

Lower Rattlesnake Neighborhood Council Leadership Team Minutes

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

4pm – 5pm

City Council Chambers, 140 W. Pine St.

1. Introductions and Roll Call:

Peter Lesica, Robert Schultz, Joan Bessac Steelquist, Marta Meengs, Gracie Sanford, Ken Brown, Christy Hagar, Jordan Hess – Mayor, Ellen Buchanan – Director Missoula Redevelopment Agency, Kalina Pritchard, Missoula Neighborhoods

2. Minutes for January 31, 2023 were approved as submitted.

3. Railroad crossing updates from Jordan Hess and Ellen Buchanan:

- “Significant delays and setbacks” to the wayside horn installation with the transition to Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). There are two crossings: Taylor and Madison streets.
- Taylor street is likely off the table for discussion. It is on private land. The City asked the question: is this project still valuable to the community if Taylor Street decibels do not change? The community resoundingly said that it is still worth the investment.
- There are new requirements for the Madison Street crossing. The electrical cable cannot be attached to non-railroad property and will likely need to cross under the Rattlesnake Creek. This significantly increases the cost and delays timeline.
- Ellen and Jordan have had zero conversations with BNSF, because the MRL/BNSF integration is still in progress. It's not a good time to go to BNSF.
- BNSF is unwilling to make “pre-emptive operations decisions” while the merger is underway.
- Jordan had a meeting with Montana Rail Link a couple weeks ago, but the decision is up to BNSF.
- Question: What is the timeline to meet with BNSF?
 - i. Answer: Jordan and Ellen responded that it is up to BNSF.
 - ii. The committee requested to have a community representative(s) at the meeting when it is scheduled.
- The committee reminded the City that we started this conversation around intolerable train horn decibels over 10 years ago. In that time, Taylor St. has added a gate to accommodate federal regulations, which say sounding a horn is not required. However, BNSF still sounds the horn due to their calculated risk passing through GW Petroleum.
- LR Committee agreed to (re)aggregate sentiments from the local motels, other business, and neighbors to demonstrate the level of severity and priority within the community to both the city and BNSF in the form of a letter.

Jordan agreed to send the address for BNSF.

- Ellen is looking into applying the formulas used for the Madison Street study to the Taylor Street crossing.
The original Madison Street study cost about \$20,000. There is no indication on timeline for Taylor Street analysis or that it would cost any money beyond a resource's time.
- The overall budget for the Wayside Horn Project is around \$200,000. This does not include boring under the creek.
- Jordan offered a possible funding solution applicable starting next year: Inflation Reduction Act. If awarded, this funding could be applied to both crossings, the Orange Street tunnel, Northside pedestrian bridge, etc.
- Jordan acknowledged that this has been a long and frustrating process.
- The LR Committee thanked Jordan and Ellen for being present and attentive.
- Jordan and Ellen left the room.

4. Neighborhood Budget:

- The neighborhood has \$644.77 to allocate before end of fiscal year, June 30, 2023.
- The last neighborhood meeting in November cost around \$550 for postcards and pizza.
- The LR committee would prefer to use the funds for another meeting to be held in June or July.

5. Possible agenda items for next neighborhood meeting:

- “Meet your neighbors” – (un)structured time to get to know your neighbors.
- Update on the Gateway to the Rattlesnake sign.
- Updates from the city/community
 - i. Marshall Mountain
 - ii. Jamie Jonkel, bear report
 - iii. Lolo Street bridge update
- Proposing neighborhood projects for further engagement

6. Scheduling the next LR Leadership Team meeting:

- April 25, 2023, at 5pm. Location TBD: Greenough Park is preferred.

7. Neighborhood Clean Up:

- Occurring April 29, 2023.
- Neighborhood to decided timing. Tentatively 10am-1pm.
- Tentatively collaborating with the Heart of Missoula Neighborhood.
- Robert offered to pick up supplies.

8. Reviewed February Community Forum Notes:

- Robert and Gracie attended.

- The city covered the Ward Rezoning efforts, there is very little impact to LR.

9. Neighborhood Grant Projects:

- Gracie joined the sub-committee to review and score projects.
- The sub-committee met last week and finalized their scoring for grant allocation.
- Community Forum will vote on the proposal on Thursday, March 24, 2023.
- Final process and approval will be complete around mid-April.
- The proposal includes fully funding the LR project in reinstalling the Gateway to the Rattlesnake sign.

10. Call for Public Comment:

None.

11. Call for Announcements:

None.

Meeting adjourned.