

Neighborhood Council #7
Monday, June 9, 2025
Gibson Room, Civic Center

Call To Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Chair Trevor Mikkelsen, who led the Pledge of Allegiance. In attendance were Neighborhood Council #7 Members Trevor Mikkelsen, Troy Lane, Allison Tangen, Bill Wadman and Liaison Rob Moccasin. Sandy Rice was absent. A quorum was established. Also present were resident Charles Goodman, and City Commissioner, Joe McKenney.

Old Business: Bill Wadman made a motion to accept the May minutes as amended. Troy Lane seconded. The May minutes were approved.

Committee Reports:

Downtown Development Partnership: Troy Lane reported 50,000 in TIF funding was approved for the Clearwater Credit Union project. The new building will be located at 101 1st Avenue North. The TIF funds will be used to demolish the current structure to facilitate the \$8.4 million project. Great Walls Art Fest 2025 will be August 10-16. Work to light the downtown alley murals is progressing. The city has been pressure washing downtown sidewalks and adding flower boxes. The First Avenue South road construction project has started, and will last through the summer. The International Economic Development Conference will be held in Great Falls, June 23-25. The Downtown Night Market dates will be June 27, July 25, and August 8.

Brownfield Committee: No new applications.

Downtown Safety: No report.

Council of Councils: Police Chief Jeff Newton reported staffing of officers and dispatchers remains a top priority. Yearly turnover has increased since Covid. Currently, the department loses 8 officers per year. Highly qualified applicants for the dispatcher positions are in short supply, resulting in unfilled positions. The Evidence Storage Facility remodel project is completed. The Great Falls Police Department is assessing the costs and benefits of the current crime mapping software. The Council of Councils discussed the request to enact a Noise Ordinance at certain train crossings. Noise mitigation cost the City of Billings 1.3 million to establish 3 quiet zone crossings. Mayor Reeves pointed out there is no funding available for mitigating crossings here in GF. Brock Cherry has identified 8 possible crossings in Great Falls. MDOT is not interested in facilitating any of the crossings that are state thoroughfares. Concern was voiced over the city's liability of quiet zone crossings if an accident should occur due to noise mitigation. If the city moves to enact an ordinance it would start with an assessment that will require staff time and money. Also discussed was the Sentinel Missile upgrade and how Great Falls could capitalize on housing opportunities after the project is completed. Joe McKenney commented that the housing plan changes month to month. The project leaders have talked about plans to build the housing west of town in either Vaughn, Fairfield or Augusta, and east of town in Lewistown. Currently, no decision has been finalized. They have indicated that the housing will be of modular design.

Strategic Planning: No Report

New Business: City Commissioner Joe McKenney gave a presentation on the need for a new levy to fund public safety. The City of Great Falls has never passed a Public Safety Levy, and with the Legislature not investing in cities and counties, the impetus of raising money for local infrastructures falls on local property taxes. The rate of increase of property taxes has been capped at 1/2 the rate of inflation; this model has left counties and municipalities with the choice of cutting positions or passing levies to keep budgets in the black, while trying to keep up with growth. After the last Safety Levy failed, the City Commission believes they will need community support and to reduce the dollar amount asked from the taxpayers, as they formulate the next levy attempt. The newly created Electric City Citizens for Public Safety Committee will meet every two weeks until August 20th. The next meeting is June 11, at the Great Falls Association of Realtors, 401 13th Avenue South. Charles Goodman from NeighborWorks reported that the Baatz Building will be completed in September and plans to start moving residents in at that time. Charles also encouraged everyone to go out and support the Voyagers.

Next month's agenda suggestions:

- Ice Cream Social.
- Jane Weber to give presentation on property tax bills that recently passed during the last legislative session.

Submitted by Bill Wadman, Neighborhood Council #7.