

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of July 23, 2012

Members Present: Phil Kiser, Darren Brown, Dave Campbell, Chuck Fulcher

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Wendy Thomas

Others Present: Dave Gagnon, Joan Redeen, Clint Joy (Standard Parking), Jeremy Trebas

Call to Order: The Parking Advisory Commission meeting was called to order by Mr. Kiser at 3:00 p.m. in the Ryan Room.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Kiser asked if there were any changes to the June 18, 2012 meeting minutes. Mr. Campbell made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Brown seconded. All being in favor, the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Capital Needs Assessment Update

Ms. Thomas said she sent an email to Carl Walker requesting a contract for the work to be done on the North Parking Garage. She has not received a response, and they have not been responsive in months. She said they apparently do not want the business, and she is looking for another contractor. She said there still may be time to have some of the work done this winter, depending upon the weather. Ms. Thomas said that she was looking for a cost for materials only for the exit signs, since the City electrical inspector will do the labor. Mr. Gagnon said he can get a quote on materials. Ms. Thomas asked for clarification on whether quotes received were for all the exit signs and if all of them needed replacing. Mr. Gagnon replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Thomas said there were quotes for pigeon netting for the south parking garage. She said the pigeons can be discouraged from roosting by installing an angled metal piece, and the cost is less than netting and the appearance of the structure will not be affected. Ms. Thomas explained that pedestrians are exposed as targets as they walk on the sidewalk to pigeons sitting on the I-beams above. In addition, the accumulation of pigeon debris at the exit doors onto the stairwells is very unpleasant.

Display Windows in South Garage

Ms. Thomas said Jean Price had contacted her and talked about water issues with the display windows in the south parking garage. When the change-out on displays occurs at the end of August through Labor Day, the City building inspector is going to inspect to find out what the problem is.

Lot #3

Ms. Thomas reported there has been no action yet on the sale of Lot #3. She has contacted the owner of Mountain Mudd regarding the language and protections in their buy-sell agreement, since their lot was a dirty site when they purchased it. The owner is working on getting her that language, and Ms. Thomas said it is a possibility that the City can incorporate that language in a buy-sell on Lot #3 and it can move forward. As of yet, it is unknown if there are old tanks underground since Lot #3 used to be a service station.

PAC Member Terms

Ms. Thomas encouraged members of the Commission to spread the word regarding the open seat on the Parking Advisory Commission.

Our Town Grant

Ms. Thomas stated that the City did not get awarded the NEA grant for wayfinding signage. She will follow up with NEA as to the reasons the grant application fell short.

NEW BUSINESS

Conference Report

Ms. Thomas said she collected meter information during the PIPTA Conference in Seattle. She said that she learned that it would not be cost effective to pay for updated meters without charging more per hour for parking. Ms. Thomas gave an overview of some new parking meter technology, and the viability for a community such as Great Falls to purchase or lease newer equipment or add solar panels to the parking garages. She stated that the travel and conference costs were not charged to the Parking Fund since she received a scholarship for registration fees and the rest of the expenses will be covered from PL transportation dollars. She said the conference focused on transportation demand management, community involvement, bikeway and greenway planning, as well as parking issues.

She said IPI dues are pricey at \$595 annually, but she received an offer for a year's subscription to the IPI magazine. She may be able to access more information through Standard Parking's membership. The IPI conference is in May 2013 in Ft. Lauderdale.

Ms. Thomas said she also attended a presentation by the Missoula parking official, Ann Guest, concerning the new parking program in Missoula, which was started in January. Ms. Guest said she thought the program would lose money, but instead it is bringing in increased citation revenues. Ms. Thomas said if Great Falls wanted to institute such a program, it would need to come before the City Commission for approval. Ms. Guest presented information on an annual report for their City Commission, and Ms. Thomas said it is a good way to show the Commission and the public what is being done in the parking program. She would like to have an annual report by next July (2013).

