

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
GREAT FALLS PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD/ZONING COMMISSION
December 8, 2015**

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
Peter Fontana
Anthony Houtz
Keith Nelson
Cheryl Patton
Sophia Sparklin
Mark Striepe
Michael Wedekind

Planning Board Members absent:

None

Planning Staff Members present:

Craig Raymond, Director P&CD
Galen Steffens, Planner II
Gregory Gordos, Planner I
Connie Rosas, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Other Staff present:

Sara Sexe, City Attorney
Dave Dobbs, City Engineer
Joseph Petrella, Director Park & Recreation

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 24, 2015. Seeing none, the minutes were approved as submitted.

BOARD ACTIONS REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING

Phoenix Townhomes- Minor Subdivision 114 2nd Street Northwest

Gregory Gordos, Planner I, presented the staff report for the Phoenix Townhomes Minor Subdivision. The applicant, Dana Hennen dba Phoenix Group, is requesting to subdivide one lot into two lots for construction of a Residence, townhouse. The lot is currently zoned R-2 Single family medium density, as is the majority of the neighborhood.

The lot is 8,700 square feet, and the applicant is proposing to subdivide the lot into two 4,350 square foot lots. The proposed townhouse would be a two-unit townhouse, and the division would allow for ownership units along each side of the townhouse with a dividing wall between each unit. The Conditional Use Permit for Residence was approved on November 24, 2015.

Currently the parcel is vacant, and the proposed project would create two 1,400 square foot two-story townhomes with front loaded garages, side entrances with a connecting sidewalk, two bedrooms and two bathrooms on the main floor, and unfinished basements. Curb, gutter, and sidewalk improvements would be provided on both 2nd Street Northwest and Colorado Avenue Northwest.

The subject property is located in Neighborhood Council #3, and the Council voted on November 5 to support the project. Two letters to date have been submitted by the public in opposition to the project. The project is consistent socially, environmentally, and physically with the Growth Policy. Mr. Gordos went over the Conditions of Approval as listed in the staff report, and said the staff recommends approval of the proposed Minor Subdivision.

PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions from the public.

PETITIONER'S PRESENTATION

There was no representative for the applicant present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD DISCUSSION AND ACTION

MOTION: **Recommendation I:** The Planning Advisory Board, based on the Findings for the Basis of Decision, recommend the City Commission approve the Minor Subdivision of the property legally described as Lot 6A, Block 2, Viles and Robinson Acre Tracts, Section 35, Township 21 North, Range 3 East, P.M. M.T., Cascade County, Montana, subject to the

Conditions of Approval located in the staff report being fulfilled by the applicant.

Made by: Mr. Striepe
Second: Ms. Patton

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

Chair Weisenburger asked Mr. Gordos to explain the next steps in the project process. Mr. Gordos said the Planning Advisory Board recommendation will be presented to City Commission, which will then approve or deny the application. If approved, the applicant will submit all documents for review.

BOARD ACTIONS NOT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING

Mike Svetz, Project Manager from PROS Consulting, presented an overview for the developing master plan for the Parks and Recreation Department. PROS is partnering with ETC, a market research firm who will conduct the statistically valid survey, and TD&H, a local engineering company which will assist with community engagement and analysis of the system. The purpose for the master plan is to create a compelling vision for the Great Fall's Parks and Recreation Department, and determine the right path to follow.

PROS Consulting is a full-service management consulting and planning firm specializing in government agencies in 46 states and seven foreign countries; 90% of the projects they have completed in the last 21 years have been for local municipal parks and recreation agencies.

Desired outcomes for the master plan include: engaging the community, leadership, and stakeholders to build a shared vision for parks, recreation, facilities and trails for the next five years; utilizing a wide variety of data sources to predict trends and patterns of use, and address unmet needs; determining levels of service standards; operational and financial preparedness; developing dynamic and realistic strategic plans for long term success and financial sustainability; and aligning the master plan with the City's Growth Policy Update.

Mr. Svetz said the needs of the community drive what the Parks and Recreation Department should do, while also taking into account organizational capacity, sustainable funding, and making sure the organizational structure can deliver those services to the community. The statistically valid survey is a key component in determining these needs. A random sampling of the community will be taken, with a minimum of 375 surveys being collected and processed. The surveys collected will reflect the census including age, diversity, population, and income levels, while also being geographically balanced.

