

Downtown Business Improvement District of Missoula
Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 3 pm via Zoom

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

Staff: Linda McCarthy, Robert Giblin, John Corwin, and Madison Mathias

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Beaton at 3:05pm.

Alley Inventory Presentation by Madison Mathias: With 80 blocks in the district, only 44 have traditional allies, according to Madison Mathias. With about six months of research and analysis, she is close to finalizing the inventory. She shared data with the group, beginning with aggregated findings. Beaton asked if Hip Strip was included. Yes, it was. The data for each alley is listed on 3-4 pages with appendices. The type of data showed is notable infrastructure, waste bins, land cover, drainage, condition, and more. Information also includes maps and photos. Sippy offered compliments to Mathias for the work completed. Beaton questioned how the report would be presented to property owners. The question is only now being considered and develop by the Committee including which alleys will be recommended first for improvements. As a member of the committee, Sippy explained how data was gathered and the purpose of the inventory, adding how it might connect with other Downtown plans. McCarthy added that the recommendations are just now coming together. Sippy added that we can work with property owners wanting to activate alleys. Gilligan asked if there is a prescriptive plan for each alley. McCarthy added that we have data on the alleys but not prescriptive ideas for each alley. Buchanan added this is baseline information only. She also added some history about when alleys were dirt and how the MRA worked with property owners to pave the alleys. She suggested reaching out to MRA staff to learn more about how that worked. Buchanan added that consolidating and hiding dumpsters will need to be addressed. The Downtown Alley Inventory should be finished in a few weeks and perhaps committee members should step forward to take this to the next level. Stearns asked if there are places where public art could happen. He added that art has helped make some alleys more inviting because folks are taking selfies in front of murals. Mathias added that we should look at some examples. Beaton suggested adding information about wrapping the dumpsters in artwork, and Buchanan suggested that working with Republic Services on such a project might be easier than working with MDF on the Signal Box project. McCarthy reminded that we might need to get different alley images and ideas to stimulate thinking. Mathias was complimented for work.

Approval of Minutes: With no proposed edits to the December 2020 minutes, Bodlovic moved to approve the minutes, Buchanan seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial Review: Giblin reported the BID has a strong cash position due to higher assessments received to date over the previous year, as well as additional funds from garbage contract. The BID has almost \$100,000 more than this time in 2020. Expenses have been well managed. There was vacancy savings, and the BID has not spent much in business development or Master Plan expenditures. Giblin added that the BID will make the first payment - \$32,000 - for Downtown Policing contract in the near future.

Updates on Master Plan & North Riverside Parks & Trails Plan: Buchanan reported that the DTMP Implementation Team continues to work on mostly planning efforts. She and the MRA staff met with Dover, Kohl & Partners last week to develop the Broadway Plan timeline and process. Missoula Water is preparing to purchase two parcels adjacent to its building, which will add considerable amount of property to city owners. Further construction is planned in the area with pedestrian crosswalks and curbing.

With the notion that the federal government may consider an infrastructure bill this year, there is a strong desire to design and engineer the conversion of Front & Main, so that Missoula has a shovel-ready project in case that were to

happen. The city has recently issued two RFPs: one to engineer Front & Main conversion, the other to assess Higgins Avenue from Broadway to Brooks. MRA looking at Brooks as rapid transportation corridor, including buses running up middle of street. Should that centerline transit service run all the way up Higgins Avenue? With no local funding for Front & Main, the best-case scenario would be federal funding, similar to the ARRA funds the city secured for the North Higgins conversion in 2010.

Sippy then reported that the NRSP&T Implementation Committee is currently focused on redesigning the amphitheater seating, alongside the redesign of the green hill and the installation of the stormwater infiltration gallery at that location. Morrison Maierle is on contract for that project. Many volunteers from the Blue Ribbon Committee have volunteered to stay involved and help with implementation, including fundraising. Other areas that could be improved in the near term are the Higgins underbridge improvement. McCarthy added that the framework for fundraising for these proposed improvements was presented to the Foundation Board last week and that we may be looking at one million dollars for these first phase improvements. Buchanan asked that number included the stormwater project, as that component has already been funded. McCarthy didn't know. Gilligan asked about flooding in the park if the mound was removed. McCarthy responded that the levee would remain in place. She also added that a separate group was working on the riverfront trail and river access components of the plan and that they would likely be looking at the Open Space program and/or river grants to help fund those improvements.

