

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of February 19, 2013

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.

Members Present: Dave Campbell, Chuck Fulcher, Heidi Propp

Members Absent: Phil Kiser, Darren Brown

Staff Present: Wendy Thomas

Others Present: Joan Redeen, BID; Dave Gagnon, Standard Parking; Samantha Lodge, Great Falls Rescue Mission; Tom Moore, Great Falls Rescue Mission

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Campbell asked if there were any changes to the January 22, 2012 meeting minutes. Mr. Fulcher made a motion to approve the minutes. All being in favor, the motion passed.

New Member Introduction

Heidi Propp said she owns the downtown boutique, Elemental Goddess, at 17 2nd Street South and her customers were getting parking tickets. Joan Redeen encouraged her to apply for the appointment to the Parking Advisory Commission (PAC). She said she brings the perspective of a new business owner to the PAC.

Mr. Campbell asked what her specific parking issues had been and how they were remedied. Ms. Propp said there had been a yellow curb in the middle of her parking spaces in front of the store, so customers parked in front or behind the yellow curb and straddled the meters and were getting tickets. Mr. Gagnon and Ms. Thomas had the curb painted over to cover the yellow. There was also a meter that was placed without enough room for a vehicle to park correctly, and people were getting tickets. The meter was moved to resolve the problem. Finally, Ms. Propp said an unused loading zone was removed to allow more parking spaces.

The members of the PAC welcomed Ms. Propp to the Commission.

OLD BUSINESS

Item 2. Lot #3 Lease Offer

Ms. Thomas said the Great Falls Rescue Mission had approached the City to purchase Parking Lot #3. During an appraisal process, it was discovered that this lot use to be the location for a gas station, but it is not known whether the underground tanks are still there or whether there is any contamination. Ms. Thomas discovered that the City would be liable for cleanup if the property was sold. Ms. Thomas suggested a long-term lease for the Mission at a rate annually of \$5,700. Jim McCormick with the Mission countered with \$3,600 annually, with the City handling snow removal and the Mission handling lawn care and maintenance. They would also like an option to buy the lot written into a 5-year lease, as well as a renewal option.

Ms. Thomas said this lot is one of the lowest in generating revenues, but revenues in that lot have been increasing. About one-quarter of the lot has been designated for the Mission at no cost. Mr. Moore said that the Mission does not want anything built on the site that would convolute the work of the mission, and they need the parking space.

Mr. Campbell asked what snow removal costs for that lot are. Ms. Thomas said generally snow removal on surface lots is \$675 per event. Mr. Campbell stated that there are also insurance and maintenance costs to consider. Ms. Thomas said the amount proposed by the Mission is basically the amount the lot brings in now as revenue on a consistent basis. Her concern is that costs do not remain consistent.

Ms. Thomas asked if the Mission had enough demand to use the entire lot. Mr. Moore said that with events at the Mission and future building plans for another location in the vicinity, they would like control of the entire lot. Discussion followed about providing an additional portion of the lot to the Mission but not the entire lot, and the cost to the City of environmental cleanup if the lot were to be sold. Mr. Campbell suggested an inquiry to clients using that lot now. Mr. Moore said they are willing to negotiate with those customers and to continue to offer parking to them. Ms. Thomas said there were a couple of customers who use that lot intermittently for free, and she wants to ensure they are still able to do so. These are employees of the school district who monitor people getting on and off the buses to make sure connections are made. Ms. Lodge said accommodating these school employees did not appear to be a problem.

Mr. Fulcher suggested addressing this item again once the parking lot customers with monthly passes are polled for their input. Ms. Thomas said she will place this item on next month's agenda. Ms. Thomas will gather information on maintenance costs, such as the sprinkler system and snow removal. Ms. Propp asked who would carry the insurance if the Mission was to lease the lot. Mr. Fulcher suggested the Mission consider leasing half the lot as a trial.

Ms. Thomas stated a lease agreement would need approval of the City Commission.

Item 1. Capital Needs Assessment Update

Ms. Thomas said she received documents for the proposed work on the parking garage, as well as bid documents. She has not had a chance to review them, but the firm is sending an engineer at the end of the month to verify drawings. They will oversee the bidding process and submittals.

- a. Exit Signs – Ms. Thomas reported that all the new exit signs were installed last Friday.
- b. Pigeon Netting – Ms. Thomas received the bids for this, but in discussions with Mr. Gagnon, he requested that funds be spent on replacing hand-held units. She has not made a decision on this item yet.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Monthly Revenue & Expense Reports (1/2013)

There were no comments on the Monthly Revenue & Expense Reports. Mr. Campbell asked about how the trial period for the Library parking machine was coming. Ms. Thomas said the Library has presented her with a list of complaints about the machine, but they felt the machine should remain. Ms. Thomas compared revenue for January 2012 at \$617.16 for 18,258 patrons.

