

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
GREAT FALLS PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD/ZONING COMMISSION  
October 25, 2016**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission was called to order by Chair Nate Weisenburger at 3:01 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the Civic Center.

**ROLL CALL & ATTENDANCE**

Planning Board Members present:

Nate Weisenburger, Chair  
Scot Davis, Vice Chair  
Anthony Houtz  
Sophia Sparklin  
Mark Striepe

Planning Board Members absent:

Peter Fontana  
Keith Nelson  
Cheryl Patton  
Michael Wedekind

Planning Staff Members present:

Tom Micuda, Deputy Director P&CD  
Andrew Finch, Senior Planner  
Galen Steffens, Planner III  
Erin Borland, Planner I  
Maria Porter, CDBG Administrator  
Connie Tryon, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Other Staff present:

Joseph Cik, Assistant City Attorney  
Joseph Petrella, Park and Recreation Director

Mr. Micuda 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 Nate Weisenburger asked if there were any comments or corrections to the minutes of the special meeting held on August 30, 2016. Mr. Davis noted Ms. Sparklin's name needed to be corrected. The minutes were approved as corrected.

### **BOARD ACTIONS NOT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING**

#### **Federal Fiscal Year 2017 Section 5303 FYA Funding Contracts**

Mr. Finch said the contracts before the Board are routine items the Planning Advisory Board (PAB) is asked to approve yearly. The Planning Department receives Federal transit planning funds that are passed on to the Great Falls Transit District (GFTD) for their use in transit and bus planning. Mr. Finch explained the first contract is with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) for the receipt of the funds, and the second contract is between the PAB and the sub recipient, the GFTD.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Shyla Patera, 1013 7<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, with North Central Independent Living, encouraged the Board to pass the contracts and assist the GFTD whenever possible.

#### **BOARD DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

MOTION: That the Planning Advisory Board approve the FFY 2017 Section 5303 Contracts with the State of Montana and the Great Falls Transit District.

Made by: Mr. Davis  
Second: Mr. Houtz

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

#### **City of Great Falls Park and Recreation Master Plan**

Michael Svetz, PROS Consulting, presented the highlights of the Park and Recreation Master Plan that provides a detailed analysis of the assets of the system, as well as the value of the improvements that were identified. Mr. Svetz explained the age segmentation of the population, as well as ethnicity and income levels, and how those are projected to change over the next 15 years. This helps identify the demands and needs of the population. Overall, the outdoor park system is at a B- rating in regards to facility assessments; however, when you specify the outdoor amenities, the ratings become lower. He stressed the importance of reinvesting in the current system. Indoor facilities such as the Natatorium and the Recreation Center have a C rating.

Mr. Svetz said community input was heavy; about 300 people attended public meetings, which is far more than the 10 or 15 people that typically attend in a community of this size. He said there was a lot of positive feedback on the system, and the items that are listed as highly valued are the needs the community expressed repeatedly. Mr. Svetz reviewed the methodology of the statistically valid survey, where the goal was to complete 350 surveys; 549 surveys were completed with a confidence level of 95%. He explained the survey results were balanced geographically and demographically to match the larger community population.

Mr. Svetz said park usage is high in our community at 82%, the national benchmark being 79%. However, the national benchmark for a rating of excellent on the condition of parks is 31% and Great Falls parks have a rating of 21%. He also reviewed Park and Recreation facilities that are most important to our community, with the trail system heavily at number one. The community identified the highest unmet needs as being outdoor exercise areas, adventure areas, and covered picnic areas. Program participation and program quality were rated low in the community compared to the national benchmarks. Mr. Svetz explained the low ratings were directly related to the program barriers; the top identified barrier being that people are too busy or not interested in what is offered, and the second barrier being that people do not even know what programs are being offered in the community year round. Mr. Svetz reviewed the overall satisfaction with the value received from the park system, which was very low, but also emphasized the statistics showing that the community strongly agrees there are personal benefits provided by the parks system.

Capital improvements are broken into three categories: critical projects (deferred maintenance at existing facilities), sustainable projects (enhancing existing programs or beginning alternative programs and making other strategic changes), and visionary projects (the complete set of services and facilities desired by the community). With 52 parks, facilities, and pools, the cost of the critical projects identified to simply bring the entire system up to where it should be is \$12,614,160. The cost of identified sustainable projects, which would bring underdeveloped property to be fully utilized effectively and efficiently, is \$1,150,000. Finally, two main visionary projects for the City of Great Falls were identified. The first project would be to construct a 50,000 square foot multi-generational center that would replace the current Recreation Center and Morony Natatorium, and the second project would be to develop a master plan to repurpose the Anaconda Hills Golf Course and convert it into a new use like a campground/adventure area through private public partnership. Total cost for the visionary projects is \$20,250,000.

Mr. Svetz touched on the primary funding recommendation in the Master Plan, though he said there are many options listed. The recommendation is that the Great Falls City Commission consider the adoption of a resolution that would create a Citywide Parks Maintenance District to supplement current funding and create a sustainable funding source. He also reviewed additional staffing recommendations that would be supported by the creation of the District.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jana Cooper, 1800 River Drive North, thanked the vision of the Park and Recreation Department to complete this Master Plan, and expressed her support.

Shyla Patera, 1013 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, with North Central Independent Living, said she has attended many meetings during many different master plan processes, and the Park and Recreation Master Plan drew a lot of public attention. She expressed her excitement, and offered North Central Independent Living services in moving forward with disability accessibility in all of the parks as well as the recreation facilities.

Mr. Petrella explained to the Board that most of the park facilities in the community are not ADA accessible. In the next one to three years the department will fund an ADA Assessment Plan, which is required by federal law and will help with the implementation of ADA federal guidelines.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

Mr. Weisenburger asked what other entities, other than the PAB, are reviewing the Master Plan and giving an approval. Mr. Petrella said the Park and Recreation Advisory Board was the first Board that reviewed the plan, followed by the PAB, and then it will go to City Commission for adoption.

**MOTION:** That the Planning Advisory Board recommend the City Commission approve the Park and Recreation Master Plan.

**Made by:** Ms. Sparklin  
**Second:** Mr. Davis

**VOTE:** All being in favor, the motion passed.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Next Meeting Agenda – Tuesday, November 22, 2016

- None

Project Status:

- None

Petitions & Applications Received:

- Church of Christ- Annexation, Subdivision, Zoning, & CUP
- West Ridge Addition, Phase VII- amended plat & PUD rezoning

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chair Nate Weisenburger adjourned the meeting at 3:59 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

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SECRETARY