

Minutes Neighborhood Council District 3 (NC3)
Thursday, May 2, 2013
Multi-Purpose Room
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order: John Sturgeon, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Lori Fay was absent. A Council member quorum, consisting of John Sturgeon, Johnathan Kenneway, Kathleen Gessaman, and Ron Gessaman, was present. Audience attendees were: Marty Basta, Director of Parks and Recreation; Officer Smail, Community Policing; Samantha Huffman, Program Coordinator of GFPD Volunteer Program; Aaron Pursell, Great Falls Urban Chicken Citizen Initiative; and five members of the public.

Minutes: John S. asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting. **Johnathan K. moved to approve the April 4, 2013 minutes; Ron G. seconded.** There was no discussion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Unfinished Business:

• **Committee Reports:** Ron G. reported on the April 16th City Commission meeting: sewer rates were increased 10% and water rates were increased 5% effective May 1st; and the public hearing for Calumet's Westgate Mall PUD overlay on I-2 zoning was scheduled for May 7th. On April 17th, the City Commissioners and City Staff met with attorneys, Mr. James and Mr. Murphy, for a two hour closed executive session to discuss the ECP vs. Southern settlement. The ECP Board met for a special meeting last night, May 1st, and following that meeting, the Commission met for a special meeting on the ECP settlement with Southern. Ron said the Planning and Zoning Board met for their April 9th session and the April 23rd session was cancelled. Ron noted several items of interest on the upcoming May 7th City Commission Agenda. Ron also reported that at the May 14th Planning and Zoning Board meeting, Damon Carroll plans to ask for a PUD zoning for his proposed 24 unit apartment complex next to the water tower on 36th Ave NE.

Johnathan K., reporting on the March Police Advisory Board meeting, said the Police Chief has started a volunteer program to help the Police force. At the meeting Chief Bowen also discussed D-DAT, a data driven approach to crime and traffic, and how the program is working in Great Falls.

Minutes of City meetings can be found at <http://www.greatfallsmt.net/meetings>.

New Business: Community Policing: Officer Smail (GFPD) presented the latest crime statistics for the NC3 area and asked for any questions. Ron mentioned the problems experienced by a local couple trying to report an unsafe and abandoned vehicle in the neighborhood. Officer Smail said the abandoned vehicle procedure is lengthy - first a sticker is put on the vehicle and the owner has five days to correct the problem before the complaint goes to the City Attorney's office. Next, the City sends out a letter within two weeks and the owner has 30 days to respond to the city letter. After that period, the abandoned vehicle will be towed. Samantha Huffman said the GFPD Volunteer Program is working to streamline this process but City code will require changes. Ron said a couple meetings ago a person with several small children complained about speeding on his street near CMR. Officer Smail said he had talked to the gentleman, parked on his street, and wrote a few tickets, which temporarily slowed traffic while he was there. Officer Smail said the school's SRO is supposed to be inside the school and can't help with traffic. If the GFPD had more officers, they could patrol the streets near schools more effectively. John S. said someone is racing a Harley Davidson motorcycle without a muffler up 2nd St NE, and other cyclists tend to race up that street in the summer (since it doesn't have any stop signs on it).

Skyline Heights Park: Marty Basta, Director of Parks and Recreation, presented a proposal by some members of Faith Lutheran Church to buy the undeveloped park across from Skyline School. Marty exhibited a map of the location under discussion and it turned out to be Skyline Addition Park not the Skyline Heights Park listed on the NC3 agenda. Marty reported he had talked to Dr. Crowley, the GF Public Schools Superintendent, in 2012, and been told the School District doesn't need the parcel across from Skyline School or the park land. Marty suggested the sale of Skyline Addition Park could help fund other amenities such as a tennis court for Skyline Park. Marty said he is not an advocate for selling City parkland because there is an intrinsic value for having open space. Marty said the church representatives outlined their plan to the Park Board on April 8, 2013, and the Board voted unanimously to recommend the City Commission advertise Skyline Addition Park for sale based on the interest of Faith Lutheran Church. Marty invited the church representatives to make a presentation to NC3. Marty said if the City Commission approves selling the park, the land would have to be advertised and not sold for less than its appraised value. Marty introduced the church representatives Bill Garberg (1712 19Ave S), Gene Bern (2745 Fern Dr), and Russ Sorensen (4102 9th St NE). The church representatives explained why they were interested in relocating their church to this spot.

