From: Elizabeth Marshall
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site; Elizabeth Marshall
Subject: Common Good Missoula Housing Trust Fund
Date: Friday, July 17, 2020 10:15:28 AM

Dear City Council,

Thank you everyone for all you do and your work on this issue, now vastly more important than ever due to the impacts of Covid. I read one estimate that upwards of 20 millions people could lose their housing in the coming months nationwide.
Disclaimer - I work for the Missoula Housing and am writing today as a citizen.

I 'm writing to ask you to incorporate the following Common Good requests into the Housing Trust Fund resolution:
1. Establish Housing Trust Fund to be included in 2021 budget.
2.Establish oversight committee with decision making power including good citizen representation: BIPOC representation and 50% representation by cost burdened renters including people with disabilities, history of incarceration, vouchers, labor representation and eventually renters living in HTF housing.
3. Recognize housing as a human right.
4.Commit to an anti-racism frame for HTF, committee, and funding.
5. Ensure broad parameters that don't exclude any funding mechanisms.
6.Commit to move toward more funding from City of MIssoula in the future.

In the mid 1990s I was freshly out of an abusive marriage, with three sons under the age of 8. We were living in a seedy rental in town and briefly lived on TANF cash assistance while I stabilized my family's world. Our rental went on the market and to my surprise it sold immediately. I did not have the resources to pay a typical rental cost. My peer counselor suggested I contact the Missoula Housing Authority. I snubbed her suggestion, commenting that their services were only for homeless folks. She pointed out that without resources I could be living in my car with my sons. When I walked in the door at MHA they had just depleted their mailing list for three bedroom units and we moved into a beautiful three bedroom duplex on Phillips Street in under two weeks. This was purely circumstantial. It was not a reflection of my work or skills. I was the most rapidly housed person anyone there could remember. I share this story for two reasons.
1. Often what unfolds in life is circumstantial. And doesn't indicate lack of skills or lack of hard work etc.
2. If as a nation and a community we prioritize housing as a human right we could have far more units like this where rent and utility expenses are capped at 30% of income.
This is not a pipe dream. Many other countries in the world provide affordable quality housing to their residents. Obviously on the national level it will be awhile before such change can happen here.
Locally the skyrocketing costs of homes will drive our children and grandkids and front line workers to have to live further and further away. This will result in longer and longer commutes to work in a town that may become exclusive only to the more wealthy. The fuel used in their commutes will more than offset any savings made by the city's fossil fuel sustainability efforts.
In closing a thought from George Bernard Shaw. "There are those that look things the way they are and ask why? I dream of things that never were and ask why not." We can do this.

Thanks for your time~

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