

Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission

Minutes ~ February 7, 2012

Commission Members in Attendance: Rod Austin (Downtown BID), Margaret Borg (Attorney), Barbara Berens (County Auditor), Ginny Merriam (City of Missoula), Susan Hay Patrick (United Way), Keithi Worthington (City Attorney), Jason Wiener (City Council), Leslie Halligan (County Attorney) arrived 1:45pm

Commission Members Absent: Rob Scheben (Police Department), Eran Fowler (Poverello Center), Laurie Johnson (Downtown BID), Brenda Desmond (District Court), Melissa Gordon (OPG), Julie Hilley (Owner, MKLauren), Melinda Mason (WMMHC), David Pierce (Salvation Army), Vacant (Food Bank), Keenan Whitt (Homeward), Leanne Vreeland (St. Patrick's Hospital)

Others In Attendance: County Commissioner Michele Landquist, Judge Kathleen Jenks

Introductions and Welcome: Ginny Merriam called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes: January minutes were approved

Committee Updates:

Rod Austin presented Downtown Ambassador Statistics (seek electronic copy)

Statistics show that in 2011 Individuals Moved, Panhandlers, Bikes on Walks have declined by a large amount in the last year while the Assist Citizens and Visitors remained the same, which shows the same quality of coverage but encounters with fewer problem behavior. Rod credits prevention efforts like downtown officer and Homeless Outreach Teams. Overall ambassador time is still 2/3 negative, 1/3 positive and the eventual goal is to reverse that.

Ginny asked if there should be earned media on the issue. BID Board would like for the word get out as soon as possible. Ratepayer breakfast might be a good occasion. Numbers are a chance to highlight successes of MDAC, Poverello HOTS, BID programs and to point out the value of replacing the grant that is funding HOTS. Michele believes January and February are the right time to get on the agenda of foundations and corporate donors.

Ginny and Rod will work on earned media once Rod returns from vacation.

Crime and Prevention – Keithi Worthington and Rob Scheben (seek electronic copy)

Keithi presented pedestrian interference and panhandling offenses statistics. 459 total offenses in 2010, 353 in 2011. Panhandling and soliciting from the highway dropped significantly, other categories were roughly consistent. Twelve individuals were charged with aggressive panhandling and other charges; they owe about \$33,000 collectively in fines.

So, what would be a different way to handle this? According to Sue Wilkins, to do punitive community service through Missoula Correctional Services would cost \$70,000 on Mullan, \$115,000 downtown. Judge Jenks said the court would love to have some tools to work with. Imposing fines without anything else costs something but is meaningless for some people. Tickets come with a mandatory \$18 surcharge but if community service cannot be applied to surcharge, the program will not be more attractive than ambivalence or warrant; ordinance implementing program would need to have suspension of the surcharge for this circumstance only. Court and attorney are not sure the program will work but it will take two years to evaluate that. Not having a penalty ultimately doesn't reduce offenses for the most difficult to reach. There was discussion about whether community service would be viable – whether people this noncompliant will exercise the option to be compliant through community service where they are not currently. Kathleen said that the program is needed to demonstrate that

there are consequences and get that out as word of mouth; right now, the word of mouth is that there are not consequences. Motivation to pay is not there with this population; motivation to avoid arrest and interaction with police or court is there. Judge has been pleasantly surprised by people's willingness to do community service but the surcharge and requirements of status quo community service program are not compatible with service by this group.

Margaret thinks that misdemeanor probation should be dropped as it is not appropriate for this category of offense. Keithi and Kathleen agree.

Built Environment

Margaret Borg will initially convene the Built Environment Committee.

Human Services – Jason Wiener and Susan Hay Patrick

Susan reported on the task forces generating recommendations and prioritizing them: (list of task groups)
Common themes include the need for a single point of entry with physical location and information sharing about clients. Prevention strategies needed to address deposits and barriers to rehousing. Need for housing development, including family and no-holds-barred housing. Case management and support services in the degree required. Working with property managers and owners to prevent eviction.

Miscellaneous business and discussion

Committee composition: Dave Strohmaier (City Council) has resigned. Michele Landquist, Alex Taft, possibly Dan Cederberg will be appointed by the mayor. Letters of reappointment to be sent. Suggestions for new members welcomed.

Respectfully Submitted

Jason Wiener for Melani Coyle

**Date of Next Meeting
Jack Reidy Conference Room
March 6, 2012**