

**AGENDA  
GREAT FALLS  
PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION  
CIVIC CENTER – PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE ROOM  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 – 3:30 P.M.**

The agenda packet material is available on the City's website: <https://greatfallsmt.net/meetings>

Public participation is welcome in the following ways:

- Attend in person.
- Provide public comments via email. Comments may be emailed before 12:00 PM on Thursday, September 19, 2024, to: [jnygard@greatfallsmt.net](mailto:jnygard@greatfallsmt.net). Include the agenda item or item number in the subject line, and include the name of the commenter and either an address or whether the commenter is a city resident. Written communication received by that time will be shared with the Parking Advisory Commission and appropriate City staff for consideration during the agenda item and before the final vote on the matter and will be so noted in the official record of the meeting.

**Opening Meeting:**

1. Call to Order – 3:30 P.M.
2. Roll Call

**Inge Buchholz (Chair)**  
**Jayson Olthoff (Vice-Chair)**  
**Carol Berg**  
**Katie Hanning**  
**Nathan Laidlaw**

Ex-Officio Member:  
**Kellie Pierce**

3. Recognition of Staff
4. Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 15, 2024\*

**New Business**

1. Staff Presentation of the Free 2-hour Parking Holiday at the North Parking Garage / Proposed action to recommend that the City Commission support improvements to the North Garage, including signage, structural improvements, and a new gate system. - *Associate Planner Alaina Mattimiro*
2. Discuss Jason/Inges' findings concerning Downtown ADA parking spots. – *Inge Buchholz & Jason Olthoff*
3. Inform the Parking Advisory Commission regarding future booting and unpaid parking violations. – *Senior Planner Andrew Finch.*

