

**PARKING ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 8, 2013**

**Members Present:**

Don Olsen, Chairperson  
Mike Craighill

Bob Carr  
Steve Bruggeman

Leticia Moore  
Will Gilbert

**Members Absent:**

Tami Kelling

**Others Present:**

Chris Mallow

Lisa Harmon

Megan Hodson

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

Don stated before the PAB started the agenda, he needed to report Drew Smith has resigned from the Board. Drew felt he was too busy and was missing too many meetings; and therefore, was not performing to his personal standards. Don said there are two vacancies on the Board.

**REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS**

**Elections of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson**

Don stated the PAB Chairperson is also obligated to sit on the Downtown Billings Partnership Board. The DBP meets one Friday morning per month.

Steve motioned to reelect Don as the PAB Chairperson and Leticia as Vice Chair.

Don asked Leticia if she would like to be the Chairperson. Leticia stated she would like to run, but she would not be able to commit to the Friday meetings with the DBP. Don asked if there was any other discussion. Bob asked Leticia if she still wanted to be the Vice Chair. Leticia stated yes. Don said it would be good for Leticia to go to one of the DBP meetings to get familiar with those meetings. Will seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion passed.

**Minutes**

Bob asked for clarification regarding Randy Hafer's comment about having a parking plan for the whole city. Don explained when Randy sat on the PAB, historically the Board was dedicated to parking issues in downtown and by MSU; however, during that time it was expanded to address issues regarding parking all over town. Don stated previously the PAB would not have heard about the parking standards that Randy, Wyeth Friday and Chris Hertz presented.

Chris explained the volunteer officers patrol areas outside of downtown: handicap zones, fire zones, and street enforcement in neighborhoods, such as parked against traffic, sidewalks, and blocking driveways.

The volunteers write the tickets and turn them into the Parking Division, which handles the processing and receives all of the revenue that is generated from the tickets. Chris stated it is a pretty big deal for the City as a whole.

Bob motioned to approve the December minutes. Leticia seconded. All in favor. The motion passed.

### **Monthly Report**

Chris stated there was minimal change in Park 3. Park 1 has jumped 50% in the reserved spaces from the prior month. The roof and covered spaces are getting tight also. With the Northern garage closing on February 1<sup>st</sup>, Park 1 will receive 35 more customers and the garage will be more profitable. Park 2 is still full and has a waiting list.

Leticia stated she is concerned with Park 2 and renting the covered spaces at 120%. The vacancies have allowed Park 2 to work that way in the past, and she believes it will no longer be able to work that way. She is afraid of having tenants coming in to park and not having any available parking spaces. Leticia said they will be moving in another 50 people on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Wells Fargo building soon and she wants to make sure the spaces they are paying for are available. Chris said over time as people give up spaces, a number of them will not be re-rented, therefore eliminating the concern. He wants to make sure whoever is paying for a space has it when needed.

Don asked what it would take to verify who is supposed to be parked where in the garages. Chris said Park 2 is going to re-register all of its cardholders. Leticia stated she would request a list from Park 2 and would reconcile it against her list of cardholders. Steve said he does that twice a year with his cardholders in Park 3. Chris stated Parking will also re-register all of Park 1. He believes by re-registering the garages Parking will have accurate numbers to know how much availability there truly is.

Chris stated the cash sales were up and down with no huge change. He believes the Christmas season was strong downtown, and it helped the cash sales in November and December. The park and shops dropped a little bit. He believes when the public enters Park 2 they can see it is packed with cars, and the perception is that the garage is full, so they just leave. Chris said Park 2 tries to direct the customers to the roof where there is available parking.

Don asked how the general cash flow is currently for the Parking Division. Chris said it is pretty good and at next month's meeting Pat Weber will present a year-to-date budget to more clearly illustrate the cash flow. Chris said Pat believes Parking is within a few thousand dollars of the budget.

