

## Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission Minutes ~ July 6, 2010

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Rod Austin, Barbara Berens, Ellie Hill, Melinda Mason, Kim Murray, Susan Hay Patrick, Rob Scheben, Peggy Seel, Dave Strohmaier, Leanne Vreeland, Julie Weaver, Jason Wiener, Keithi Worthington

**Commission Members Absent:** Margaret Borg, Brenda Desmond, Leslie Halligan, Julie Hilley, Laurie Johnson, David Pierce, Nick Roberts, Keenan Whitt

**Others in Attendance:** Melani Coyle (Commission Secretary); Cindy Wulfekuhle, OPG; Melissa Gordon, OPG

**Intro and Welcome:** Ginny Merriam called the meeting to order.

**Public Comment:** None

**Review of Minutes:** The May and June minutes were distributed via e-mail. Rod Austin moved to approve the minutes, and Susan Hay Patrick seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as distributed.

### **Salcido Center Status – Ellie Hill**

The Poverello Center was founded in 1974 as a food and shelter facility. It is now a public facility and has capacity issues. It is overcrowded and not handicapped-accessible. There is a segment of the population the Poverello Center is not able to serve at the Poverello Center. Several years ago, they started applying for grant money to open a drop-in day facility. The First Baptist Church opened its doors for this facility, charging \$2,000 a month during summer months and \$2,500 during winter months. The church has stated it was more than they bargained for and that their mission has changed. It is very expensive to pay for the rent and the staff that are at that location. There are 45 unduplicated people a day that use this facility. The lease for this facility ends January 1, 2011.

The Board of Directors meet at the end of this month, and Ellie has asked the commission for feedback and comments. They are looking at three options.

1. Invest in homeless outreach teams (HOT). They are used in other communities very effectively. They are largely funded by Business Improvement Districts. There is federal funding that matches BID funding. Rod said funding from the Missoula Downtown BID is not an option in their budget.
2. Stay open until January 1, 2011, and then move to a new location. They will lose funding if they do not have a new location.
3. Close the facility and hope others will step up and help out.

Susan asked about the needs assessment and how it could help with this decision. Cindy said the assessment will take several months and will not help with a location before January. This assessment is to work on a ten-year plan to work with the homeless. The assessment will be done in warmer months, as well as colder months. It is different from the Poverello Center issues. Keithi stated it started out as a smaller assessment and grew into what it currently is as it was being discussed. Ginny said they are related only because the needs assessment came out of the Poverello Center needing a different

location and asking for Mayor Engen's support; he asked for the needs assessment to be sure he could support what configuration serves people best. Rod said the Poverello Center took a bold step with the Salcido Center and he commended them for it. Jason said Salcido was meant to move into the new facility and Cindy said that would not have happened until at least next year.

Ellie asked if there is a way to differentiate what she is doing with the needs assessment and what Cindy's office is doing. OPG has taken charge of the needs assessment at the Mayor's request.

Cindy asked about the operations of the Salcido Center. Ellie said it is not a problem. They would like a place with lower rent. They are open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with two staff members there at all times. They are bachelor-level social workers who have been trained on referrals. It reestablishes trust with service providers. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are now served to those under the influence at the Poverello Center, which has helped. Having the Salcido Center in the same location as the Poverello Center would save about \$75,000 a year.

Cindy asked what monies the Poverello Center had already received for a new location. Ellie said \$285,000 in federal appropriations, \$500,000 in capital from the Veterans Administration with \$300,000 annually to maintain the facility and Montana Senators said approximately \$1 million in federal appropriations next year. It is a \$5.6 million facility, and they are on a two-year cycle for Community Development Block Grant funding. The VA money has to be spent by September 2011.

The Salvation Army has a fantastic day center that they are not using to serve the homeless. Cindy said she has been in contact with them, but Captain Pierce has not been at any of the meetings. Ginny said it may help for someone on the commission to meet with the Salvation Army. Captain Pierce is a member of the commission also but has not attended a meeting. Several commission members were skeptical of this location because it is the gateway to downtown. Kim asked what kind of pushback the downtown merchants would give if the Salvation Army was used.

Another option may be the Missoula County print shop building. The County has purchased the old Garlington, Lohn and Robinson building, so they will be moving into that once the new GLR building is done. It would not be a long-term solution, but it could help for the short term. The building may also be up for sale. Cindy told Ellie to contact Dale Bickell about the building.

Ginny said the downtown people are pleased to have the Salcido Center. Julie said downtown business owners do not want option three to happen. Rod said a lot of businesses would like to have the Poverello Center moved to the outskirts of town, but they are glad the concept of the Salcido Center has worked for that population. Many would be supportive of having the Salcido Center in the same location as the Poverello Center.

