

**Downtown Business Improvement District of Missoula**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 3 pm via Zoom**

**Present:** Charlie Beaton, Carma Gilligan, Kirk Bodlovic, Ellen Buchanan, Karen Sippy, Scott Sterns, Dan Cederberg

**Guest:** Grant Kier

**Staff:** Linda McCarthy, Robert Giblin, John Corwin

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Charlie Beaton at 3:07 pm, and he welcomed guest Grant Kier, Executive Director of the Missoula Economic Partnership.

**DISCUSSION ON CURRENT MISSOULA ECONOMY:** McCarthy opened with conversation regarding support of small businesses as groundwork for part of today's meeting. Kier shared his concerns for the well-being of Missoula businesses, noting there is no easy answer on how to help them. With no additional federal assistance, it is hard to ask businesses to shut down to flatten COVID curve. During the summer, we could see that businesses adjusted to some restrictions and managed to stay open. Business owners did say that even before the latest round of restrictions, they knew it would be harder to get through the year. Grant shared his appreciation for DMP for being involved and gratitude for Ellen Lahey of MCCHD. He feels there have been good conversation between the bars and restaurants owners and the MCCHD. He feels there will be some tradeoffs, but is grateful more businesses are collaborating. We need conversations to help businesses adapt to get through the winter. He acknowledged the value of businesses working with, not against, county restriction. Grant expresses his appreciation for McCarthy's involvement.

McCarthy then shared stats on grant funds received in Missoula County. She noted the two things businesses need right now: customer spending and financial support for rent and labor. Helping businesses with economic recovery will be a priority for the DMP and MEP.

Kier shared anecdotal information that case counts are a greater issue than behavior of people. The challenge may be educating the public on safe shopping and dining protocols. Kier then noted MEP cannot support just one industry. Other problems they're trying to solve include keeping schools and child-care facilities open so people can work.

Discussion ensued on compliance with the mask mandates and how the community is more tolerant of mask wearing. He wondered if businesses messaging/a campaign of following masking wearing and distancing would better received now. One compelling concept might be to showcase how following the mandates is about saving a business. Beaton noted the larger issue is MCCHD saying stay home, and business owners welcoming customers. The messaging is confusing to the public. Kier agreed and noted the work being done to help unify the messaging, reinforce the right behavior, and reduce non-compliance behavior. The right messaging is important.

Buchanan then shared how the MCCHD is overwhelmed and how their focus is on public safety. She asked is there a way to help with messaging. Kier then added the need for the private sector to help with contact tracing in a constructive way. Buchanan noted the BID could offer help, but it's hard to know how to help. Kier noted that without additional federal aid, many local businesses may not be here in January. We can advocate to our government representatives and put on pressure to help provide financial help. When asked, McCarthy reported that the coalition is called Revive Missoula Bars & Restaurants and includes about 100 food and beverage businesses.

Cederberg shared his opinion that people are just going to stay home, and that nothing will change their minds until they feel safe going out. He noted there are many industries and businesses that have done well during the pandemic, and some segments of the economy are thriving. He suggested we find out who needs help and help them cover their overhead expenses. Buchanan added that providing financial assistance is the one thing we can do. McCarthy wondered

if it would be productive to talk with property owners about rent relief, to have the MDF do another round of fundraising for the Downtown Business Support Fund, and to send a construction recommendation to Governor Bullock to redirect unspent state COVID funds to bars and restaurants. She also reported that Missoula County may be allocating CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds to support small businesses. She also noted many businesses are maxed out with borrowing. Buchanan asked if we could encourage banks to help businesses cover their payments. Kier suggested that only the federal government can provide the kind of financial support needed to keep businesses from failing in the coming months.

Cederberg reminded the group that there are things we can do locally that would be helpful, noting how the MDF raised funds relatively quickly last spring. We need to help businesses cover their expenses until May. What can be done by banks, local governments, and other agencies to help? We could do another good campaign to support small businesses, and he thinks we could save some businesses from closing. We could make a difference.

