

University Neighborhood Council Leadership Team Agenda

November 9, 2021

1. **Introductions and Roll Call** The meeting was called to order at 6:31 and began with introductions. Those present included Darcy Caron and Dori Gilels, co-Presidents; Bryce Rowe, Treasurer; Kat Cowley, Basic Need Agency at UM; Kelly Elam, Missoula Neighborhoods; Rick Caron; Robin Spear, Jeff Smith, and Ali Martin of WGM; Daniel Carlino, incoming City Council Member for the 3rd Ward; Diane and John Taylor, community members; and Jennifer Copley, acting secretary. Lacey Zinke, Director of Fraternity and Sorority Involvement joined the meeting later.

Rick Caron thanked members Ali and Bryce for helping the 30 to 40 students who showed up to rake on Sunday, November 7.

2. **Approval of Minutes** With a correction to the title of Lacey Zinke's position at the University of Montana, members approved the October 5, minutes.
3. **Presentation and Discussion on Rankin Park and University Entrance** Jeff Smith, representing WGM Group; Robin Spear, a landscape architect with the firm, and Ali Martin, a member of the WGM team discussed their vision for proposed entries to university area. The University and the City of Missoula partnering to create a more defined, welcoming entry.

The plan seeks to create a “sense of arrival” to the campus at Arthur Avenue and 6th Street, enhancing the experience of visitors to campus. WGM hopes to create a “positive and impactful first impression of the University of Montana” for both motorists and pedestrians. It also hopes to enhance use of Rankin Park by improving amenities, connecting to existing paths, and improving landscaping. WGM hopes to collaborate with the UM Signage and Wayfinding project to improve signage and street safety that includes a prominent sign near the main entrance to the UM campus from the Madison Street Bridge. To improve their planning, WGM will seek comment from council members and the public.

Bryce said he would like to see signage on both sides of the park, thus creating a gateway element. He added that he hoped the City and UM would use native plants. Robin said non-native plants may be needed to add color, working around existing elements. Bryce also suggested creating more seating for people moving back and forth to the UM stadium.

Jennifer urged using the space to better honor Jeanette Rankin, perhaps with a statue. She also urged creating a safer space for families with children by marking the perimeter of the park with traffic-protective barriers, perhaps large rocks. She suggested planting more trees in Rankin Park, perhaps relying on the 20 trees the City annually donates to a neighborhood.

Rick reminded members that the area was once used for athletic activities. He said that plumbed drinking water would make the area more useful. He said that grasses planted there should be easy to mow.

Dori mentioned that Rankin Park has not been well-maintained recently. The area, she said, is overgrown. With temperatures getting hotter and dryer, Dori urged the planting of hardy trees and exploring gravel and other surface types for the area.

Kat wondered about safety issues at the busy intersection, remarking that more lighting could be useful. Dori reminded members that a university professor had died near that incredibly busy intersection.

Jeff Smith clarified that it has not been determined who will care for the improvements, but the City is willing to partner with UM.

Darcy asked that there be additional UM signage on Arthur, and Jeff Smith affirmed that more signage is planned.

Robin expressed her excitement about the project and suggested an adopt-the-park plan for various neighborhoods. She added that 20-30% of birds live in cities, and UM has a dedicated arboretum and amphitheater to which Rankin Park might serve as a gateway or educational element.

In response to a question by Dori, Jeff explained that irrigation, signage, lighting, and other improvements should connect to existing trails. Though improvements should be welcoming, Jeff added, much is left to be determined.

Rick then asked about an exit sign from UM. Robin said it might be a kind of mirror of the welcome sign, creating “Instagram moments” when entering and leaving the University area.

Jeff explained that the only real commitment from UM so far is the area where the new sign will be located. Questions remain. How do UM goals fit with what the neighborhood wants and what can the City achieve? Is UM interested in sharing or taking care of units of the park? We do know that UM wants to attract and retain younger students, so goals between overall masterplan and UM are complementary.

Dori emphasized that it is important to consider the area as a whole and not just for UM signage. Jeff responded that WGM plans to advocate with the Parks Department to enable a unified front with the University, getting all parties aligned and creating complementary plans.

Rick added that improvements on Arthur and 6th could encourage Missoula to improve more of the East Broadway access, too. Darcy supported Rick’s words by stressing the importance of this project to the City and University.

Jeff asked if the WGM groups could come back in December to explain how the plans are developing. Darcy promised to be in touch with an invitation.

Rick reiterated Bryce’s earlier request for the use of native plants, if possible.

4. **Items to be Discussed** Via e-mail Kelly sent out proposed new by-laws and a copy of the old. Neighborhood Councils can accept them or reject the proposed changes. Most neighborhoods

will probably approve the changes put together by the consultants, said Kelly. Darcy added that she found the proposed changes “not earth-shattering” but said we should discuss the addition of businesses.

Jennifer asked how we could keep leadership teams from becoming mini-Chambers of Commerce if local businesses were included. Dori reminded members that businesses would be nonvoting.

To support the City’s increased emphasis on diversity in representing the residents of neighborhoods, Rick suggested that perhaps neighborhood churches should be involved, too,

Darcy suggested tabling the discussion until December, voting then to approve or disapprove the new bylaws. Dori seconded Darcy’s suggestion, and members approved the motion.

What size should leadership teams be? asked Rick. Darcy also suggested we consider the number on the team, looking seriously at expanding the size of the neighborhood council. Kelly responded that she believes consultants hired by the Missoula Neighborhoods suggested leadership teams be limited to 15 members.

5. **Community Forum Report** – No Community Forum meeting.
6. **UM Student Report** Lacey and Kat reported that the “Can the Cats” food drive was underway, bigger than normal, and urged our support. Pick-up dates appear in the student newsletter or could be learned with a call to UM.
7. **Missoula Neighborhoods Report from Kelly Elam** Community Forum will meet November 18 at 6:00 PM. Kelly’s office hopes to have a replacement for Colin by December. Kelly is working on simplifying grant applications. Grants will be due in mid-March, and Kelly will put all the dates on the edited grant applications.
8. **Public comment on non-agenda items** Brad sent out the survey members edited, and Dori and Darcy shared that view that the survey should go to everyone on all the Neighborhood Council lists because Bonner Park is used by all in the city. Dori will send the survey to Kelly to distribute to other neighborhoods. Darcy will resend the Newsletter and the survey, to give people another opportunity to read. To include student opinion, Kat sent it out on the Neighborhood Ambassadors website.
9. **Announcements** The UM Grad Student Urban Deer Study Results were shared via email. Jennifer and Rick participated in the Urban Deer Study. Rick emphasized that the deer issue is concerning, saying he sees deer on his morning school bus runs.
- Daniel Carlino said this was the first Neighborhood Council Meeting he had attended and urged us to stay in contact if we needed his assistance.
10. **Adjournment** The meeting adjourned at 7:34.