

Dave Campbell's Thoughts on Parking
July 15, 2016

The incremental changes that the Parking Advisory Commission has proposed will never close the gap between revenues and expenses for the system, at least as it is structured now. We must remember that Walker Consultants, in their 2013 study of Great Falls' parking, said "Contrary to popular belief, most pay parking systems do not ever come close to being entirely self-funding."

With this in mind, I believe that our system needs to have a combination of assessment revenue to support the infrastructure and user fees to fund operations. As is stands, user fees do cover the costs of enforcement, but City overhead charges and maintenance take the system into the red. It is logical for the citizens of Great Falls to maintain the city's assets and for the users/beneficiaries of parking enforcement to pay their fair shares.

In the mean time, the best way to cover our expenses is to increase revenue. Rates increases to cover the shortfall would be unacceptable, so the only way to increase those revenues is to get better utilization of the assets. We should concentrate on filling the empty spots in garages and lots. Better signage will let the public know the options that the system offers, better pricing might entice customers parking elsewhere into our facilities. Without significant new activity Downtown, we must cannibalize from other facilities.