Buchanan added that there may be crossover between the West Broadway Master Plan and the proposed improvements to Downtown Lions Park on California Street, so when construction happens, there may be opportunities for collaborative contracts. Bodlovic asked how far the center-lane transit corridor might go, and Buchanan responded.

Updates on Marketing & Downtown Advocacy: Both the Put Your Money Where Your Heart Is campaign and the Downtown Dine Local campaigns both drove a lot of support and commerce for Downtown businesses, and many retailers noted they had a better holiday season than they anticipated. Many Downtown food & beverage businesses participated in the January promotion, and engagement from the industry was higher than it's ever been before. The marketing team is now focused on the development of another Downtown-wide promotion for the spring, which might look like a Passport Program and/or an activity in Caras Park that could bring folks Downtown. Lastly, Sackett continues to work on the creation of a written marketing plan for the DMP.

Downtown Advocacy continues to focus on supporting businesses, providing connections to resources where needed, and of course homelessness and parking. Beaton complimented noted the Advocacy Committee has been well attended lately. McCarthy reported the MPC will be making some minor modifications to the garages, leaving the gate arms down 24/7. While this won't change any utilization or rates, the MPC will have better data on utilization of the structures after business hours. Gilligan added that the parking signage was confusing. McCarthy explained that the banners are intended to communicate that lease spaces are available to the general public evenings and weekends. McCarthy then reported on recent topics at the Montana Legislature, declining COVID case numbers, and proposed changes being considered by the Missoula County Health Board this week.

Discussion on Board Development and DMP Representative: Both Bodlovic and Cederberg are coming up on the end of their four-year terms on the BID Board this May. Bodlovic has decided he will not renew for another term. Cederberg would like to serve another four-year term, if Mayor Engen will have him. How important is it to have a Providence St. Pat's representative on the BID Board? All agreed that representation from the hospital, which is Downtown's largest landowner and employer, is essential. Providence has a leadership team member who has offered to serve, should the mayor appoint him. This position represents Zone 2. Discussion ensued, and both Beaton and Bodlovic agreed to connect with Mayor Engen on the appointment.

Discussion on BID Annual Meeting for 2021: Should the BID Board host the annual meeting of ratepayers this spring? Given the pandemic, it would likely be a Zoom meeting. Beaton suggested it would be a good idea and thought a Zoom

meeting could be done with a limited agenda. Buchanan asked how City Club meetings on Zoom are going, and Giblin reported that City Club has been well attended with 150-200 attending each month. The reference to City Club is an example how the process could work and be successful. Beaton emphasized the importance of connecting with ratepayers, since we didn't host the event last year. Buchanan added that there is much to share around what's happening in Downtown. While attendance has historically not been robust for this event, a Zoom meeting might be well attended and could easily be done. The lunch hour was indicated as a time to host the meeting. Mailed invitations will be used, since we only have about 40% of the ratepayer email addresses.

