

GREAT FALLS PARKING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of April 18, 2016

The Parking Advisory Commission meeting was called to order by Bill Mintsiveris at 3:01 p.m. in the Planning and Community Development Conference Room of the Civic Center.

Members Present: Dave Snuggs, Bill Mintsiveris, Dave Campbell, Chuck Fulcher, Kenny Volk

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Craig Raymond, Director P&CD; Tom Micuda, Deputy Director, P&CD; Joelle Marko, CD Technician

Others Present: Joan Redeen, Great Falls Business Improvement District; Jenn Rowell, Great Falls Tribune; Tena Grigsby, Standard Parking; Brad Livingston, Chamber of Commerce; Cody Proctor, KRTV News

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Mintsiveris asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the March 28, 2016 meeting. Ms. Redeen noted a correction to the minutes. Mr. Mintsiveris motioned to amend the minutes. Mr. Volk seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, all voted to approve the minutes as corrected.

OLD BUSINESS

Item 1. Downtown Parking Plan

Mr. Raymond suggested a few ideas to possibly implement in the near future to help determine how the parking program would be affected. Removing meters from areas that do not see much revenue and suspending the residential enforcement program temporarily were examples of things that could be put in place sooner rather than later. Feedback from the implementation of those ideas would be beneficial to the Downtown Parking Plan.

Standard Parking is in the process of conducting their own parking study for the area they maintain in Great Falls. Ms. Grigsby stated she would share the results as soon as the survey data has been compiled. With those results, the Parking Advisory Commission (PAC) will be better able to further develop the Downtown Parking Plan. The group agreed to wait for the study results before making any immediate changes to meters or enforcement areas.

Item 2. Review of Parking Survey Data

The group discussed the large amount of responses to the survey. Mr. Snuggs said he believes the public thinks metered parking is a detriment to the downtown area. He also believes the public feels that Standard Parking's main revenue source is comprised of parking citations and the money the City of Great Falls pays for their services. He feels that Standard Parking should be more willing to assist the city with upgrades to parking facilities when they are experiencing increased profits. Mr. Raymond said that thought is an example of not understanding the contract Standard Parking has with the City. When profits are increased, Standard Parking does not automatically get that money, it goes into the parking fund. When there is a decrease in profits, the fund does not receive the money.

Mr. Mintsiveris feels the City should address the safety of the parking garages, especially the North Garage, by upgrading lighting and surveillance to start. The increased presence of vagrant and transient people in the garages is also a safety concern. Mr. Mintsiveris believes that is the City's problem to correct. Making sure the parking garages are more comfortable to public will play a large role in increasing use and revenue from the garages.

Mr. Campbell reiterated the lack of signage for the City-owned lots is detrimental to the Downtown Parking Program as a whole. He believes investing money for signage at each lot would bolster use and revenue in the lots. That revenue in turn could be used to update security in the garages. Ms. Redeen stated that Downtown Development Partnership (DDP) is actively moving forward on a way finding plan for downtown. That plan will include signage for parking.

Changing time limits at meters throughout the downtown area was discussed; two hours on Central Avenue and three hours on the side streets. New payment stations for the surface lots were mentioned as well. The group was surprised that the Passport Parking smart phone app is so well known to the people who took the survey, even though actual usage of the app is very low. There was discussion again on incentivizing parking in the City-owned lots to increase revenue.

NEW BUSINESS

Item 1. 3rd Quarter Budget Performance Report

Mr. Campbell noted that revenue from the lots and street parking is greater than the revenue from citations. Mr. Raymond reminded the group that collection efforts were suspended temporarily due to a change in software the parking program utilizes.

Mr. Snuggs questioned the existence of a parking fund for reserves. Mr. Raymond stated there is such a fund. Utilizing the fund requires City Commission approval after approval of the annual budget. The group realizes that the projected losses for the parking fund are rather large. Mr. Volk stated that cutting costs (including enforcement) would be a practical course of action to begin with. Increasing revenues alone might not save the program.

Mr. Snuggs suggested privatizing the downtown parking program. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Raymond said that in theory that may sound like the answer, but is not as easy as simply turning the parking program over to Standard Parking. Restructuring the contract with Standard Parking or finding a new company to partner with was discussed. Mr. Snuggs believes shifting some of the costs, including maintenance of the garages, to Standard Parking would benefit both the City and the downtown parking program in the long run.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Mintsiveris requested members of the PAC bring one idea they would like to see implemented for the parking program to the next meeting. The members will then present their ideas to the group and get feedback from one another.

The next PAC meeting will be May 9th, 2016 at 3 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.