

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of September 17, 2012

Members Present: Phil Kiser, Dave Campbell, Chuck Fulcher

Members Absent: Darren Brown

Staff Present: Wendy Thomas

Others Present: Dave Gagnon, Joan Redeen

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

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Kiser asked if there were any changes to the August 21, 2012 meeting minutes. Mr. Campbell noted that he disagrees with Mr. Valero's statement in the minutes that it is not worthwhile to have Saturday parking enforcement. Mr. Kiser made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Fulcher seconded. All being in favor, the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Capital Needs Assessment Update

a. Exit Signs

Ms. Thomas said she is ordering new exit signs for the North Parking Garage, and that the City electrical inspector will install them. She said that when the electrical supplier found out that she works for the City, they were willing to try to give an even better price on the signs. Mr. Campbell inquired if the signs were LED, and Ms. Thomas said they are not. She will, however, call to see if that is an option.

b. Pigeon Netting

Ms. Thomas said she has received quotes for pigeon netting, but there is no consistency in the quotes. She will make sure all bidders are providing the same information. Meanwhile, she has started working on a \$15,000 contract that will require City Commission approval. Mr. Campbell asked if the netting was just for the perimeter of the building. Mr. Gagnon said there is a doorway on the third level that gets pedestrian traffic and is an area they want to keep clean of pigeon debris. Ms. Thomas said the sidewalk area at the parking garage on 2nd Avenue South is another area to address.

c. Engineer

Ms. Thomas reported that the City Attorney has said it is possible to go to the next ranked bidder on the list of engineering firms to work on the North Parking Garage. She said that there are two firms which scored equally in second place on the list, and her preference would be to work with the company with which she has some personal knowledge, as she feels they would be responsive. She requested input from PAC members, and said she could provide the Commission with copies of the original submissions for their review. After some discussion, Commission members encouraged Ms. Thomas to follow up with the company she was inclined to choose. She said she will follow up tomorrow.

2. Display Windows in South Garage

Ms. Thomas, the City electrical inspector and the building official examined the display windows in the South Parking Garage to determine the cause of water damage. The window that appears to have the most problem has the air vent covered up. The next time displays are taken down, they will remove and replace the drywall ceiling and check for any water issues. Mr. Fulcher suggested a ceiling vent grid, which would allow both airflow and a

convenient way for artists to hang displays. Ms. Thomas said they could install a grid in the display window with the most problems, and if it resolves the humidity issue, they can do the same with the other display windows.

3. Library Lot New Payment Machine Trial

Ms. Thomas said she has received a quote from Digital Technologies for approximately \$7,700 for a new payment machine in the Library parking lot. The machine will be installed in October for a three-month trial period and will take coin and credit cards. The machine is solar powered so there is no conduit to install. Mr. Campbell asked if the machine will work at 20 below zero. Ms. Thomas said there will be battery backup for cold weather. Mr. Campbell asked if there was radio control with the machine in order to approve credit cards. Ms. Thomas said there will be a wireless connection, and Mr. Campbell asked if that is included in the price. The cost for wireless will be part of the parking garage phone bill. Ms. Thomas said there will also be a processing fee for the credit cards.

Once the machine is installed, there will be a parking attendant on site for a week to help educate customers. Ms. Thomas will look into warranty information on the machine. All were in agreement for Ms. Thomas to move forward with the machine installation. She stated that parking revenue collection methods in Great Falls are antiquated and open to theft, and it is time to move forward with updates. Ms. Thomas said there will be a minimum charge with credit cards. Ms. Redeen asked if a credit card can be automatically charged for a parking ticket. It was confirmed they cannot be automatically charged.

Mr. Kiser noted that all the testing for new parking technology is occurring in big metropolitan areas, and perhaps a test area is needed in a city the size and location of Great Falls. In light of that, he said it might be possible to get a grant to pay for updated electronic equipment.