PROS will do an in-depth assessment and inventory of every aspect of the current system; they will conduct a condition analysis that will help them understand where there is deferred maintenance, and if certain elements of the built environment are beyond their useful life. They will also assess environmental design, determining if there are elements that make it more or less prone to crime. Service area mapping will be done as well, which will give a visual understanding of whether or not there are enough assets, and where there may be gaps or overlaps in the system on things like swimming pools, tennis courts, and basketball courts. There will be a prioritization of demands and needs, analyzing facility amenities and assets to provide a guide for the future for new development, renovation, updates, as well as identifying what may no longer be needed or wanted in the community.

One of the most critical aspects of delivering a park and recreation system to the community is for the community to understand how they want to use those public spaces; this is not a “build it and they will come” approach. Mr. Svetz said that first identifying how people want to recreate, and then providing the appropriate amenities, trails, and facilities that match up with those needs is one of the biggest components of this master plan. Reviewing all the current data of programs and assessments will need to be done first, and those results could potentially reveal there are certain lines of service or program elements that should not be continued, which could free up funding, capacity, and resources to start meeting unmet needs. Levels of service will also be analyzed and determined in order to classify the lines of service provided, in hopes to guide the development of a pricing policy that’s fair, based on the level of benefit received.

Finally, the last step is to build a capital improvement program, which will be aligned with funding sources from local department budgeting, City wide budgeting, and outside funding sources for larger projects. The capital improvement plan will plan for short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals, and identify a funding source for each capital improvement.

Mr. Svetz said they will be continuing data analysis as well as starting the community survey process in late winter, which will continue into early spring. The goal is to continue with the park and facility assessment over the next five months, and present to the community initial findings in April, have recommendations in August, and then come to the Planning Advisory Board for approval/adoption of the master plan in early fall. Mr. Svetz then offered to answer any questions from the Board.

Mr. Fontana asked if during the cost-benefit analysis they were to determine that a facility did not generate enough income to support its expense, how would they quantify the benefit the facility has to community. Mr. Svetz said this is where the statistically valid survey comes into play to help provide an understanding of who benefits from the facilities services, which plays into a synthesis of need. After synthesizing all the different data points, they can start to prioritize the needs of the community and classify services. One of the elements that factors into the decision is the state of that facility and determining what type of investment may need to be made to meet the needs of the community. Mr. Svetz said there is not a straight forward answer to that question. Mr. Fontana said his concern regarding the tennis courts and a lot of the swimming pools in Great Falls is that they are free recreation for kids, but are in horrible disrepair, and he does not want to see this Master Plan leave the low income families behind. Mr. Svetz said that will not happen. The best recreation systems meet the needs of the entire community, and makes sure we are offering services that everyone wants; if the survey shows the low income population doesn’t like tennis, but they love basketball, then you would look at converting those tennis courts into basketball courts. This is not about just eliminating things, but repurposing things. Mr. Fontana said he doesn’t want to see this master plan be about generating revenue only. Mr. Svetz agreed.

Mr. Nelson asked if they survey only 375 people. Mr. Svetz said in order to get at least 375 surveys back that are geographically and demographically balanced, 2,500 to 3,000 are sent out. It is the job of ETC to get a random sampling that is representative of our community, and based on our population, 375 surveys must be evaluated to give them an accurate sampling. Mr. Nelson asked if this was a ten year plan. Mr. Svetz said yes, there will short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals. Any longer than ten years, the plan becomes less valid due to changes in politics, demographic, and economy.

Mr. Wedekind asked if PROS Consulting was hired by the City, and asked if they took the state and county facilities that are in our vicinity into consideration, even though this is a City plan. Mr. Svetz said yes, they are hired by the City, and yes, they will inventory the entire region so that we will have a City standard based off of our City's population, but also take into consideration school, state, and county facilities so it can be determined what the City needs to contribute to meet the level of service standard established by the plan. Mr. Wedekind asked if they will take into consideration Malmstrom Air Force Base (MAFB) services, and Mr. Svetz said yes, they do take into consideration the fact that the MAFB population already has their recreation needs met. Mr. Wedekind asked what the City is paying for their services. Mr. Svetz said for all three consultants, it will be in the neighborhood of \$89,000 and the project takes 10 to 11 months to complete.

