

JOINT CITY/COUNTY MEETING

MINUTES

MARCH 3, 2011

3:00 PM

CASCADE COUNTY COMMISSION
CHAMBERS

MEETING CALLED BY	Commissioner Jane Weber
PRESENTATION	Economics of a Healthy Community
FACILITATOR	Commissioner Jane Weber
NOTE TAKER	Marie Sickels
TIMEKEEPER	Marie Sickels
ATTENDEES	City Mayor Michael Winters, City Commissioner Fred Burow, County Chairman Bill Salina, County Commissioner Jane Weber, Paul Lloyd-Davies, Patty Rearden and Rebecca Richards (City Parks and Recreation), Lacey Gallagher (Benefis Health Care), Allison Struber and Jody Murray (Great Falls Public Schools), Stu Nicholson, Gerry Jennings, Steve Malicott (President of the Chamber of Commerce), Ellen Sievert(City-County Preservation Officer), Jim Rearden, Gary Owen, Mark N. Donahue, Anita McNamara, Mike Haynes (City Planner), Randy Hand, and Linda Cargill.

Agenda topics

BUILDING OUR PAST-PREPARING FOR
THE FUTURE: SAFE, HEALTHY,
VIBRANT, COMMUNITIES

CATHY COSTAKIS, ACTIVE
LIVING COORDINATOR,
COMMUNITIES PUTTING
PREVENTION TO WORK, MSU

PRESENTATION	<p>Cathy Costakis began her Power Point program by presenting the obesity trends and health risk indicators in Cascade County. She then provided examples of communities across the nation and in Montana who have improved their built environment to stimulate community lifestyle changes. By providing safe walking opportunities and bicycling paths, citizens can increase their day-to-day physical activity, thus helping to reduce the national trend and exponential rise in obesity rates. The obesity issue leads to chronic long-term health problems with heart disease, diabetes, and other disabilities. Other programs encouraging better nutritional habits and reducing smoking (particularly among teens) and exposure to second hand smoke also decrease the risk of chronic respiratory afflictions. She emphasized that healthy lifestyles is individual choice and responsibility, but behavior is influenced by many factors including social networks, places we work and go to school and the community in which we live (the design of the built environment); how accessible pathways are for pedestrian and bicycling traffic, how accessible routes connect from neighborhoods to workplaces, recreation sites, grocery stores, and other shopping/cultural sites. How neighborhoods are designed/built makes a big difference in the way people live and access their workplaces – houses with porches and sidewalks, boulevards, trees all make neighborhoods and communities safer for people to be outdoors and physically active. Simple things like designing streets so that traffic speeds are reduced help make communities safer for children walking to school and citizens to get outdoors. Cathy described that local government policies influence community design. She then addressed the City of Great Falls and Cascade County on why they should care and what they can do to provide policy guidance to improve communities. In her presentations she showed a picture with five silos labeled Transportation, Housing, Public Health, Environment and Energy and mentioned that there was a</p>
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	<p>need to have these areas mutually beneficial to each other and serve multiple purposes; in doing this communities can be more effective with public dollars. Cathy concluded by saying that communities like Billings are promoting themselves as “healthy communities” providing walkways around even their big box stores, extensive recreation trails, and starting their <i>Healthy by Design</i> rating for conventions they are marketing in the community. Communities like Billings, Helena, Missoula, and Bozeman have passed Complete Streets resolutions to encourage safe walking and bicycling designs and setting priorities for retrofitting existing travel ways in the communities. These kinds of policies help make communities more marketable for incoming professionals and increase the market rate of homes where the built environment is conducive to pedestrian/bicycling traffic.</p>
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BUILDING OUR PAST

BRANT BIRKELAND,
 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNER FOR
 CITY OF GREAT FALLS

PRESENTATION	<p>Brant Birkeland gave a Power Point presentation: he stated that creating a safe, healthy and vibrant community will benefit residents, businesses and local government, and gave examples of each. He explained how our city’s founder, Paris Gibson, had the foresight to design beautiful parks, boulevards on our streets, and plant trees in the Great Falls. Our historic neighborhoods on the north side of town are testament to his strong understanding of community design. People have places to go and feel safe on the sidewalks in those areas. Gibson’s design concepts did not carry into the future as smoothly, and today we have high traffic streets without sidewalks; with difficult crossings, and without consideration for pedestrians or those with physical disabilities. He stated that preparing for the future involves planning, policies, partnerships, projects and promotion. In closing he gave examples of active transportation in Billings and questioned how we could create a legacy with our safe, healthy, vibrant city. He described how the City’s Downtown Master Plan is working to define how the built environment can improve the economic outlook of the city. He explained how young professionals are looking for community amenities first, and then seeking employment in that chosen community. He thoroughly presented the economic benefit of having a community that is attractive and provides attractive physical amenities in the neighborhoods.</p>
DISCUSSION	<p>There was an open discussion period in which everyone agreed that there could be improvements made to the City of Great Falls, and Cascade County. Many topics were mentioned which included; better use of our trail, focusing on our children to create an active lifestyle, looking at our policies to create a healthy community, and building on the policies already in place.</p>

MEETING ADJOURNED
 AT 4:15 P.M.