

**PARKING ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
December 11, 2012**

Members Present:

Don Olsen, Chairperson	Bob Carr	Leticia Moore
Mike Craighill	Steve Bruggeman	Tami Kelling

Members Absent:

Will Gilbert	Drew Smith
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Others Present:

Chris Mallow	Megan Hodson	Chris Hertz
Wyeth Friday	Randy Hafer	

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS

Minutes

Steve motioned to approve the November minutes. Bob seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

Monthly Report

Chris stated there was some standard deviation from November for the Parking garages. Chris explained the cash sales were down for November. He believes this was due to City employees having three days off in the month of November; Election Day, Veteran's Day, and Thanksgiving Day. Chris said around Thanksgiving and getting closer to the holidays things start to slow down. Park and Shop's were down at Park 2, and the Crowne Plaza ticket validations and token usage were also down. Chris believes this is somewhat normal for the month of November and the holiday season.

Don asked if there was an explanation for Park 2 being off for the month of November. Chris believes the Park and Shop and the Crowne Plaza ticket validations are off because there has not been as many seminars this fall at the Crowne Plaza.

Don asked if there was any indication that the free parking during the trial period had any effect on the parking garages. Chris said he has not seen enough information to know for sure if there was a direct affect or not.

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

Don stated everyone on the PAB received an updated map (attached) of what City Council approved as the new metered zone. Don said there are three different zones that need to be addressed: the east fringe, which currently does not have meters but would under the new proposal; north of downtown between 6th and 7th Avenues North, which will have 2 hour and 10 hour meters; and west of downtown, where the majority of the meters, approximately 120, will be removed.

Don stated Lisa and Greg have some concerns regarding placement of 10 hour meters because the new map shows removal of the 10 hour meters by the old telephone company and near the Catholic Church. He said First Interstate Bank likes the 10 hour meters. Further, there has been support for the 10 hour meters to be placed in all the outlying areas.

Don said he added item (b) to the agenda for discussion. He thinks the Board needs to have an annual review to look at meter utilization earlier rather than later. For instance, if there are areas where meters are not being utilized, he would like to have a plan on how the Board would modify the area as opposed to waiting 5 years down the road.

The Board discussed the benefits of free parking vs. 10 hour meters in the outlying area around the core of downtown. The Board looked at the west part of the map, and Don stated there are roughly 130 meters being removed in that area. He stated the 10 hour meters by the telephone company and the Catholic Church get used a lot and that area is going to become “free” parking. The area around the new federal courthouse currently does not have meters, nor does it have efficient parking for the building. Don thinks the Board will start to hear complaints about that area.

The Board voiced concerns regarding the medical corridor area. Minnesota Avenue between South 26th and South 25th Streets, 7th Avenue North and North Broadway, North 25th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues North, and North 26th and North 30th between Montana Avenue and 1st Avenue North were all considered and discussed.

Don asked if the Board would go back to Council and explain they are not putting meters in the “proposed eliminated areas” on the map. Chris said yes. He explained there are no sidewalks or curbs along the north side of Minnesota Avenue between South 26th and South 24th Streets, and that Bruce and he do not feel the area on 7th Avenue North between North 28th and North 27th Streets warrants meters.

Bob asked if any meters have been removed yet. Chris stated he would like Lisa to send out a mass email before removing the meters, and Bob would like feedback from the email as well before the removal. Steve said he would like Lisa’s input regarding where the 10 hour meters should be placed. Don asked if the Board wanted to delay until next month so Lisa could be present. Bob motioned to table the discussion. Leticia seconded. Don said the Board should also have a policy for the 10 hour meters. Leticia said if there is not that much feedback from the email, the Board will need to move forward. All in favor. Motion passed.

Off-Street Parking Regulations- (a) Review and discuss proposed Site Development Code Changes

Chris Hertz introduced himself and explained the history behind the off-street parking regulations. He said about a year ago a committee was formed to take a look at the off-street parking requirements. He handed out some proposed changes the committee is considering making. The changes include revising and establishing parking ratios for certain land/building uses. Some of the uses are outside of the Downtown Business District and the EBURD. Some of the use’s parking ratios have been troublesome throughout the years, for example, furniture stores. Currently, a furniture store is required to have one spot for every 200 square feet of gross floor area. The downtown furniture stores currently do not have anywhere close to that. The committee has proposed to change that. The committee has looked at some other uses as well, such as medical offices outside the medical corridor.

The committee would also like to establish a maximum number of parking spaces the big box stores can create. This is not meant to prevent them from building more parking spaces, but to prevent them from over doing it. The committee also revised the pedestrian access requirements. Currently, by code there has to be five feet in-between buildings and parking spaces. The committee wants to expand that, and also if the business has a fairly big parking lot, they will have to provide better pedestrian access throughout it. The committee also worked on parking lot lighting. The committee also looked at providing a transit offset for certain land usage. If offices buy bus passes, the off-street parking requirement will be reduced by a certain amount. The committee is working with MET Transit, and one of the requirements, for obtaining this “**Transit System Offset**”, will be buying bus passes for three years. This offset allows a parking spot to be reduced for each bus pass purchased. These ideas the committee derived from other cities. The committee referred to the ITE Manual to help determine the parking ratios, which is the transportation manual for parking generation. The committee is also considering whether there should be a requirement for bicycle parking; and if so, they will establish a design standard provision.

One main item that Engineering has done is to revise parking layouts, which set the requirement dimensions for parking stalls and drive aisles; the revisions decrease the length of the parking stalls and the width of the drive aisles. The hope for doing that would help out some of the developments that do not have the width to fit the parking in. There were some areas that the committee discussed that were rejected; one of those items was off-sets for adjacent on-street parking. Another was administrative relief for city offices and the idea behind that was if someone did not have a number of parking stalls, maybe the engineering division could give them administrative relief for variance for parking. Bicycle off-set, motorcycle off-set, and compact stalls were also discussed but never got to a point where they would be off-set.