NEW BUSINESS

Monthly Revenue & Expense Report (8/12)

Ms. Thomas handed out a corrected monthly report. She pointed out a comparison to last year's revenues. There was discussion about the drop in traffic and shoppers in the downtown area. Mr. Fulcher said meters were bagged at his store for construction at the neighboring property but the spaces were not being used by the contractor. Ms. Thomas said the bags can be removed if he does not want them on those meters, and Mr. Gagnon confirmed that when a store owner objects to meter bags in front of their store, the bags are removed.

Parking Garage Fee Increase and Proposed City Code Changes

Ms. Thomas said she reviewed the end-of-year Parking Fund balance, the improvements needed in the North Parking Garage and in Lot 4, and the need to update parking lot payment boxes. She said a proposed fee increase for the parking garages of \$1 per month, increased annually by \$1, is just a drop in the bucket but is a start, and that the Parking program is losing money. She said the program was in the black this year due to parking ticket revenue. The proposed increase is for the parking garages because there is not enough demand for space in City lots.

Mr. Kiser suggested also increasing boot fines and bagged meter rates. Ms. Thomas said other cities have a sliding scale on parking tickets, except for Bozeman, which charges \$20 per ticket. She stated the proposed boot fine increase could include a \$25 fee for the service of removing a boot on a vehicle and also a \$100 fine.

There was discussion about ticket information available through the handheld devices that parking attendants use. Mr. Gagnon said the current handhelds do not give the ticket history on any given vehicle. Ms. Thomas said that the City process for tracking tickets is updated daily but is not real time. Mr. Kiser noted that in order to use a sliding scale for tickets, the handheld devices would need to show ticket history.

There was discussion about parking lot use at the various lots. It was clarified the proposed memo for a parking fee increase was for the parking garages, but not for lots. Ms. Redeen said it made sense to her to have the parking garage fees less expensive than meter fees. Discussion followed about the value of the parking garages and lots as compared to on-street metered parking.

Ms. Thomas asked for a motion on the memo for a parking garage fee increase. Mr. Kiser made a motion to approve the memo with the addition that the rate for meter bags is increased to \$5 per day. He also moved that boot fines increase to \$100. Mr. Fulcher seconded the motion. There was discussion about the logistics and staff time involved in removing a boot, which justifies the increase.

All being in favor, the motion passed. Ms. Thomas said she will send the motion to the City Manager, who can approve the parking garage and meter bag fee increases. A boot fine increase will need to go to the City Commission for approval.

Ms. Thomas reported that she sent out a Request for Qualifications for a graphic designer to design a parking program logo. She said that with a logo, they can begin putting together some marketing materials which may be incorporated into wayfinding signage. Signage suggestions will be coming out of the Downtown Access and Circulation Plan.

There was no further new business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Redeen invited those present to the Montana Downtown Conference on October 24-26 at the Civic Center. She said that on Friday, October 26, Ann Guest from Missoula will be a guest speaker, as well as possibly Max from Idaho. Ms. Thomas said she met Max at the PIPTA conference in Seattle and he is the Parking program manager in Boise. The parking program there is part of their Downtown Redevelopment Partnership. Ms. Redeen suggested inviting City Commissioners to the Downtown Conference. She said the Business Improvement District (BID) is funding a study that compares property taxes between downtown locations and the outlying big box stores and the Holiday Village Mall, and which shows that downtown has far more tax value. There will be speakers on that subject on Thursday of the conference. Ms. Redeen said that the study shows that our county government, as compared to city government, receives the bulk of property taxes and needs to invest more in downtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on Monday, October 15, 2012. Ms. Thomas suggested changing the date to Tuesday, October 16, due to installation of the machinery at the Library parking lot. Mr. Kiser cannot attend on October 16, and he will miss the November 19 meeting due to travel. The previous Monday, November 12, is the Veteran's Day holiday. It was suggested the November meeting be held on Tuesday the 13th.

Ms. Thomas will check with Mr. Brown to see if he can attend a meeting on Tuesday, October 16 to ensure a quorum if Mr. Kiser is absent.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.