

**PARKING ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
April 9, 2013**

**Members Present:**

Don Olsen, Chairperson  
Mike Craighill

Will Gilbert  
Steve Bruggeman

Leticia Moore

**Members Absent:**

Bob Carr

**Others Present:**

Bruce McCandless  
Megan Hodson

Lisa Harmon

Chris Mallow

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

**REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS**

**Minutes**

Leticia moved to approve the March minutes. Steve seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

**Monthly Report**

Chris stated in Park 1 additional spaces were rented. Park 2 saw a loss in the number of rented spaces, which he believes is due to the over renting of spaces. He has directed Staff to bring down the occupancy of Park 2, so monthly parkers are able to find a space. There was no change at Park 3.

Chris said the cash sales are up for the month of March vs. February, but down from the prior year. Park and Shops, validations, and token usage are also up from the previous month. He said overall, March was a busy month.

Don asked what how many spaces are available for hourly parking in Park 2 and Park 3. Chris said there are 135 spaces in Park 2, and 65 spaces in Park 3. The garage roof is used for hourly overflow. Don asked if it is correct that Park 2 has 120 more hourly spaces than the Empire Garage. Chris said yes.

**Parking Garage Rate Proposal**

Chris said last year the Board looked at raising the garage rates along with the rate increase for the fines and meters. He decided to bring this item forward for discussion pertaining to the removal of the \$100,000 TIF transfer. Chris also stated Council has previously wanted to charge different rates for the parking garages. He explained the garages that have the highest demand should have higher rates than the least demanded garages. He prepared a rate proposal of what the rates would look like, and to cover the \$100,000 transfer.

Chris asked Pat Weber if the transfer was tied in with the refinancing of Park 2 and if it is contractually obligated revenue. Chris said it is not specified if the transfer has to exist for the refinance of Park 2. Chris said that Pat advised that if the transfer is taken away, it should be replaced with another source of income.

Chris said another goal is to build up the Parking Reserve fund. The Reserve fund use will be limited to Capital Projects and maintenance.

Chris explained the rate structure for FY14 - Park 2 and Park 3 would increase by 10% for all spaces. For FY15, Parks 1, 2 and 3 would increase by 10% for all spaces. The current average rate for roof spaces in Park 1 and Park 2 is \$24.75/month, and would increase to \$27.50/month. Steve asked when the increase would start. Chris said July 1, 2013.

Don said he would like to separate the two items, the \$100,000 transfer and the garage rate increase. Don asked for clarification on the \$100,000 TIF transfer and if it is tied to Park 2 or the Empire Garage. Bruce said Chris still needs to research it, but he believes the transfer cannot be tied to the Empire. The Empire Garage fund is from the TIF, and does not depend upon the Parking fund. Lisa said she remembers the transfer being tied to the refinance of Park 2. Chris said his recollection is that the transfer is not legally obligated for the Park 2 refinancing, but Parking had to show revenues/expenses. The transfer was to help Parking sustain the revenue/expenses. Chris said he would double check with Pat regarding this.

Steve asked if Pat's recommendation was required to replace the transfer with a new source of revenue. Chris said it is just a recommendation. Chris said over the two years the rate increase would generate over \$200,000.

Mike asked Leticia since she has a lot of clients that rent from her, if the rate increase would be a burden on her. Leticia said it would be a big burden on the tellers at Wells Fargo. She has heartburn over the roof and the reserved spaces. She said the Board has not increased the rates on the roof and covered spaces in the last six years. The Board has recently raised the reserved spaces incrementally over a period of five years. This would be another increase on that class, and she believes there is not a huge demand for reserved spaces. Leticia said if the reserved rates increased, her tenants would most likely move to covered. In her opinion the wages in Billings are not justifiable for the reserved rates to increase. She thinks the Board should try it and in six months if those spaces do not sell, then the Board should switch them to non-reserved.

Don said he would like to see Park 2 and Park 3 increase, but not Park 1. He would like to first start with the Empire Garage rates, and then follow with Park 2. Steve said he does not disagree with the increase, but believes the timing is an issue. He stated the Board has not seen the rates for the Empire Garage yet. He thinks there will be some shifts when the Empire opens, and the Board should wait before increasing the rates. Steve also stated with the Board adding more signed 10 hour zones, in-turn could create people coming out of the garages and moving to those areas. He would like to wait and look at everything as a whole. Steve said his recommendation is to table this for a year and let all of the projects get completed.

Chris said with FY14 balancing there is no financial need to do anything like there was the previous year. Mike asked if the TIF transfer happens July 1. Chris said he does not know when the transfer happens. Leticia said her only concern is waiting a year to discuss this item, and then only giving the customers a

three month notice. She would like to give at least a six month notice, especially the lower income people because it affects their budgets more.

Steve asked if the proposal would go before Council. Chris said yes. Steve thinks the Board should have more of an educational proposal to give to Council. Lisa asked Chris if there was revenue coming in from the Empire Garage on his budget. Chris said yes, and is based on the current rates. He said for five months the revenue showed approximately \$50,000. Steve said the rates for the Empire Garage would be justified because it is a new garage. Leticia stated her concern would be charging more for the Empire when it is all automated. She believes it should not be more expensive because Parking is not paying for a garage attendant.

Mike asked Chris if he could find out from Pat how strong the recommendation is to replace the TIF revenue, and if the revenue from the Empire Garage could help replace the loss. Chris said yes. Lisa asked how Billings' parking garage rates compare to Bozeman and Missoula's rates. Chris said Billings is below Missoula and Bozeman.

Steve said the Parking reserves are becoming healthier and the Board should wait a couple years before removing the transfer. There needs to be more data gathered to compare the garages and the rates that need to be set. Don stated with the TIF being broke, the Board needs to keep this in mind. The Partnership helped Parking out with the transfer, the Empire Garage, and has helped with major improvements for downtown.

Mike motioned to table this item for six months. Leticia seconded. All in favor. Motioned passed.

### **Handicap Parking Policy**

Chris said there have been discussions regarding the Handicap parking in the Empire Garage. The Empire will have an automated system, which means no parking attendant. Currently, a person who has a valid handicap placard or plate can park in the garages for free. Chris said Parking does that to comply with City Code, and provide accommodations to handicap patrons. The automated system for the Empire will not have the human element, but everyone will need some sort of verification of payment or validation upon exiting. He said there is no way to simply let handicap patrons out. Chris wants to take a look at treating everyone the same in all of the garages, which means making handicap patrons pay for parking in all of the garages.

Chris also mentioned handicap patrons parking on the street. He said per City Code handicap patrons do not have to pay a fee to park on the street, and do not have to abide by time regulations. Chris said he has spoken with other cities in the region and handicap patrons are not charged a fee. The other cities do comply with the time restriction though. Chris said he spoke with Anne Guest (from Missoula) and Paul Burns (from Bozeman), and that is how they do it in response to Handicap Advocacy groups coming to them. The groups said they wanted to be treated the same. Chris said he precipitated the Empire Garage as being a universal change in how Parking handles handicap parking in downtown.

Chris said this would require a change to City Code Section 24-443(c). Chris said he would propose amending the language to read the handicap patrons are exempt in having to pay, but have to comply with the time regulations. He said this will allow consistent treatment in the downtown area. Chris said there have been complaints regarding handicapped employees parking at meters all day. Mike asked how this will be fixed with the Empire Garage. Chris said the option would be charging a rate for

handicap parking in the garage. Don asked why the City approved not charging for handicap parking. Chris said he spoke with Terry Smith from Engineering and he could not remember why.

Chris said he would propose handicap patrons could park for free at a meter space, but would have to obey the time limits. Steve asked if this would go before Council. Chris said yes, because it would change the Municipal City Code.

Leticia asked if there are enough handicap spaces in the downtown area. Chris believes there are enough to accommodate. Leticia added she does not understand why the City allows handicap patrons to park at meters for free when there are enough handicap spaces. Mike believes there would be inconsistency. He said if the handicap patrons prefer to park on the street, but cannot find a parking spot, then they would have to park in a garage. In-turn it went from free to having to pay. Don said there are parameters for being able to get out of a car, a wheelchair, and through some safe mechanism get to the sidewalk. He believes in theory it is creating a very un-safe situation for a person in a wheelchair.

Lisa suggested taking one step at a time, and changing the code to adhere to the time regulations for the meters and the signed parking. Mike suggested coming up with a refund system for the Empire Garage. He said the handicap patrons would pay, and then come to City Hall to get a refund. Don said Parking will hopefully build up enough reserves to eventually make all of the garages automated.

Steve asked if a handicap group could come and discuss this item in the future with the Board. Don said there is a consultant group that works strictly with accessibility issues. He said it would make more sense to work with that type of group to resolve this. Chris said he would contact the accessibility consultant and Volunteers of America. He would either write them a letter or invite them to the next meeting to weigh in on this topic.

### **Annual Meter Utilization Review Report Planning**

Chris said he has identified November as a month that is slower to start the annual meter utilization review. He would like to start with the signed 10 minute zones, and figure out if the zones are needed still in front of certain businesses. Don asked if this would be built into Chris' work schedule. Chris said yes. Leticia asked if it would be on the December's or November's meeting. Chris said he would prepare it for the November's meeting.

