

CITY MANAGER REPORT

February 24, 2010



PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT CO-LOCATION WITH PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT AT FORMER PARKSIDE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION BUILDING

As planned in the FY10 budget adopted last year, the Planning and Building Department will move into the former Parkside Federal Credit Union building by April 1st when their lease at the Stampede Square building expires. As city staff discussed some of the ramifications of the Planning and Building Department layoffs, one aspect was that, with only one receptionist/customer service person left at Planning and Building, there is no back up for this position in case of vacation or illness.

During these discussions, Parks and Recreation Director Karl Cozad, who also experiences a problem with receptionist/customer service back up, offered to consider locating at the former Parkside Federal Credit Union building with Planning and Building. In discussions last year, when we were closing on the purchase of Depot Park, Karl had not wanted to occupy the Parkside building alone as he would not have any receptionist/customer service backup and it was too big of a building for only Parks and Recreation. However, as we all discussed the layoffs and reduction in personnel at the Planning and Building Department and their relocation, Karl offered to co-locate with Planning and Building.

After thinking about the ramifications of such a relocation, we have decided to go ahead and do that relocation of Parks and Recreation offices, at least until such time in the future when Planning and Building Department staffing levels increase. The relocation will involve Karl Cozad and his staff person Kelley Auclair. There is sufficient room in the former Parkside Federal Credit Union building for both Planning/Building and the Parks/Recreation front office functions and the co-location will provide receptionist/customer service support for both departments.

TEMPORARY PARKING LOT AND LEASE PARKING CHANGES FOR CENTRAL AVENUE CONSTRUCTION

As part of the 200 Block of Central Avenue reconstruction which is scheduled to begin on April 5th, we are planning to make some changes to the parking arrangements in the two, temporary parking lots that we have leased in the downtown area. The two parking lots are the lot across from City Hall and the lot at the northeast corner of 3rd and Spokane. A map showing the the two parking lots and the proposed changes is attached to this report.

For the lot across from City Hall, we are planning to change that lot from the current use of unlimited parking to 2 hour limited parking. Doing so will provide more short-term, close in parking for the spaces we are losing in the 200 Block of Central Avenue during construction. At the same time, we would change the use in the parking lot at 3rd and Spokane from being ½ leased and ½ two hour parking to unlimited. This lot, which is not very heavily used for shopping, would then accommodate parking for longer than 2 hour shopping, employee parking, and locals parking.

I have talked with the owner's representative of the lot at 3rd and Spokane, Paul Johannsen, and he is fine with the change as long as we maintain a lease payment, the level of which we are still discussing. I have also talked with the only remaining paying lessee of spaces in that parking lot, Stephen Isley and Cindy Just of Isley Jewelry and they are okay with the change as well. Paul Johannsen was also provided with 10 lease spots as part of the compensation for the prior lease on that parking lot.

We have to revise the signage in each of these lots prior to April 5th, so if the Mayor or Council have any concerns with this change, please let me know. I think this new arrangement will open up more close-in shopping parking and still address longer term parking needs with the parking lot at 3rd and Spokane which is currently under used.

MEETINGS

Central Avenue Reconstruction Neighborhood Meeting (2/17) – John Wilson and I attended the first construction preparation meeting with the merchants and property owners in the 200 Block of Central Avenue. This project is planned to begin on Monday, April 5th. Ryan Mitchell and Brandon Theis of Robert Peccia and Associates went through the construction process and schedule with the citizens who showed up. There will be another such meeting on March 23rd from 6-8 p.m. in the City Council chambers.

Park Board Sub-committee on City Beach property acquisition (2/19) – John Phelps, Karl Cozad, and I met with the Parks Board sub-committee members to discuss how to proceed on this project. We plan to meet with Joe Basirico on Thursday, 2/25 to continue discussions. Joe represented the City during the prior negotiations to purchase the lot when it went to the voters for an election.

Health Insurance Committee (2/22) – As an ex-officio member, I attended the meeting of the employees' Health Insurance Committee. We heard a presentation from a MMIA representative on possible rate increases and on benefit plan changes. The committee voted to continue with MMIA for our medical, dental, and vision insurance program.

Meetings later this week – On Thursday, I will attend a WAVE Board meeting as I am a designated board member. Also, Thursday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. at the Library meeting room is a citizen meeting with Montana Department of Environmental Quality employee Matthew Kent regarding the BNSF railyard clean-up project.

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Sunday, February 28th – Special Olympics opening ceremonies and parade

REMINDERS

March 11th, 2010 - 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm: Design Meeting No. 2 for 1st Street & Central Avenue (000 & 100 Block) – at Library Meeting Room – 1st and Spokane.

March 23rd, 2010 - 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm: Neighborhood Meeting No. 2 for Central Avenue (200 Block) – at City Council Chambers – 2nd and Baker.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Stearns
City Manager