

# Grant Creek Neighborhood Council Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 15, 2008, Best Western Grant Creek Inn 7PM

Meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Leadership Team Chairman, Brian Walter. More than 53 people were present.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Neighborhood Council, a special meeting about the pedestrian-bike trail in December 2006, were approved by voice vote following a motion by John Langstaff.

Candidate for County Commissioner, Michelle Landquist, introduced herself during “Public Comment – Items not on the Agenda.”

**Presentation** by Roger Millar, director of the Missoula City-County Office of Planning and Grants for the past 15 months. This power point presentation detailed the **Urban Fringe Development Area** Project, also known as UFDA. The issues raised in the presentation – growth, density, land use– are well covered by a data-base assembled by OPG and available on their website. (For those with slow Internet connections, it is possible to obtain the database on a CD from OPG.)

In a nutshell, according to OPG, the projected growth for the Missoula Valley anticipates a need for 15,000 housing units in the next 20 years, or 726 units per year, for a growth rate of 2% a year (compared to 6% in Boise, ID and 8% in Bend, OR). The land that is “available” for development amounts to 6500 acres of the 33,000 acres in the Urban Service Area. OPG defines “developable” as land that is “worth more than the improvements on it” as well as vacant land that is not zoned against or otherwise restricted from development. The average density in the Missoula Area is 2 houses per acre, so the 6500 developable acres could accommodate, at that density, 13,000 homes which is close to the anticipated need for houses. Existing zoning of those acreages, however, would allow 32,500 homes, far more than is needed. The city portion of Grant Creek is currently at 0.6 houses per acre. Mr. Millar admits that OPG has “a lot of clean-up work to do.” There are many other factors that affect whether or not land is developed i.e. landowner preference ,availability of services, conservation of open space and wildlife protection, fire risks in the urban interface, etc. One interesting statistic from the presentation: 75% of established Missoula households could not afford move here and buy their own homes at today’s prices! Mr. Millar also briefly discussed the results of a recent “Envision Missoula” exercise, undertaken with the assistance of a consultant, where under a group of citizens attending the presentations (less than 1% of the community) voted to steer development towards a dense urban center core versus two other options with one having satellite cores at Frenchtown and East Missoula in addition to a center core; or development proceeding under the current the business as usual approach. The adopted Envision Missoula center core concept will be considered in the Transportation Plan Up-date now being prepared. A parallel but related project underway is a Rewrite of the City Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. **(More information and maps on these projects can be found on the City and County websites)**

Brian Walter strongly urged Grant Creek residents to participate in the public input opportunities as these OPG initiatives are developed. Lack of such participation will mean that other active individuals and groups will determine what will become of Grant Creek and the City.

Kristin Smith from WGM made a short announcement regarding a **re-zoning application** from Town Pump (formerly Sevenar) to expand their gas station and convenience store with another island of gas pumps and an addition to the store. She stated that a casino is NOT part of the plans, that trucks were not being accommodated. She did not know whether a car wash would be incorporated. There will be a public hearing in the future during which Grant Creek residents can have input.

Bert Lindler spoke next about “Eagles, Elk, and Bears, oh my!” A pair of **Bald Eagles** is nesting near the Grant Creek Ranch’s bull pasture (a.k.a. hay barns), and probably feasting on calving afterbirths. The **North Hills Elk Herd** now numbers more than 300 head and is doubling about every 7 years - but the habitat isn’t! Eight cows are GPS-collared and 10 more have radio collars, so researchers are collecting good information about their movements. Efforts to remove unnecessary fencing and control the weeds are progressing on National Wildlife Federation lands and other private lands. There will be a meeting of the Elk working group at 7 p.m. on May 22 at the GC Inn. **Bears** are again moving through our valley. Friends of Grant Creek, Inc., has secured a FWP grant to purchase bear-resistant garbage containers for loan to residents of upper Grant Creek. The cans would be serviced by Allied Waste. There may also be opportunities for residents outside the target area to purchase bear-resistant cans as part of our bulk order, thereby eliminating the lease fee paid to Allied Waste for such containers (for more info, contact Bert Lindler). The grant also provides funds for an educational brochure about the Grant Creek Elk Herd, and for an educational event we are calling the **Grant Creek Bear Fair**. Committee chair Kim Birck sketched out early plans for the Bear Fair, which will take place on Saturday, September 6, at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation HQ. Collaborators include RMEF, NWF, Montana Natural History Center, International Wildlife Media Center, vendors and others. Mark your calendars! It will be an event for the whole family, with educational activities for the kids.

