

City Council Work Session

5:30 PM
Council Chambers
June 17, 2013

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) Hanel, Ronquillo, Cromley, Cimmino, Pitman, McFadden, Bird, Ulledalen, McCall, Astle (Arrived at 5:45 p.m.), Crouch.

ADJOURN TIME: 6:50 p.m.

Agenda

TOPIC #1	Sale of Parkland Update
PRESENTER	Mark Javis, Park Planner
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Mark Jarvis: Updated Council on sale of parkland. Needed input from Councilmembers. Reviewed previous reports and actions. Reviewed sales proceeds policy approved by Park Board. Parks near schools could be sold, i.e. next to Beartooth Elementary and near Career Center. May consider some land trading at Castlerock Park with School District 2. Wilson Park used Land and Water Conservation Fund money, State Fish, Wildlife and Parks will tell City what it can do with the property. Ramada Park was proposed for sale in 1997, neighbors wanted to keep it and create a Park Maintenance District; never happened.
- Ulledalen: Who is maintaining and any covenants?
- Mark: Neighbors mow and there are no covenants. Southgate Sublinear strip parks should be sold to adjacent owners and adjust lot lines. Lampman and Lampman Strip Park studied; Park Board recommended sale if no Park Maintenance District created. Survey sent to nearby owners with 4 options: develop both; sell Lampman and develop the strip; sell Lampman or do nothing. 200 surveys returned. Survey results were, 59% don't want development and 41% want some form of development. If City sells Lampman, could use proceeds to pay costs to partially develop the strip park or use for Centennial Park improvements.
- Cromley: General rule is to use money for nearby park development, may not be consistent with needs.
- Mark: Land came from the subdivision, so proceeds should be used in the area.
- McFadden: Use Lampman Park proceeds to develop Centennial dog park?
- Mark: Yes.
- Ulledalen: Council directed staff to consider using sale proceeds for nearby park development.
- Bird: Option to use Lampman for a dog park with water feature?
- Mark: Possible.
- McCall: Need 10-12 acres for dog park?

- Mark: Minimum of 7-10 acres based on demands. Heights park heavily used, lots of demand. Lampman has about 6 acres.
- Mayor Hanel: Support dog parks, but question whether Lampman or Centennial are appropriate.
- Pitman: Serves on the committee. Appreciated comments and requested Council report citizen feedback to PRPL.
- Astle: Appreciated Park Board Committee. Citizens don't want development even after being told the result could be land sale. Get it sold.
- Public comments: None.
- Consensus: Sell Lampman, give Dog Park Committee right of first refusal. Experts say sell Ramada Park, would vote in favor.
- Mayor Hanel: Southgate sale makes sense.
- Pitman: Recommended Council proceed with all committee's present recommendations. All recommendations are brought before the Council for final approval.
- Mayor Hanel: Ms. Volek, this is Council's directive, to proceed with park land sales as recommended by the committee.
- Tina: Duly noted.

TOPIC #2	MET Route and Schedule Discussion
PRESENTER	Ron Wenger, Transit Manager
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Ron Wenger: Reviewed MET routes and schedules. Changes are usually small and are made according to driver and passenger input and statistical analysis. One change was needed this year on Broadway when Billings Clinic expanded. Challenges to making any changes include staying within the Teamster contract provisions and staying within the current operating budget. Believed the proposed changes address most of the requests. Also believed the changes were a productive use of resources; increased ridership and stayed within budget. (*Turned over presentation.*)
- Stan Barr, MET Operations Supervisor: Changes put more driver hours on the street and expanded service on west end. Adding 3 runs to most utilized routes. METLink will utilize 6th Ave. N. to service workers at new GSA building. Most utilized route is Grand Avenue route. More service will be put on Grand Ave., extending to 32nd St. W. Will be a bus on Grand Avenue every half hour. Will also change the Central Avenue, Southside, Southwest/Westend routes. Westend run used to be a 27-minute run. Increased to a 50-minute run, but will give service to the Veterans Administration Medical Clinic, the Zoo and Shiloh Crossing. Central run expanded service on southside. Southside route has small changes. Saturday changes similar to daily changes, with the exception of the Central Avenue (S9 Route); will have 2 runs during the heart of the day and will have better coverage of the Southside. New access to the VA, Zoo and Shiloh Crossing area and stayed within budget.
- Pitman: Thanked MET for providing service to VA. Any changes to Heights?
- Stan: No changes.
- Ronquillo: Smaller buses?

- Ron: Bus replacement cycle is behind based on the indecisiveness at the Federal level and State process is slow, so haven't done it yet but plan to buy the next 2 replacements as smaller buses. Are 1/3 lower price than full size.
- McFadden: Will there be bus shelters at the VA and Zoo?
- Ron: Under study as to where the best placements will be for those.
- Public comments:
- Ed Saunders, Lt. Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired and President of the Adjutant of the Disable American Veterans, Billings Chapter 10: Thanked the City for allowing input. Long process to plan these changes. Good to work with MET employees, first-rate people. Gave statistics of DAV van usage providing transportation for Vets to VA medical clinic in Billings. The DAV asked for federal assistance. Participated in the National Academy of Sciences study on transporting veterans, executive summary study pointed out needs for treatment and transportation to get veterans to appointments. DAV participated in distribution and collection of passenger surveys. Received 660 surveys back that indicated public transportation was a priority. DAV understood responsibility to encourage ridership or it may go away. Very pleased with route changes. *Concluded presentation by introducing a number of armed forces delegates that accompanied Lt. Colonel Saunders.*
- Tina Volek: Preparing schedules to implement the changes. Don't need Council's approval for minor route changes.
- Ron: Correct, need Council to change rates or add/drop, but not for making these changes. Changes should occur in August. Will go through the bid process for printing route schedules.

TOPIC #3	BIRD Exposition Gateway Master Plan
PRESENTER	Nash Emerick, High Plains Architects
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Nash Emerick, High Plains Architects: Represented the consultant team that worked on the Expo Gateway Concept Plan and represented the project team. Steering committee worked hard; engaged property owners. Three public meetings were held. Plan transmitted to Council last Friday and is an in-depth analysis of the area and contains recommendations toward achieving goals. On agenda for Council approval on June 24. Four main planning principals: stormwater system improvements; street types and transportation infrastructure, potential roundabout and pedestrian overcrossing; public spaces/parkland/landmarks – connections; and land use. Analyzed the major connector streets (1st Ave. N., 4th Ave. N. and 6th Ave. N.), along with retail streets; identified Expo Drive as the gateway boulevard so it will receive different treatments to provide a nice gateway into the City; 3rd Ave. N. was identified as the signature street for the area and could be developed pedestrian-friendly and welcoming to people staying in the area or here for events and access to amenities in the expo gateway area (similar concept to Broadway downtown); and café corners. Already working on implementation.
- Mayor Hanel: Is there a possibility of traffic exiting Metra at 4th Ave. N.?

- Nash: Abandoned that idea at this point, but a transportation element is being developed and it could be included there.
- Ronquillo: Commissioners said 4th Ave. N. may become an exit. Good plan.
- McFadden: Pedestrian bridge suggestion; place a “Welcome to Billings” sign on the side of it.
- Ronquillo: Any Montana Department of Transportation participation?
- Nash: Yes, had a MDT member on the committee. Continued discussions for highway access.
- Public comments:
- Marty Connell, 2903 Ratcliff Drive, Billings, MT: Property owners surveyed; 21 were yes; 3 were no; 10 with no responses. The railroad companies are reviewing the plan. Will consult the MDT for their approval, they have been very cooperative. A cinema complex, along with lodging and cafes are proposed. An 80-unit workforce housing being discussed. Public Works says that when snow flies in 2014, all infrastructure will be done. Working on annexation, SID, RSID, etc. and property owners know about this planning. Annexations will add \$500,000 in taxes, without improvements.
- Tina: This item is on next month’s Council agenda.

TOPIC #4	Montana League of Cities and Towns Board
PRESENTER	Councilmember Jani McCall
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Jani McCall: Provided a League of Cities report. She has been named as first VP of the League and can no longer represent the City, so need a new representative. Recommended Councilmember Pitman be appointed the new representative and asked for Council support.
- Tina: Should be added to the 6/24 meeting agenda.
- Mayor Hanel: Congratulated Councilmember McCall on her promotion to first VP of the League.
- Public comment: None.

TOPIC #5	Legislative Discussion
PRESENTER	Tina Volek, City Administrator
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Tina: Interim study committees have begun working at the State legislature. Any suggestions from Council about topics for study by the committees? One topic was TIF districts. Are there any others? Ed Bartlett will be attending those meetings.
- Cromley: The topics will be decided by the legislature. Perhaps the topics could be distributed to the Council for further comment.
- Tina: Will ask Mr. Bartlett to work on that.
- Ulledalen: Infrastructure aid to eastern Montana due to growth spilling over from the Bakken area.

- McCall: Studies already assigned. Will get them to Council. Delaying Tina's appraisal until July 2nd.

TOPIC #5	Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- None.

Additional Information:
