

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of the April 18, 2024 Meeting

The Parking Advisory Commission meeting was called to order by Chair, Katie Hanning, at 3:30 P.M., in the Planning and Community Development Conference Room at the Civic Center.

Members Present: Katie Hanning, Chair
Carol Berg
Inge Bucholz
Nathan Laidlaw
Jayson Olthoff

Ex-Officio Member: Kellie Pierce

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Brock Cherry, Planning & Community Development Director
Andrew Finch, Sr. Transportation Planner
Jamie Nygard, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Others Present: Jenn Rowell, with the Electric, Tena Grigsby, SP+, at 3:35 P.M.

New Commission Member Introductions:

All of the Parking Advisory Commission members introduced themselves and stated what they do and why they are on the Commission.

Commission Next Steps:

Mr. Cherry stated that there are many different interests in the downtown area, and small, measurable victories, can make parking better. The commission read the parking code from Chapter 17 of the OCCGF.

Mr. Finch gave a brief description of what the parking program is.

Mr. Cherry spoke about the budget and stated that the program should be paying for itself. He stated that the metered parking is the greatest impact of the budget and that staff will be looking into the utilization of the facilities and the occupancy rate.

Mr. Cherry stated that the parking program was awarded \$183,785.00 in TIF monies, a few years ago, for potential improvements. Future meetings will be geared towards educating the new Commission Members about the parking assets. Mr. Cherry stated that there are several items that need to be addressed for maintenance and is wanting to develop a long range plan for the parking program.

New Business:

Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair:

MOTION: To elect Inge Bucholz as Chair of the Parking Advisory Commission for 2024.

Made by: Mr. Olthoff
Second by: Mr. Laidlaw

VOTE: All in favor, the motion passed 5-0

MOTION: To elect Jason Olthoff as Vice-Chair of the Parking Advisory Commission.

Made by: Ms. Berg
Second by: Ms. Bucholz

VOTE: All in favor, the motion passed 5-0

Parking Garage Proposal:

Mr. Cherry stated that Mayor Reeves has many concerns about the parking program and he has visited with staff, along with the City Manager's Office, about how it can be improved. Initially the metered spaces were looked at, but with the revenue that they produce, there was some apprehension.

Mr. Cherry stated that the parking garages are underutilized, so staff is proposing that beginning on June 1, 2024 through August 31, 2024, the north parking garage will offer the first two hours as free parking. Ms. Pierce stated that the parking garage fees are .50 cents an hour, vs the on-street parking, that is \$1.00 an hour, so the loss of revenue will not be as significant.

Ms. Bucholz responded that her clients are older, and will not use the garages.

Mr. Laidlaw stated that it would be a great opportunity to advertise, as he did not realize that the garages were there and open to the public. He also wanted to know how much of the fees for the on-street parking, were going towards the software. Mr. Cherry responded that at a future meeting, there will be a presentation about the software and what changes need to be made. Currently there is not a contract and SP + is being paid monthly. Ms. Pierce stated that advertising has to come from the City and will be shared by her office.

Ms. Bucholz stated that people are frustrated with how to pay, not actually paying.

Ms. Hanning stated that the advertising and banner emphasizing Public, is important. She also stated that lighting has been redone and that there are new cameras that were installed, so safety has been increased.

Mr. Cherry stated that it is a trial for staff to get data on how it works. There is not a lot of time, as the Parking Commission will need to make a decision and it will go to the next City Commission meeting, on May 7, 2024, so that it can be advertised and implemented by June. The City Commission makes the final decision.

Mr. Cherry stated that based on how the trial goes and the benefit to downtown businesses, it may become a permanent solution to the parking program.

MOTION: That the Parking Advisory Commission recommend to the City Commission that the North Parking Garage have a trial of 2 hour free parking from June 1, 2024 through August 31, 2024.

Made by: Mr. Laidlaw
Second by: Ms. Hanning

Public Comment: Jenn Rowell, asked how the usage of the trial will be tracked. Mr. Cherry responded that the garages will be easy to track and that the on-street metered parking will be more of a challenge, but it is being worked on. He stated that at future meetings, he is hoping to have more details.

VOTE: All in favor, the motion passed.

Determine Future Meeting Items:

Mr. Cherry stated that he will continue to go over parking assets in the budget. The Commission determined that going over one asset at a time, would be the easiest. Mr. Cherry stated that at the next meeting the SP+ contract will be presented. He stated that after all of the hard assets are gone over, the Commission will begin a SWOT Analysis. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:25 P.M.