Ms. Sparklin asked if there was a sample survey. Mr. Svetz said he has provided a sample survey to staff, and Mr. Petrella could provide one for the Board.

Ms. Patton asked if they will be examining maintenance levels. Mr. Svetz said they will be examining organizational capacity, which means evaluating maintenance standards, program standards, partnership policies, donation policies, sponsorship policies, volunteer policies, etc.

Mr. Petrella said he wanted to clarify the funding source so the public does not think this is coming from general fund money. He said \$80,000 is coming from the Park and Recreation trust fund, which is money set aside to do things such as a master plan, and the fund is currently very healthy with over \$500,000 in the fund. The other \$9,970 is being donated by the Park and Recreation Foundation.

Mr. Sparklin asked if there were any unique things Mr. Svetz has observed about Great Falls. He said the river makes us a unique community and provides us with a lot of recreational opportunities. One of the most unique things about our community is that we are an outdoor recreation driven community in a climate that doesn't support 12 months a year of outdoor recreation. People are very passionate about recreation outdoors over a 12 month period; you typically only find that in places like California and Arizona, climates that don't hit 20 below in January. Mr. Svetz said he has recently done work in Calgary, and they are not an outdoor recreation driven community because of the cold. He said he doesn't believe Great Falls outdoor recreation is a bi-product of a lack of facilities, but that it is one of our community values.

Mr. Weisenburger asked if when Mr. Svetz responded to the RFP to compete to do the master plan for Great Falls, how did he approach the City in terms of potential things that could be improved. Mr. Svetz said one should never assume anything when putting together an RFP process because the data that those assumptions are based off of comes from the internet, which isn't always accurate or reliable. PROS Consulting understands Great Falls is very proud of its past, while trying to manage itself forward. They understand the fiscal realities Great Falls faces, in particular getting out of the utility situation from three years ago; they try come into this with an open mind, and trust the process that has generated 1.2 billion dollars in assets in Park and Recreation over the country in the last 20 years. He said it comes down to the fact that Parks and Rec provides experiences; their job is to determine what those experiences should be based on the uniqueness of the community, and then provide the City with strategic elements that organize the department and organize the system in such a way that maximizes capacity, and effectively and efficiently manages the system.

Mr. Davis asked if the results of the poll were weighed against national trends. Mr. Svetz said there will be national benchmarking for most of the questions on the poll. Mr. Davis asked if emerging trends around the country would be addressed by the survey, as we are a growing community and have to respond to the needs of those we recruit from around the country that are filling the jobs being created here. Mr. Svetz said the survey will address the needs of the people that are here now, but one of the components that will be included in the plan is trends from around the country, such as yoga, pickleball, or lacrosse. Though it may not come into play in the survey, it will be part of the analysis.

Mr. Fontana asked if the report may recommend reducing the size of some parks, or even selling some park land. Mr. Svetz said that may happen, and from what he understands there may be a lot of undeveloped park land that Great Falls may not need in the future; there could be higher and better uses for that land such as infill development.

COMMUNICATIONS

Next Meeting Agenda – Tuesday, December 22, 2015

- None

Mr. Weisenburger said he understood we may need to set up a nominating committee at the next meeting. Mr. Raymond said that after talking to Ms. Sexe, City Attorney, we will take nominations from the floor at the second meeting in January due to time frames. There will be no meeting on December 22.

Project Status:

- None

Petitions & Applications Received:

- None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor-elect Kelly said in an effort to recreate a different environment and start to do some things that need to be done, he would like to publicly recognize the Board members. At each City Commission meeting he will feature a different board and thank each member for their service, discuss what they do as a Board, and discuss some of the highlights and lowlights of what they've done over the years. He invited them to the City Commission meeting on January 19, 2016, and asked Mr. Weisenburger to introduce the Board and give a brief overview of the work that is done by the Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Weisenburger adjourned the meeting at 3:57 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY