

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of October 15, 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 Ryan Room of the Civic Center.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Kiser asked if there were any changes to the September 17, 2012 meeting minutes. Mr. Fulcher made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Campbell seconded. All being in favor, the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Memo to City Manager regarding fees

Ms. Thomas sent a memo to the City Manager regarding the Parking Advisory Commission requesting a change in parking ticket rates and meter bag rates. The memo requests time at a City Commission work session to discuss the following parking program items:

1. Monthly parking pass fees for parking structures- information only;
2. A booting fine;
3. Designation of additional parking officials so that when Ms. Thomas is not available, someone may perform duties for the parking program;
4. Escalating parking ticket fines; and
5. Increasing meter bag rates from \$2.00 per day to \$3.00 per day.

Ms. Thomas said that all of these items except parking pass fee changes for the parking structures will require action by the City Commission, and that she requested the City Manager approve fee increases for the parking structures. The City Manager responded that he would like members of PAC to attend the work session with the City Commission when it is scheduled. The City Manager stated he will visit with Ms. Thomas on parking items he can adjust, and he said it is possible the new TIF could be used for improvements but that there are other important needs.

Ms. Thomas inquired if PAC members could attend a City Commission work session. Mr. Fulcher is unavailable on Tuesday evenings but will let Ms. Thomas know if that changes. Mr. Kiser will be gone the entire month of November and said that December 4 is the best date for him. Mr. Campbell said he will be available. Ms. Thomas said she will request December 4 and will email members of PAC copies of the final memo.

Exit Sign Update

Ms. Thomas received some quotes for new exit signs for the parking structures, and Mr. Gagnon got quotes for changing out the existing face plates on the exit signs. New LED signs run about \$200 each. Ms. Thomas said it is possible to do some makeshift updates for about \$100 each, and replacing existing face plates would be about \$330 total. Ms. Thomas said that the old model bulbs are not a good quality, and Mr. Campbell said the ones he replaced in March at his business are already burned out and difficult to find. Mr. Gagnon said the parking program replaces bulbs about twice a year.

There was discussion about which update would prove most economical in the long run. Ms. Thomas said a total cost for new signs would be about \$1,400.

MOTION: That new triangulated exit signs be purchased to replace the existing signs in the parking structures.

Made by: Mr. Kiser

Second: Mr. Fulcher

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

Customer Service Training

Mr. Gagnon said that on October 4, Standard Parking employees had refresher training on customer service as a follow up to the previous training. That same afternoon, an employee polled merchants and customers on the street for feedback. Mr. Gagnon said he was pleased overall with the feedback, and that there will continue to be monthly customer service training sessions for parking attendants.

Discussion followed about citizens calling Standard Parking when they have unexpected car problems or emergencies and are parked at a meter, and the possibility of parking attendants making calls for citizens in such situations. Mr. Gagnon said it has been suggested that parking attendants carry comment cards. He suggested the cards be directed to Ms. Thomas.

Mr. Kiser said he visited Hood River, Oregon, and the meter payment box system there allows you to park in various spaces for the time paid. He inquired when the new box would be in place at the Library, and Ms. Thomas said it would probably be the first week in November.

Mr. Kiser asked about a possible grant for the parking program. Ms. Thomas said she can follow up with Federal Highways, which has made grants available partially out of air pollution funds for large metropolitan areas. Great Falls does not have the same qualifying challenges, but she will look into it further.

Ms. Thomas said she contacted Desman about structural work to be done on a time and materials basis, since Carl Walker did not respond. She should hear from Desman next week. She said she has been reading literature which suggests that parking in a city should be as much about the experience as any other retail experience. She has heard customers complain about lighting in the parking garages, and will be discussing prioritized improvements with the engineer. Interior paint and better lighting would make parking in the North Garage a better experience for customers. Mr. Kiser said that when the North Parking Garage was built, it was well lit. Mr. Gagnon explained that the current sodium lights just aren't bright enough. Mr. Campbell said if the lights were lowered on the beams, that may prevent shadows and make the garage brighter. Mr. Kiser suggested that the rate increase funds be earmarked for upgrades such as lighting.

Ms. Thomas said she had an idea for a coffee shop connected to the parking structure payment booths where customers could order a latte and/or breakfast muffin as they were parking for work in the morning, and it could be charged to their parking pass.

Ms. Thomas said the Lodging Association would like to continue the hotel pass program, and she agreed to continue it for another year and reassess the program next November. She reminded those present that the Design Charrette for the Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Study is Wednesday, November 7 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Ms. Thomas said she had spoken with Rhonda Kueffler at MSU-College of Great Falls about the lack of submittals for the graphic design work for the parking program. Ms. Kueffler suggested students work on a logo submittal as part of their class work for the first portion of the design class, and then work on a template for a brochure, public outreach materials and signage during the second portion of the class. Ms. Thomas suggested that the work could

be juried and the best project selected. Since money has been budgeted for this project, the budget funds could be used as prize money.

NEW BUSINESS

Monthly Revenue Report (8/12) and Quarterly Expense/Revenue Report

There was discussion about some of the budget expense percentages being higher than anticipated for the first quarter. Ms. Thomas said she would ask Ms. Tryon about those items. She noted that Standard Parking was paid in September for October services, and that elevator costs accounted for some of the expenses.

Downtown Partnership/TIF funding

Ms. Thomas said she agrees with the City Manager's comment about TIF funds being important for other uses, but the parking program cannot continue without supplemental funding at some point. She said that reworking Lot 4 and possibly combining it with a park feature and public art would make that block area much more attractive.

Mr. Kiser asked about the speaker addressing taxes at the Downtown Conference next week. Ms. Redeen said the conference is not being videotaped, but attendees will receive a flash drive with all the PowerPoint presentations. Elected officials were invited to attend free of charge on Thursday. Ms. Redeen invited PAC members to attend free of charge on Thursday, provided they register in advance. She said the taxation portion is on Thursday morning and the parking roundtable discussion is Friday morning.

Mr. Campbell suggested a question on the parking survey to ask if business owners are willing to be charged a fee for a district without parking meters. Ms. Thomas said she is waiting for an updated version of the survey after sending the company a number of suggested changes. She said that once the survey is ready, it will be posted online as well as being available on paper.

There was no further new business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Due to schedule conflicts, it had been suggested that the next meeting be held Monday, December 3. Due to holiday Mondays in January and February, PAC will meet on Tuesday, January 22 and Tuesday, February 19.

Ms. Thomas noted that Mr. Kiser has been chair of PAC for the two years she has been on staff with the City and asked about elections. Mr. Kiser said that with all of his travel, he hopes to stay involved in the Commission but feels he is contributing less. Discussion followed about the vacancy on the Commission and encouraging citizens to apply.

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