

**PARKING ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
October 16, 2012**

Members Present:

Don Olsen, Chairperson	Bob Carr	Tami Kelling
Mike Craighill	Steve Bruggeman	Will Gilbert

Members Absent:

Leticia Moore	Drew Smith	Chris Mallow
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Others Present:

Bruce McCandless	Lisa Harmon	Greg Krueger
Megan Hodson		

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS

Minutes

There were no minutes to be approved.

Monthly Report

The monthly report was tabled until next month.

Meter Trial Report

Don stated City Council did not reject the trial but wanted more information from the PAB to move forward to make a decision.

Don said the first item was the poll that Lisa and Chris sent out. It came back very supportive of the meter trial. Lisa said they sent it to 400 people around the downtown area and it was live online for about eight days. The people that were polled were able to leave comments, and most people found it easy to park in downtown Billings during the trial. Some people did mention for free parking they had to arrive fairly early to get a parking spot. The survey concluded a need for more 10 hour meters. Lisa explained she feels that reducing meters and offering free parking is a good strategy. Bruce and Lisa would like to take the results from the survey and implement them; for example, a little less free parking and a little more 10 hour meter parking.

Lisa and Bruce think there should be better marketing on where to park downtown. Greg explained he was pleased to see the comments were positive instead of being negative. Steve stated he believes the trial was a success, and by gathering all of the information together, the survey says the same thing. Lisa said in the future, she would like to send a mass survey to people all over Billings, not just the downtown people, which would be about parking in the downtown area in general. Lisa believes receiving mass information would be beneficial. Steve agreed with Lisa and said the educational effort

would help also. Lisa explained marketing parking would play a huge role in educating the public, and she thinks signage is a start. Don agreed signage would be helpful, for example enforcement time of the meters. Mike also stated handicap parking would be another great opportunity to explain.

Lisa stated Council asked for numbers from Chris and wondered if Don had the information. Don said yes. Bruce explained that even though it was not clear on the report, the original meter reduction would net a \$30,000 loss per year. At the same time, Parking eliminated one of the parking enforcement positions and also eliminated two parking attendants. Don said parking enforcement was never intended to be a revenue generator; it was intended to control parking and enforce meters. Don believes if building revenue is the only reason for enforcement, then it is a dangerous path to go down and reinforces the negative perception of parking downtown.

Bruce said it could be explained to Council that even though there may be a net loss from reducing the number of meters, overall parking meters and enforcement still generate more revenue than they cost. Mike also said the Board talked about projections. The meter reduction revenue loss would be stagnant, but enforcement expenses would go up year by year because of personnel contracts. Mike thinks the Board should generate some projections that would make it clearer. Don cautioned the numbers could change based on the fines, number of meters, and if the Board adds more 10 hour spaces.

Don explained the last time he went to Council he reported the PAB thought the trial was a success, but one of the Council members asked how could it be a success if the trial was losing money. Don said the Board needs to give Council an answer to that question. Steve stated the Board has other statistics showing the trial did not take people out of the garages but instead moved people away from the core meters, which was the purpose of the trial. The trial was to balance parking better and create free parking options for people. Mike said the online survey results also show the success of the trial.

Lisa agreed with Don's previous comment that enforcement does not need to make money, but to break even. Steve explained the rates and fines needed to increase to replenish the reserve level. Therefore, with the trial, free parking was offered as an accommodation for the rate increase to people who park downtown frequently. Currently the rates have been increased, yet there is no free parking, and that is not solving the problem. The Board needs to make a place for free parking. Lisa said the trial was a good way to show people a variety of parking options.

Don said it would be helpful if more of the Board could show up for the Council meeting. Steve asked how the Council meeting was going to work. Lisa stated Greg and she will be at the meeting. Bruce said the Board is item 8 out of 11 items after consent and it is not listed as a public hearing. If members of the PAB wish to testify, they can do it at the beginning of the meeting.

Don said there needs to be a consensus. Everyone was going different directions – the PAB, Staff, and the DBP. Don explained Chris supports a concept of a meter zone: a core of some sort, 2 hour meters, 10 hour meters, and free parking.

Bruce asked the Board to look at the map that was attached to the agenda. Bruce explained the concept of the map is to create some kind of shape, whether a square, rectangle, or a circle. The shape the Board picks becomes a boundary, and within the boundary there would be meters and outside the boundary there would be no meters. Inside the boundary Staff and PAB would continue to work on where the signed parking and meters would be. Bruce asked if the Board could accept the concept of

the map; and if the Board can accept the map, is it the right area or should they be shrinking or expanding the area.

Steve thinks there should be free parking closer to the core and does not think it is realistic to have free parking six blocks out. Bruce asked if they would exclude 10 hour meters in the free parking. Steve said yes. Bruce said the main reason 32nd St was included is because of the YMCA. The YMCA liked the free parking, but the other businesses on the block felt YMCA clients were parking there all day. The Board studied the map and decided where to make the boundary line for free parking.

