

MISSOULA PARKING COMMISSION

Minutes

February 4, 2016

A Board of Directors' meeting was held in the City Council Chambers, 140 W. Pine at noon. Those attending the meeting were Board members Matt Ellis, Heidi Kendall, John Roemer, Pat Corrick and John Smith. From the Parking Commission office were Geoff Badenoch, Interim-Director and Tiffany Brander, Administrative Services Manager. Also in attendance were Jim Galipeau, JCCS, Linda McCarthy, Missoula Downtown Association, City Council Member Michelle Cares, and Dennis Burns, Kimley Horn. The following members of the public were also present: Dick Ainsworth, Jeremy Watterson, Spencer Wilber, Sue Thompson, Bob Snodgrass, Travis Hoffman, Otis McCullough, Mick Harsell and Jill Gilliam.

Call to Order – John Smith

Introductions and Welcome to those in attendance

Public Comments and Announcements:

John Smith requested that the Board hear general public comments that did not involve the disability policy which would be later addressed in the meeting.

The owner of The Bell Pipe Shop, Otis, informed the Board that his sales for December were less than they were seven years ago and feels that the meters are the cause of this. He stated that the increase in rates and learning curve has been disastrous and he would like to see the rate schedule looked at again. In response, John Roemer stated that the meter project was a decision that had been in progress for over four years with multiple opportunities for public comment. Matt Ellis responded as a Downtown Business Owner that he is of the mind after talking with customers that although there is a learning curve most of the feedback he has received has been overall positive with some negative. He attributes lower revenue amounts to the month of January and not the parking meters. He believes the new fee and rate structure encourages turnover and higher utilization of the parking structures.

The owner of Bagels on Broadway, Sue Thompson, stated that the new meters are going to put her out of business because people now have to pay one dollar to park and get a one dollar bagel. She has had customers come in and say that they will not come back in due to the amount they have to pay to park and the inconvenience of the machines. She is not sure how her business or other downtown business are going to make it because people aren't going to put up with having to pay the meters when they can go somewhere else that has free parking. She stated that she would prefer a different meter system or an old meter that was retrofitted digital head as the new meters make no sense whatsoever.

Jeremy Watterson of Liquid Assets stated that many of his customers are in-and-out customers who are very much displeased with the level of the increase of doubling the minimum rate. He feels that the rate increase is detrimental to businesses.

Jill Gilliam, MPC Toll Booth Collector, as a public citizen, reminded those at the meeting that the first hour of parking in the MPC parking garages is free and is only one dollar per hour after that.

The owner of Bob's Sew and Vac, Bob Snodgrass stated that he has received customer complaints about the new meters not working and not taking their money and telling him not to

expect to see them again. Bob commented that the 100% increase in fees was too high and too quick and the shortest option of 30 minutes is too long and expensive. He noted that Bozeman is a similar city that does not have parking meters. Lastly, Mr. Snodgrass explained that now that the meter posts are gone, the cars are parking further apart and more spaces are being lost due to the winter weather covering the road markings.

The owner of Butterfly Herbs, Steven Cord, reported that his business receives constant complaints every day about how much his customers hate the meters and that they are going to start avoiding downtown. Some of his long-term customers are saying that they won't come back and it isn't due to the fee increase but just dealing with the machine. His customers are saying that they are spending as much time at the meter as it takes them to come in and get their order. Interfacing with the machine is what has got them the most turned off and it's just not worth it to participate with them.

Board members John Smith, Matt Ellis and John Roemer briefly responded and thanked the public for their comments.

Adjustments to the Agenda: None

Approval of Minutes:

Heidi Kendall requests that the first sentence of the second paragraph of page number four be removed.

After brief discussion, Heidi Kendall moved to approve minutes with changes brought forth by herself, John Roemer seconded her motion and the **Minutes of the January Board Meeting held 1-07-16 were approved unanimously with the adjustments as described above.**

Interim Director's Report:

Geoff Badenoch gave a brief report to the Board on the Interim Director's Report that was submitted to the Board via email. He reported that the pay by phone app is being researched and more information will be given at next board meeting. He informed the Board that staff members are looking at other ways for the public to use the LUKE machines which do not include credit or debit cards but in the meantime are letting citizens know that T2 is a level one service provider which keeps their card information safer than when used at a grocery store or gas station without keeping any of their card data. Geoff informed the Board that staff members are looking in to the possibility of shorter periods of meter time, updating and adding signage and creating a new in house mapping system.

John Roemer reported that he parked in front of the Depot Restaurant on a weekend day and noticed that the lease parking only signs around the building do not include the enforcement hours. **John Roemer directed staff that enforcement hours need to be added to the signs in that area.**

Matt Ellis requests that when MPC staff research pay by phone apps that the vender's security be looked in to closely.

Communications and Presentations:

Heidi Kendall states that she requested that the Parking Commission have a spot on the Mayor's calendar and he has agreed to meet with two members of the Parking Commission on the second

Monday of every month with no set agenda. The next meeting will take place on February 8th and Matt Ellis and Heidi Kendall will attend. Heidi agreed to coordinate with the Board Members for future meetings.

Old Business:

A. Update on selection of new Parking Commission Director

Rod Austin has agreed to take the position of Parking Services Director and will begin his employment on March 1, 2016.

