

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes of the February 20, 2025 Meeting

Vice Chair Jayson Olthoff called the Parking Advisory Commission meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. in the Planning and Community Development Conference Room at the Civic Center.

Members Present: Jayson Olthoff, Vice Chair
Carol Berg
Katie Hanning

Ex-Officio Member: Kellie Pierce

Members Absent: Inge Buchholz, Chair
Nathan Laidlaw

Staff Present: Brock Cherry, Director
Lonnie Hill, Deputy Director
Andrew Finch, Sr. Transportation Planner
Rob Moccasin, Neighborhood Council Liaison
Jamie Nygard, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Others Present: Jenn Rowell, with the Electric via Zoom, Tena Grigsby with SP+, Evan Pryor with Metropolis via Zoom

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Olthoff asked if there were any comments or corrections to the November 21, 2024 Parking Advisory Commission meeting minutes. Seeing none, Ms. Hanning motioned to approve the minutes, and Ms. Berg seconded.

Vote: All in favor, the motion passed 3-0

New Business

Parking Program Marketing

The Commission members discussed ways to improve the public's understanding of the kiosks, how to use the Passport App, and how to get that information out to the public, including:

1. Hand-outs from PassPort
2. Stickers on kiosks providing directions
3. Videos explaining how to use the kiosks, app, and FAQ's
4. QR Code on business cards that takes you to the video
5. Knowledge Drop on March 3, 2025, with the Chamber

Next steps regarding the free parking trial in the North Garage

Mr. Cherry stated that the North Parking Garage generated more revenue than the previous year and that summer utilization increased by 144.8%. He also mentioned that the Finance Director will attend the next Parking Advisory Commission meeting to review the budget.

Mr. Cherry asked if the Commission would suggest that the City Commission hold another free parking summer holiday at the North Parking Garage.

Mr. Olthoff stated that increasing awareness of the garages should lead to more significant usage in the long term.

Ms. Pierce inquired whether the necessary improvements in the North Parking Garage would impact free summer parking. Mr. Cherry responded that significant improvements need to be made and will not be completed by the time the summer holiday begins.

Ms. Pierce stated that a precedent should not be established for free parking every summer.

MOTION: To recommend Brock Cherry make a recommendation to the City Commission to allow for a free parking summer trial in the North Parking Garage for 2025.

Made by: Ms. Hanning
Second by: Ms. Berg

VOTE: All in favor, the motion passed 3-0

Passport Violation Letters

Mr. Hill stated that Passport began sending violation notification letters on November 1, 2024 in resuming enforcement. In doing so, it was discovered that the letters were mailed for courtesy violations (\$0) and were sent more frequently than monthly, resulting in several calls to the office from upset and confused individuals.

Mr. Hill stated that staff collaborated with Passport to rectify the errors and that Passport refunded all erroneous mailings accompanied by a letter in which they accepted full responsibility. The City, not the third-party vendor, is responsible for sending individuals to collections, so no collections have been initiated.

Mr. Hill also mentioned that an active scofflaw list exists, and as violators are notified, booting enforcement will resume for repeat offenders. He stated that the Parking program no longer has access to the Police Department database and has changed software, so it currently cannot access the scofflaw list for public publication. Still, he hopes that this can be resumed in the future.

North Garage Improvements TIF request – Sign package, Repairs

Mr. Hill stated that City Staff is pursuing a sign package for the North Parking Garage as part of a TIF request. He stated that two local bids had been received for between \$30,000.00 and \$50,000.00. He also presented some site photos of where the signs would be placed and stated that all of the signs would be lit.

Mr. Hill stated that part of the TIF request will also cover some deferred maintenance on the North Parking Garage due to a leaking standpipe and the roof above the stairwell that is leaking. Mr. Cherry mentioned that a previous TIF request was awarded, but it had specific conditions for use, so an amendment will need to be submitted to the DDP and City Commission for the updated repair items. Mr. Cherry also indicated that the signage request will be separate from the previously awarded one.

Mr. Cherry pointed out that the gates at the garages are unacceptable.

Initial discussion regarding the liquidation of surface lots for potential redevelopment opportunities.

Mr. Cherry stated that the City is considering how it would operate if it managed the Parking Program instead of using a third-party provider to run it.

Mr. Cherry presented a map showing all the surface parking lots owned by the City. He mentioned that millions of dollars in capital improvements are needed to ensure the effectiveness of the parking program. The Great Falls Development Alliance partners conducted a market assessment where they identified actions and goals to continue adding value to downtown. One question raised was whether a city-owned property was underutilized and had a higher and better use. One reason for redeveloping a city-owned parking lot is that the city lacks the funds for capital improvements. If a lot is redeveloped privately, it will generate new taxable value for the TIF and the downtown area. Mr. Cherry asked the Commission if the City should consider selling underutilized parking lots for private redevelopment. Ms. Hanning inquired whether the City had been approached about selling a lot, and Mr. Cherry responded that he was merely suggesting the concept of selling the lots.

Ms. Grigsby provided the statistics for the monthly parking pass holders:

1. Lot #2 – 65%, with 14 spaces allocated to Arvon
2. Lot #4 – 55.5%
3. Lot #7 – 60%
4. Lot #8 – 106%

Mr. Cherry stated that staff knows what needs to be done next, and the next step is to collaborate with Finance to determine what it would look like if the City runs the parking program or whether an RFP should go out.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:33 P.M.