Kathleen G. asked if the money from selling Skyline Addition Park could be used for Skyline Park improvements. Marty said the money from the sale couldn't be earmarked specifically for improvements for Skyline Park. Parkland sales money just goes into the Park Trust Fund. The Park Board could decide to set the money aside for improvements to Skyline Park. Johnathan K. asked what the appraised value was, and Marty said the park was appraised on May 9, 2012 and its 4.03 acres were valued from \$15-18,000 per acre or about \$60,000 to \$72,500 total. Ron noted the parkland if sold would have to be subdivided and separated from the school land and then rezoned via zoning hearings; this would not be a fast process. Marty agreed and said some underground utility issues would also need to be addressed. Kathleen asked if there was any way to guarantee only this church group could purchase the property. Marty said if another group outbid the church group, the Park Board still has final approval and could deny the bid.

Marty asked the Council to recommend approval for the sale so action could proceed on the next step - getting with the planning department to re-plat the property. Ron G. said the Council couldn't take any action tonight because the park name listed on tonight's NC3 Agenda was Skyline Heights Park and not the Skyline Addition Park being discussed and hence the public didn't have proper notice/opportunity for comment. Marty said his memo listed Skyline Additions Park; he was disappointed the Council couldn't take action because of the incorrect agenda. Johnathan, John, and Kathleen opined they wouldn't mind a church buying Skyline Addition Park but no action could be taken until the June meeting. **Ron G. moved to ask City Staff to correct the error in the posting of the park name and present the item again at the next meeting's (June 6th) agenda. Johnathan seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

GF Initiative: Aaron Pursell, a member of NC4, said he started the Great Falls Urban Chicken Citizen Initiative because the City Commission doesn't always appear to act in accordance with the people of Great Falls' wishes. When the Commission refused to either allow chickens or to turn the chickens' issue over to a voter referendum despite apparent overwhelming citizen support, he felt he had to act. The initiative is more about the citizens have a say than about chickens. For more information on the initiative (and the 25 business locations that have the petition available for people to sign), check Aaron's website: at <http://gfchickens.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/GreatFallsHens>. Aaron said the initiative needs 7,000 signatures to put the issue on the ballot to give the people of Great Falls a true say in having urban chickens like all the other major cities in Montana. Aaron said it would cost \$50 per year to register chickens and that fee would be used by Animal Control to verify that the chickens were kept in a safe environment, etc. Aaron answered some questions.

GFPD Volunteer Program: Samantha Huffman, Program Coordinator of GFPD Volunteer Program, said she was hired one and a half months ago to develop the program. She is not an officer but plans to organize a volunteer program for the GFPD like the successful (about one hundred participants) program in Billings

headed by Penny Reach. Samantha said she shadowed Penny to get ideas. Samantha said the volunteer program is a force multiplier for the GFD and could save the department money. Some possible activities for volunteers are: helping the two full time personnel with evidence support; a volunteer patrol unit targeting abandoned vehicles (they would report to dispatch if they spot any problems); a bike patrol touring neighborhoods and major events to discourage burglaries; chaplains; working with low-income youth to encourage better behavior; helping with animal control; assisting the sex and violent crime registry person in keeping the registry up to date, etc.

Ron asked how the program was funded. Samantha said, in addition to her salary, the volunteer program receives about \$1,500 from the GFD and the rest of the funding will come from grants like HIDA funds, COPS, Highway Patrol, Optimist funds, WalMart, in-kind donations, etc. Ron asked what time commitment would volunteers be asked to make. Samantha said she needs volunteers over 18 years old who can work a minimum of 4 hrs/week or about 200 hours per year – the volunteering must be in 4 hr blocks/shifts. Johnathan asked what the project's goal for her first year was; Samantha said her goal was to have 51 volunteers - she presently has 7. Johnathan stated that if the program can document over 7,000 volunteer hours per year they will be eligible for larger grants.

Samantha mentioned that the Citizens Police Academy is offered twice a year – it's a 12-week program that meets for three hours on Wednesday nights; currently 30 people are enrolled. Samantha said she has set up a Facebook page under Great Falls Police Department Volunteers.

Petitions and Communications: Bill Garberg thanked the NC3 Board for listening to his church group's proposal.

John S. said the next Council of Councils meeting is May 28, 2013. Johnathan said he thought he would be able to attend the meeting.

Ron G. moved to suspend NC3 Council meetings in July and August and resume in September.

Kathleen G. seconded the motion. John asked for discussion - Kathy said she would check with Riverview School staff about holding the June meeting at the school. **The motion passed.**

Dexter Busby, Calumet Refinery representative, said there will be more activity in the future in the Westgate Mall area as additional lighting near the Dimitri's Restaurant exit is installed; deteriorating areas of the mall parking lot are repaved; and equipment needed for the fall shutdown arrives for storage on site.

Ron G. moved to adjourn, Johnathan K. seconded; the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

The next NC3 meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 6, 2013 at 7 p.m. at Riverview School.

Respectfully submitted, Kathleen Gessaman, NC3 Secretary. Please note these minutes are not an exact record of what was said.

The NC3 Board would like to thank Riverview School for providing a meeting spot for NC3 at the school.