Action Items:

A. Disability Parking Policy

Geoff Badenoch explained the background of the MPC Disability Parking policy as well as informed the Board why that policy changed with the change to LUKE parking meters. Geoff stated that the Disability Parking Policy is very important and requests that the Board determine how MPC staff should proceed. After a discussion of the research he has completed, Geoff presented the Board with three policy options to consider. They included: 1) going back to the previous policy which stated that if the parker had an accessible designated vehicle they could park at any metered space for free for up to two hours; 2) That an accessible designated vehicle may park for free only in the designated spaces; or 3) that all parkers (including accessible designated vehicles) will be responsible for paying no matter where they park. Geoff informed the Board that due to ADA regulations we are obligated to make a reasonable accommodation for any parker who is unable to use the system however, we do not have to give special treatment, only a reasonable accommodation. The floor was then opened for public comment.

Travis Hoffman of Summit Independent Living Center indicated that the issue with the new machines is that while they are easier to use for some that is not the case for all. The usability of the machines are no more accessible than the old meters were for people with certain grasping disabilities. If MPC is going to charge, he expects to pay and share in the responsibility, however, everyone has to have the same level of ability and that is where the issue is. His recommendation to the Board was that until such a time comes that MPC can put a mechanism on the new machine for swipe pay technology, invoice disabled parkers, or provide a pay by phone app, that MPC re-implement the previous policy of two hours of free parking in the accessible parking spaces.

Dick Ainsworth informed the Board that walking is difficult for him, particularly in the winter when it is icy. The old method of allowing free parking with placard is a good deal but he doesn't mind paying for parking, it's just that getting to the machines to pay is difficult. He stated that it would be nice if the machines would take dollar coins. In response to Dick's comments, Heidi Kendall asked for him to clarify if he would like to have the hang tag or license plate work in any space or if it would be okay to be limited to the currently identified on street spaces? Dick replied that ideally all spaces but currently accessible spots would be an acceptable half way, he stated the more the better but even just the designated ones would be okay. Travis Hoffman responded by requesting a decal or something for the dashboard that would allow you to pay something every month but not use the LUKE machine, if it could be figured out. He stated that part of the problem is the number of accessible parking places downtown, especially for people who cannot travel long distances. He indicated he would be happy to sit down and brainstorm with MPC, although he feels a good solution would be the mobile pay by phone app.

Jeremy Watterson stated that Portland, Seattle and Spokane do not make people with disability permits pay and Great Falls is only other town in MT that requires it. He requested an explanation as to why the decision was made to change it and felt that the explanation that was previously given was not sufficient.

Spencer Wilber– commented that it is difficult for him to walk to a LUKE machine to pay and while the first hour of free parking in the garage is fine if you are just going to walk around nearby, it does not help for further destinations.

City Council member Michelle Cares asked that the Board repeal the recent disability parking decision and create a specific policy on the topic.

After public comments concluded **Matt Ellis stated a motion as follows:**

1. The MPC disability parking policy be reinstated to reflect two hours of free parking in the marked accessible designated spaces downtown.
2. A committee shall be formed to further discuss and create a new disability parking policy. This committee shall consist of a commission board member, MPC staff members and members of the community.
3. Direct MPC staff to do an analysis of pay by phone options available.

Geoff Badenoch indicated to the Board that it will be challenging for Parking Enforcement Officers to enforce this policy with a two hour limit. Dennis Burns commented that perhaps MPC should look in to mobile license plate recognition to assist. It would be expensive but an option to assist in enforcement.

Pat Corrick moved to amend section one of Matt Ellis' motion to state the policy be reinstated to reflect two hours of free parking in all metered parking spaces downtown as long as a disability plate or hang tag is displayed. **Matt Ellis' motion was unanimously approved with the amendment as suggested by Pat Corrick.**

B. MPC Bylaws

Geoff Badenoch reports to the Board that the MPC Bylaws have not been revised since 1996 and encourages them review and make any necessary updates. He suggested that the Board appoint a committee of two to review, update, tweak, and take a look at the Bylaws to make sure they are serving the Board and what the Board agreed to do.

John Smith and John Roemer volunteered to serve on the committee. They welcome other Board members to send any edits or comments their way. .

Pat Corrick mentioned that currently, if there is a tie after someone has already been excused from the vote, the person who is excused is then forced to vote. He would like to see a fifth person come in to replace the person who recused the vote if possible.

Non-Action Items:

Matt Ellis would like see that before the summer hits the Board find a way as a group to do some brainstorming on a five or ten year plan which would help in decision making discussions. He would like to open up the meetings to some of MPC's stakeholders to make it a good discussion board where planning can be done. John Roemer stated that he would support that.

Financial Statement:

Jim Galipeau gave the Board a brief update on the December financial statement. He informed The Board that he and his associate Brenda Peyton met with Tiffany Brander to discuss the financials of the Parking Commission and some changes that will need to occur due to the new system of meter collection. Currently there is not a lot of change from the meter revenue standpoint due to the transition period and it will take a while to see any changes or trends. Parking tickets over the last five years have continued to go down along with ticket revenue. However, Lease revenue is up quite a bit with the addition of the Park Place structure. Jim notes that expenses after the staffing changes seem to be going back to normal and December is overall positive in comparison to last year.

Setting of next meeting date and adjournment

Next Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 3, 2016 (Jack Reidy Conference Room)

Respectfully submitted,

Tiffany Brander
Administrative Services Manager