**Public Comment**

**Adjournment**

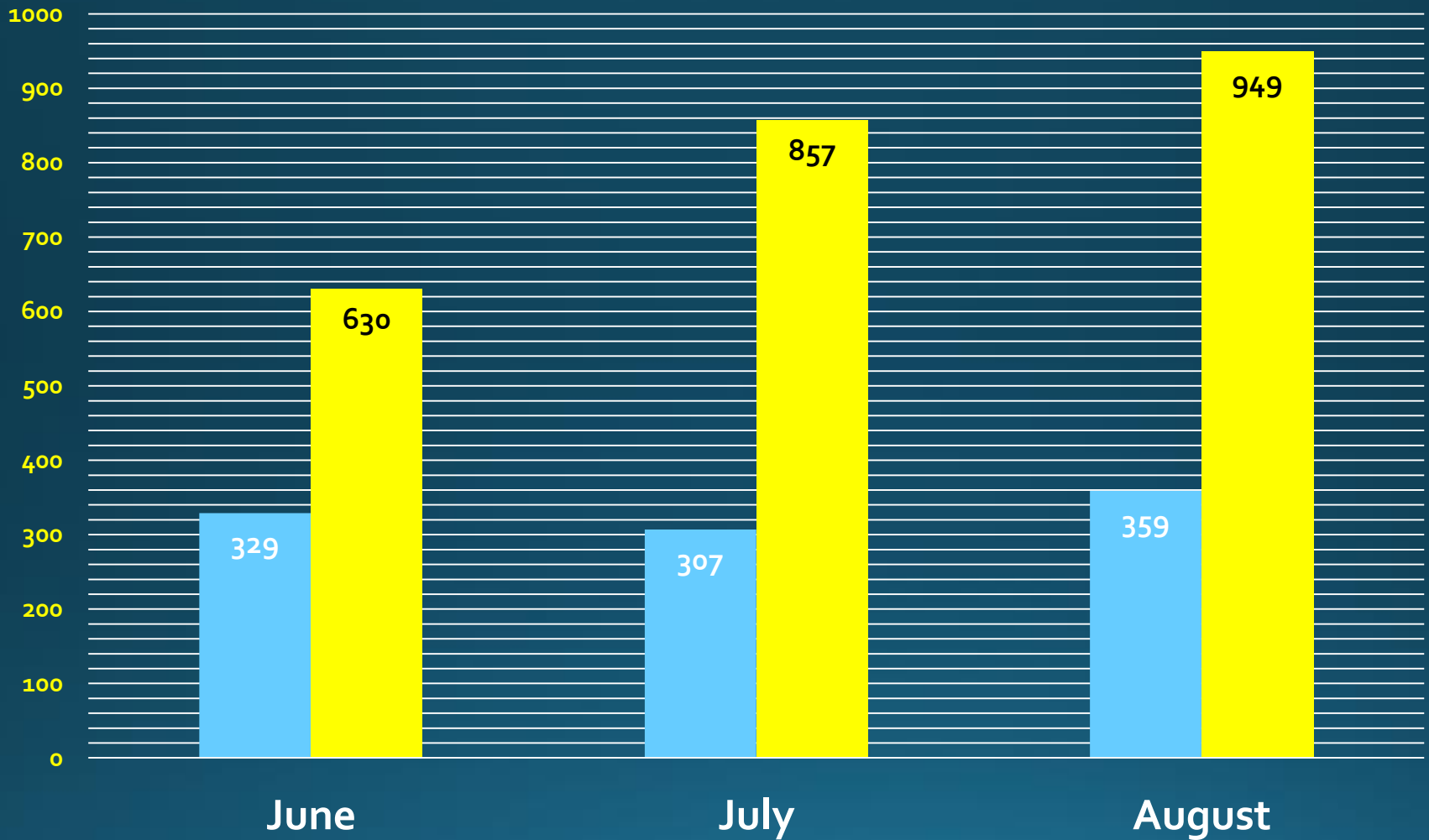


# North Parking Garage Free 2-Hour Summer Parking Trial: Findings & Recommendations

Planning & Community Development  
City of Great Falls

September, 19<sup>th</sup> 2024

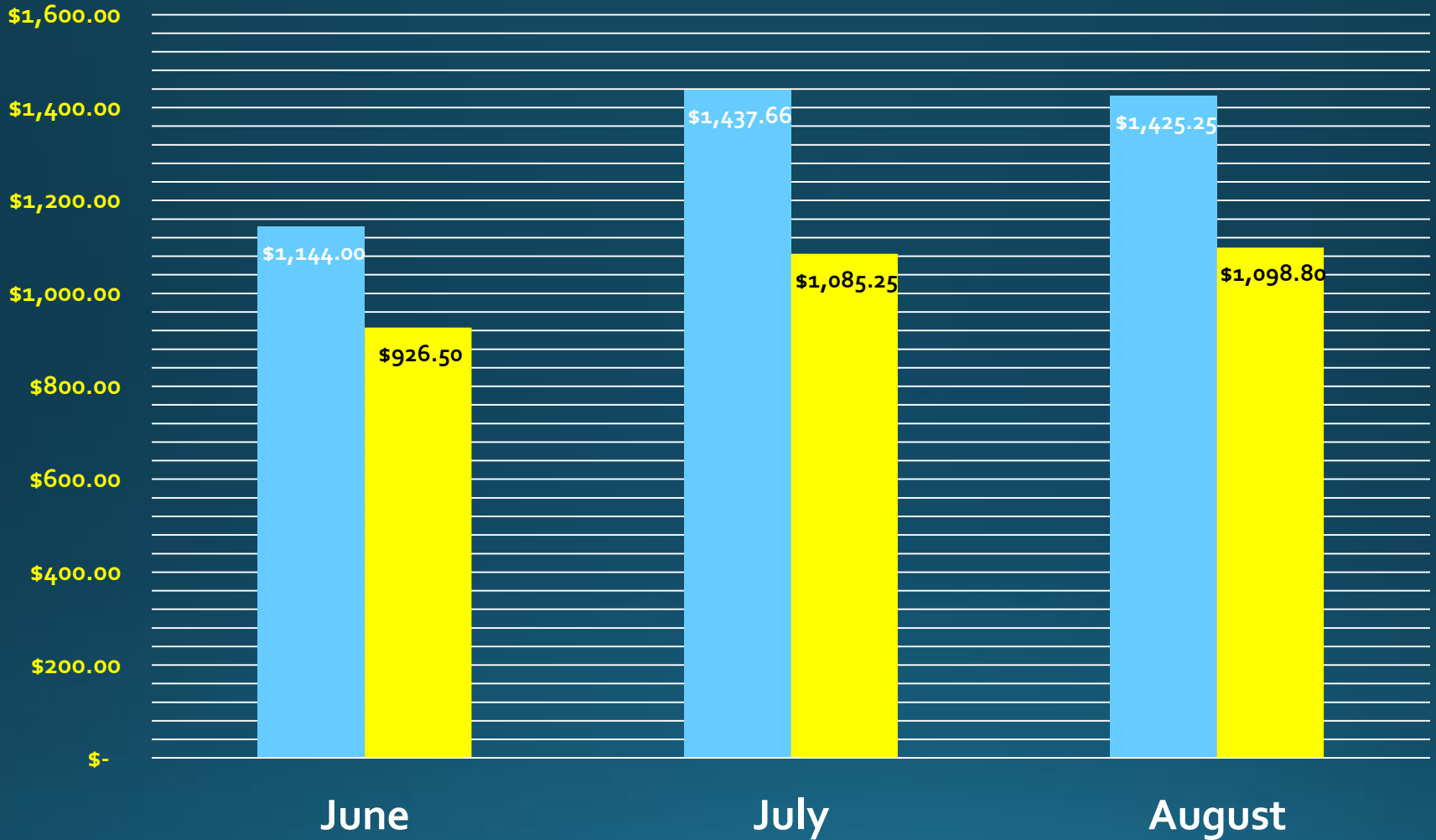
