non-compliance is low with only 28% doing what they were supposed to do. Daily jail number counts are given to the court with municipal court having between 12-15 individuals in the jail out of a population of over 400.

Quiet Zone presentation: Damian Conn, a member of NC2, gave a presentation about pursuing the possibility of a quiet zone in the NC2 area. Some federal grants are available. Chair Sandra suggested a panel discussion about this topic be scheduled for the May 27, 2025 Council of Councils meeting. Delegates were in favor of adding this item to the agenda.

Council Sharing:

NC1: no report

NC2: Tim reported on a problem with transients, and the campers at ShopKo have left. West Kiwanis Park may be repurposed as a soccer court. They continue to discuss a Quiet Zone proposal.

NC3: Garri reported they continue to fundraise for Skyline Park and Valley View Park. December's meeting included an update from Traffic manager Eric Boyd about the washed-out culvert on the east side of the 9th Street bridge. They also discussed the challenges of improving 6th Street N.W., and that the department is studying the health of all city streets. They held a home decorating contest in December.

NC4: Sandra reported that the Discovery Meadows housing development is hoping to break ground this year. The Silverstone project has been approved for annexation, but it hasn't yet been annexed. Phase 1 will be smaller than originally planned. Mitchell Development is proposing The Falls mixed-use development on 57th Street between 3rd Avenue South and 10th Avenue South.

NC5: The Council is considering going remote with their meetings. They will contact NC3 to discuss how best to do this.

NC6: Rick reported that a city burn permit email was sent to Commissioner Wolfe. The situation is in progress. They have discussed homelessness and the city's budget.

NC7: Allison reported that the Council sent a letter of concern to the City Commission about the proposed library funding.

NC8: Karen reported that there are still problems with speeding on 1st and 2nd Avenue North.

NC9: Alicia reported that a property complaint has been resolved.

- City Commissioner Joe McKenney reported that he is talking to community leaders 'to pick up the torch' to engage the community about public safety.
- Mayor Cory Reeves encouraged the councils to set up a Facebook page, if they have not already done so.

Neighborhood Concerns: None

May 27, 2025 meeting agenda items:

- Crimemapping update from Captain Black
- Quiet Zone panel

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Guynn, chair