

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of September 19, 2016

The Parking Advisory Commission meeting was called to order by Chair Bill Mintsiveris at 3:05 p.m. in the Rainbow Room of the Civic Center.

Members Present: Bill Mintsiveris, Dave Campbell, Kenny Volk

Members Absent: Chuck Fulcher, Dave Snuggs

Staff Present: Craig Raymond, Director P&CD; Tom Micuda, Deputy Director P&CD; Connie Tryon, Sr. Admin Assistant

Others Present: Fred Burow, City Commissioner; Tena Grigsby, Standard Parking; Brian Scoggins, Standard Parking; Joan Redeen, BID; Jenn Rowell, Great Falls Tribune; Brad Livingston, Chamber of Commerce

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Campbell motioned to approve the minutes of the August 15th meeting. Mr. Mintsiveris seconded. All being in favor, the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Item 1. Ideas from Standard Parking

Mr. Scoggins discussed the parking rate structure in Great Falls. He believes the rates are extremely low for a city the size of Great Falls. Most cities charge at least one dollar per hour at meters, and seventy-five dollars per month for garage rates. In order for new technology to be implemented in the parking program, Mr. Scoggins stressed the need for increased parking fees and rates.

Mr. Raymond stated that the parking program has never been properly funded. The departure of Asurion and NEW did not help that situation, but that is not the sole reason the program is not funded properly and unable to support itself. He understands that meter and garage rates need to be increased, or a parking assessment district created, for the program to begin to support itself. Implementation of new technology aside, the parking program cannot afford even basic maintenance to the garages.

NEW BUSINESS

Item 1. Memorandum on Parking Assessment District Option

The group discussed the memo that Mr. Raymond drafted regarding the possibility of increasing meter rates and garage leasing fees, and/or establishing a parking assessment district. Increased usage of parking facilities and on street metered parking will not create the revenue needed to make the parking program self sufficient. Commissioner Burow suggested raising meter and garage rates in small increments. He believes that by both creating a parking assessment district and increasing fees, some funding problems can be solved.

Any revenue received from an assessment would only be able to be used to make upgrades in off street parking facilities. Mr. Raymond stated a major concern is the safety and cleanliness of the parking garages and the surface lots. Adding automatic gates at the entrances and exits of the parking garages would be the first step towards increasing safety and cleanliness. Automatic gates would make it possible for customers to use the garages on an hourly basis if needed, instead of a full day. The ability to park in a safe and clean environment would draw more customers to the parking garages, in turn increasing revenue.

Ms. Redeen stated that downtown property owners would agree with implementation of a downtown parking assessment district only if the parking meters would be removed. Mr. Campbell said that removing meters would force customers to self-enforce, which rarely happens. Removing meters would require more on street enforcement from Standard Parking. There was discussion about the balance of possible rate increases and the development of a parking district. Mr. Campbell believes the downtown merchants should not be solely responsible for improvements and needed maintenance for the parking program. A rate increase would take the full burden from the downtown merchants and spread it among the patrons that park downtown.

Mr. Raymond believes having a fully funded and functional parking program can encourage more activity in the downtown area. At this point, the program cannot even afford to maintain the structures currently in use. The South Garage has leaking window sills and the elevators in the North Garage are perpetually in need of repairs. With such deficits, there is no room for voiding parking tickets or not requiring people to pay to bag parking meters. Mr. Raymond believes that there should be a one-time courtesy ticket for citations that are not time violations; however, the revenue from those citations is greatly needed at this point in time.

There was discussion about the small steps the Parking Advisory Commission (PAC) has taken to make changes to the parking program. Costs and wastes have been cut as efficiently as possible, but that will not solve the major budget problems. Though minor changes have been made, more significant changes will be necessary to make the program more viable and able to support itself. The PAC will need to discuss where to set boundaries for a possible parking assessment district, as well as what the assessment will be based on.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be October 17th, 2016, at 3 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:59 p.m.