

City Council Work Session

April 5, 2010

5:30 PM

Council Chambers

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Hanel, Ronquillo, Gaghen, Cimmino, Pitman, McFadden, Ruegamer, Ulledalen, McCall, Astle, Clark.

ADJOURN TIME: 7:50

Agenda

Electronic recording was not available to transcribe. Minutes were created from handwritten notes.

TOPIC #1	Public Comment
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- **Kevin Nelson 4235 Bruce**, referred to the East Billings parking ordinance, and said he was not sure that item 6C from the March 22nd meeting was actually approved on first reading. He said the Charter provided for equal services and revenue for the benefit of all, and this ordinance gave the benefit to a few. He suggested reconsideration of the 'yes' vote.

Councilmember Gaghen advised that Council approved the item and meters were not part of the plan. Mr. Nelson asked if meter revenue would stay right there if they were ever approved. Councilmember Gaghen said it would.

TOPIC #2	Pioneer Park Master Plan
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Parks, Recreation and Public Lands Director Mike Whitaker introduced consultants Stan Griswold of The Land Group and David Selvage of Planet Dynamics to talk about the draft master plan for Pioneer Park. He explained that the next step was to put it on a regular meeting agenda for public hearing and approval, if the Council was comfortable with the plan presentation that evening.

Mr. Griswold presented the executive summary of the draft plan.

Councilmember Gaghen stated that the existing disc golf course had 12 holes and asked which ones would be eliminated for the recommended nine-hole course.

Councilmember McCall asked about the suggestion of adding a winter course in the south area. Mr. Griswold explained reasons for resting the main course by directing the winter use to an alternate course.

Councilmember Astle asked if the baskets were moved for winter and summer courses. Mr. Griswold responded that they were.

Councilmember McFadden asked if sensitive areas were protected. Mr. Griswold said they were.

Councilmember McCall asked if the plan addressed the tennis court surface. Mr. Griswold explained that it included a concrete surface.

Councilmember Astle stated that golf course owners charged for golf, so he wondered why charges could not be in place for disc golf.

Mr. Selvidge explained that it was difficult to restrict access in public parks, so charges were not traditionally assessed. He advised that 18% of citizenry used the course, and it was bigger than regular golf. He added that an additional course in another location was recommended. He said the current course had not been managed because the park had not had adequate maintenance, and that the plan recommended changing that. Councilmember Cimmino confirmed 30,000 rounds of disc golf had been played on an annual basis. She commented that seemed like a significant number.

Councilmember Pitman referred to the recommendation to replace the Zimmerman Center. He said the original idea was for Dehler Park to take away some of the demand for traditional parks, and asked if that was addressed in the report. Mr. Griswold said it was somewhat addressed.

Councilmember Cimmino asked that it be added to the minutes that she asked staff whether the City Council approved disc golf in Pioneer Park, and staff's response was that the Parks Board had considered it. Assistant City Administrator Bruce McCandless did not have that information in his notes, nor could he or Mr. Whitaker recall the discussion, which could not be confirmed without the electronic recording.

The public comment period for the item was opened.

- **Kevin Nelson** asked why disc golfers did not use other parks.
- **Bruce Simon** stated that disc golf and concrete paths would change the park character. He added that he did not feel the survey was valid because many elderly responded and probably did not know what disc golf was. He said park experts were saying that the only way disc golf worked here was with management, meaning it had to be manned and the City did not have the money for that. He stated that other parks were better suited for that activity because it turned a large part of the park over to one set of users and that was not appropriate.
- **Amy Cowley** stated that planning cost over \$80,000. She referred to a March 1 meeting that neighbors weren't invited to attend. She stated that property values would be affected. She said there were too many disc golfers for the parking facilities. She challenged statements made by City Administrator Tina Volek and Mr. Whitaker. She suggested removing disc golf from Pioneer Park and giving them their own space. She added that the budget should go to maintaining the park.

- **Charles Bott** stated he agreed with many of Ms. Cowley's comments, especially the legality of allowing disc golf to continue in the park. He said three councilmembers told him that disc golf was illegal in the park and he did not know why it had not been moved. Councilmember Ulledalen asked Mr. Bott if his suggestion was to move disc golf to the Heights. Mr. Bott stated that High Sierra could be acceptable after it was studied. He said the problem was that Council was not upholding the law.
- **Carrol Smith** stated that taxes were already too high, and he wanted to know how much all that was going to cost and how much it would cost him. He said he could not afford to spend another dime on taxes.

Councilmember Pitman asked about costs. Mr. Whitaker revealed some of the costs for the recommended maintenance. He said the low-hanging fruit was to fix the disc golf and it was expected that donations and other labor would work on that. He said the total was a multi-million dollar project.