Revenue for January 2013 was \$727.30 for 17,544 patrons. The cost of processing fees are not yet available. Approximately 8 patrons a day use a credit card. Ms. Thomas said they are placing a sign on the payment machine which states that the revenue goes to support the Library. Ms. Propp suggested a PSA to that effect, which will help compliance with Library parking.

2. Passport Parking Presentation

Mr. Campbell said he thought Passport Parking was a better idea than kiosk stations, which may require updates every 5 years which would eat up all the profits generated by them. He said being able to keep the meters and not have large infrastructure costs was a plus. Mr. Gagnon said newer handhelds have wifi capability. Ms. Propp noted that if you pay at a meter with an iphone, the meter still flashes unpaid. Ms. Redeen said that will increase revenues when a customer leaves and there are paid minutes, but the next customer cannot see that. Ms. Propp suggested there needs to be significant customer education.

Mr. Fulcher inquired about being able to move to various parking locations without paying more than once with the new system. Ms. Thomas said only the Library currently has that capability. She said that merchants still have the option of validating parking with the new system.

Mr. Campbell asked whether an RFP is needed to continue to use the new system if it works well. Ms. Thomas said there are no start-up costs. There is a processing fee of 25 cents charged to the customer for this system. She said she spoke with her counterpart in Ocala, which has a small historic downtown and an older population, and has instituted this system. They have seen revenues increase and are very happy with this program.

Discussion followed about the need for wifi and how to incorporate that with the system. Ms. Thomas said it can be accomplished with cell phones. She noted that the 25 cent processing fee is not charged again if a customer loads more time on the meter. Ms. Thomas explained that customers using their cell phones to pay for parking will get a report with a breakdown of the charges. She said she believes people will use this for the convenience, and it will eliminate a Canadian coin problem. Every meter will have a sticker and there will be a sign per each block. There is still a 2-hour limit at each meter. Ms. Thomas said that there is no start-up cost or contract with this particular provider. Everything is on a month-to-month basis. The BID recommends a pilot area to include Central Avenue from Park Drive all the way to 9th Street. Ms. Thomas would like the system to be up and running by Western Art Week in the middle of March.

Item 4. Equipment – Handhelds

Mr. Campbell requested the discussion move to Item 4 – Handhelds, as it was relevant to Passport Parking. Ms. Thomas provided an update on the current handhelds, which were purchased in 2006. She said these were working fine, but there are now improvements in technology. She received a price quote for purchasing new handhelds as well as financing them. Mr. Gagnon prefers to forego pigeon netting in lieu of purchasing new handhelds. Ms. Thomas said it's possible to purchase pigeon spikes and have Standard Parking install them as the first phase, and then later as a second phase, purchase the netting.

Discussion ensued on the options with different handhelds as per the materials included in the Commission packets. Mr. Gagnon prefers handhelds with a printer, but Ms. Thomas said they are only guaranteed to -4 degrees. Missoula uses these with chemical handwarmers. Another

model is guaranteed to work to -20 degrees. Ms. Thomas said she believes they all now come with cameras. Ms. Thomas noted that a number of parking programs lease equipment because technology changes so quickly, but Cardinal, which is our software provider, does not offer any lease options. Ms. Thomas said she would check with Cardinal about how each of the models will work with their software.

Item 4. Equipment - Gate Control Equipment

Ms. Thomas said an RFP went out last week for new gate control equipment for the north parking garage. She proposes a change in garage hours. She said there could be a "free in" at 5:00, but those who come in prior to 5:00 and leave after that time would pay upon exiting. There would continue to be a validation system.

Ms. Propp said she thought the Passport Parking would work well in the garages. Business could sponsor parking for events. Ms. Thomas said she would look into pay-by-phone and business sponsorships for the parking garages.

All the commissioners were in agreement that Ms. Thomas should move the Passport Parking trial forward immediately. Parking fees increased by \$1 in the lots and garages on February 1. The boot fee increase and meter bag rate increase will go before the City Commission on March 5.

Discussion followed about creating an escalating parking ticket price to encourage frequent offenders to be more compliant with parking requirements.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Thomas said she received a proposal for design services for the parking program. There was brief discussion about the proposal and signage. Ms. Thomas showed the Commission a list of the variety of foreign currency that is received by the parking program, and noted that they are working on exchanging Canadian currency so they can deposit it into the program funds.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:44 p.m.