

CASCADE COUNTY, MONTANA
COMMISSIONERS' JOURNAL #

Special Commission Meeting
May 29, 2007
10:30 a.m.
Commission Chambers

PRESENT Chairman Olson, Commissioners Peggy Beltrone and Joe Briggs. Phyllis Gerrett, Sharon Tenney-Mayberry, Charles Boccock, John Scott, Ryan Smith, Herb Sobeczek, Clayton M. Braden, Glenda K. Alexander, Janette Fulbright, Kerry Callahan Bronson, Richard Ecke, Jo Hall Salina, Bill Salina, Nancy Anderson, Jims Sims, Robert Sims, George A. Edelberg, Colette Gray, Betty J. Ford, Carl J. Donovan, Timothy J. McKittrick, Frank Mason, Gloria Smith, Ben Graybill, Brian Clifton, Rina Ft Moore, Deb Mart, Marie Sickels, Jackie O'Fallon, and media.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Olson called the meeting to order. The reading of the calendar was waived.

AGENDA ITEM #1

**COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CTEP) EXPOPARK
LANDSCAPING BID AWARD**

Commissioner Beltrone made a **MOTION** to award a construction contract to Boland Well Systems in the amount of \$ 191,731.00 for the Base Bid items for the construction of the Expo Park Landscaping project, and approve Alternate Bid Item #2 for \$6,250.00 for a Concrete Barrier Wall, Alternate Bid Item #3 for \$6,512.00 for Asphalt Overlay, and Alternate Bid Item #4 for \$35,800.00 for Period Lighting, for total construction contact approval of \$240,293.00 and approve 5% construction contingency for unforeseen construction costs which may occur, contingent upon approval by the Montana Department of Transportation, and authorize the Commission Chairman to execute the necessary documents.

Brian K. Clifton Planning Director gave a synopsis of this Expo Park Landscaping Project. There was some discussion on the lighting, and the increased cost since 2003.

Motion carries 3-0

AGENDA ITEM #2

**MOTION TO APPROVE/DISAPPROVE CONSOLIDATION OF ALL POLLING DISTRICTS
WITHIN CITY LIMITS INCLUDING GORE HILL**

Commissioner Briggs made a **MOTION** to approve Resolution 07-30 which moves all polling places within the city limits of Great Falls and also to include the Gore Hill Fire Station to Exhibition Hall at the Montana Expo Park, Great Falls, Montana

Rina Ft. Moore and Deb Mart presented this consolidation by stating that they were proposing moving all polling places to include Gore Hill Fire Station to Exhibition Hall at the Montana Expo Park. It was stated that the ten countywide polling places would remain intact. They stated that

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they had an open house where 50-60 people attended. With the exception of two, people were pleased upon seeing what was going on. Rina passed some pictures around to show those who did not attend the open house what the set-up looked like. They informed the board that there would be a \$7,000.00 minimum savings per election.

Deb stated that the current leases that we have on the polling places that we use is only a year to year lease.

Commissioner Beltrone questioned whether we had had any feedback from the City Officials or the School District.

Deb Mart told her that we had heard nothing from either one of them. She did say that the City of Great Falls was going to run a mail ballot for the primary but would run a regular poll election in November.

Deb Mart also mentioned her concerns about having polling places in the schools due to the recent bomb threats and lock downs stating that the Governor is the only one that has the authority to close down polling place.

Chairman Olson opened the meeting for public comment;

Clayton M. Braden voiced his concerns about the price of gas and questioned if he and others would get reimbursed due to them having to drive further.

Phyllis Gerrett whom is an election judge felt this is a good idea for the handicapped. She felt we should give it a try and for the others they can absentee vote.

Jo Ann Hall Salina felt that democracy depended on a well informed an accurate electorate and this proposal seems to remove people from the process by eliminating neighborhood voting. She stated that this is ill, penny wise and pound foolish and would cost the electorate.

Nancy Anderson Chairwoman for the Democratic Party began by thanking Elections/Clerk and Records for the open house which was a wealth of information. She believed after speaking with others that this would limit the voter's ability to get to the polls, and requested that other options be considered.

Sharon Maberry stated she was previously Sharon Tenney Elections Supervisor came in support for the one polling place stating it is the right move due to a variety of reasons.

Jim Simms Election Judge stated he is for the move and believes it would support the judge. He has tried to call the Election office on Election Day and knows that it is often hard to get assistance. He also mentioned that security in the schools is another issue, and he felt that it is a good idea and he is 100% for it

Kerry Callahan Bronson stated that her mother in law has voted at 5 different sites and she thinks that it would be great.

