

Great Falls Citizens' Council  
Council of Councils Meeting Minutes  
May 28, 2013

The meeting was opened by Eric Ray, Neighborhood Council #5, at 7:00 p.m.

**Delegates present:** Lynda Sowell, Neighborhood Council #1; Phyllis Hemstad, Neighborhood Council #2; Sandra Guynn, Neighborhood Council #4; Eric Ray, Neighborhood Council #5; Carl Donovan, Neighborhood Council #6; Karen Grove, Neighborhood Council #8; and Peggy Scheschy, Neighborhood Council #9; Commissioner Bill Bronson.

**Guests included** City Manager Doyon, Mayor Mike Winters, Ron Gessaman, Kathy Gessaman, Dorothy Schmidt, Jeff Key, and Samantha Huffman.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **Minutes** from the January 30, 2013 meeting were presented and the vote to accept the minutes as presented was unanimous to approve.
2. **Neighborhood Watch update:** Eric Ray reported Council #5 has had two public meetings which were specific to Neighborhood Watch recruitment. He gave several suggestions to other Councils interested in creating collaborations with Neighborhood Watch members. Carol Bronson, Neighborhood Watch coordinator for Cascade County, announced that Eric Ray and Carole Gilmour had received NeighborWorks' Volunteer of the Year award for their outstanding work with Neighborhood Watch.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Great Falls Long Range Transportation (LRTP) Planning update:** Jeff Key, Traffic Engineer and Project Manager for the Transportation Plan update, gave information on the project, its process, and timeline. The partners for the LRTP are the City, the County, MDT, and the GF Transit District. The project is overseen by a Transportation Advisory Committee. The update is mandated by the Federal government and is attached to funding for roads. The plan has different components including traffic, bicycle and walkways, and air quality and freight movement. The project is scheduled to be completed in nine months, which is an accelerated timeline. For outreach, Jeff will meet with many groups, including the nine Neighborhood Councils, and have 3 public meetings—the first is scheduled for June 19, 2013. The boundary for the Transportation Plan update includes all of Great Falls and an equal amount of area in Cascade County. There is a website: [www.greatfallslrtp.com](http://www.greatfallslrtp.com).
2. **GFPD Volunteer Program update:** Coordinator Samantha Huffman introduced herself. She explained she has been hired to implement a volunteer program similar to Billings' program, which has been in existence for 12 years and has some 100 volunteers. She stated the purpose of her program is to engage the community and augment services, freeing officers for more pressing duties. There are currently 10 volunteers, but the goal is to have 50. The volunteers have been patrolling the downtown on the rhino (ATV) and on bikes, have helped in the evidence room, have served as the chaplain and the physician, and have overseen youth activities at the Housing Authority. Future duties may include working with abandoned vehicles, updating the sex and violent offender registry, and fingerprinting.

3. **Impact of the ECP/Southern Montana settlement:** City Manager Greg Doyon addressed the delegates with information on the potential \$3,250,000 settlement with Southern Montana Electric, which would be paid in two payments. The first would be made soon at \$2.5 million. It would come from existing fund accounts within the City budget:

- a. Central Garage -- \$905,000, leaving a balance of \$2,000,000+
- b. Information Technology -- \$200,000, leaving a balance of \$271,000
- c. Fiscal Services -- \$325,000, leaving a balance of \$98,000
- d. Engineering -- \$250,000, leaving a balance of \$309,000
- e. Public Works Admin -- \$100,000, leaving a balance of \$255,000
- f. Employee Health Insurance -- \$200,000, leaving a balance of \$156,000
- g. Hazard Removal -- \$100,000, leaving a balance of \$1200
- h. Economic Revolving – 420,000, leaving a balance of \$1300

The second payment of \$750,000, due by 12/31/2013, would be made from adjustments in the 2013 budget process. That would mean leveling fund budgets, limiting all non-essential employee travel, freezing wage increases for exempt employees, and changing the employee insurance plan/company, which will have no financial or benefit impact to the employees.

In addition to the settlement, Mr. Doyon expressed a need for recovery and stabilization of the undesignated fund balance which should be at 17%. It is currently at 8%. He stated he did not want to use a “tax anticipation note” to augment the fund between the bi-yearly tax allocations. He said the Commission plans to take actions to write off past ECP losses: the \$1.4 million CD liquidated by PPL, an additional \$866,000 that can’t be retrieved, \$1,000,000 of Highwood Generating Station’s patronage capital, and a formal transfer of \$5.4 million that was used to subsidize customers billed on a fixed rate that was less than Southern was charging. Also, existing customers will be asked to voluntarily pay more to make up for the higher amounts being paid by the City. All in all, the total loss to the City could be near \$15.5 million. Other budget measures employed to help will include a freeze on purchasing through the end of the year and limiting the hiring of “non-essential” positions. Mr. Doyon said the City will try to avoid furloughs and layoffs, if possible.

Questions to Mr. Doyon from the attendees included “will the City be selling park land to pay some of the debt?” and “why didn’t the City go for a bond to pay the settlement?”

Mr. Doyon responded that the Commissioners have looked at selling park land that is undeveloped and unusable but nothing has been decided. Commissioner Bronson responded that the Commission did not feel a bond issue would be a good resource at this time for multiple reasons.

Mr. Doyon said he would make himself available to the Councils if they would like him to come to their meetings on these issues.

## OTHER BUSINESS

### Individual Council Sharing

1. Lynda Sowell reported her Council had a high deer population and would like to start conversations with officials before it becomes a problem like Helena and Fort Benton have experienced.
2. Phyllis Hemstad reported a new community garden in her area has been successful.
3. Ron Gessaman, member of NC3, reported “hot” issues as the expansion of the Refinery, a proposed 24-plex on 36<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE, the roundabout at Smelter and Division, potential sale of park land to a church, ADF building, and nothing happening at Great Bear Industrial.
4. Sandra Guynn reported that crime was down in her neighborhood and Clara Park was one of the parks the Commissioners were looking at to sell, but Park and Rec Director Marty Basta would not recommend it.
5. Eric Ray reported all of the resident claims to Benefis had been paid in full, his Council has been working to fundraise for repairs to the walking path in Russell Park, and all the existing members have filed for reelection to the Council in 2014.
6. Carl Donovan reported SID and storm water drainage discussions with the Upper/Lower River Road residents, and problems with people from other areas using the garbage containers in his area.
7. No delegate present.
8. Karen Grove reported a noise issue from the mill, Ice Cream Social in July, and the Council was taking the summer off.
9. Peggy Scheschy reported her Council had been quiet.

#### PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Neighborhood Concerns:** there were no concerns.

The next Council of Councils meeting will be held Wednesday, October 30, 2013.

A motion and second were made and voting was unanimous to close the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patty Cadwell  
Neighborhood Council Coordinator