

Neighborhood Council #1
Meeting Minutes
DATE April 8th, 2014

Members Present: Lynda Sowell, Bill Thomas, Dennis Mora, Neil DuBois

Absent: Mike Flaherty

Others Present: Jana Cooper, Lu Bourcier, Bob Moretti, Ed Venetz, Rebecca Horn, Jan Cahill, Dave Abbott, Laurie Price, Gilbert Day, Karen Day, Patty Caldwell

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:00 by Chairwoman Lynda Sowell.

Committee Reports: No Police Advisory Board report as Councilman Mike Flaherty was absent.

Old Business: Motion by Bill Thomas to approve March minutes, seconded by Councilman Neil DuBois, motion carried unanimously as written.

The issue of rezoning the empty lot west of the present Hilton Garden Inn was revisited. Last month, the council tabled the issue of rezoning until the April meeting to ensure that residents of Neighborhood Council #1 had sufficient time to comment on the issue. No further comments offered during the current council. Councilman Bill Thomas moves to support the rezoning and write a letter of support to the members of the City Planning Board scheduled to meet April 22nd. Motion seconded by Councilman DuBois, motion carried unanimously.

Review of council bylaws and changes made last month. Chairwoman Lynda Sowell motions to adopt the bylaws and resubmit to the City Attorney, motion seconded by Councilman DuBois, vote carried unanimously.

New Business: Bob Moretti and Jan Cahill trustees of the Great Falls School Board presented information to the council about the upcoming levy in support of Great Falls Public Schools. The Fox Farm neighborhood has traditionally supported the school levies. Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) is the 3rd largest employer in the city with over 2,000 employees. GFPS has one of the most successful adult education programs in the state, and is one of only 100 school districts nationwide to be recognized for its exemplary music program. Administrative pay in the district is near the bottom for the seven AA districts in Montana. The dropout rate in Great Falls has also been reduced by over 50% within the last year. The levy request is for approximately \$1.65 million. In the past four years the Great Falls School District has lost 60 teaching positions due primarily to the failure of the last three levies. The shortage of teachers has resulted in 63 classrooms being "overloaded" this current school year. Insurance costs for the district have risen by \$555,000 along with graduated teacher raises projected at \$440,000 dollars, constitute the bulk of the request. Approximately 80% of the district's budget comes from the state, the other 20%, by law, comes from local levies. As a result of the last three levy failures, the GFSD has had to borrow money from reserve funds in order to maintain the status quo. Reserve

funds are intended to cover unexpected costs, such as boilers going out in buildings, water heaters, etc. \$300,000 dollars will be spent on technology and \$50,000 on gifted education. Historically, “no” votes for the levy have remained about the same, while “yes” votes for the levy have dropped by nearly 2,000 over the last three years.

Dave Abbot a candidate for the Great Falls School Board and current director of the Great Falls Food Bank, addressed the council and those in attendance and presented his background and candidate platform.

Lu Bourcier introduced himself. Lu is a member of the Citizens On Patrol (COPs) program and has been assigned as liaison to Neighborhood Council #1. Lu will bring any concern we may have as a council to the police department and do his best to answer any question that council members or residents of the neighborhood.

Other Business: No other business brought before the council.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made at 7:35 p.m. by Lynda Sowell seconded by Councilman DuBois approved unanimously. Next meeting May 13th.