

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of January 22, 2013

Members Present: Dave Campbell, Darren Brown, Chuck Fulcher

Members Absent: Phil Kiser

Staff Present: Wendy Thomas

Others Present: Joan Redeen

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

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Campbell asked if there were any changes to the December 3, 2012 meeting minutes. Mr. Fulcher made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Brown seconded. All being in favor, the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Capital Needs Assessment Update

- a. Exit Signs - Ms. Thomas stated the electric signs for the north parking garage have arrived and the City electrician will begin installing them as soon as the weather is warmer. Mr. Campbell said that the ballast on the third floor on the north side next to the exit door needs replacement.
- b. Pigeon Netting – Ms. Thomas has received revised bids on pigeon netting. One bid came in a little over \$15,000, and another came in a little over \$13,000. She will move forward with the contract for installing netting and bird spikes in the south parking garage.
- c. Engineer Update – Ms. Thomas said she is very pleased with the new engineer, Desman Associates, which is the firm prioritizing needed maintenance to the north parking garage. She handed out a schedule of proposed improvements. Desman Associates recommends improvements be made to all concrete, water proofing and mechanical work at the north parking garage for a total cost estimate for construction at \$193,120 and engineering fees of \$25,500, for a total budget of \$218,620. Staff had estimated \$250,000. Mr. Campbell asked if that includes raising the stairwells, and it does not. Ms. Thomas said the engineering firm thinks the stairwells have settled over time, and due to an extraordinarily wet year, there was additional settling, but given the age of the structure, that is to be expected. She said she is concerned about a tripping hazard at the stairwell, and Desman Associates will make a recommendation about how to resolve the surface transition problem, which Ms. Thomas said will be included in the work to be done. She will forward a memo from Desman Associates to the PAC members. Work is expected to begin by this summer.

2. City Commission Presentation

Ms. Thomas said the City Commission was very supportive of the PAC proposals. Following the presentation, she met with the Interim City Attorney to discuss implementation.

- Boot Fees - The Interim City Attorney did not feel comfortable with a fine for the Boot Fee, but he thought the fee could be increased based on a study of employee time involved with booting. Ms. Thomas said that based on that time study, the hourly rate calculation comes out to about \$45. She said she will ask that the Boot Fee be raised to \$50. Mr. Campbell asked if that fee included overhead, and Ms. Thomas said it did not.
- Fines – Ms. Thomas said the Interim City Attorney was supportive of the staggered ticket prices for fines and the item has to be adopted by the City Commission as an amendment to the City Code.

- Collections – Ms. Thomas said she contacted some other parking programs, and some of them turn delinquent tickets over to collections. Bozeman sends tickets to collections after 40 days. Discussion followed about charging an extra fee to cover collection fees. Ms. Thomas said the City does not have a contract with any one agency for collections, and she is working with the City Fiscal Services Department so that the Parking Program can engage the services of a collection firm. She pointed out that even 70% of unpaid ticket money coming back is more than nothing. There was discussion about the \$300,000 in unpaid tickets and how the Booting program works. Ms. Thomas explained that in order to boot a vehicle after 7 tickets, the car has to be available for booting and she has to be available to authorize the boot. She talked to the Interim City Attorney about giving boot authority to Mr. Gagnon at Standard Parking. He said this would require a change in City Code, which should designate the City Manager or his/her Designee as the authority. Mr. Campbell suggested a lien on vehicles with unpaid parking tickets, and Ms. Thomas said it would help to contact a local legislative representative. Mr. Brown said the County may not support the idea in case of loss of vehicle registration revenue.

Mr. Brown asked about staggered ticket prices. Ms. Thomas said Bozeman has a flat fee of \$20, which doubles to \$40 if not paid within 10 days. Missoula has a staggered ticket program of \$0, \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$30. They reset the clock every 6 months. Staggered tickets would require upgraded handheld devices. Ms. Thomas said in order for the City Parking Fund to pay for handhelds, there would need to be revenue coming in from collections.

