

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of May 16, 2011

Members Present: Phil Kiser, Dave Campbell, and Charles Fulcher

Members Absent: Darren Brown

Staff Present: Wendy Thomas and Phyllis Tryon

Others Present: Dave Gagnon, Standard Parking; Nick Oswood, Oswood Construction Co.; Joan Redeen, BID; and Justin Redeen, BID

Call to Order: The Parking Advisory Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Kiser at 3:01 p.m. in the Rainbow Room.

Meeting Minutes Mr. Campbell made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 25, 2011 meeting. Mr. Fulcher seconded the motion, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Old Business

Rome, GA Parking Program Information

Mr. Kiser opened discussion regarding the information on the Rome, GA parking program. Ms. Thomas stated that one idea coming from the report would be to offer out-of-town visitors staying overnight at local hotels a free parking pass to encourage them to shop downtown. Mr. Kiser stated he was disappointed in the failure of the report to explain clearly the downtown demographics of Rome, such as the composition of professional, government, and retail businesses in the downtown area, and the type of buildings per block area. He noted one of the conclusions of the report was to offer a free ½ hour in the parking structure to accommodate people who want to park free on the street, which didn't seem logical. Mr. Kiser also noted that survey questions about possible shuttle service failed to report how far people would have to shuttle, or how often shuttles might run. Ms. Thomas said she would put a note on her calendar for next year at this time to check with Rome for results on their program.

New Business

Parking Budget

Ms. Thomas reported on the projected budget for 2011-2012. She stated she met with Mr. Neil Curry from TD&H about the sinking stair and elevator tower in the north parking garage. He recommended a full structural analysis be completed. However, based on a quick walk-through, he felt the amount of funds required for repair could be lower than originally thought. Mr. Kiser suggested moving the wiring in the parking garage to address the electrical issues caused by the sinking elevator. Ms. Thomas noted that option is being considered but it is not inexpensive.

The projected budget includes funds for a structural study on the parking garage, about \$100,000 in funds for repair of the structure, a downtown parking study, and funds for new parking signage. She explained there are some carry-over funds in reserve that could also be used for repairs, but then the reserves would be gone. The projected budget includes parking fine revenue not previously included in the past, and which currently goes into the City General Fund.

Courtesy Parking Program

Mr. Gagnon of Standard Parking explained that currently they are issuing courtesy notices for government vehicles parking in residential districts. Ms. Thomas stated that the intention with government vehicle parking is that they park no longer than the posted restrictions in any district, and no longer than 2 hours at a meter when on legitimate government business. Mr. Gagnon stated that enforcement attendants do not write a ticket if they are unsure of a violation.

Bagging Meters for Construction

Ms. Thomas explained that Mr. Oswood of Oswood Construction Co., with the Public Drug construction project downtown, said Public Drug was frustrated with paying for bagging meters. She wondered if the Downtown Plan might include a waiver of this requirement for a period of time in order to encourage downtown construction projects.

Mr. Oswood stated that after being awarded the contract, the City's Public Works Department determined that sidewalks needed to be replaced, which was not included in the original construction contract. Public Drug agreed to replace approximately 1300 square feet of sidewalk. The City then required a boardwalk for pedestrian safety reasons. The company agreed to these unexpected costs.

Additionally, the company is being charged to bag meters, which were removed at the City's request. Mr. Oswood stated that prior to the project beginning, there was no one parking at those meters on the street. He also said that with the extra costs agreed upon to replace the sidewalk and build a boardwalk, Public Drug does not think they should also pay for bagging meters. There have been additional requirements with storm drainage and other items, and they feel they are being penalized for building downtown instead of elsewhere. The cost is \$2 per bag per day, for 6 or 8 meters.

Ms. Redeen, with the Business Improvement District, stated that other downtown property owners have suggested that Public Drug should not have to pay to bag meters. The BID Board also agrees. Mr. Kiser noted that this Commission is an advisory commission, and can make recommendations to the City but cannot dictate policy. Mr. Kiser suggested that Mr. Oswood present a request in writing to the Parking Commission so a recommendation can be made to the City Commission. Mr. Fulcher noted that not all construction projects should be exempt from paying for bagging meters, but that considering the circumstances, he supported this exemption. Mr. Oswood will email a letter immediately to Ms. Thomas. Ms. Redeen said the BID would also write a letter in support.

Parking Rates and Universal Passes

Ms. Thomas reported that UPS chooses not to use the delivery zone areas for parking because it is more convenient to simply park at a meter for deliveries. She proposed a parking pass at a cost of \$50 for the first vehicle, and \$25 for every vehicle thereafter. Ms. Thomas said she could compare pass fees with Helena, Missoula, and Billings for the future. Helena and Missoula are currently working on proposals for increased parking rates. Ms. Thomas requested at this time that the Commission accept her proposal of \$50 and \$25, since that is what she discussed with UPS. Fees can be raised in January for the next calendar year.

Gold Pass

Ms. Thomas researched that Helena offers a Universal pass for \$65 which allows parking on surface lots and parking garages but not metered parking. They are planning on an increase for next year. Ms. Thomas suggested \$75 for such a pass in Great Falls. If metered parking is included, the price rises. The proposed

“Gold Pass” for Great Falls was originally suggested to include parking at meters. Ms. Redeen stated that Ms. Sue Ferrin of the Great Falls Downtown Association felt that retail employees would then park all day at a meter. Ms. Redeen stated that if the meter 2-hour limit was still in place, Ms. Ferrin would probably be in favor. Discussion followed regarding pass fees. Further discussion ensued about the plausibility of offering such passes and getting some feedback on the idea. Ms. Redeen said that the BID Board meets the first week of June. The Downtown Association members meet next in July. Ms. Redeen wondered if Ms. Ferrin sent out a member survey email, how would a response be generated? Could there be a link to a survey? Ms. Thomas stated she could talk to the City IT Department to see if there could be a simple survey connected to the City website.

Mr. Fulcher stated that if a Gold Pass is instituted, violations on the pass should carry a substantial penalty. There was discussion about escalated ticket fees for habitual offenders, higher ticket fees for pass holders, and also the cost of a pass.

In regard to parking passes for UPS and other delivery vehicles, Mr. Kiser made a motion for an annual delivery pass at \$50 for the first vehicle and \$25 for each vehicle thereafter, with the cost of the program to be reconsidered at the end of the year. Mr. Campbell seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Mr. Campbell asked Ms. Thomas when a parking study could be done, because the information could impact discussion on parking pass rates for next year. She stated she could release an RFQ in early July, allow a month response time, and then move forward if the Parking budget was approved by the City Commission.

Monthly Revenue & Expense Reports

The Commission reviewed a revenue report from Standard Parking. Discussion followed about courtesy parking spots on downtown Central Avenue. Ms. Thomas suggested changing the number of courtesy parking spaces for any establishment based upon the size of store frontage. The idea of a test block on the 500 block of Central was discussed, including raising courtesy parking space fees. Mr. Kiser stated that the cost of doing business at the mall was about \$60 per square foot versus \$6 for downtown. He suggested that if meters in the downtown were removed, merchants could pay for the meter spots, which would cover the cost of patrol. In conjunction with that, he suggested higher ticket fees, which would prevent abuse of parking spots.

Public Comment

Ms. Redeen stated the BID Board currently has two openings. There is one application in, and they are looking for another application. She introduced the new Community Ambassador for BID, Justin Redeen. There were no further public comments.

The next Parking Advisory Commission meeting will be Monday, June 20, 2011 at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Charlie Bruckner will be a new commission member attending.

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned at 4:46 p.m.