Discussion on Rooftop Graffiti Mitigation: McCarthy led the discussion with how roof-top graffiti is more rampant than ever before, probably because of COVID. She is looking for ideas on how to remove rooftop graffiti, since the BID can't provide that service on top of buildings. At last week's Advocacy Committee meeting, Aimee McQuilkin suggested we consider covering rooftop graffiti with art, instead of removing. She shared how there was graffiti tagging on her block until the Myrtle mural was added to the Higgins facing wall. Buchanan was concerned such art would encourage more graffiti. It was explained that the "art" helped prevent graffiti. Beaton added that he always believed this has been the responsibility of a property owners, not the BID, to clean up. Buchanan added that this is a tough time to ask some business/property owners to spend money on graffiti if cash flow is a problem, and then she suggested graffiti removing drones. Giblin shared he has had discussions with the crime prevention officer about the potential to offer a reward for information leading to identification and conviction of graffiti artists tagging Downtown buildings. Should the BID provide that reward money? Mathias added that catching one graffiti artist won't necessarily get rid of graffiti. IS Crimestoppers an option? Cederberg suggested if the police know who might be doing the graffiti, then the BID should work with them to help dissuade. While it has been a long-term issue in Downtown Missoula, it continues to be a problem. Should we ignore it or try to do something about it? McCarthy asked Giblin to reach out to the crime prevention officer to learn more. Mathias suggested growing vegetation in areas that are primary targets. Beaton recommended keeping the discussion going, and to learn what is the police's recommendation. There was much discussion about using a cleaning drone, which Buchanan shared does actually exist.

Mission Work: Clean, Safe, Economic Vitality: McCarthy gave a brief update on the Clean Team, noting they're still at 50% capacity due to COVID. They were so excited to be invited to Giblin's celebration in the parking lot earlier this month.

The Downtown police officers continue to work with the homeless, and recently helped an individual return home to family in Louisiana. Both the temporary shelters on Johnson Street and Highway 93 South are scheduled to close at the end of March. The Hot Team has increased from two to five individuals, thanks to COVID funding, and they've been working to help relocate folks from the Reserve Street encampment and getting folks sheltered one-by-one. Discussion ensued about the potential for the BID to increase its support for the HOT. McCarthy shared the details of a recent car accident at the corner of Higgins and Front that damaged the sidewalk bench and the corner structure of the Mercantile, but didn't break any windows at 1889. Gilligan asked how the temporary homeless tent camp is working. McCarthy shared it was not at full capacity, but that all tents were occupied. Nearly 80 people are staying at the Johnson Street shelter.

Snow removal has been the big job in recent days, and Ray Kroenke is managing the load 100%.

The Higgins Bridge construction is on schedule, despite missing a couple of days due to frigid weather last week. The Missoulian building is under contract, and they are planning to move their operations to Midtown somewhere.

There is movement to commence with fundraising for the proposed Community Center in McCormick Park, in conjunction with Currents. The new tech building for ATG in the Old Sawmill District is under construction. Staff reported on a variety of business movements in Downtown and noted the construction fencing and boardwalks were removed from the Pattee & Main Street areas as the AC Hotel is close to being completed.

Stearns asked about legislation that might affect Downtown Missoula. Discussion ensued on special improvement districts, vehicle license plates, limiting local authorities, tax increment financing, and concealed carry of guns.

DMP Committee Signup 2021: Noting everyone is already committing time to committee service, McCarthy noted the 2021 committee list was included in the board packet for review. Anyone interested in joining a committee or know someone interested in getting involved should let McCarthy know.

Partner Updates: MDA, MDF: McCarthy reported that MDA membership dues were coming in steady and that 2020 Gift Card sales increased by 18% from the previous year. The DMP Annual Report is finished and posted, and the staff is looking at how to move forward with community festivals and membership. There will be no Winter Brewfest, but there is hope for a Garden City Brewfest later this year. Both Out to Lunch and Downtown ToNight will likely be rolled out the first week in June in a modified form. The Missoula Downtown Foundation had a record year of fundraising in 2020 with \$75,000 raised through the Spirit of Place Campaign and about \$160,000 in license plate revenue coming in the door. Staff introduced a framework for the 2021 Caras Park campaign, but more work needs to be done there. Cederberg then reported that the Foundation decided to not move forward with another round of fundraising for the Business Support Fund, due to the federal aid bill passed in December, which will allow the organization to focus on Caras Park fundraising.

Old Business, New Business, Announcements: McCarthy noted the advice provided at the MEP Economic Roundtable is for all businesses to consult with their accountant on new tax credits and instructions for reporting covid funding.

Discussion around the delivery of covid vaccines, and positive comments were shared on how the Missoula City County Health Department has truly served our community and worked well with the food and beverage businesses.

With no new business or announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 5:12 pm.