There was discussion about the recent vandalism on the parking meters.

Ms. Thomas stated she is working with Standard Parking to send out a Request for Proposals to replace the gate control equipment in the north parking garage. She said she estimates the cost will be close to \$100,000. The average lifespan of such equipment is 7 years, and the current equipment is 30 years old. Ms. Redeen suggested a more automated gate system that would not require an attendant. Mr. Campbell said that in Bozeman, parking employees go through the parking garage and notice unpaid vehicles. Ms. Thomas said the RFP package includes that idea.

3. Library Payment Stations

Ms. Thomas said the Library payment kiosk seems to be working, but Library staff have received complaints, especially that the system will not take bills. She said that bill payment machines are known to break down frequently. Credit card use is consistent. Mr. Campbell said he used a credit card at the Library kiosk and found out you pay a minimum of two hours with a credit card. Ms. Thomas has asked Standard Parking to put a notice on the machine which explains that to customers. Mr. Campbell also said that parking attendants can print a report showing which vehicles are paid. Ms. Thomas said the attendants place a parking fee envelope on the vehicles that are not paid, which requests the driver to go into the Library and pay the parking. Ms. Thomas said the trial period for the automated machine is three months, and as of a month into the trial, revenues are consistent when compared to past years for the same month. A customer came into the Planning & Community Development Department and asked when credit card payment would be available for all City parking. Ms. Thomas said the kiosk at the Library has the capability of taking license plate information so that in the future, a citizen would be able to pay at one location and then be able to move to other lots without paying again.

Ann Guest in Missoula has reported to Ms. Thomas that they are removing meters in Missoula and installing payment kiosks on each block. Ms. Thomas said she will be taking a parking tour of various cities. Ms. Thomas is concerned about how the parking program in Great Falls collects revenue and she intends to discuss this with other program managers. She said the Bozeman parking program consists of three people. She said she will try to get budget information from each city.

Ms. Thomas said she will move forward with the RFP for the north parking garage gate equipment. The bid package includes a provision for swiping a credit card when entering and leaving.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Monthly Revenue & Expense Reports (12/2012)

Ms. Thomas stated that revenue was close to December 2011, but she said that given the recent vandalism, she expects the next month to be off significantly. Standard Parking is responsible to repair or replace the meters, and will have to order more meters.

2. Quarterly Financial Reports (ECP Charge)

There was general discussion about the Quarterly Financial Reports. Mr. Campbell said it appears there is a profit for the first quarter, and Mr. Brown noted that budgeted repair money has not yet been spent. Mr. Brown asked if the entire north parking garage was going to be sealed and Ms. Thomas said it was. The south parking garage was sealed just over two years ago.

Mr. Brown asked about the budget for vehicle equipment and maintenance. Ms. Thomas said the budget includes funds for replacing parking control equipment, not just vehicles. Handheld devices are not included.

Ms. Thomas explained that the Parking Program had set aside money for ECP, and the City has collected the funds. Parking's share was approximately \$20,000 and was accounted for in prior budgets.

Mr. Brown inquired whether the Great Falls Rescue Mission was pursuing the purchase of the City parking lot. Ms. Thomas said the lot is actually making more money, and offered the idea of a long-term lease at \$5,600 annually and negotiating who pays for maintenance. She suggested GFRM would keep the grass mowed and the City would take care of the sprinkler system. Snow removal would need to be negotiated. GFRM countered with an offer of \$3,600 annually, plus sprinkler and grass maintenance, with the City handling snow removal. She said GFRM wanted a 5-year lease term with the option to buy, and to have the lease payments count toward the purchase price of the lot. She said she has not been able to work out the environmental issues if the lot changes hands. Mr. Brown said he was not in favor in selling the lot and that snow removal, which is expensive, should be GFRM's responsibility.