# Total North Garage Daily Users



**144.8% Increase from last Summer**



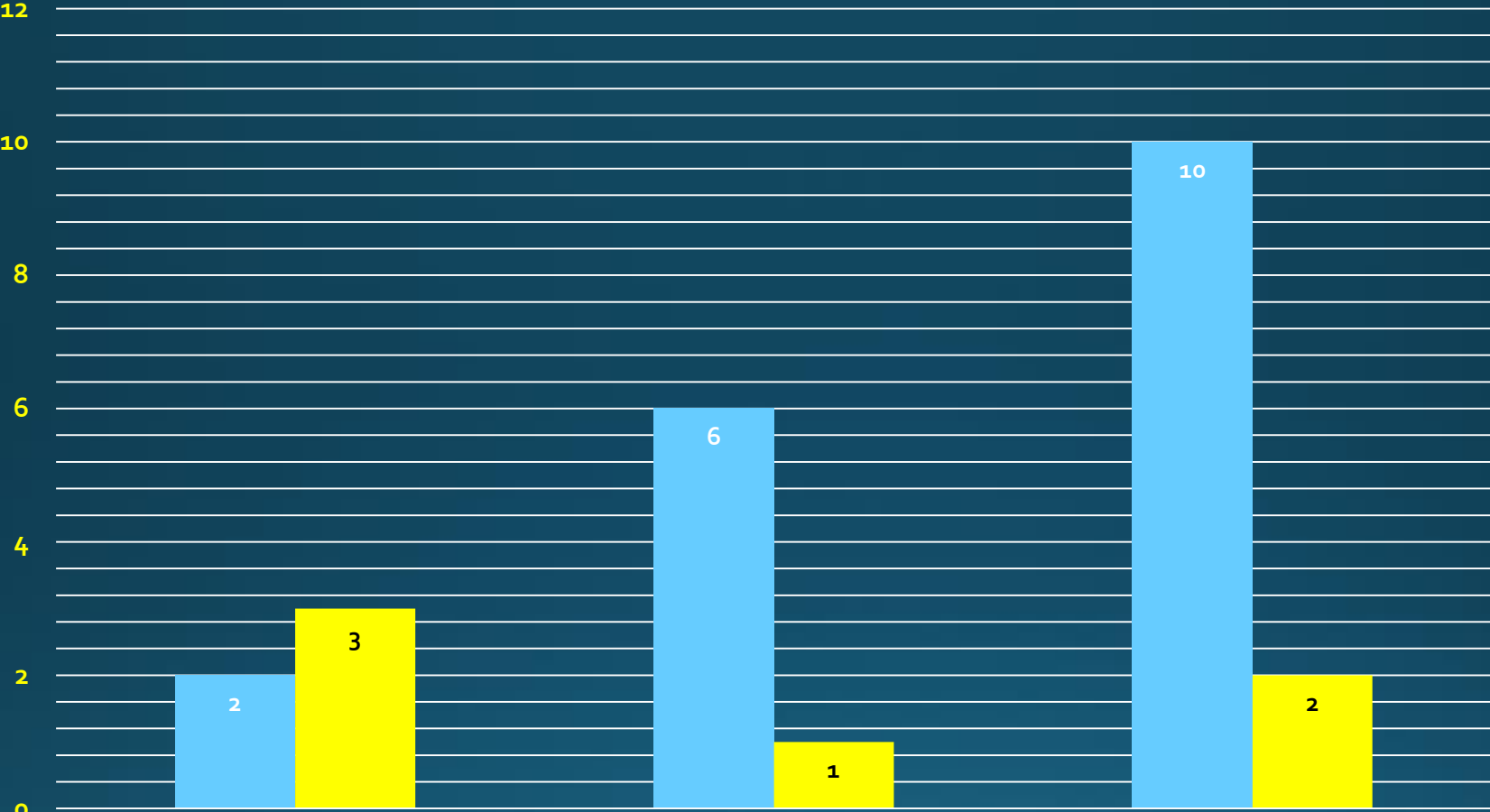
# Total North Garage Daily Fees Collected