Chris Hertz said he talked to Terry Smith to set up one more meeting to finalize everything. Then the committee will talk to the DPARB, homebuilders association, and maybe the group of architects. The committee wants to get it out there, and then take it to City Council.

Randy explained the biggest changes will occur outside the downtown area. For example, the new Scheels store, on Shiloh, has an excess of planned parking spaces. The committee would like to curtail that. Steve asked if they envision much for development in the core. Randy said the other areas are way more flexible than downtown. Randy believes that it will help the areas that have been already developed also. Chris Hertz explained Scheels has to conform to the Shiloh Crossing development covenants and they are supposed to share parking. The committee went to Scheels and talked to them about doing a parking variance. Scheels went to them and said no and they are going to build more because their covenant requires them to.

Mike asked about more information regarding the transit off-set. Chris Hertz said the idea is that hopefully the purchased permits will be utilized; however, the committee has no way to enforce it if not. Randy added that hopefully the businesses will use the passes and then keep purchasing them in the future. Chris Hertz said it will change the way MET processes things because they are not set up to sell three years worth of passes.

OLD BUSINESS

Empire Parking Garage Update

Don stated the committee finalized the design. He explained there is a lot of brick as they wanted a historical look to the garage. He showed the Board a final rendering of the design which is pretty accurate of what the garage is going to look like. Bill Honaker and the Northern still have the right of first refusal, but neither have fully committed.

Bob asked if both ends are going to look the same. Don stated they are very similar. The only difference is the stair and elevator tower near the hotel is closer to the alley because it has to serve the Northern Hotel, and there is a sky bridge that attaches to the hotel as well. Bob asked if there is retail space on North Broadway. Don stated North Broadway is the entrance/exit for the garage. The main floor is going to be all retail facing Montana Avenue. Alley Cat will have 25 parking spaces and the Northern Hotel will control 160-180 parking spaces in the garage. Mike asked if there was access to North 27th Street. Don said there will only be one stair tower and no vehicular access from North 27th Street, but to access Bill Honaker's spaces you have to go through the alley.

Don said the schedule is going to get very aggressive right after the 1st of the year. All of the utilities are going to be replaced and the lines will be buried. Shortly after that the Windsor Court building will come down, and then the excavation will start. In February the parking garage will come down.

Bob asked how many spaces are going to be in the new garage. Don stated about 540 spaces.

Steve asked if it accommodated residential on top. Don said it was discussed, but the columns would have to be bigger and the column spacing for a parking garage is different than retail. Combining those reasons, there would be bigger issues with it. Bob asked who was handling the retail and whether the spaces would be purchased or leased. Don said it is all condo and if the spaces do not sell then leasing would be considered. Leticia said they are trying to limit the condos to retail and not commercial. Don said yes, office space would be the last choice.

Leticia asked about the valet parking. Don said the City will be paying for the valet parking with bonds. They are committed to providing valet parking to the Northern for the entire period from demolition to the new garage opening. Chris said the fine details of the valet parking are still up in the air. Don said there is one guy who has shown interest in the valet parking.

Chris said there was a hiccup with the Windsor Court building. Someone cut an asbestos-wrapped pipe and testing is being done to see if any asbestos has been spread. It was a little setback for the process.

The abatement of the Windsor Court building could be double or triple of the original price because asbestos wrapped pipe was cut. It might have spread asbestos and the building needs to be surveyed and tested again. The asbestos was primarily located in the basement.

Alternative Management Report

Because the Alternative Management Report was not on the agenda, Don stated he wants to see it on the agenda going forward even if there is no update. Therefore it was added to the meeting.

He said there has been discussion about the BID becoming the Parking Commission. The BID is pursuing and preparing to take over Parking operations and management. The PAB would be

dissolved, as an advisory board would no longer be necessary.

Bruce McCandless explained Helena combined their BID and Parking Commission and found that they were really at odds with each other. The Parking Commission should be maximizing profits to maintain the operations of the Parking Division; whereas the BID would want to have free parking downtown, because it is good for business. Therefore, Helena will be separating the two again.

City Council wanted the PAB to make a recommendation in regards to a parking commission vs. privatizing. Upon discussion it was determined the PAB supports a commission concept, which they wanted presented to Council. Chris was unaware whether this has been presented yet, and he said he would inquire about it. The PAB stated they would like to be an active participant in the decision and process. Lisa has also informed Steve the BID Board would like to remain active in parking even if they are not chosen as the commission. Don suggested inviting Council members to the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Signage at Existing Parking Garages

Don said this item may stay tabled. He hopes to take the ideas with the Empire garage and Lisa's efforts to develop something that might be applied to the other garages. Don stated the PAB needs to control signage with the garages so it does not look tacky. Chris agreed that some sign standards should be developed.

Downtown Alliance Report

There was no representation from the DBA and nothing was discussed.

Informational Items

Chris said the Empire garage will have two of the utility agreements going before Council. One of the agreements is with Cablevision/Optimum to be executed for an amount not to exceed \$80,000 for the utility relocation with 25% paid to them upon execution for long lead fiber optics. The second agreement is with NorthWestern Energy for about \$400,000. He talked with Walt Backer at NorthWestern Energy who said since the City is providing the conduit channels, the amount should be lower. NorthWestern just needs to order a switching gear which is going to cost \$45,000. Chris said they are trying to get an easement with Bill Honaker for the switching gear to be on his property. The City of Billings also will execute agreements with Integra, Zayo Group (a small fiber optic company), Mid Rivers, MDU, and possibly Century Link.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