### **Metered Zone- (a) Meter type and placement (b) Annual Meter Utilization Review**

Don explained in the light gray area of the "metered zone" map the PAB is allowed to have meters. Leticia stated she is a little disturbed by an email that was sent stating the PAB is required to have meters in that area. Her understanding of the trial was that the PAB was going to reduce the amount of meters and enforcement zone, not add more. The PAB is expected to install parking meters on streets inside the district. Chris said Staff's understanding of Council directive is to have meters in that entire area. Steve said the PAB would need to go back to Council with a recommendation saying there are places they want meters outside the "metered zone" or places they do not need any meters inside the zone. Don stated he thinks there was a lot of confusion with Council, and at the last minute the metered zone map was developed and approved. Personally he thought it was the area the PAB would be allowed to have meters in, but not required to. Mike and Steve agreed with Don.

Leticia stated the enforcement zone will end up being the same size as before and the point was to reduce it. Don said he has a hard time thinking the public will park in the industrial area. It would go back to enforcing meters that are not being used, and the PAB is trying to get away from that happening. Leticia stated Council created a mirror image of what was happening before the trial started.

Will asked if there was a timeline when the meters need to be placed and if it could be pushed back to find out if there is going to be a Parking Commission. Chris said there was no timeline, and he can speak to Bruce about it. Don asked if the Board can wait to put the new meters in, but go ahead and take out the ones they want removed. Chris said he thinks it can happen independently of each other.

Bob asked what the costs are to remove and add meters. Chris said it is about \$140/pole for the steel and the average cost of Streets driving the poles in. Don asked what the meter itself costs. Chris stated a meter costs about \$600-\$700 to replace.

Mike asked, since it appears the Board agrees, if they could go back to Council and explain they do not want to move forward with adding new meters in. Leticia asked why the outlying areas were added to the metered zone. Chris said he was asked to create a 10 hour meter buffer between the 2 hour and the free parking creating a square shape. Steve said the understanding was meters were allowable, but not mandatory. However, Chris said he could eliminate those areas by creating cross hatched, no parking zones when amending the map. Steve said the Board never talked about adding meters; the trial was a meter reduction trial and not a meter issue trial. Leticia said the Board compromised by not getting rid of more meters than what is on the map. Steve believes the Board did not go to Council and advocate for adding more meters. Leticia added the Board went to Council more than once and clearly stated they wanted to reduce meters.

Leticia stated the two goals of the trial were to reduce the enforcement zone, which would reduce expenses, and to increase turn over within the core. She believes the Board achieved both of those goals by where the meters were reduced during the trial. The Board received approval from Council to remove some of those meters. Adding meters back would be counterproductive to what the Board's goals were from day one.

Lisa said part of the trial was to create parking options and turn over in the core and to give the public 10 hour meter and free parking options. Her understanding was that some of the 2 hour meters would be converted to 10 hour meters, but not to add meters. She believes there is still a desire to create more options, and part of that would be 10 hour meter parking. Leticia said First Interstate seems like the only ones who utilize the 10 hour meters because of their placement. Leticia cannot offer that option to her customers, and she stated she doesn't know if the Board should be catering to First Interstate Bank. Lisa also said that since Park 1 became monthly parking only, there are fewer options for employees in that vicinity that are working longer than a two hour shift. Lisa stated the uses for downtown parking are different than other areas of the city.

Leticia said if the Board is going to move the 10 hour meters, they need to be spread out across downtown. Lisa agreed and added pocket areas of 10 hour meters would be good. Steve asked Lisa if she had a recommendation for the placement of the 10 hour meters. Lisa inquired how many 10 hour meters exist. Chris said he will find out how many 10 hour meters are in the gray area and how many are in the area for removal. Lisa said at the all time high, they sold over one hundred 10 hour permits per month. They dropped to seven permits during the trial. Leticia does not think there should be one hundred 10 hour meters. Lisa said a happy medium between 7 and 100 would be good. Lisa added some

employers buy permits for their employees as a perk. She thinks the 10 hour permits still need to be maintained.

Lisa said the survey results showed the public were happy with the trial.

Mike motioned to remove the 2 hour meters, leaving the 10 hour meters as is, outside of the designated metered zone while Lisa gets feedback regarding the demand for the 10 hour meters from her clients. In the meantime, the PAB can see what happens with the removal of the 2 hour meters. It might end up that 2 hour meters in the core become obsolete and can be converted into 10 hour meters. Steve seconded the motion. Leticia suggested not selling any more permits in advance until the Board decides how many 10 hour meters are going to remain. Chris will make a current 10 hour meter map. All in favor. Motioned passed.

### **BID Parking Plan**

Don wanted to clarify that the BID Parking Plan, Parking Master Plan, and the Alternative Management Report are similar, and the Board is going to address all of these items at once.

Lisa presented the BID Parking Plan. She explained that Council members felt the BID should be active alongside the PAB with addressing parking issues, such as enforcement and the parking fund, which began to surface about a year ago. She said she avoided it as long as possible, because she felt parking is very complex and she wanted to remain an ad-hoc member rather than be actively involved.

Lisa did say that the BID will respond to a Parking Commission RFP if it is issued.

She explained that she first created a Power Point regarding downtown parking. She asked for input from her members about their concerns and suggestions. The members were concerned that they invest a lot to downtown, such as purchasing buildings and bringing business downtown. Therefore, the members have an interest in promoting downtown positively. So how can they change the public's negative perception of parking into an amenity to downtown? The members also voiced concern about limited parking resources to support office development, and retail and restaurant businesses, as well as how to infuse technology into parking.

Next Lisa spoke with her colleagues in other areas about National Best Practices for parking. Most of them felt there are a lot of opportunities for a downtown district working with a City to manage parking. She explained the BID does work with the City to a degree; for example, the 10 hour permits and token program. Bruce McCandless and Lisa have traveled to other districts across Montana and have found Billings is lacking a comprehensive plan for parking in downtown. The Parking Plan will assist the BID to understand parking and to appropriately respond to whatever City Council decides to do. Lisa believes the bottom line is figuring out how to compose parking into an economical development tool. Parking has changed so much over the years, and it can further the downtown goals of revitalization of downtown.

Lisa created the report with Dennis Burns, from Kimley-Horn and Associates, to help her Board understand that in order to get involved in parking there will need to be a strategic and comprehensive plan and focus to parking. She hopes the community, Council, and Parking Staff could join with the DBA, DBP, and the BID to create and deliver the best parking system for downtown Billings and its surrounding areas. The BID hopes the PAB would read the plan and feel that it is a good starting point.

## **Parking Master Plan discussion**

Lisa explained there is no master plan for Parking. There is an old master plan for the downtown that is 15 years old. In that plan, Parking is one page long. Lisa believes it would be a great opportunity to involve the whole community of Billings to create a Parking Master Plan with a goal of economic development which would include event, retail and residential parking. She also believes the PAB should bring in a Parking Professional to help them write the strategic plan for Parking.

Lisa said Cedar Rapids is a good example of a Parking Commission and asked the Board to look at the Cedar Rapids website (Park Cedar Rapids). Together their Chamber, their downtown district, and an economic development organization run all of the programs for their city, with the downtown district managing the parking system.

Lisa also spoke about the Vision Plan, which is separate from the Parking Plan. She explained one of the challenges when writing the vision plan was parking.

Don stated parking is a life blood for downtown. The PAB paid Rich & Associates to help the Board with making a plan, and they were not pleased with what was suggested. He believes the Board has done a good job so far with the information given to them. Steve said they need a facilitator to help them with strategic planning as opposed to just writing a plan. The PAB has a lot of data they can bring into the mix, such as the Rich report. They need to build a framework for economical development.

Chris said, in the future to get new data, there have been communities that have reached out to the Universities. Don said they would need to be well managed so it would have some credibility.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Empire Parking Garage Update**

Don said the contracts have been signed and the Windsor Court building is being torn down first. Chris said Northern Industrial went back into the building and tested for asbestos spreading from the vandalism. It was contained to the one room that the asbestos wrapped pipe was in. On Montana Avenue with the lane closure traffic cannot turn left onto North 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Don said the trees were also cut down. Chris said the alley relocation is gearing up and construction is starting. Chris said they are preparing to sell bonds in late February. Once Sletten has exhausted the amount of money they have available to them, Sletten will stop and wait for the bond proceeds. The condo documents are being worked on and the pre-demolition is wrapping up.

### **Alternative Management Report**

Don stated a Parking Commission seems to be the most logical. Steve agrees with Don and believes the ball is in Council's court. The PAB has informed Council on two different occasions they support a commission.

Don wants to know if the Board wants to have any involvement in the transition. Steve said as long as the Board is in an advisory capacity, they have to be involved. Lisa stated historically someone, if not several, has to be on that Board. The PAB can help Council go in the direction they are interested or advise them why it is not a good idea. He believes Council needs to start the ball rolling on developing a commission.

Chris said Bruce McCandless has been doing the work on the commission. City Council asked to see a resolution creating the commission and an idea of the transition plan to get from a City service to a commission service. Bruce told Chris the most reasonable time would be the start of the fiscal year, which is July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mike asked how the parking commission would fund the building of another parking garage. Don said the commission would work the same as Parking currently does, by funding from bonds or the tax increment district. The only difference the commission would have is the right to approve such a project. City Council has check points for the commission and can still shut it down.

Don asked if Bruce could come to the next meeting and present what he has regarding the commission. Leticia asked if the Board could also invite Council members because the Board cannot move forward without some sort of conclusion between the groups.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Signage at Existing Parking Garages**

Don said the signage in the Empire Garage is going to be more comprehensive and intelligent. They would like consistent signage within all of the garages. Don would like this item to remain on the agenda for upcoming discussion.

### **Downtown Alliance Report**

Lisa said there have been a lot of changes in downtown. They have three new employees working with them, Kastina Benoit-Executive Assistant, Natasha Potratz-Events Coordinator, and Toni Humphry-Communications Manager. There is a Merchant Membership meeting at the end of January, which will be a meet and greet with the new staff. Lisa explained, with the Empire Garage project, they have used a lot of their resources and have fewer resources to accomplish some of the DBA's goals set forth in their visionary summary. It is going to take a lot of collaboration and partnerships to get stuff done in downtown. The Purple 5k run and Crazy days are coming up.

### **Informational Items**

Don said Greg asked the Board to discuss the Northern Hotel's valet parking. Lisa asked the Board if the valet parking could use the Skate Park lot to park the vehicles for the Northern Hotel's valet service. Chris explained the idea would be to put a fence to restrict access to the parking lot. Greg believes they would be able to meet the requirements for the amount of spaces needed and be able to get to the Northern Hotel in the allotted time. Leticia asked how many spaces were in the parking lot. Chris said he believes there are 120 spaces and the valet parking only needs 110 spaces. Greg is going to talk to the owner of, and businesses in, the L&L Building and Inter-Faith Hospitality Network about using the parking lot. Leticia asked what other security is in place besides the fence. Lisa said Greg has 24 hour security as part of the budget. Don asked if they were just looking for conceptual support from the PAB. Chris said yes. Leticia motioned conceptual support for the parking lot and to recommend other parking options for the patrons who currently use the lot. Will seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

Don wanted to add a discussion to next month's agenda regarding signage on the parking meters that would inform patrons when they must pay the meter and when they are free.

Chris said Parking added a decal on top of the meters that explains the meter shuffling ordinance. They are bright orange and go around the top of the dome.

Lisa asked if the sign could be moved on Park 1 that says monthly card holders only. Chris said he will look into it.

**Adjourn:**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

