

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
GREAT FALLS PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD/ZONING COMMISSION  
March 25, 2014**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission was called to order by Chair Nate Weisenburger at 3:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the Civic Center.

**ROLL CALL & ATTENDANCE**

Planning Board Members present:

Mr. Nate Weisenburger, Chair  
Mr. Scot Davis, Vice Chair  
Ms. Dana Ball  
Dr. Heidi Pasek  
Ms. Sophia Sparklin  
Mr. Wyman Taylor

Planning Board Members absent:

Mr. Anthony Houtz  
Ms. Cheryl Patton  
Mr. Mark Striepe

Planning Staff Members present:

Mr. Craig Raymond, CBO, Director P&CD  
Mr. Andrew Finch, Sr. Transportation Planner  
Ms. Phyllis Tryon, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Other Staff present:

None

Mr. Raymond affirmed a quorum of the Board was present.

**MINUTES**

*\*\*Action Minutes of the Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission. Please refer to the audio/video recording of this meeting for additional detail.\*\**

Mr. Weisenburger asked if there were any comments or corrections to the minutes of the regular meeting held on February 11, 2014. Seeing none, the minutes were approved as submitted.

## **BOARD ACTIONS NOT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING**

### **Long Range Transportation Plan Update**

Andrew Finch, Sr. Transportation Planner, reviewed the staff report for the Great Falls Area Long Range Transportation Plan Update. Mr. Finch said that as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the City is required to update the LRTP every four years and must show compliance with air quality standards. The deadline is the end of April for the City to adopt a compliant LRTP. He said it has been since 2003 that the City has done such a robust update, starting with updating base data.

Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA) was hired as a consultant for the update process and has been working on the update for nine or 10 months. Mr. Finch introduced Jeff Key with RPA, who provided an overview of the LRTP Update. (The PowerPoint presentation is attached to and made a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Key said he wanted to focus on the process used for the LRTP, the content of the plan, and the public engagement and response throughout the process. He explained that the Federal government is strongly encouraging three items to be brought to the forefront of LRTPs under MAP-21 planning guidance for the Federal transportation program. These are the Safety, Freight and Security topics of Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Mr. Key said the public engagement and outreach on this plan, outlined in Chapter 2, was one of the more robust efforts they have done. There were three formal public informational meetings; a variety of outreach tools such as Facebook, websites, non-motorized surveys, news releases, display advertisements, etc.; and 26 individual stakeholder events, including all the Neighborhood Councils, groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Great Falls Transit Board, Airport Authority, etc. and non-motorized groups. Through this public outreach process, they were able to identify areas of community concern.

Mr. Key said that interchange projects take decades to advance and usually start within the LRTP. Possible interchange projects are identified in the Update.

Chapter 3 of the LRTP Update covers goals and objectives, which takes into account other area planning documents as well as MAP-21 Planning Factors and Livability Principles from HUD/EPA/USDOT. Chapter 4 presents detailed information on the existing transportation system. Mr. Key explained that 16 intersections out of 80 studied have poor level of service during one or two peak hours of the day. There are also a few roadways, such as River Drive North, where traffic studies reveal capacity concerns.

Mr. Key said RPA was tasked with identifying a vision for a future network for non-motorized travel within the LRTP Update, as well as summarizing the local transit system. An add-on to the update was a pavement condition study on City roadways. Under the Safety chapter of the Update, behavioral characteristics have been added to the safety assessment studies.

Mr. Key said that lots of coordination goes on between the County, City and Malmstrom Air Force Base in relation to security issues with transportation, which is covered in Chapter 8. He said that Cascade County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is the most current, relevant guiding document, and identifies 22 potential hazards facing the County and municipalities. Of those, 4 are transportation related, which include such items as bridges, low level roadways with potential to flood, and rail lines.

Mr. Key explained that Chapter 9, Facility Recommendations, is broken into three categories which are tied into demonstrating fiscal constraint: Committed, with dedicated funding in place; Recommended for Funding, but have not yet been committed; and Illustrative, which are, as of yet, unfunded. As an MPO, the City is required to reasonably forecast how much money will be available over the life of the plan, and to compare that forecast with Committed and Recommended Projects. In order to demonstrate fiscal constraint, projected funding must be higher than those two categories.

Mr. Key said that RPA is recommending only four major long-range projects for the future due to costs. The first is work on River Drive North. Other projects include work on intersections in the Bootlegger Trail/Old Havre Highway area, reconstruction on 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast to make it more of an urban collector roadway, and an I-15 corridor study.

Mr. Key said the Federal government wanted two categories of projects added to the Update: Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Nominated Safety Projects and MDT Nominated Pavement Projects. Historically there has been a disconnect between the LRTP and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and these additions should help with the adoption process with the Federal agencies.

Mr. Key reviewed options included in the Update for a vision for non-motorized facilities. As a result of public comment, he noted a proposed trail on the Sun River levee was removed from the vision because of objections from the Flood Control District Board. He said the Future Major Street Network presented in Chapter 11 is a planning tool and is conceptual in nature, and is intended to establish a logical road network for the community.

The LRTP Update meets air quality conformity determination. Public comments are included, and RPA responded to the comments and made adjustments to the Update as needed. Mr. Key concluded his presentation and said this was a robust document and engaged the public more than the previous plan.

Mr. Taylor said he was impressed with the thought put into this update and the tools used. Chair Weisenburger commended Mr. Key for the work being so well done. He said he attended some of the public meetings and RPA did their best to receive input from the community in multiple ways. Mr. Davis asked about improvements at 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast and Bootlegger Trail, and whether that will increase traffic there. Mr. Key said this was one of the top four future projects and may take to five years to ten years. In the meantime, they have proposed short-term traffic calming methods on 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast to ease traffic concerns in that area.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Shyla Patera, 1120 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Black Eagle, for North Central Independent Living Services, said she has positive things to say about the plan, and is concerned about future highway funding and how that will impact sidewalk and accessibility funding. She said her comments on the Update are in the public comment portion of the LRTP.

## **PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD ACTION**

**MOTION:** That the Planning Advisory Board approve the 2014 Long Range Transportation Plan Update, recommend approval by the City Commission, and direct the Board's representative on the Policy Coordinating Committee to vote accordingly.

**Made by:** Mr. Davis

**Second:** Dr. Pasek

**VOTE:** All being in favor, the motion passed.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### Next Meeting Agenda – April 8, 2014

- River City Casino – Conditional Use Permit
- Howard & Rosemary Cary – Annexation & Zoning

### Upcoming Planning Board Projects

- East Great Falls Retail Center

Mr. Raymond said an application for the Design Review Board was just received and this project will go before that Board on April 28. A Conditional Use Permit application will come before the Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission in the near future.

### Project Status:

Stone Meadows Addition – City Commission, April 1

### Petitions and Applications Received:

- None

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mr. Weisenburger adjourned the meeting at 4:13 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

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SECRETARY