Cederberg wondered how we better understand who needs help and how much help do they need. Kier suggested there is not a way to know without asking every business how they are and to see who needs help. He said the only information we have is how much each business or industry took in PPP money during the first round. That would be a way to guess what could be needed.

Buchanan then wondered if and how the Midtown Missoula Association was involved in any discussions on supporting small businesses. Beaton responded he didn't think they were actively reaching out to businesses, due to lack of staff.

**REVIEW & APPROVAL OF WEST BROADWAY PLAN CONTRACT WITH DOVER, KOHL:** McCarthy noted the contract with Dover, Kohl & Partners to do a community visioning process for West Broadway is an addendum to the original contract from 2018. Buchanan gave a brief overview of the process and suggested it would start before Christmas. Gilligan asked if the work is focused on property inside the BID boundary, and Buchanan responded that the BID is funding this process and that the target property for the planning effort is located inside the Downtown Master Plan study boundary and that the area is a gateway to Downtown. The BID holds the master contract with Dover, Kohl, and much like the North Riverside Parks & Trails Plan, the Broadway Plan is a continuation of the Downtown Master Plan. Gilligan suggested the BID should not be involved. McCarthy and Buchanan provided reasons why BID should be involved: it holds the contract with Dover, Kohl, it's a continuation of the Master Plan, it's a gateway to Downtown, and the BID will not need to contribute any funds to the process. The process will be fully funded by MRA and the Big Sky Trust Fund.

**Stearns moved to approved the West Broadway Planning Contract, Sippy seconded the motion and the board voted. With five votes for approval, one vote against approval, and one abstention, the contract was approved.**

**REVIEW & APPROVAL OF BIG SKY TRUST FUNDS AGREEMENT WITH MEP:** Following approval of the DKP contract, McCarthy noted the contract between the BID and MEP is for utilization of Big Sky Trust Funds for the planning process. The contract is a standard agreement following the allocation of \$25,000 to the process. Buchanan noted again the BID will not be responsible for funding and that MRA and MEP have covered the costs.

**Sippy moved to approve the agreement for Big Sky Trust Funds, Cederberg second the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Gilligan voted to approve the contract but suggested an additional statement that the BID does not invest funds for this or has any obligation in the agreements.

Buchanan noted this contract will be managed by shared staffing from MRA with additional assistance from DMP staff, especially with communications and outreach. She doesn't expect the process to take as long as the Master Plan process, but noted there will be Westside Neighborhood residents and businesses involved. She then shared some information about parcels along the riverfront and noted the area is ripe for redevelopment.

McCarthy noted the West Broadway planning will take place before the Payne Block planning project due to current, temporary use of the facilities.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** After Gilligan noted two minor edits to the October minutes, Sippy moved to approve the minutes, Stearns seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**FINANCIALS:** Giblin gave a brief overview of the BID's current financial documents, including the balance sheet, profit & loss, and cash flow. The BID is in good cash position with a higher cash balance today than this time last year, due to the payouts for the Downtown Master Plan. He noted the Clean Team is working and billing at a lower capacity. Giblin is also working on the BID Audit, which was delayed due to COVID protocols.

Giblin then provided a brief overview of the BID's contributions to the Downtown Missoula Partnership in 2021, noting both the BID and the MDF will be asked to contribute more towards salaries and benefits to help make up for lost event revenue from MDA. The proposed work plan and budget does not fill the vacant Director of Giving or Ambassador positions next year, however, the BID will need to discuss what to do with the Ambassador position during next spring's budgeting process.

**MISSION WORK UPDATES:** The Clean Team is still working at 50% capacity, but we have not received any complaints as of yet. The team is working on sweeping and removal of organic material. However, our maintenance crew has taken on some of work, picking up garbage in the public right of way. We are planning small gifts for each member for Thanksgiving, including Downtown Gift Cards, masks and stickers. McCarthy also noted the 90 strings of green garland and white lights to be hung on the street lights, which was funded by BID, MDF and MDA. She also reported on the recent pickup truck repairs and the need for a weekend snowplow person.

