

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of June 24, 2013

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

Members Present: Chuck Fulcher, Darren Brown, David Campbell

Members Absent: Heidi Propp

Staff Present: Craig Raymond, Interim Director P&CD; Jana Cooper, Planner II

Others Present: Tena Grigsby, Standard Parking; Joan Redeen, BID

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Brown asked if there were any changes to the May 20, 2013 meeting minutes. Mr. Fulcher made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Campbell seconded, and all being in favor, the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Item 1. Capital Needs Assessment Update

- a. Exit Signs – Ms. Cooper said she had spoken with the City electrician this past week, and he will install the last exit sign. She said she also had information on Parking Garage improvements, and those are on hold until the budget is approved.
- b. Pigeon netting – Ms. Cooper said this item is still on hold. Mr. Brown asked why netting had been decided instead of using spikes, and Ms. Grigsby said she thought it was because netting would cover a greater area. Mr. Campbell thought the suggestion for netting was contained in the parking garage assessment. Mr. Brown asked whether work outlined in the assessment was being moved forward, and Ms. Cooper said they are waiting to finalize the upcoming Fiscal Year budget. Mr. Raymond said that budget items are currently under review. Ms. Cooper said that the City Special Projects Engineer has everything ready to go to bid. Mr. Brown expressed a concern that if this work has to go out for bid again, prices could increase and the work would be delayed.

Ms. Redeen asked about the third floor ballast by the northside exit door of the north parking garage. She said it has been in need of repair for six to ten months now. Ms. Grigsby said she was not sure if the City electrician was ever informed about this ballast being out. She said she sent him an email today. Mr. Raymond said he would have the electrician take care of it.

Item 2. Display windows in South Garage

Mr. Brown asked about the leaks in ceiling drywall in the display windows. Mr. Raymond said he had looked at this some time ago and had not ruled out the possibility that the window seals were bad and were causing condensation. Mr. Brown said at one point it had been said the moisture was coming from the ceiling. Mr. Raymond said he would check it out. Mr. Fulcher said mesh had been suggested as a fix. Ms. Cooper said there is also a leak in the office of the south garage and they are tracking down who did repair work on it in the past. She said it was a pretty major leak.

Item 3. Lot #4 Repairs/Design

Ms. Cooper said some repairs were completed last month, but there is nothing new on the design updates. Ms. Redeen said it was a dream to aspire to updating the design, and she believes the Downtown Partnership should be involved and have a contribution to make. She said it would be a few years before the Partnership could do anything. She said Garry Hackett had the idea to have the City lease parking spaces in this lot for parking for the building next to the Rocky Mountain Building. Mr. Campbell said decent signage would make a difference for this lot.

Ms. Redeen suggested waiting for any changes to this lot, except for signage, until the Rocky Mountain Building construction has been completed.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Monthly Revenue & Expense Reports (5/2013)

PAC members reviewed the financial reports for May 2013. Ms. Cooper said last month's reports had some minor inaccuracies, which have been corrected with this report. She said if the commission wanted a corrected report from last month, she would send them a copy.

2. Purchases: Library Pay Station Purchase & Handhelds

Ms. Cooper said handhelds have been purchased and are received. Mr. Brown asked if the software can be upgraded. Ms. Grigsby was not sure. Ms. Cooper said the Library Pay Station is being reviewed, and Mr. Raymond said it is a hard sell financially. The Library is not willing to split half the cost. Ms. Cooper said that now the company may be willing to lease the station for six months at a monthly cost of \$425. So far, the station has been on trial at no charge. There is an option to buy with 75% of the lease fee being applied to the purchase. The City is making about \$700 per month at this lot, and half of those proceeds go to the Library, so there would be a loss to the Parking program if the station is leased.

Discussion followed about the increased accountability with this pay station and the ease of oversight for the parking attendants. Ms. Grigsby said the parking attendants do not write tickets for the Library parking lot. If a vehicle has not paid, a 50 cent courtesy fee envelope for parking is placed on the vehicle. An hour later, parking attendants can write a citation, but customers are gone by then. Ms. Grigsby suggested increasing the courtesy fee to encourage patrons to pay for parking. She said that there would need to be discussion with Kathy Mora at the Library about changing the fee.