Ginny asked the commission to continue to think about it and call Ellie with any comments or suggestions.

### **Crime and Prevention Committee statistics and discussion of alternatives to fines for aggressive panhandling tickets – Rob Scheben**

Rob pulled reports for 2009 for disturbance calls. There were 600 disturbance calls in the BID area, of which 14% originated in downtown. This is approximately 50 calls per month. He then broke those 600 calls down by incident codes. The most frequent call was traffic-related incidents, and the second highest was for a person to be removed.

He then pulled the reports for the city ordinances between August 2009 and June 2010. There were 235 citations broken down this way: prohibited places, City Ordinance 9.36.050, 99; pedestrian soliciting on roadway, State code 61-8-507, 91; aggressive panhandling, City Ordinance 9.36.030, 45. In Municipal Court in 2009, there were 889. There were 131 returned via mail with no forwarding address. These are assumed to be transients and total \$290,000 of unpaid fees.

What Rob is working on now is how many of the 235 tickets are chronic offenders. He asked what this group can do to help solve the revolving door syndrome. The Crime and Prevention Committee is going to invite Judge Loudon and Pat Morgan, Court Manager, to the next meeting. Kim said the committee wants to invite them so they can get the court's perspective on the issues. Rob said the police are getting the calls, but there is no deterrent. The goal is to stop people from doing what they are doing. There is one person who owes \$13,533 with some others pending, and the committee wants to discuss what the courts can do to help be a deterrent. The "Make the Call" campaign is not going to work unless things are done and there is a way to break the pattern behaviors.

Dave said the committee is looking for an avenue to engage the court in a collaborative nature. The ordinances were never meant to be the silver bullet for downtown, but are they having some of the desired effect? If people aren't paying their fines, it is not having an effect. Officers need to be given something to work with.

Kim said she has heard people say, "This is not a fun town to be in anymore", so she thinks it is working. If this is a less desirable environment and people are stopped from what the behaviors they portray over and over, they decide to move on, and it is working. There is a rotating population, so the work has to be continuous. Rod said it is not just the courts, but maybe funding can be found in other places. The Department of Justice has funding for those who have mental illness. Rod said everyone has to work together, including the courts, to make it possible. Keithi said there is funding for a misdemeanor probation program. Melinda said it has to be allowed to play out. If the same people are getting fewer citations, it is positive and there will be a natural decline in behaviors. Ginny suggested the committee invite the Mayor when they meet with the court staff.

### **Denver's Housing First program and what it might mean for Missoula – Jason Wiener**

Ginny prefaced this discussion by saying that there was a housing summit held in Missoula where Dave Klimut from the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless spoke. This program pays for housing with services for homeless with no questions asked. Dave said council members were concerned about not giving options to homeless people and how much money was being spent in the emergency room and for other services.

Jason said Dave gave examples of peoples' lives that had been turned around. There was a cost analysis done after three years of the program being in existence. It followed 19 people for two years before the program and two years after being in the program and found there was a savings of approximately \$31,000 per person. It also found the ER cost declined by 73 percent, detox declined by 77 percent and incarceration declined 76 percent.

Federal appropriations funded the first three years. Thirty-five percent of participants did not pay for housing, and the other 65 percent paid 30 percent of the housing cost.

Ellie said the new Poverello Center emulates this model. Melinda asked when people go into that housing, is it long-term? Jason said the apartment buildings were built with services onsite.

Jason said the numbers for Valor House could be analyzed to get information such as was done for Colorado.

Cindy said it is not an easy case to make to bend over backwards for these people when others are living in marginal housing and barely making it.

Ginny said the Mayor is very interested in this model.

**Miscellaneous business and discussion**

Ellie said Melissa Gordon coordinates the At-Risk Housing Coalition. She asked about the role of a 10-year plan. Ginny said that is a good question for the Mayor. Ellie said she spoke with interagency folks about a part of HUD called Council of the Homeless.

Ellie asked if the consultant for the needs assessment will help with the ten-year plan. Cindy said yes.

Cindy asked how the staff person is doing that was stabbed. Ellie explained the circumstances that the homeless veteran who has been staying at the Poverello Center was drunk one night and not allowed to stay. He came into the small office and told the staff he was going to kill him and pulled a knife on him. When the staff tried to exit the room, he was stabbed in the back and required three stitches. He is doing ok and the person is being charged.

**Date of next meeting:**

August 3, 2010  
Jack Reidy Conference Room  
1:30 – 3:00 pm