

Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission

Minutes

July 1, 2014

Commission Members in Attendance: Ginny Merriam (City of Missoula), Keithi Worthington (Deputy City Attorney), Sue Wilkins (Missoula Correctional Services), Rob Scheben (Police Department), Travis Mateer (Poverello Center), Michael Moore (Reaching Home: Missoula's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness), Eran Fowler Pehan (Poverello Center), Dan Cederberg (Downtown Attorney), Melanie Brock, Susan Hay Patrick (United Way), Margaret Borg (Retired Attorney), Jon Wilkins (City Council), and Melinda Mason (WORD)

Commission Members Absent: Paige Livingston (One Eleven), Michele Landquist (County Commissioner), Caitlin Cople (City Council), Barbara Wickel (Missoula Interfaith Collaborative), Jenny Montgomery (Montgomery Distillery), Jason Wiener (City Council), Laurie Johnson (BID), Bryan Von Lossberg (City Council), and Melissa Gordon (Grants)

Others in Attendance: Heidi Bakula (City of Missoula), Brent Dobak (Downtown Ambassador), Andy Roy (Police Dept.), Tara Moss (Montgomery Distillery)

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of June 3, 2014 were approved as corrected

Special Presentations:

- None

Committee Updates

- Crime and Prevention – Keithi Worthington and Rob Scheben
No update
- Real Change Promotion – Ginny Merriam – Laurie Johnson
No Update
- Built Environment – Margaret Borg
No update
- Human Services – Jason Wiener and Susan Hay Patrick
Report on Reaching Home Steering Committee meeting (10-Year Plan to End Homelessness)
No Update
- Miscellaneous business and discussion – Recent events in Billings – Mike Sample

The commission discussed the death of Mike Sample, a businessman from Billings, known for giving panhandlers money and the repercussions of his death in regards to future interactions with the homeless.

Andy Roy, the downtown police officer, noted that this probably would not happen in Missoula because transients tend to fight more amongst themselves and they never press charges even if they end up in the hospital. There is however a large population of transients that city officers are not familiar with who don't carry ID and could be running from something.

Discussion from commission members was as follows:

- There's always a possibility that a person could be high on meth looking for money but they are neither homeless nor panhandling.
- Unfortunately Mike set up a pattern with the homeless population and they always knew they could come to him.
- Limiting the sale of alcohol is an issue that could really help in Missoula.
- People that have lost jobs in the Bakken Oil Fields due to drugs and alcohol are showing up in Billings.
- The focus needs to be on working with public health officials, curb alcohol sales, work on behavior not homelessness, use the city's current ordinance and find effective ways to use the ordinance as is.
- Behavior is being driven by addiction and public education is key.
- Professional panhandlers cruise the streets and it's important to figure out how to curb that behavior.
- Medicaid expansion would help to get people in jail into a detox program to end the addiction and to keep them from ending up back in jail. Look at current legislation.
- Rob Scheben indicated that Mike Sample never reported past conflicts with transients and Mike would take his wallet out and actually show his money to the person asking. Rob also notes that if you feel uncomfortable in any way avoid the situation.
- More candid conversations with businesses and their employees are needed in order to get a consistent result.
- There have been bad experiences with 911 where they act bothered when contacted for an officer to respond to a situation of some type. These complaints are not given priority and a level of response should be expected from 911. Travis offered to bring someone from 911 to a meeting in order to discuss this situation.
- One idea is to site people that give to panhandlers and research the constitutionality of this.

Ginny asked the commission if some action should come out of this discussion. Suggestions were to:

- Talk to business owners and their staff and come up with some type of training for them and the public.
- Educating businesses and the public about the effect of giving money to the homeless and panhandlers is more meaningful than teaching the public to defend itself.
- General message about safety is still important.
- Have a Real Change table at Out to Lunch in Caras Park on a Wednesday.
 - Ginny Merriam - Approach Linda McCarthy about a luncheon for owners and employees. Rob and Travis would be good for the training.
 - Rob Scheben and Travis Mateer - Offer to come to staff meetings at local businesses for training.
- Dan Cederberg - Talk to local businesses that distribute alcohol downtown about limiting sales in the morning.

- Keithi Worthington - Research if it's legal to ticket people who give to panhandlers.
- Keithi Worthington – Research ordinance prohibiting sales of alcohol in the morning. May only affect packaged liquor.
- Margaret Borg – Investigate issues with 911 about responding to calls about the homeless or panhandlers. Rob Scheben offered to listen to 911 tapes and approach them.
- Get information to the neighborhood councils to reach more people.
- Talk to university students at orientation. An ad in bathroom stalls on campus possibly?

Respectfully Submitted,
Heidi J. Bakula
Executive Assistant

Date of Next Meeting
Jack Reidy Conference Room
August 5, 2014