

**Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission
Minutes – October 5, 2010**

Commission Members in Attendance: Margaret Borg, Brenda Desmond, Ellie Hill, Laurie Johnson, Melinda Mason, Ginny Merriam, Kim Murray, Susan Hay Patrick, David Pierce, Rob Scheben, Peggy Seel, Dave Strohmaier, Leanne Vreeland, Jason Wiener, Keithi Worthington.

Commission Members Absent: Rod Austin, Barbara Berens, Leslie Halligan, Julie Hilley, Nick Roberts, Julie Weaver, Keenan Whitt.

Others in Attendance: Ben Bach, Lori Davidson (Missoula Housing Authority), Larry DeGarmo (Salvation Army), Michele Landquist (Missoula County Commissioner), Tim Payne (SHARE House), Judge Don Loudon, Karl Paré (Missoula Housing Authority), Melinda Reiland, Shari Strachan (United Way of Missoula County).

1. Intro and Welcome: Ginny Merriam called the meeting to order and introductions were made around the table.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of Minutes: The minutes were amended to reflect Peggy Seel (OPG) as a Commission Member. A motion was made (Ginny Merriam) and seconded (Susan Hay Patrick) to approve the minutes as amended. The motion carried.

4. Guest Speaker, Tim Payne, Director of SHARE House.

Ginny introduced Tim Payne of SHARE House and welcomed him to the meeting. Tim provided a detailed description of the resources provided by the nonprofit and answered questions from the Commission. SHARE House provides a chemical dependency evaluation and helps clients with addiction and mental health issues. Their waiting list generally includes 6-8 males and 4-8 females. They are able to provide six beds total for people meeting the federal definition of homelessness who are also without access to other resources. SHARE staff work with outreach workers at the Poverello Center's Salcido Center. Their clients include patients released from the state mental health center. The SHARE House provides a six-month, multiple-phase, recovery-model program for people with addictions and mental health issues, to help stabilize their lives. If funding were not an issue, Tim said, the quality of life for his clients could be improved if there were "commitment laws" that basically require detox after a certain number of failed attempts to clear one's addiction. Along the same lines, it would be ideal if these programs were available to people who do not qualify for Medicaid, Montana Chemical Dependency Center (MCDC), or other such insurances.

The group discussed the problem of providing detox services for alcoholism and other drug addictions. Tim reported that for the past year SHARE House has not had funding to provide detox services. It was confirmed by members of the Commission that there really aren't any detox services available locally for individuals expressing the desire for them. Ellie confirmed that some of the homeless individuals at the Poverello Center would like detox services. Tim answered questions from Jason Wiener and Rob Scheben regarding the number of people served

under SHARE's closed detox program (4) and the length of time it takes to undergo detox (3-10 days depending on the particulars of the individual and his/her addiction). Tim confirmed that St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula will help people with severe withdrawal symptoms, but the group consensus was that serious alcoholics probably would not allow themselves to get to this point without help from others in the detox process. The group identified Pathways in Kalispell, MCDC, and St. Peter's in Helena as other places in the state that conduct detox services. There isn't a referral process for detox services. Other items discussed in the Q&A include the fact that detox is dangerous and is best conducted by medical staff and in partnership with hospitals. Detox services are expensive and may also require certain accreditation, on-staff psychologists, and number of units/beds to be made available in the program. Not everyone who drinks every day will want or need to undergo detox programs; Ellie noted that there are many people in the community who drink every day but are not homeless. Jason asked if SHARE House's clients had housing would they still need their services, and Tim replied that if they had housing they probably wouldn't need the services; they would be able to access community resources.

Keithi asked Tim if it would be helpful if funding were available to cover the expense of the \$25 administrative fee for the chemical dependency evaluation from Turning Point (from which referrals to appropriate programs could be made). While the money may be difficult to come up with sometimes, Tim answered, people who really want to quit will find money for that fee.

Tim answered questions on the role housing plays in the work of SHARE. He relayed that about 90% of the clients have lost housing by the time they enter the program. Ellie described two models for addiction services: the "recovery model," which SHARE operates under, provides addiction services first and housing needs second. The "housing model" emphasizes stabilizing housing for the individual first, followed by addiction recovery. Ellie reported there have been successes nationally with the housing model, and it is believed to alleviate stress associated with addiction. For homeless clients in the program, assistance with applying for Section 8 housing may be part of the individualized service. Jason noted there is a 2-year waiting list for Section 8 housing. The question and answer period revealed that the cost of care at SHARE is about \$100/day with about 35% of clients making return visits. SHARE does not serve sexual offenders and rarely serves violent offenders. The Elkhorn Treatment Center in Helena runs a program similar to SHARE House.

