

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of February 22, 2016

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

Members Present: David Campbell, Dave Snuggs, Bill Mintsiveris

Members Absent: Chuck Fulcher, Kenny Volk

Staff Present: Craig Raymond, Director P&CD; Connie Rosas, Sr. Admin Asst

Others Present: Fred Burow, City Commissioner; Joan Redeen, Great Falls Business Improvement District; Jenn Rowell, Great Falls Tribune; John Conway, Standard Parking; Brad Livingston, Chamber of Commerce; Darren Brown

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Mintsiveris asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the February 8, 2016 meeting. There being none, Mr. Snuggs made a motion to approve those minutes. Mr. Campbell seconded and all being in favor, the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Item 1. Downtown Parking Plan

Mr. Mintsiveris said though he was not part of the Parking Advisory Commission (PAC) when Mayor Kelly and the City Commission addressed the PAC and set forth their expectations, he feels like they are not accomplishing enough at the meetings. He does not feel like the problems with the parking program have truly been addressed, and if the Mayor wants solutions next month, the PAC needs to start addressing those problems immediately. Mr. Raymond clarified that the Mayor does not want solutions by next month, but they do want to know what the framework will be to get to those solutions, which he feels was outlined last week. He said it will take some time to achieve a full understanding of the parking program and its problems. Mr. Burow also clarified for the City Commission, and said solutions by July are even unrealistic, as this will be a trial and error process, which is time consuming.

Mr. Raymond said now that the mission statement has been completed, the next phase is the discovery process; the PAC will need to get a full understanding of cost, revenue, citation revenue, maintenance, deferred maintenance, and equipment costs. This will be the first step moving forward, followed by determining the customer experience and whether assets are being used in the most efficient way. Once those have been determined, overall management of the program will need to be analyzed; options to consider are continuing with a contractor, hiring City employees to run the program, or establishing a Parking Commission that is in charge of the entire program, including setting the budget. Mr. Raymond then introduced John Conway, Vice President and Regional Manager of Standard Parking (SP+), which is the City's current parking provider.

Mr. Conway said he has helped run parking programs for several cities across the country for the last 21 years, and SP+ has solved parking problems for municipalities everywhere. He said from this point forward as the City's operator of the parking program, SP+ can come up with long term solutions that can resolve the issues for this community. Mr. Brown asked Mr. Conway if he had worked with any cities that had a similar downtown to Great Falls. Mr. Conway said they took a city in Colorado that had no parking program, to one with paid meters and time limits, which required a lot of education to both merchants and the public.

Mr. Raymond reminded the PAC that at their meeting on February 8, they discussed holding a public meeting early in this process, and it would be a good idea to get input from the public, and possibly integrate a survey into that meeting. He asked if they felt ready to schedule such a meeting. Mr. Snuggs said it would be a good idea, and he felt every business owner in downtown should be hand delivered an invitation. There was discussion on needing a meeting agenda to have a constructive meeting, and making this more of a listening session as opposed to proposing ideas to the public. Mr. Campbell suggested that at the second PAC meeting in March, they determine a meeting agenda. They agreed to hold the public meeting on April 7, 2016 at 6:30 PM.

Mr. Raymond said the framework, mission statement, and an update on progress the PAC has made will need to be presented at the City Commission meeting on March 15, and he asked for a volunteer to present, as he will be out of town training. Mr. Snuggs volunteered, and Mr. Mintsiveris agreed to go as well.

Mr. Raymond asked if there were questions on any of the material that was handed out at the previous PAC meeting. There was discussion on the financial reports that were sent out, and the need for an overall big picture of the annual budget. There was also discussion regarding lighting in the parking garages, and the possibility of implementing LED systems to save roughly fifty percent on electrical costs. There was also discussion on the considerable cost of elevator maintenance that was expended last fiscal year, and the surface lot and garage maintenance that needs to be done, but is currently being deferred due to the loss of revenue from Asurion.

Mr. Snuggs said he would like to see the program be steered away from using the word enforcement, and focus on having advocates for downtown instead. He said anyone can write a ticket, but he would like to see advocates for downtown take the mission statement and utilize it to create a positive experience for downtown. Mr. Conway said SP+ employees are ambassadors for communities, and it is not just about writing tickets. Mr. Campbell asked if there was training for the parking attendants in Great Falls to help them become better advocates for the City, and Mr. Conway said yes.

Mr. Snuggs expressed his frustrations with receiving parking tickets downtown from SP+ employees, and feels their employees issue citations unnecessarily and have poor attitudes. Mr. Conway said the SP+ employees are there to enforce City policy and cannot make exceptions with enforcement on the street level, but the customer service can be significantly improved. Ms. Redeen clarified that SP+ employees are there to enforce City policy, and though the customer service aspect could be worked on, those on the PAC should be held to a higher standard, and be cognizant of the standards that are currently set forth in the policy. Mr. Raymond added that it is incumbent upon the City to set those policies to be enforced by SP+ employees. Mr. Conway said the problems the parking program Great Falls faces are ones that SP+ has solved for other communities before, and as the PAC moves forward he is excited to share his expertise.

Mr. Livingston said he would like to see the PAC take advantage Mr. Conway's knowledge and the expertise SP+ can bring to the parking program, and he was very encouraged Mr. Conway was there to help. Mr. Conway said SP+ will do an updated study, which will take a little bit of time, but identifying the mission statement and giving SP+ employees some training can be done right away.

Mr. Raymond said for the next meeting, the annual budgets for current and previous fiscal years will be provided, as well as a further breakdown of SP+ costs. Mr. Snuggs asked what the role of the parking program was- to generate revenue for the City, or to be self reliant and cover costs. Mr. Raymond said revenue is used exclusively for the parking program; it is not used as a revenue source for the City. There was discussion on new technologies that could be implemented to be more efficient and cost effective, especially regarding labor costs.

Item 2. Monthly Revenue Report for January

Mr. Raymond told Mr. Livingston he would be happy to add him to the mailing list so he can receive the packet information and financial reports every month.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The PAC meeting dates for March were set for March 7 and 28. Mr. Raymond said the new Deputy Director for Planning and Community Development will attend the meeting on the 28th and be introduced.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m.