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Colette Gray approached the Commission in opposition. She stated she is a Community Advocate for Opportunities Inc. She felt there were too many challenges involving long lines, and transportation.

George Edelberg stated he is in favor, and with absentee voting today that anyone can vote. He felt if people were responsible and wanted to vote they would find a way.

John Watts stated he felt it was a good idea, and if people want to vote they will find a way.

Herb Sobeczek complimented the set up at the open house but felt some voters would not drive through the traffic, and got feedback from others that this was not thought through well enough he also had concerns about transportation, in closing he stated he was not for or against this.

Charles Bocoock questioned if a four year average has been done, and what percentage would it need to drop before changing, because things are not working.

Carl Donovan thanked Rina and Debbie for the open house then stated he believes this would disenfranchising the neighborhood polling places and he proposed having 4 different polling places without diluting the neighborhoods.

Janet Fullbright stated she is a roaming election judge and has seen some problems in the polling places. She encouraged the Commission to give this a try.

Ben Graybill a lifelong resident of Great Falls felt that the issue is accessibility. He mentioned providing a variety of polling places instead of a single polling place. He felt that the Government has obligations to provide more than one polling place.

Betty Ford stated she is for one polling place, and feel it will be a good meeting place for all.

Tim Mckittrick stated he is opposed to the consolidation. He doesn't believe that this will save money and felt it is undemocratic to padlock the polling places. He stated it will take him 45 minutes round trip to vote at one polling place. He requested the Commission to vote against the consolidation.

Commissioner Beltrone stated she was uncomfortable with staying the same and making a change.

There was discussion concerning the rise in absentee voting.

Rina Ft Moore also reminded the Commission of the other issues; huge rise in absentee voting which will only increase, late registration, larger counting boards, unanswered phone calls, staff unable to assist the judges. She continued to state how important it is for our staff to meet the needs of the voters, and they would be able to do it face to face. This would allow them to have some control of a chaotic situation.

Deb Mart said that we had explored the possibility of four polling places the last time that this issue came up, and that there were not four places available that would meet the HAVA needs. She

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stated that we are dealing with approximately 11,000 voters and a lot of them are voting in the schools. Deb also stated that the consolidation would not save our office any workload and would in fact increase the work within the department.

Deb told the commission that the Secretary of State is investigating voter fraud and that she could not guarantee that everything was kosher in Cascade County. She explained that the judges are trained briefly every two years. She said that if the judges had questions and tried to call, that it was most likely that they did not get through on election day because of the many many calls that came into the office. She said that she had concerns about the integrity of the election process.

Commissioner Briggs thanked Deb for her work. He reminded the audience that this issue had been visited over a year ago and that we will have to address this issue sooner or later. Eventually we will have to get out of the schools and churches. He said that he saw no way around this issue and that he was in support.

Peggy Beltrone stated that she was disappointed. She questioned whether we could get the schools to use PIR days for election purposes. She stated that she didn't believe that we were at the level for absentee and was concerned that it would be a disaster. She questioned whether we could consolidate to one and then try to find four places for the presidential primary.

Rina Moore told her that she was not going to experiment in that way with the presidential primary. She stated that with a 50-60 person count board, late registration, actual voting and the counting of all the ballots going on at the same time, that the process was huge and to manage it, it needed to be in one place. She reminded the commission that the elections office had dumped 167 phone calls during the last election, because they simply could not get to them and that is not any way to serve the voting public.

Theresa Diekhans said that she would like to see a 100% turnout. She said that the need is here for one polling place and that should have been obvious last November. She said that election integrity is a fundamental part of the election process. Theresa told of displaced voters, long lines etc... Theresa also reminded people that voting was not in the neighborhoods anymore. It is the duty of the election staff to insure no fraudulent activities take place. This issue has been going on for over a year and from a legal standpoint she believes this is the time and the place.

Chairman Olson stated that democracy gives people the opportunity to vote. We are facing changes in voting requirements and that this plan was not hatched here as Butte/Silverbow already does this. Lance said that he feels forced to make this decision but does believe the time has come. Commissioner Olson stated concerns over rising costs, staffing, no additional funding, late registration, HAVA Act, permanent absentee etc. .. He said that he is tired of the mandates and the promise of monies from the state that never show up.

Upon voting Commissioner Beltrone voted against.
Motion Passes 2-1

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