Councilmember Gaghen pointed out that it was a plan and would be implemented piece by piece and over a period of time.

Mr. Whitaker stated that guidance from Council was needed to move forward on some of the plan elements; taxes would not be immediately raised to fund those elements.

Councilmember Ulledalen stated that surveys had been done and the budget was known, so he wanted to know what the next action was. He said it was known that the City was short of money, and asked what action plan could be implemented.

Councilmember Clark asked if it was correct that increased maintenance costs were not included in the capital cost estimates. Mr. Whitaker said that was correct.

Councilmember McFadden asked how long the plan was in effect and how much time was available to raise the money to implement it. Ms. Volek advised that they wanted to do it within ten years, but many of the parks that were of value had not been improved for many years, nor had they received adequate maintenance.

- **Tom Iverson**, stated he was Chairman of the Parks Board. He said the Board wanted people to use the parks and was glad to see the disc golfers use the park. He stated that the Board wanted to make the recommended changes, and the Board unanimously approved the plan.
- **Jim Roat, Air Fairways Disc Golf** advised that he helped install the course with Parks Department employees. He said there was a lot of support for the plan, and there would be a lot of volunteers willing to work to improve the park, many more than who were willing to attend and testify at Council meetings. He added that they were ready to go with new equipment.

There were no other speakers, and the public comment period for the item was closed.

TOPIC #3	<i>Council E-Mail Policy Revisions</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Ms. Volek explained the proposed change to the policy to reserve the right to not post some emails that defamed, slandered, abused, contained unfounded accusations, or were political or commercial ads, etc. She added that emails that contained crude language or attacks on employees would not be posted, and staff was working on a citizen complaint policy about employees, so there would still be a route to complain. She explained that Council would still get the emails, but they would not be posted.

Councilmember Pitman stated that the Billings Gazette instructed people that there could be reasons why an email was not posted, and the City might consider doing the same.

Mayor Hanel commented that he liked the policy and thought it was working well.

The public comment period for the item was opened. There were no speakers, and the public comment period for the item was closed.

TOPIC #4	<i>Stockman Bank/Library Lot Purchase</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Assistant City Administrator Bruce McCandless and Library Director Bill Cochran provided a PowerPoint presentation which showed the property location, background data and the purchase/sale proposal. Mike Tuss, of CTA Architects, the architect for Stockman Bank, was present and available to answer questions.

Councilmember Ulledalen asked if the available parking drove the size of the bank building. Mr. Tuss explained that it started with several stories to accommodate all the internal needs, but when it was apparent the downtown building could not be completed soon enough, the Heights and King Avenue banks were expanded to meet the needs. He added that after a summer meeting, Stockman told him to design a drive-up bank. He said he convinced Stockman to build a three-story building if customer parking could be found and if the bank was willing to look at more land for employee parking. He said the bank could possibly build more, but was committed to three stories. Mr. Tuss pointed out that many banks did not want to sell their real estate to other banks and Stockman had built architectural identity, so it was expensive to retrofit a building, plus Stockman needed more than two drive-up lanes.

The public comment period for the item was opened. There were no speakers, and the public comment period for the item was closed.

TOPIC #5	<i>Legislative District Criteria</i>
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

Ms. Volek reported that she received formal notice that the redistricting commission would hold a public hearing on April 19, at 6:30 p.m., at MSU-B downtown. She said the commission was asking for input on what criteria to use for next redistricting. She noted that a work session was scheduled April 19, and the lengthy agenda would prohibit Council from attending at 6:30 p.m.

Councilmember Ruegamer stated he was skeptical about the hearing and outcomes. He suggested forming a committee of staff, Councilmembers and Ed Bartlett to develop what the City wanted to say at the hearing. He said he was willing to talk with colleagues in other cities, many of who were underrepresented and cared a lot about it.

Mayor Hanel asked for suggestions about how to deal with the schedule conflict. Ms. Volek advised that she was willing to ask department directors if they could move the items to a later time, but there would be conflicts with the budget schedule if that was done.

Councilmember Pitman asked if the work session could be held on Tuesday. Ms. Volek said it could, as long as it was advertised.

Councilmembers Clark, McCall and Ruegamer and Mayor Hanel volunteered to serve on the committee suggested by Councilmember Ruegamer. Councilmember Ulledalen said they needed to make sure that the City was on the same page as the Montana League of Cities and Towns and the Chamber of Commerce.

The public comment period for the item was opened. There were no speakers, and the public comment period for the item was closed.

Additional Information:

None.