Ms. Thomas shared information about a parking official in Eugene, Oregon soliciting art to beautify the parking garage in that city. He also solicits short term artwork from "guerilla artists." In addition, he encouraged poets to post poetry in the stairwells. Ms. Thomas said she liked their commitment to the community to enhance the parking structures beyond functionality. She shared information about a community that used buildings in the downtown area to produce a light show in the winter and brighten up the downtown.

Discussion followed about creating bicycle parking downtown. Ms. Redeen said the bike racks downtown are unattractive and bicyclists don't know they are bike racks. She said the BID has discussed ways to improve the racks with some art. She said Crooked Tree requested a bike rack for customer use. There was discussion about the parking program in Eugene and how the city compares to Great Falls.

Monthly Revenue & Expense Reports (6/12)

Ms. Thomas presented some comparison information on another city parking program. Discussion ensued about how to encourage shoppers to use parking structures versus metered spaces and the desire shoppers have to park in front of where they shop. Ms. Redeen suggested the parking structures should be a cheaper hourly rate than metered parking. The Shop Till You Drop parking pass program was discussed. Mr. Gagnon reported about a half dozen passes used per month. Ms. Thomas said she is almost out of printed passes because the hotels keep

requesting them. It was suggested that people receive passes and then perhaps forget to use them. Mr. Gagnon said he could have a year-to-date report for the next PAC meeting.

Ms. Thomas stated that the Missoula parking program just put \$3 million into a new structure. She said that the Great Falls program needs to be profitable in order to invest in capital improvement. An end-of-year Fiscal report for the Parking Fund for the City fiscal year ended June 30 will be available at an upcoming PAC meeting.

Lot 4 Design

Ms. Thomas presented a design to enhance Parking Lot 4 for both drainage and landscaping. She said the landscaping was not expensive. City Engineering estimated \$375,000, but she said that was more of an order of magnitude that included curb and gutter, which doesn't need to be done. She explained the lot could be graded and resurfaced. Mr. Gagnon said that the lot needs to be leveled out to prevent icing issues in the winter. Ms. Thomas said that just under half the lot is regularly utilized. Ms. Redeen said if it looked nice, use would increase. Mr. Fulcher asked if the lot area could be utilized as half monthly, half day passes. Ms. Redeen asked who provided pricing on landscaping for Ms. Thomas, and suggested checking with Tilleras Landscaping, as they are currently working with Mr. Redeen on tree replacement. She said weed killer had destroyed some downtown trees. Ms. Thomas said the trees are existing in the lot, and enhancements would be low plantings such as grasses. PAC members were enthusiastic about possible improvements to this lot.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeremy Trebas said he worked with the Great Falls Rescue Mission and saw Lot #3 as a topic on the meeting agenda. He said he was interested in City issues. Mr. Kiser encouraged him to look at the opening on the PAC, especially since he works downtown.

Ms. Thomas said that Clint Joy from Standard Parking was available to answer questions. He explained that Brian Scoggins and Roamy Valera will be here on August 21 to review operations and conduct a half-day training for parking enforcement personnel. He said the training helps staff relate better to the public. PAC members are welcome to join them. Mr. Kiser spoke about comparisons to other city parking programs and removing parking meters. He said he hasn't seen any vibrant downtown area with parking meters in other cities in his travels. Cliff talked about alternative parking programs, incremental ticketing, ways to improve the program, and the possibility of cash infusions by contracted operators. He said such contracts are more long-term and tend to run about 10 years.

Ms. Thomas said that if parking rates are increased, they should increase in incremental portions instead of the double-the-rate increase at meters that was done in Great Falls in the past. There was discussion about the cost of implementing increases in relation to the amount of increase. Cliff noted that within 20 years, technology chips in automobiles will make meters obsolete. Ms. Thomas said that technology is in place in Canada, and patrons get a monthly bill from the city.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 20, 2012. In order for Standard Parking to be available to provide information at the next meeting, it was agreed that the meeting would be held on Tuesday, August 21. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.