

Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission Minutes
February 6, 2018

Commission Members in Attendance: Melinda Mason (Children's Mental Health Bureau), Nicole Rowley (County Commissioner), Dave Chrismon (Downtown Ambassador), Dan Cederberg (Downtown Attorney), Eran Fowler Pehan (Housing & Community Development), Margaret Borg (Retired Attorney), Sue Wilkins (Missoula Correctional Services), Ginny Merriam (Mayor's Office), Ethan Smith and Alex Beal

Commission Members Absent: Michael Moore (Downtown Business Owner), Keithi Worthington (City Attorney), Tom Snyder (Downtown Business Owner), Amy Allison Thompson (Poverello Center), Elizabeth Marshall (Palace Apartments), Bryan von Lossberg (City Council), Ryan Boyd (Salvation Army), Lt. Jake Rosling (Police Department) and Theresa Williams (Reaching Home Coordinator)

Others in Attendance: Heidi Bakula (Mayor's Office)

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of January 9, 2018 were approved as submitted.

1. Public Comment - None

2. Introductions

3. Downtown Update

- Ethan Smith discussed Little McCormick Park. He said it was problematic because of overnight camping. They were able to cite someone on the new ordinance for the first time, now they have to appear in Municipal Court. Mainly the judge wants to know how the city can help them with other options. There is a possible fine of \$100, but it was never intended to bankrupt them.
- Ginny explained that last spring a compliance officer came to her management team meeting. She wanted to discuss the old ordinance because she needed a stronger mechanism to cite people who are camping overnight in city limits.
- Ethan said with the old city ordinance you would have to catch the campers camping between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. in order to cite them. Also, they struggle with homeless people sleeping at the Northside Pedestrian Bridge. They really want those people to go to Union Gospel Mission which is a warming center. Many people are also parking near the Union Gospel Mission and the Northside Pedestrian Bridge. Ethan went on to say that several people in the downtown homeless population have secured housing or have left town after given a bus ticket.
- Eran Pehan explained that many homeless people are parking in the old Safeway parking lot. If they are intoxicated they never want to get too far away from a shelter which is why they park there.
- Sue Wilkins noted that Caras Park did not have many homeless people walking around, nor did the downtown corridor. She wondered if the core transient population was still around.
- Ethan explained that it was just a revolving door in the downtown area, some come and some go.
- Alex Beal also noticed a cycle of people coming and going through the court.
- Dave Chrismon noted that some were hanging out at the library, people were also getting into housing and he did not see much as far as panhandling. It was possible that it had to do with the weather.
- Ethan thought there would be a struggle when the new library opened. There were 10-12 rowdy people that hung out at the library.
- Dave said that police officers walk through the library and that really helped.

- Cola Rowley was concerned about the homeless population being pushed into Missoula County. They didn't have enough officers to patrol the entire county.
- Eran explained that the Coordinated Entry System is now housing people at a much faster rate. They were working on the top 10 homeless people in the area. If a person disappears they have most likely secured housing. At this point in time thirty individuals have vouchers for housing but they cannot find housing for them. No one whose housing meets federal standards will rent to them even though there were protective measures in place for landlords. The voucher pays fair market value for a 1 bedroom unit that passes federal inspection. Some landlords require a background check and a rental check.

4. New Business

Eran Pehan explained that she had met with Bryan von Lossberg, Ginny Merriam and the mayor about MDAC. They discussed what the focus of the commission should be. Several people on MDAC want to term off the board. The work climate, Coordinated Entry System and the economic development has impacted and changed the homeless population. Most of the gaps in assistance have been filled. The consensus at the meeting with the mayor was to shift MDAC to meet quarterly instead of monthly. The quarterly meetings could be used to broaden the work that the commission does and would be a good time to share feedback. The mayor would also attend these quarterly meetings. If the commission wanted to they could always go back to monthly meetings. What were people's feeling about this?

- Ginny Merriam explained that in the last decade the sidewalk interference and panhandling ordinances had been developed, plus the public education that the commission had done has made it a struggle to find or latch on to another project. The heavy lifting had already been done. The quarterly meeting could be a clearing house for information.
- Cola Rowley stated that she liked actively being part of a project. She would not be valuable as a feedback person.
- Melinda Mason felt that new members didn't have a task to grab onto, it would be good to broaden the spectrum.
- Eran said that some new members have opted to leave the committee and that there seemed to be just a core group that was attending meetings. The business community wanted feedback from this commission or a listening session, work outside of this meeting didn't seem feasible to business owners since they are not paid to attend MDAC.
- Ginny stated that the mayor was interested in inviting other community members such as Linda McCarthy from Missoula Downtown to the quarterly meetings.
- Eran asked the commission members if they saw a gap that MDAC could fill.
- Sue Wilkins felt that the commission could broaden its purview and also look at problems that the county faces with homelessness. She appreciated the brainstorming that the commission did and she hated to see the monthly meetings go away. Big challenges would be coming up downtown because of the new hotels that are being built.
- Eran asked the commission members if MDAC was already represented by another group or organization, was it duplicative?
- Ginny said that the mayor also wants to be sure that MDAC does not have any unfinished business.
- Dan Cederberg thought that parking and panhandling are the biggest issues. MDAC could function like a board of directors for projects that need oversight. Maybe projects could be housed with the Business Improvement District or someone else. The commission could pick four projects to oversee. He felt there was still an issue of having a Native American presence on the commission which had not been addressed yet. Maybe another entity could take that on.
- Eran said that the commission had no control over non-profits, what would the commission's role be?

- Dan thought everything could be outsourced, but MDAC could make sure projects were done. MDAC could make sure nothing is lost and share information.
- Cola stated that there was a Native Outreach Project at the jail. Maybe the commission could look at that data and how to tackle that problem. As a side note there were also two emergency detention beds at the Western Montana Mental Health Center that were not being utilized.

5. Working Group Updates

Nothing new to report.

6. Discussion of additional members in key areas – Nothing new to report.

Respectfully Submitted,
Heidi Bakula, Executive Assistant