**Trail News:** Brian Walter gave an update on the huge amount of progress that has been made by the Grant Creek Trail Association toward getting a shared-use pedestrian-bicycle pathway up the valley from the present end of the trail at the RMEF northern boundary to the intersection with Snowbowl Road. This 8-foot wide paved trail would roughly parallel but be separated from Grant Creek Road for safety reasons. Fund-raising has included securing grants from FWP, and promises of funding from Missoula County and the Open Space Advisory Committee. City funds are being budgeted as well, and an application has been submitted to Senator Baucus for a 2009 Congressional Appropriation. The fund-raising effort launched by mail just before the holidays brought in an astonishing \$8000.00 from Grant Creek residents! Fifteen of the 19 property owners whose lands would be touched by the trail have signed Letters of Intent to grant easements for the trail, and some of the others are waiting for engineering studies to more accurately define the routing alternatives and easement requirements on their properties. The City is in the process of selecting an engineering consultant for the project. The first phase of the consultant’s work will begin in June and will include route surveys, routing analysis, and

preparation of maps to support the formal legal easements with the City to be negotiated with the landowner by the Trail Association, Once the easements are in hand, fund-raising will be ramped-up and will include approaching others outside the valley to contribute to the trail. The City has agreed to maintain the whole 3.3 miles of the trail, once it is constructed.

**Fire Hazard Reduction:** Brian reported that the large USFS fuel reduction project for the Grant Creek area has been approved and is expected to take place over the next ten years. Crews are currently slashing and hand-piling in the Butler Creek area. On a separate project on private lands being coordinated by Bitterroot RC&D, fuel reduction was completed in 2007 on 102 acres east of Grant Creek Hills and north of Gleneagle. Contracts are in place for more fuel reduction on 60 acres east of Colorado Gulch as soon as grant funds can be secured.

There is little to report on the **Snowbowl Expansion**. The preliminary Environmental Impact Statement was delayed, but is due out later this summer. There will be opportunities for public comment after it is released.

**Capital Projects** – Brian reported that the requests for City Capital Improvement funding made in February 2007 were resubmitted in February 2008. These include a right turn lane for Grant Creek road at the I-90 interchange, re-landscaping and better maintenance for the median at that intersection, and a bus stop/park and ride north of the Town Pump. Mountain Line is interested in expanding service to Grant Creek, but no progress has been made on securing a park and ride property.

**City Council Representatives**, Pam Walzer & John Hendrickson, both spoke for a few minutes. Pam said that in her first 90 days on the job she has noticed that the “squeaky wheel gets funded” so Grant Creek residents should make an effort to speak out on projects they support. (Four members of the LT appeared at a meeting of the Conservation Committee the next morning in support of \$170,000 of Open Space Bond money for the Grant Creek Trail.) Pam also said that Grant Creek is “park-deficient” - meaning that there is no public park land in the valley - which increases the likelihood of our getting funds for the trail. John Hendrickson mentioned that the I-90 right hand turn lane is in the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) for 2009, and will happen “when the City has the money.”

Other news: A lone wolf was reported a week ago on the Flynn Ranch, and 2 adult wolves were reported in Butler Creek recently.

Neighborhood Council business:

**By-law amendment.** Per changes in City rules, our bylaws needed to be revised to read: Businesses, churches, schools, neighborhood organizations, and other entities within the neighborhood are eligible to designate a representative to attend meetings **but only residents of the Neighborhood Council are eligible** to vote on issues that come before the Council. Passed on a voice vote.

**Leadership Team Elections:** Brian presented a slate of candidates nominated for positions on the Leadership Team and stated that additional nominations for these positions could be made from the

floor. Candidates and the neighborhoods they represent were: Bert Lindler, Prospect Meadows; Valerie Holzer, Prospect; Brian Walter, Grantland Landowners; Mike Hall, Grantland-Colorado Gulch; Gary Marbut, Lime Springs; Kim Birck, Grantland 1-10; Amy Webbink, Gleneagle; and John Langstaff, Upper Grant Creek/Friends of Grant Creek' and Steve Laber , at Large position #1. There were no additional nominations from the floor for the Leadership Team positions. The above slate was approved by voice vote. Leadership positions are vacant for the Cottonwoods, Business, and at Large position #2.

Amy Webbink and Don Nicholson were nominated to represent Grant Creek on the Community Forum. Don Nicholson was selected by voice vote.

Brian Walter and John Paoli were nominated for the position as alternate representative to the Community Forum. Brian Walter withdrew. John Paoli was elected by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kim Birck  
Acting Secretary  
April 20, 2008