### **Metered Zone Map- 10Hour Zones**

Don said Lisa and Chris had a meeting regarding the placement of signed 10 hour zones around the downtown area. They created a buffer zone creating long term free parking, long term parking which a fee would be paid, and short term meter parking in the core. Chris said he looked at the most heavily used areas first, and North 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North stuck out. Lisa said when they looked at where the garages are placed, employees who work in the area between Montana Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and North 30<sup>th</sup> Street to North 31<sup>st</sup> Street, there are no garages available for the employees to park in. She said there is a need for employee parking in that area.

Steve asked how many signed 10 hour signs would Parking be installing. Chris said Parking would add about 40-50 spaces. Leticia asked if enforcement would be increased then, and if the parkers would need a tag to park in those areas. Chris said it would be signed 10 hour by permit, so the enforcement officers would have to go through and do a visual check. If the vehicle does not have a permit it would then get a ticket. There would be no chalking and checking involved. Leticia said theoretically, it would need to be checked a couple times a day. She believes one of the points of the meter trial was to reduce

enforcement rather than increase it. Leticia also added she had a concern regarding east of North 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Chris said the area between 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North and North 25<sup>th</sup> Street and North 24<sup>th</sup> Street were identified as taking out the meters and replacing them as signed 10 hour parking. Leticia said that would be helpful.

Don asked what the plan for Minnesota Avenue is. Chris said the plan calls for 2 hour diagonal parking on Minnesota Avenue, but also calls for 10 hour metered diagonal parking on the cross streets. He spoke with Terry Smith and Erin Clauch about the map. They said with the number of curb cuts with diagonal parking it would not gain much space. Chris said diagonal parking may not be feasible. He would like to take the 10 hour parking down further to South 25<sup>th</sup> Street and South 26<sup>th</sup> Street.

Steve asked if Parking would be increasing enforcement significantly with adding the signed 10 hour zones. Chris explained the sections the enforcement officers patrol. There are three sections; east (North 27<sup>th</sup> Street to North 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Montana Avenue to 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North), which includes the hospital corridor, center (North 27<sup>th</sup> Street to the east side of North 29<sup>th</sup> Street and Minnesota Avenue to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue North), and west (North 29<sup>th</sup> Street to Division Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue North). He spoke with the enforcement officers and they believe they could include it in their route.

Leticia said she had a meeting with Board members of Billings Clinic and they have been receiving tickets while attending their board meetings. She told the Board members she is against enforcing the hospital corridor because it is private and the hospitals are benefiting from a City service without having to pay for it. She would either like to see the hospitals pay for the service or stop enforcing the area. Steve said the permits for parking at the signed 10 hour zones will generate a little revenue and might help with the extra enforcing. Leticia said if enforcement is having a hard time juggling between the signed 10 hour zones and the hospital corridor, then enforcement should skip enforcing the hospital corridor.

Mike asked exactly what was enforced in the hospital corridor. Chris said the handicap zones, meters, and signed parking. Leticia said enforcing in that area is not necessarily great for the patients who park for 2 hours and end up staying longer. Lisa said there is that same risk in the core for dining and shopping. Leticia said it is a patient receiving medical care not two ladies having lunch. She added that the Hospital Board members' goal is to give the highest quality care to their patients. Chris said he spoke with Mitch Goplin from Billings Clinic and the reason for enforcing the hospital corridor was to stop employees from parking where the patients are supposed to park.

Chris explained enforcement would check in the morning the signed 10 hour zones and after lunch. He said the 10 hour meters were easy to enforce because an expired meter would be flashing, so enforcement would park and walk the block. He believes enforcing the signed 10 hour zones would be enforced the same way, by parking and walking. Chris thinks it would take only 10 minutes to walk a block. Will asked why enforcement would walk and not drive. Chris said specifically with diagonal parking the enforcement officers are behind the vehicle, and it is hard to see the permit hanging. Mike asked if there could be stickers made and placed on the back window of the vehicles. Chris said he would look into it.

Don said the Board originally wanted free parking closer to the core, and this would move it further out. Chris said yes it would move free parking to North 32<sup>nd</sup> Street instead of North 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

Steve asked if there are more signed 10 hour parking spaces than there were 10 hour meters. Chris said Parking would add about 50 spaces. He said some of the areas would preserve the current 10 hour parking, so it is only adding a few more into the southwest area.

Lisa asked if the signed 10 hour zones on North 31<sup>st</sup> between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North would create a problem with the surrounding businesses. Chris said yes it could cause a problem, and currently it is free parking. Leticia said the Board is increasing enforcement instead of reducing it. Steve asked about eliminating the proposed signed 10 hour zone on North 31<sup>st</sup> Street between Montana Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, and only placing the signed 10 hour zones in the areas where there were 10 hour meters.