3. Downtown Parking Study (Draft)

Mr. Campbell asked if this study included the whole Downtown study. Ms. Thomas said it did. She said she felt the most valuable part of the study was the explanation of how to budget for a parking program. There was discussion about a test area for no-meter parking. Ms. Thomas said if you pull meters, there has to be tiered ticket program in place. Discussion followed about bagging meters, and Ms. Thomas said she has asked Standard Parking for a price quote on bags with something such as a logo printed on them. Mr. Fulcher said with a tiered parking ticket, you could set up test zones and then move the zones to get a feel for parking response in different areas. Ms. Redeen asked if Set Free was still paying the fee for the bagged meters at the Rocky Mountain Building. Ms. Thomas said they are.

Mr. Brown asked for any response from N.E.W. on the proposed \$1.00 per month fee increase for the parking structures. Ms. Thomas said Human Resources response at N.E.W. was that they would look into not paying parking for employees. Ms. Thomas explained to them that this is the first increase in 10 years, and it is only a \$1.00 per month increase. City Manager Greg Doyon has approved the increase as of February 1.

4. Parking Pricing

- a. Monthly Meter Permits – Ms. Thomas said she felt that people who responded to this item did not understand what is being proposed. She said this proposal was attached to low revenue blocks. She explained that Ms. Guest in Missoula recommended meter areas that are not producing revenue should be turned into long-term parking. Monthly parking passes could be sold that are block specific. Discussion followed about color coding for different blocks. Mr. Campbell suggested adding some fringe areas such as the end of 4th Avenue South and the east half of 2nd Avenue South. It was agreed that \$20 a month would be appropriate.

- b. High Volume Discount – PAC has already approved a high volume discount for employers with over 10 employees utilizing the parking program. Ms. Thomas met with the Human Resources Director at D.A. Davidson. Currently 52 employees utilize the program. D.A. Davidson employees were sent a map showing parking options in Great Falls. Ms. Thomas said that in looking at where parking rates are posted for the public, there is a variance in rates posted for parking lot #7. A rate of \$15 was posted on the website, so Ms. Thomas held to that price on that lot. Ms. Redeen said she remembers the PAC setting the price for that lot at \$15 because it was under-used. Ms. Thomas said she is trying to grow the customer base. Employees at D.A. Davidson receive a parking allowance from their employer. Ms. Thomas said if the number of employees utilizing the parking program drops below 50, pricing will revert to higher rates.

Mr. Fulcher mentioned the concept of covered mini-garages so people could rent their own stall. Ms. Thomas said she has looked into using solar cells as parking cover. Ms. Redeen suggested parking at a discount on the top levels of the parking garages.

OTHER BOARD DISCUSSION

Ms. Redeen asked if there were any applications for the open position on the PAC. Ms. Thomas said there is an application and approval of the application will be on the agenda of the City Commission on February 5. She anticipates the applicant will attend the February 19 meeting of the PAC.

Ms. Thomas said she received a proposal from The Wendt Agency on the graphic design quote for a parking logo and some templates for documents. Their bid was \$25,000. She has not requested information from Allegra Printing. Ms. Redeen asked if she had approached MSU-Great Falls. Ms. Thomas said she did but has not heard anything further from them. Mr. Campbell said that Helena has colorful new parking signage.

Ms. Redeen asked about the Wayfinding Study and its relationship to parking signage. There was discussion about when signage will be implemented from the Wayfinding Study and concern that currently there is no signage. Mr. Fulcher suggested an international approach using a clean, simple look and the international color of blue for signage. Discussion followed about where signage should be located. Mr. Fulcher said the investment should be in the actual signs rather than in the design. Mr. Brown suggested merchant sponsored signage. Ms. Thomas said that in Bozeman they do receive revenue for advertising within their parking structure. She said that because the Great Falls parking program is a governmental agency, sign regulations are not applicable, but signage should be tasteful and have a visual appeal. Signage should designate “public parking.”

Ms. Thomas said she would like to bump out the wall in the office in the north parking garage and install more of a glass storefront to help the public find the office. Mr. Fulcher said he’ll draw up some sketches for signage design for the parking program at no charge.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.