**22.3% Decrease from last Summer**  
**(- \$896.36)**



# Total PD Calls for the N. Parking Garage



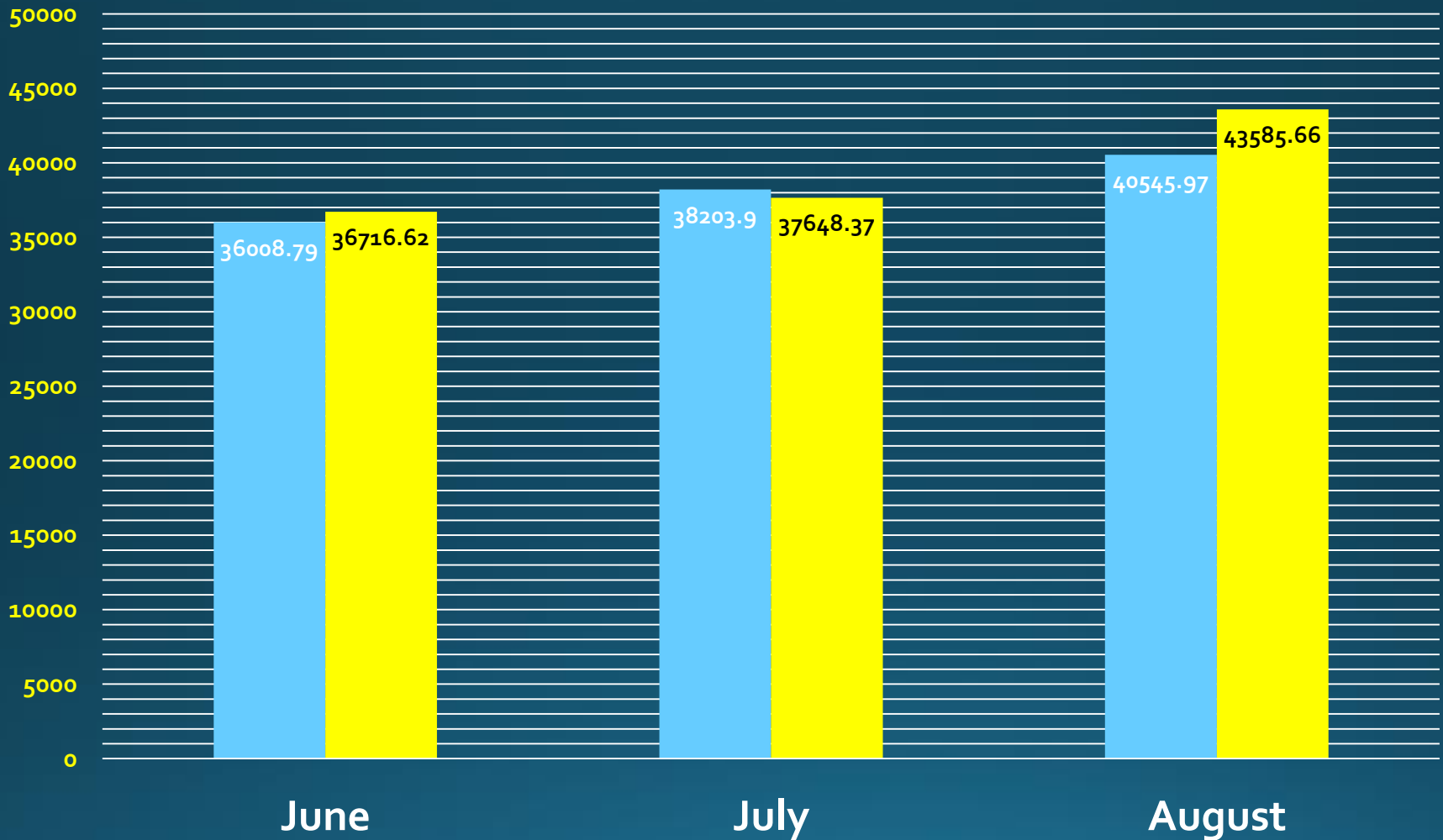
**200% Decrease from last Summer**

*(Could be increased occupancy, increased patrolling, or evening chain barrier)*



# Total Parking Program Revenue

(Garages – daily & monthly, kiosks, surface lots, PassPort App)



**2.7% Increase from last Summer**

(+ \$3,191.99)



# What went well?

- The 2-Hour Free North Parking Trial **didn't cost the City money**—in fact, we made more than last year.
- Summer utilization in the North Garage **increased by 144.8%**.
- Safe to say that **awareness of the North Parking Garage has increased.**



## FREE 2 HOUR PUBLIC PARKING

**NORTH PARKING GARAGE  
17 4TH STREET NORTH**

- **FIRST 2 HOURS FREE**  
(\$.50 AN HOUR AFTER)
- **UPDATED SECURITY  
CAMERAS AND  
LIGHTING**
- **EASY ACCESS**



**JUNE 1 - AUGUST 31**

**FOR MORE INFO: 406-727-**



**KUDOS TO CHUCK!**

# Next Steps – Updating the North Parking Garage

- Keep Tracking the Data!
  - Will Fall utilization be higher because of the new “converts” to the north parking garage—even without the two-hour free parking?
  - Continue to find the “Goldilocks Parking Rate.” What rate can we charge that allows the parking program to succeed (pay our bills—minimum or no general fund subsidy) while incentivizing maximum utilization?

## Updating the North Parking Garage

- Signage—The North Parking Garage is poorly advertised and needs new signage to communicate to users that it is a public garage, including our competitive pricing.
- Minor Immediate Structure Improvements –
- Gate Replacement -



## *Staff Recommends the following to the Parking Advisory Board:*

- *Recommend that the City Commission continue with regular fees until the Spring of 2025. Let's see what story the data tells us.*
- *Recommend to the City Commission that we commence improvements to the North Parking Garage, including new signage, structural improvements, and a new gate system.*



## Brock Cherry

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**From:** Jayson Olthoff <jayson.olthoff@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 28, 2024 4:32 PM  
**To:** Brock Cherry  
**Cc:** Inge Buchholz  
**Subject:** Findings on Handicap Parking Spots downtown

Dear Brock,

I wanted to share the results of a recent study we conducted on handicap parking spots downtown. Inge and I visited several businesses near these parking areas to gather their views and concerns. Here are the main issues we discovered:

1. **Payment Challenges:** A significant concern is the inconvenience caused when there isn't an open handicap parking spot. Customers must then use a walker or other mobility aid to reach the kiosk and pay.
2. **Extended Parking Duration:** Several people mentioned that some individuals leave their vehicles in handicap spots all day, which affects others who need to park downtown. It's noted that, in some cases, even business owners are using these spots, which should ideally be reserved for their customers.
3. **Lack of Awareness:** There seems to be a general lack of awareness that handicap parking is free. Both business owners and customers would benefit from better education on this issue.

Here are specific comments from the business owners we spoke with:

- **Millie from Cassiopeia Books:** Millie's biggest concern is the kiosk system. She mentioned that the kiosks don't always work properly, which frustrates older customers, and that many people struggle with using the app. She feels the single kiosk per block is inconvenient for customers.
- **Alison Fried from Dragonfly Drygoods:** Alison noted the issue of people parking all day in handicap spots. She also mentioned that she often sees customers struggling with the kiosk, so she has a sign in her store advising them to bring a copy of their license number to her, and she will assist with payment. She does this as a courtesy, viewing it as a small price to make her customers happy. However, Alison expressed frustration with the high fees charged by the processing company, which can exceed 100% in fees — something she finds unfair.
- **Nicole from Graeco:** Nicole, speaking on behalf of Erica, noted that they have a handicap spot right in front of their store and haven't noticed any issues with extended parking.