Other needs identified include: the high expense of providing detox services (medical staff necessary), the need for after-detox care, and a continuum of care for people after quitting, the idea of having a place for people to "sleep it off" (Salcido Center could offer beds 24/day and police could just drop them off; Billings has a successful model for this service).

Ellie discussed the ideas of the "anchor homeless" and the "vulnerability index" in Missoula and how we have 10-12 people meeting this definition. If we could get them into a medical detox problem it would help solve other problems. "Anchor homeless" means people who have been homeless for over a decade and who suffer from both addiction and mental illness. Due to their states, anchor homeless individuals are unable to handle anything other than a medical detox. The "vulnerability index" indicates changes in the homeless community when the anchor homeless individuals are removed from the mix. Ellie says there are national models on these subjects and offered that these could be a part of a community needs assessment.

Ginny thanked Tim for coming to the meeting.

5. Crime and Prevention Committee

Keithi Worthington reported on the work the committee is doing, and the discoveries they have made with regard to the problem of repeat offenders. The committee spoke with Judge Don Loudon to get the court perspective on the issues. Keithi introduced Judge Loudon to the group, and the floor was opened for discussion and questions.

Ginny asked what misdemeanor probation and community service programs look like. Keithi responded that community service programs have costs associated with them that can be difficult to raise, while funding is available for probation programs. Judge Loudon indicated that community service programs cost \$1/hour to the participants, and that current programs are allowing chronic homeless people to work off fines at nonprofit organizations in town such as Freecycle and the Poverello Center. If more private or public nonprofits would participate, it would make this program easier.

Judge Loudon said he assigns fees every day that they know won't be paid. He said it is difficult to see an answer anywhere, but Billings has some amazing resources in their DUI court through federal grant funding.

Dave Strohmaier asked what we need to do to launch a community service program. Judge Loudon described how the current staff support may be enough to support such a program, but the main difficulty comes when considering applicable penalties to certain misdemeanors. Panhandling and open container offenses carry the penalty of fines; probation for these offenses is not possible. The penalties would need to be adjusted. Discussion ensued amongst committee members about whether probation or jail time would be effective deterrents. Judge Loudon indicated that jail time would not be a deterrent to most of our local homeless people. Agreement was made around the table.

Ginny noted that if people are not paying their fines, and are not worried about repercussions of not paying their fines, the police may not be issuing as many tickets.

Commissioner Landquist asked what the costs were to run the jail, and Judge Loudon responded that the county jail bills the person or the City \$100/hour for the time spent for an ordinance violation. Margaret added that, due to what she knows and has seen in the jails, jail is not the right place for ordinance violators. Judge Loudon said that we need to have resources available for alcoholics and mentally ill individuals. They need a place to go where they can meet with someone who knows what help is available for them.

The group spent time discussing the option of community service. Judge Loudon clarified that his ideas in this area are new, having not thought much on the subject, but utilizing/expanding the community service structure to get more people to pay off their fines could be an option. He offered that matches might be made both with community organizations and the City (offering service projects in the parks as an example). Currently, individuals are given the choice between existing locations or their finding a place on their own to serve the time. Mark asked what the consequences were for not showing up for community service, and Judge Loudon clarified that

there would be a contempt of court hearing, warrant issued for the individual's arrest, and jail time.

Judge Loudon said he thinks a city program would make a difference and that it is important just to have someone there who people can talk to about the services that are available.

Ginny thanked the judge for coming to the meeting.

6. Poverello shelter overflow on coldest nights

Jason reported that Steve Earle at the fairgrounds has a building that is heated, but the availability is limited due to rental reservations (for weddings, etc.). Jason does not believe this to be an optimal location and might be a last-ditch location on the most freezing of nights. Susan noted that she has talked with many people about vacant spaces which may be used, but still we are at a standstill. Ellie relayed that there were 36 nights last year during which the Poverello Center was over capacity; and this year, she says, there already have been nights that they are reaching capacity, so the need is even more obvious.

Jason also reported that Paul Carlson from the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness will be here on November 3 and 4 to tour facilities and meet with nonprofit leaders and government officials in Missoula. Ginny suggested the MDAC have a brown bag lunch on Thursday, November 4, to meet with him. Jason will check to see if he is available to meet with MDAC.

Ginny reported that at noon on October 19 the presentation of the checks for the Real Change campaign will occur at the Poverello Center. The new Salcido Center will not be open, but there may be an opportunity to go in and view the space.

7. Adjournment

Ginny thanked everyone for coming. The meeting was adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shari Strachan
United Way of Missoula County