McCarthy also noted the Crisis Intervention Team is up and running. She also shared Officer Krastel's story about one homeless person who was reunited with family and sent home (out of state). When asked, McCarthy responded that both the Missoula Parking Commission and the Missoula Urban Transportation District were both asked to support the dedicated downtown police officers, and we are awaiting their responses.

Corwin noted he and the business development committee are looking to update the information on the website and considering how some info would be provided in an info-graphic style.

**ALLEY INVENTORY UPDATE:** Corwin reported the alley inventory and survey is proceeding with regular committee meetings. Intern Madison Matthias has been very thorough and helpful.

**DOWNTOWN PLANNING UPDATES:** Adoption of The North Riverside Parks & Trails (NRP&T) Plan is nearly completed with just the Missoula City Council as the final organization. With adoption completed, we will post, print and distribute the final plan.

**OVERVIEW OF HOLIDAY SEASON ACTIVITIES:** McCarthy gave a brief overview of all the holiday activities being organized by the DMP. She explained Festival of Trees raffle, the Teddy Bear Tea Kits, but noted there will be no Santa's Arrival, no photos with Santa, no horse-drawn carriage rides, no Lighting of the Tree ceremony, as normal. However, we are lighting the tree with twice as many lights as last year, and we have scheduled tree lighting at 6 pm for 10 consecutive nights. We are decorating downtown in a bigger way that we believe will generate greater interest. The Parade of Lights will be a REVERSE parade with folks remaining in their vehicles and driving by the floats located on Campus Drive. In absence of the Downtown Holiday Party, we will be sending a holiday card from DMP staff this year.

Gilligan asked if BID provided funding for the various decorations, and Giblin provided the breakdown of funding.

McCarthy then reported on the "Put Your Money Where Your Heart Is" campaign to help encourage Missoulians to shop and dine at local businesses throughout the holiday season, not just on Small Business Saturday.

Buchanan asked if are we encouraging people to gather for tree lighting, and McCarthy responded that we are not over marketing the lighting, but encouraging families to enjoy the lighting the tree on their own.

Buchanan shared just released news from the Governor's office today that align state COVID restrictions with those implemented in Missoula County at the end of October.

McCarthy asked Bodlovic to share how things are going at the hospitals. He noted how so many are people in same boat with challenges around staffing and schooling. He also noted the recent story in the Missoulian about nursing homes problems isn't helpful due to inaccurate reporting on bed capacities. Providence St. Patrick is at 90% capacity today with longer stays by people with nowhere to go. Elective procedures are naturally down. News articles are sharing unintended consequences of nothing being done. McCarthy shared how this virus is something we are just going to have to live with this and there is no conversation about how to plan for it. There is no conversation about vaccines and distributions.

**SPIRIT OF PLACE CAMPAIGN:** Noting we are in the midst of the Missoula Downtown Foundation's fall campaign, McCarthy suggested that all BID Board Members consider a small gift to the MDF. The fall campaign is helping to fun holiday and street décor, and the theme is really focused on this place. Cederberg then added that 100% board member participation in the annual end-of-year campaign is the goal. McCarthy shared information about the recent promotional video.

McCarthy also shared information about the recent "Road to Recovery" seminar, presented by Community Builders and as a substitute to the Montana Main Street Conference.

**PARTNER UPDATES:** Due to the recent shutdown of the DMP office, reopening has the DMP staff on split shifts. Staff is working on the calendar, gift card sales, marketing campaigns, membership dues mailing in December, and preparing for the holiday season activities. MDA still has some members that have not paid dues for 2020. We're also working on the Heritage medallions and wayfinding kiosks. Giblin added information about reaching out with fundraising and continuing the marketing of downtown. McCarthy also noted MDA and MDF are preparing for new board members, officers and budgets. McCarthy also shared the BID is still looking for a weekend on-call employee for plowing. Beaton shared his challenges with employees who are in quarantine as close contacts. He added how hard it is to find and hire employees, given how many people have been laid off. General discussion about how hard to find due to employment benefits and supplementing businesses.

Giblin was congratulated for receiving the Missoula Fundraising Professional of the Year by the Missoula Nonprofit Network.

With no additional announcements, Beaton adjourned the meeting at 5:12 pm.