Don asked Lisa why it would be easier to go to signed parking instead of metered parking. Lisa stated it would be easier to enforce and there is no collection of the meters. She also said signs are cheaper than meters. Chris said he would suggest putting signed 10 hour zones on the south side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North between North 30<sup>th</sup> Street and North 31<sup>st</sup> Street because there are 10 hour meters on the north side of the street. Leticia asked if Good Earth would be okay with that decision. Don stated Good Earth liked having the free parking for their employees during the meter trial, since they are not allowed to park in Good Earth's parking lot. Chris said it would give the surrounding businesses options.

Steve asked if the motion he made the previous month was taken to Council yet. Chris said he thought the Board was not done making decisions regarding the meter map before taking it to Council.

Leticia asked if the inventory would increase by adding in the signed 10 hour zones. Chris said the inventory would increase by 30 spaces. Leticia believes the Board should not be adding more inventory. Don agreed with Leticia. Lisa said there is a reduction in the 10 hour permits, and does not believe it would be adding more.

Don asked if the Board wanted to go from meters to signed parking. The Board agreed with signed parking. Leticia asked if the Board could leave the 10 hour meters in the metered zone, and put signed 10 hour parking where the 10 hour meters would be removed outside of the metered zone. Lisa said the Board should capture the parking on the east side of downtown because there are businesses expanding in that direction. Don asked if the Board wanted to take the block of North 24<sup>th</sup> Street to North 25<sup>th</sup> Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North out of the metered zone. The Board agreed to remove it out of the metered zone and make it signed 10 hour parking.

Will motioned to install 10 hour parking signs wherever there are 10 hour meters on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North between North 31<sup>st</sup> Street and North 32<sup>nd</sup> Street; North 31<sup>st</sup> between 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North; 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North between North 31<sup>st</sup> Street and North 32<sup>nd</sup> Street; and the north side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue between North 30<sup>th</sup> Street and North 31<sup>st</sup> Street. Also to remove from the metered zone 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North and North 24<sup>th</sup> Street to North 25<sup>th</sup> Street to create signed 10 hour zones, and leave the meters on North Broadway between 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. Mike seconded. All in favor. Motioned passed.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Empire Parking Garage Update- (a) Empire Signage Proposal Update (b) Empire Garage Space Designation and Waiting List**

Chris explained A.D. Creative Group put together a signage proposal for the Empire Garage. A.D. Creative worked with the Northern Hotel, and is familiar with the area. Chris said he met with Eric Finstad and the Sletten representatives to discuss a more expanded scope. He said Mr. Finstad will be writing a more expanded marketing communications strategy. It will include branding, way finding signs, overall better signage, and an optional independent website.

Don asked if there is budget available for the signage. Chris said there is working capital. Don said some should be included into the Empire budget. Lisa asked if the PAB will be able to see and discuss the signage for the garage. Chris said yes.

Don said there are a total of 540 spaces in the Empire Garage, and 344 spaces are available to the general public. Chris said he has developed a waiting list for the people who have come forward and want spaces in the garage. The current waiting list has 332 demanded spaces. He does not know exactly what kind of space they are requesting yet.

Don said there needs to be a portion designated for hourly. Chris explained his recommendation would be 60 of the 344 spaces be designated as hourly. He said that is less than Park 2 and close to Park 3. He said the first few levels of the garage will have the Northern Hotel owned spaces on one side and the City owned on the other. Lisa asked if the 60 hourly spaces would accommodate the street level retail stores. Chris said the 60 spaces were based on percentages and his assumptions on how the Northern's spaces would be used.

Chris said that also leaves 65 roof spaces, and 263 covered spaces sold at 120%. Leticia said the Board could agree with at least 60 spaces for hourly. Chris said he will bring this back next month with all the number of spaces allocated.

### **Alternative Parking Management Report Update**

Bruce said the City Charter amendment ordinance is on City Council's April 22<sup>nd</sup> agenda. He said it is moving forward.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Downtown Alliance Report**

Lisa said the BID is introducing weekend hospitality shifts. There will be purple people on Friday and Saturday night from 5-9pm traveling in pairs. All of the staff for the DBA are CPR, first aid, and AED certified. She also said the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Purple 5k were a huge success.

### **Informational Items**

Don said he would like to add some items to the agenda for May's meeting. He would like to discuss the layout of the 27<sup>th</sup> Street North parking lot, the Parking Master Plan, and a discussion on the Northern Valet and how it is impacting Minnesota Avenue.

Chris said he started a conversation with Bruce Hill at Yellowstone Electric regarding the operating systems in the garages. The Empire Garage will have a new system and the other garages will be operating on a different system. He said the Empire Garage system will be a lot better for reporting capabilities and control functions. Chris said the system that is currently used in the garages is no longer supported by the vendor. He would like to phase in the other garages with the new operating system.

Don asked how much it would cost. Chris said it would be between \$60,000 and \$75,000 per garage. He said Park 2 would be a little more than Park 3 because of more devices. Chris said this is also the same system the Airport uses.

**Adjourn:**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.