

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
GREAT FALLS PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD/ZONING COMMISSION
December 9, 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:

Nate Weisenburger, Chair
Scot Davis, Vice Chair
Dana Henkel
Anthony Houtz
Heidi Pasek
Cheryl Patton
Mark Striepe
Wyman Taylor

Planning Board Members absent:

Sophia Sparklin

Planning Staff Members present:

Craig Raymond, Director P&CD
Lee Nellis, FAICP, Deputy Director P&CD
Garrett Norman, Planner I
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.

Chair Weisenburger asked if there were any comments or corrections to the minutes of the regular meeting held on November 25, 2014. Seeing none, the minutes were approved as submitted.

BOARD ACTIONS REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING

Zoning Map Amendment – 2nd Avenue South, Block 414

Garrett Norman, Planner I, presented the staff report for the zoning map amendment request on behalf of the City of Great Falls for four lots on 2nd Avenue South, Block 414. Mr. Norman entered the staff report into the record. The purpose of the request is to change the existing zoning from C-5 Central Business Periphery to C-4 Central Business Core. Mr. Norman reviewed details of the staff report and said this request was initiated by a local non-profit organization which would like to develop a vacant lot, but the existing zoning does not accommodate the size of their proposed building. This proposed rezone will also make it easier for other existing owners to develop their property and will make existing non-conforming structures on this block area conforming. Mr. Norman reviewed comparisons of C-4 versus C-5 zoning requirements.

Mr. Norman said that the subject property is located in Neighborhood Council 7. Patty Cadwell, Neighborhood Council Coordinator, itemized the project on the Council's December 8 agenda. Two of the Council members voted in favor of the proposed project and one voted against, and so the vote to support the project did not carry.

Mr. Norman reviewed the staff recommendation on the project and offered to answer any questions from the Board. Mr. Taylor said that properties directly to the east and west also have buildings with no setbacks on 2nd Avenue South, as well as some half-blocks behind this property. He asked about the zoning on these properties. Mr. Norman reviewed the aerial map and said that properties in this area are also C-5 zoning and there are buildings that are legally non-conforming. Currently, staff is narrowing the scope of this application to the subject property and will review other blocks in the future. Mr. Striepe asked if this application is in response to the non-profit agency request, and Mr. Norman said that their inquiries resulted in staff realizing the majority of buildings in this district are non-conforming commercial properties and have the intent of a C-4 zoning district category, although there are a few residential properties as well.

There was a question about the use of a variance instead of a zoning map amendment for the subject property. Mr. Nellis explained that since it is possible to build a conforming building on the subject property, there is no hardship for a variance. Mr. Nellis said other blocks in the area may need a different solution other than an amendment to C-4 zoning due to what is already within those areas. He said there is no public interest in making it harder for property owners to redevelop existing buildings.

Ms. Patton said the proposed zoning map amendment makes sense for the subject property. She said she would have asked why staff was not going farther in addressing neighboring blocks, but Mr. Nellis answered that question. She said she hopes staff will look at the neighboring areas and that if C-5 setback standards are the problem, staff may consider changing them to be more flexible.

PROPOSERS

There were no proposers.

OPPONENTS

There were no opponents.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Voegelé, 212 5th Street South, said he is a property owner and has no problem with this proposal. He said that offstreet parking could be an issue but that this proposal alleviates problems they have had in trying to improve their own facility.

Ms. Patton asked staff if this block would become part of the parking district and be required to pay parking assessments. Mr. Nellis said it has always been part of the parking district, but there are no more parking assessments. He said the Great Falls Rescue Mission leases for free a large portion of the City-owned parking lot kitty-corner from the subject property and has approached the City more than once about leasing all of that lot or purchasing the lot. Staff will order an appraisal and begin that conversation. He said either way, there is adequate parking. Currently, the lot generates about \$40 per month in revenue from sources outside of the Rescue Mission parking.

ZONING COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION

There was no further Board discussion.

MOTION: That the Zoning Commission, based on the Findings for the Basis of Decision, recommends the City Commission approve a zoning map amendment for the subject properties: Lots 1, 2A, 6 and 7, Block 414, Great Falls Original Townsite, Section 12, Township 20 North, Range 3 East, P.M.M., Cascade County, Montana, from the existing C-5 Central Business Periphery to C-4 Central Business Core.

Made by: Mr. Taylor
Second: Mr. Davis

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

COMMUNICATIONS

Heritage Tourism Planning update – information by Lee Nellis

- Heritage Tourism Assessment event – Jan. 30-31, 2015 Civic Center

Mr. Nellis said the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission has had a goal for many years of creating a National Heritage Area (NHA) along the Missouri River that would stretch from Fort Benton to Tower Rock. Staff received \$5,000 in grant funds from the State to study this project, and the Tourism Business Improvement District is providing a match of about \$9,000. Staff is providing work hours. Mr. Nellis said a Heritage Tourism event is being planned for the community on January 30 and 31, 2015, to discuss how to change the tourism picture in Great Falls. Charles Flynn, the Executive Director of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, will be a guest speaker at the event. Vicky Solderberg of Helena, a destination planning consultant, will give an assessment of Great Falls as a destination. Mr. Nellis said an NHA is a

Congressional designation and would require a series of steps to receive but would put Great Falls on the map for tour planners across the country and in Europe.

Mr. Davis asked if an NHA designation would affect development in the community. Mr. Nellis said Heritage Areas do not have a regulatory component. Once approved through the Congressional process, money is appropriated, which would add to the community's ability to promote tourism. An institutional umbrella is required, and normally that is a non-profit agency that receives some funding through the National Park Service.

Upcoming Planning Advisory Board Opening

- Applications received – Recommendation to City Commission

Board members voted by ballot for which of the two applicants to the Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission they would like to recommend to City Commission to fill the Board opening at the end of the year, as Mr. Taylor will have served his full term. Mitch Stelling was selected as the applicant to recommend.

Selection of Nominating Committee

- For Chair and Vice Chair 2015

Ms. Patton, Ms. Henkel, and Mr. Striepe volunteered to serve on the Nominating Committee. Ms. Patton will chair the committee.

Next Meeting Agenda – Tuesday, December 23, 2014

- None

Project Status:

- Northview Addition, Phase 9 – City Commission Public Hearing Dec. 16, 2014
- Mitchells' Crash Repair Rezone – City Commission Public Hearing Dec. 16, 2014

Petitions and Applications Received:

- West Ridge Phase VII – Major Subdivision, Annexation & Zoning
- East Great Falls Retail Center

Mr. Raymond said there is a conference call tomorrow with the East Great Falls Retail Center developers.

Board Training (reminder)

- Board/Commission Training – conducted by MSU Local Government Center – Wed., Dec. 10, 2014, 6-8:00 p.m., Civic Center

Board Invitation (reminder)

- Historic Preservation Advisory Committee holiday party – Tuesday, Dec. 16, 5:30-8:00 p.m., Paris Gibson Square

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Weisenburger extended appreciation to Mr. Taylor for his service on this Board. Mr. Taylor said he has enjoyed his time on the Board, and will always remember two items that

came before the Board: 1. urban chickens; and 2. medical marijuana. He said his has been impressed with City staff.

Mr. Davis said the Board will miss him and the experience he brings.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Weisenburger adjourned the meeting at 3:37 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY