

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
GREAT FALLS PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD/ZONING COMMISSION
April 12, 2016**

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL & ATTENDANCE

Planning Board Members present:

Scot Davis, Vice Chair
Peter Fontana
Anthony Houtz
Keith Nelson
Cheryl Patton
Sophia Sparklin
Michael Wedekind

Planning Board Members absent:

Nate Weisenburger, Chair
Mark Striepe

Planning Staff Members present:

Craig Raymond, Director P&CD
Tom Micuda, Deputy Directory P&CD
Charlie Sheets, Development Review Coordinator
Connie Rosas, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Other Staff present:

Dave Dobbs, City Engineer

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.

Vice Chair Davis asked if there were any comments or corrections to the minutes of the regular meeting held on March 8, 2016. Seeing none, the minutes were approved as submitted.

BOARD ACTIONS NOT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING

Central Montana Agricultural and Technology Park TIFID

Dave Dobbs, City Engineer, presented the staff report for a funding application for Fiber Optic Cable within the Central Montana Agricultural and Technology Park (CMATP) which is a Tax Increment Financing Industrial District (TIFID). He explained this is a way to finance infrastructure; from a tax standpoint, the value of the land is calculated first, and then the value of the land after it has been developed is calculated, and the differential of those two figures is the increment which can be used to further develop the district.

Mr. Dobbs said CMATP has been a very active and successful district, and the funding in the TIFID has gone into three projects there so far, this application being the fourth. 3 Rivers Communications is proposing to install fiber optic cable, which is critical to the Park. The TIF request is for \$44,334.43 to pay 3 Rivers Communications upfront; the current cash balance in the TIF fund is \$355,792.63.

He noted the City of Great Falls has established criteria to evaluate TIF applications, which are listed in the agenda report. He offered to answer any questions from the Board.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND ACTION

Ms. Sparklin asked if there are public bids on these applications before they are brought to the Board. Mr. Dobbs said this is a unique application as 3 Rivers Communications is the only company that does fiber optic cable in the area, so it is a sole source application. The other three projects in CMATP were bid out competitively.

Ms. Patton said she noticed in the application that ADF stated they had 201 employees; she asked if that number included the painting employees that were laid off, or if that was the current number. Mr. Dobbs said that was the number before the layoffs.

Mr. Fontana asked if the administrative cost of \$6,820.68 as listed in the application will be paid out of TIF funds and reimbursed to the City for staff time. Mr. Dobbs said yes, that admin fee is to cover City costs and comes out of the TIF fund; if all those funds are not needed, what isn't need will remain in the fund. Mr. Fontana asked if that money would be transferred from the TIF fund to the City's general fund, and Mr. Dobbs explained it goes to whichever department spends the administrative time working on the project.

MOTION: That the Planning Advisory Board recommends to the City Commission approval of the City of Great Falls' TIF application for funding for the installation of fiber optic cable in the CMATP TIFID and all associated funding.

Made by: Mr. Fontana
Second: Mr. Nelson

Ms. Sparklin asked how the tiny lots were being leased in CMATP, and her concern was that a TIF application would have to be submitted and approved for each of the small lots. Mr. Dobbs said with the approval of this application, the installation of the cable will be available for each of those lots.

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

BOARD ACTIONS REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING

Proposed Amendments to the City Sign Code and other Land Development Code Revisions Pertaining to Signs

Mr. Raymond reviewed the purpose of the Sign Code, and said the existing Sign Code is a good document, but a few changes need to be addressed. The latest edits include adding a definition for projecting signs, defining temporary sign square footage and doubling allowed square footage for premises over 50,000 square feet, adding language for athletic facilities, and clarifying where illuminated signs are allowed in residential zones.

He said there have been well attended public meetings where all comments were considered and prompted further changes, and the next step will be to bring it to City Commission for public hearing and adoption.

PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions from the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND ACTION

Mr. Fontana asked if the recent Supreme Court decisions were about signage specifically, or City Code altogether. Mr. Raymond said it was primarily related to signage, as there was a case in Arizona where regulations on ideological and political signs were being regulated differently than others, and the Supreme Court ruled they need to be regulated more consistently and not discriminated against based off content.

Mr. Nelson asked if a convenience store would be unable to have an illuminated sign in a residential zone. Mr. Raymond said yes, but most likely a gas station would not be a residentially zoned property, thus allowing them that signage. It is determined by the underlying zoning. Mr. Nelson also confirmed that if the casing of a sign is altered, it loses the grandfather status and must then come into full compliance of the Code. Mr. Raymond confirmed that was correct; public feedback on this issue was considered, but City staff wants all signs to come into compliance eventually, and it was felt that this was an appropriate trigger. Mr. Raymond also confirmed that general maintenance and repair can be done to the casing without triggering full compliance.

Mr. Fontana asked if staff knew how many signs were not in compliance. Mr. Raymond said there are a lot, and the staff time required to build a database and determine that number is significant, and also part of the reason why these changes are being proposed.

Ms. Patton complimented the staff on making necessary corrections, but said she felt enforcement is critical; if the City has a code, it needs to be enforced. She asked if there was a full time individual in the field working on sign violations, or if enforcement was complaint driven only. Mr. Raymond said the office does respond to complaints, but he has also instructed the building inspectors to bring it to the attention of Mr. Sheets if they do see a sign not in compliance. Currently there is no designated full time staff member. Ms. Patton cautioned against having provisions in the Code that cannot be enforced.

Ms. Sparklin said the bench signs are seemingly compliant with the Code, though they are an eyesore. She asked staff to explain how these came about. Mr. Raymond said those signs are regulated under a different part of the Code, and asked Mr. Sheets to give some background. Mr. Sheets said when the transit shelters started going up, they essentially became billboards, as the Code states bench signs can be placed anywhere with the owner's permission. Mr. Fontana confirmed all bench signs were privately owned, and Mr. Sheets said that was correct. Ms. Patton said originally the bench signs were intended to be a revenue source for the City, and asked if the City still received a rental fee every year for the bench signs located in the public right-of-way. Mr. Sheet said there is an annual fee for each of them, which is \$77.50 a year.

Mr. Davis asked what it would involve to have an enforcement element for the signs. Mr. Raymond there is currently no staff that is able to patrol for non compliant signs, and it would require additional funds in the budget to hire someone to do that.

Mr. Davis closed the public hearing.

MOTION: That the Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission recommends the City Commission adopt the proposed Title 17, Chapter 20 Land Use and Title 17, Chapter 60 Sign Code Amendments with minor corrections to grammar, word usage, and sentence structure.

Made by: Ms. Patton
Second: Ms. Sparklin

Mr. Nelson asked if it was possible to review the application of these edits with the Planning Board in 12 months, and Mr. Raymond confirmed it could be brought to them for review.

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Raymond said though there are no projects coming to the Board at the next meeting, there are currently a lot of projects in the works, and staff is extremely busy. He said for the time period of January 2016 through the end of March 2016, the construction valuation is triple what it was last year during this time period.

Next Meeting Agenda – Tuesday, March 22, 2016

- None

Project Status:

- None

Petitions & Applications Received:

- None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Kelly thanked the Board and staff for all their hard work, and suggested that when it comes time to discuss planning on the Town Pump in the Fox Farm area, someone reach out to former Board member Ike Kaufman, as he has a wealth of knowledge and history on the area.

Ms. Sparklin asked the new Deputy Director of Planning and Community Development, Tom Micuda, to tell the Board a little bit about himself. Mr. Micuda gave a brief background on his experience as a Director of Planning in Indiana, and expressed his enthusiasm in getting back to his planning roots, learning about Great Falls, and helping the community grow and become a better place to live.

There was discussion on current projects, completion dates, and the surge in commercial and multi-family residential construction.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice Chair Davis adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY