From: Julie Merritt
To: Brad Tschida; solutions@missoulacounty.us; bcc@missoulacounty.us; Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: RE: Tax money for transient homeless (not "unhoused")
Date: Sunday, July 11, 2021 5:29:22 PM

Mr. Tschida

Thank you for sharing that interpretation of scripture. I was not familiar with that nuance. Isn't it wonderful that we live in a country where we can each hold our own views on religion?

Beyond the theological debate, if your concern really is about spending OPM, as you put it, then you should be grateful about the actions the City is taking to provide housing to our houseless neighbors. While finances are not my main motivation, it has been demonstrated in multiple communities that it costs far less to provide housing to the chronically houseless than it does to leave them on the street. People with housing require fewer calls for service from emergency responders. They have a far better chance of getting and keeping a job, reducing the need for services. The ill and disabled also require fewer emergency services if their conditions are well managed and that starts with having stable housing. I would direct your attention to the efforts that the State of Utah has made over the past 10-15 years. By adopting a housing first policy, the State of Utah has reduced its spending from approximately $20,000 per year per person to about $8,000. If we were to follow in Utah's footsteps, we would save a lot of OPM. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/inspired-life/wp/2015/04/17/the-surprisingly-simple-way-utah-solved-chronic-homelessness-and-saved-millions/

I am curious to know how you would differentiate between the "locals" and the so-called "transient freeloaders"? How long does someone need to have been in Missoula to be considered a "local"? How about a woman who flees a violent partner and comes here from a rural town in MT where there are no services? Is she a "transient freeloader"? How about someone who just recently came to Missoula and was working but lost a job or suffered an injury and lost their housing as a result? How about an 18 year old who has aged out of the foster care system and even though they are working they cannot find a place to live because no one will rent to them since they have no rental or credit history? In my experience, it is easy for some people to tell themselves that there are "good" homeless people and "bad" ones. I don't believe this is true. I believe that all human beings deserve a chance, or two or maybe even five or ten. We are all human beings and those who do not currently have a roof over their heads are not less than you or me. You can insult me for taking this position if you like. It's OK, I can take it.

I think you and Ms. Reneau would be surprised at the number of our houseless population who consider Missoula their home although they do not currently have a conventional roof over their heads. Many of the houseless have jobs. Many have physical or developmental disabilities, many have mental or other chronic illnesses, are veterans, are people who have fled abusive homes, are young adults who have aged out of foster care and have no support. Sadly, some of the houseless have followed a path that has led to substance abuse and addiction. It is virtually impossible to get clean while on the streets. The path to recovery starts with stable housing. And even if a path to recovery cannot be found for some, they are still human beings and deserve to be treated with dignity.

To be clear, I do donate my own money to care for the houseless through the United Way and the Poverello Center. I have also spent hundreds of hours volunteering with organizations that work to prevent homelessness and help those who are at risk.

Throughout my term on Council, I have heard from far more people who ask us to do more to help than I have heard from people who complain about our efforts to address the housing problem in our community. I will take that as a clear message that I am indeed serving the people of Missoula and I will continue to do so.

Sincerely

Julie Merritt
City Council Ward 6

From: Brad Tschida <tschida4mthouse@outlook.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 11, 2021 3:23 PM
To: solutions@missoulacounty.us; bcc@missoulacounty.us; Grp. City Council and City Web Site <Council@ci.missoula.mt.us>
Subject: Tax money for transient homeless (not "unhoused")

These comments were sent to Julie Merritt, based on a faulty interpretation, on her part, of Sacred Scriptures, in a response to a Missoula resident:

The Scriptures I read indicate that it's my individual (not collective) responsibility to clothe, feed, shelter and visit the needy, not that the collective be forced to do such temporal works of mercy with tax revenue. God demands that of His followers.

Ms. Merritt, you somehow believe you are being "compassionate" while using OPM (Other People's Money) to do so.

If you were truly compassionate, you would be donating your own money to pay for the care of these folks (not so much the locals, but the transient freeloaders) instead of taking our money to spend it as you, not we, see fit.

Your's is a predictable response from someone with an apparent Marxists, oligarch worldview. A Christian, Biblical worldview would be shaped by your private desire to help the truly unfortunate with your resources.

Serve the people of Missoula, don't use them to fund needless pet projects out of their wallets.

Brad Tschida

“The power of evil men lives on the cowardice of the good.” - St. John Bosco

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” St. Augustine