Steve said this would be the recommendation, but it might change on a case by case situation. Bruce explained City Council actually deems where the meters are located. The time limit of the meters is set by the City Administrator, and the City Administrator will delegate that to the Parking supervisor and the PAB. Steve reiterated that he wants to look for an area for free parking closer to the core.

Lisa stated the businesses around First Interstate Bank would like to see 10 hour meters.

Bruce said the primary parking that occurs along 2nd and 3rd Avenues is 10 hour parking, which is largely driven by the Federal Courthouse. Don asked about removing meters on 24th and 25th Streets. Lisa agreed with 24th Street, but not 25th. Staley's and The Housing Authority need more turn over for their clients. Greg said they are starting to see some development on Minnesota Avenue, and the meters should remain so there is turn over. Further, it might be difficult to put the meters back in once they are removed.

Steve believes the map is a starting point. Lisa said with downtown expanding the Board needs to work from the inside out and determine where premium parking is. Bruce stated as Missoula's downtown redevelops and there is more demand for parking, Missoula puts meters in to create parking turn over and thus support the retail businesses.

Bob inquired whether changes made now around the current Library would be reevaluated once the new Library is completed. Bruce stated the parking and the streets around the Library is still to be determined.

Don asked if the Board wanted to make any more modifications to the map. Steve said at Monday's meeting the Board will need to advise Council that they took into consideration the complaints they received when designing the map. Don asked if the Board would have to go to Council for approval if there were an issue and 2 hour signs needed to be placed outside of the zone. Bruce did believe so.

Mike asked if the meters and posts would be removed, and asked if the Board then wanted to put meters back in what would happen. Don explained that most likely would not happen; instead it would probably become a signed 2 hour zone. Bruce said if Parking knows there is not going be meters in that area, they will remove the meter head and the post.

Don said the modified map will be presented to Council with the explanation that the map addresses the complaints the Board has received. Where to place 2, 4, and 10 hour meters will be discussed later on.

OLD BUSINESS

Empire Parking Garage Update

Don said the selection committee went through a long interview process and narrowed it down to three firms. They then narrowed it down to two firms to bring in for interviews. The reason for only the two firms was because the third was too high at 30% over budget and also proposed precast opposed to cast in place concrete. Further, the selection committee did not like the appearance of the building.

The two interviewees, PCL, a contractor out of California, and Sletten, a contractor out of Great Falls who also have offices in Phoenix, gave presentations to the committee. Don said the selection committee then chose to bring Sletten back on Friday. The committee felt there were areas in both designs that needed to be improved. The selection committee will talk with Sletten to see if they can get their cost down a little bit to fit into the budget. The committee liked that Sletten's image looked more local and would fit into the historic look of Montana Avenue. Sletten is a local company and has local architects and engineers. Don said all of those items led the selection committee to pick Sletten.

Bruce said the underwriter thinks the market and the district are good, and the bonds will rate very well and probably get better interest rates. Bruce stated Pat Weber presented to City Council requesting authority for a temporary loan from the general fund for burying the utilities, demolition of the existing buildings, and pre-design of this project before Sletten would be able to start construction. The money would be paid back either by the sale of bonds or the N 27th tax increment district.

Bruce said another item on the Council agenda is to hire CTA as the City's engineer for the utility burying project.

NEW BUSINESS

Downtown Alliance Report

Lisa said also on the Council agenda for the 22nd is amending the Urban Renewal Plan for the North 27th St TIF District that Greg manages. The amendment will add a retail retention recruitment program as part of the urban renewal plan. The Alliance then can watch business plan competition, and work on street level retail and get more tenant mix going.

Lisa said Soo-Ping's last day is the 31st, and the DBA is interviewing currently. Greg added the 31st is the Downtown Trick or Treating and to watch for all of the munchkins.

Bob asked if **Natasha** was new. Lisa said **Natasha** is the new interim Events Coordinator, and she will have to put her resume in for the final position the DBA offers. Tomorrow they start interviewing for the Administrative Assistant position. Lisa explained she is the Executive Director and Greg is the Development Director, Soo-Ping's position is the Administrative Assistant. They are hiring a part-time Communication Manager to handle the web site and Facebook. They are also looking for an Assistant Director for the DBA/Events Coordinator. Lisa would also like to eventually make Joe, the BID supervisor, into the Operations Director.

Greg said they would like to have the three boards (BID, DBA, and the DBP) meet together. The three boards have a lot in common and could do so much more together.

Lisa said Tami took 2nd in the Pumpkin Pie contest for Harvest fest. The Burger Dive took 1st place and Café De Camp took 3rd.

Informational Items

There were none to discuss.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Downtown Billings Proposed Metered Streets