**Additional Observations:** From Alison’s comments, I share similar concerns regarding the fees. It appears that if someone charges for one hour and later adds time, multiple fees are incurred. This seems excessive, especially when compared to the regulations that prevent payday loan companies from charging exorbitant interest rates, yet credit card processing companies appear to do so without restriction.

Another comment that I agree with, if you have a permanent plate with a handicap decal on it, or, have a handicap sign in your vehicle, why can’t you park downtown anywhere, for free. Since we have an aging population, the number of handicap spots don’t necessarily correlate with the needs of our community, even if they meet the guidelines of the correct number of spaces required.

I hope these insights are helpful for future discussions on improving handicap parking accessibility and awareness downtown. Please let me know if you would like more details or if there are any next steps we should consider.

Jayson Olthoff  
jayson.olthoff@icloud.com  
406-899-0404

**GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the August 15, 2024 Meeting**

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

**Members Present:** Inge Buchholz, Chair  
Carol Berg - 3:33 P.M.  
Katie Hanning  
Nathan Laidlaw – 3:31 P.M. via Zoom and disconnected

**Ex-Officio Member:** Kellie Pierce

**Members Absent:** Jayson Olthoff, Vice Chair

**Staff Present:** Brock Cherry, Planning & Community Development Director  
Lonnie Hill, Deputy Director  
Andrew Finch, Sr. Transportation Planner  
Alaina Mattimiro, Associate Planner  
Jamie Nygard, Sr. Administrative Assistant

**Others Present:** Jenn Rowell, with the Electric, Tena Grigsby with SP+, Matt Gambardella with Metropolis, Evan Pryor with Metropolis

**Meeting Minutes:** Ms. Buchholz asked if there were any comments or corrections to the minutes from the June 20, 2024 Parking Advisory Commission meeting. Seeing none, Ms. Hanning motioned to approve the minutes, and Ms. Berg seconded.

**Vote:** All in favor, the motion passed.

**New Business**

**Parking Financial Presentation**

Melissa Kinzler, Director of Finance, presented to the Commission. She stated that the Parking Fund is an Enterprise Fund. She had some reports that she handed out to the Commission members and presented a breakdown of the Parking account. She stated that the fund will be very close to not having any cash at the end of June 2025 and that does not include any capital improvements. Mr. Cherry stated that there will need to be some dynamic policy changes.

Mr. Cherry stated that the South Garage is underutilized.

He stated the numbers below for counts of the North Garage but stated that the numbers were unofficial.

June 2023 – 329 daily users  
June 2024 – 630 daily users

July 2023 – 370 daily users  
July 2024 – 857 daily users

Mr. Cherry stated that the numbers will be vetted and the overall findings will be presented to the City Commission in October.

### **Any new business or concerns the Commission would like to bring forward**

Ms. Hanning stated that she had an inquiry, in the area by Rib and Chop, about the ability to put angled parking in and wanted to know how staff evaluates to see what kind of parking works in an area. Mr. Finch responded that Public Works is going to take a look at the street and see if there is a safe opportunity to add angled parking in the area.

Ms. Pierce stated that MDT is open to discussion on converting 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North to two-way streets.

Ms. Buchholz stated that the kiosks don't work very well and was wondering if there was something else that can be done. Ms. Hanning responded that the app is the easiest way for anyone to pay for parking. Ms. Grigsby stated that if anyone is having problems using the kiosk, to please call her and she will send someone out right away to look at it.

Mr. Cherry stated that his concern is user experience and noted that when looking for a new parking consultant contract, that will be one of the biggest items that will need to be addressed. There needs to be measurable metrics on how to improve on what is already being done.

Ms. Buchholz asked about the handicap parking and people taking up the spaces for several hours at a time. Mr. Finch responded that it explicitly states in the code, that time limits and charging for parking are prohibited for handicap spaces and that the code was changed two years. Mr. Cherry stated that something can be added to the Agenda for next month, if the Commission wishes to bring something forward to the City Commission to change it.

Mr. Cherry noted that the 2013 Parking Study was attached in the Agenda

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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