There was further discussion about the value of the pay station and whether the monthly lease fee could be split with the Library. Ms. Cooper said the Library was firm on the fact that they did not want to contribute to the cost, and their patrons do not like the station. Ms. Cooper said revenue has increased by \$120 per month at this lot with the pay station in place. Staff was requested to look into the history of the Parking program splitting proceeds for this lot with the Library.

Ms. Cooper said the company is looking for a decision on the pay station. The PAC asked if they could hold off on a decision for a while longer.

3. Passport Parking

PAC members were given a staff report which presented an overview of the Passport Parking program results and costs. Mr. Campbell said the program did not pencil out financially, and that with empty parking spaces downtown, it wouldn't work to raise parking fees to pay for the

program. Mr. Fulcher said he had thought the new handhelds would help with this program, but Ms. Cooper said there are monthly costs with data plans. Ms. Redeen agreed that this program is not financially feasible, but she asked if there is a way to gauge if this program brings better compliance. Mr. Campbell said it's hard to judge compliance when you are talking about one or two people using the program per day. There have been 100 unique users for the 150 meters that are in the test program. Mr. Brown said he'd rather fight to keep the pay station at the Library than continue the Passport Parking program. PAC members and Ms. Redeen agreed. Mr. Campbell said this was the least expensive way to test credit card use for parking. He also wondered how long the kiosk at the Library would last. Ms. Cooper said it is projected to last 10 years, but members questioned whether it could hold up through Montana winters.

MOTION: The Parking Advisory Commission recommends the City Commission deny the implementation of the Passport Parking program.

Made by: Mr. Campbell
Second: Mr. Fulcher

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

Mr. Raymond said this recommendation would be forwarded to the City Commission.

4. Parking Collections

Ms. Cooper said there is an agreement in place with a collections agency in Helena for delinquent parking tickets, but it has not yet been implemented. She will be focusing on this in the next month. Mr. Raymond said part of the problem with delinquent tickets is that there are a lot of wrong addresses. The Parking program pays to print and mail notices which are getting returned for bad addresses. He noted that when people change addresses, frequently they do not notify the Department of Motor Vehicles. It was also noted that when people permanently plate their vehicle, a change of address would not be recorded when they move.

Ms. Cooper said the returned parking notices used to be thrown away, but the new parking employee in the Planning and Community Development Department has been working to find a current address as they come back. Ms. Cooper said there have also been a few vehicle boots in the past month.

Mr. Fulcher said he would like to see a test zone with no parking meters and a two-hour parking limit where escalated fines would be used for parking longer than two hours. Mr. Brown said you could bag the meters instead of going to the expense of removing them. Ms. Cooper said they might think the bags signify a "no parking" area. Ms. Redeen said she thought Wendy had approached the City Commission at a work session on the idea of escalated fines, and they seemed receptive. She said Missoula has implemented this with their Oops! Program, where first offenders are given a one-time free ticket, and they are seeing good results with increased revenues. Ms. Cooper said that the Parking program in Great Falls also forgives a first-time ticket, but Ms. Redeen clarified that here the ticket is excused only if the customer requests it, but in Missoula the first-time ticket is automatically excused with a notice on the vehicle.

There was discussion about Ms. Thomas's parking presentation at the City Commission work session and whether it was available in a file. Ms. Redeen said it had been included in the PAC packet for a previous meeting; Ms. Cooper said there is a Power Point presentation in the files. PAC members said they would look for it in their materials before the next meeting.

Mr. Fulcher talked about which area of the City would be good for a no-meter test zone as previously discussed. Mr. Raymond said staff would look into it.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Redeen asked Ms. Cooper to find out if there have been any applications for the Parking Advisory Commission. She also requested that there be someone appointed in Ms. Thomas's place as a representative to the Board of Directors of the Downtown Development Partnership. Mr. Raymond said he could certainly attend for the moment, but would hold off on a staff appointment until the vacancies in the Planning and Community Development Department are addressed. Ms. Redeen noted that it is up to PAC to determine who that representative should be. She said the Deputy City Manager is on the Board as a City representative. The Board meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 9:00 a.m. Sheila Rice is the current Board Chair, and meetings are usually done by 10:30, no later than 11:00 if the meeting runs long. She encouraged action on this item so that the vacancy is filled.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Brown adjourned the meeting at 3:28 p.m.