

Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission Minutes ~ September 7, 2010

Commission Members in Attendance: Rod Austin, Barbara Berens, Margaret Borg, Brenda Desmond, Ellie Hill, Laurie Johnson, Melinda Mason, Kim Murray, Susan Hay Patrick, Nick Roberts, Peggy Seel, Dave Strohmaier, Leanne Vreeland, Julie Weaver, Jason Wiener, Keenan Whitt

Commission Members Absent: Leslie Halligan, Julie Hilley, David Pierce, Rob Scheben, Keithi Worthington

Others in Attendance: Melani Coyle (Commission Secretary); Peggy Seel, OPG; Eran Fowler, Poverello Center; Karl Pare, Missoula Housing Authority; Don Whalen, Missoula Emergency Services

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

Public Comment: None

Review of Minutes: Susan Hay Patrick made the motion to approve the July and August minutes. Rod Austin seconded the motion.

Updates from Crime and Prevention Committee – Ginny Merriam for Rob Scheben

Meeting with Judge Loudon

Judge Loudon and Pat Morgan from Municipal Court were scheduled to be at the meeting, but with both Rob Scheben and Keithi Worthington absent, they will be attending the October meeting. Margaret Borg said the committee spoke with Judge Loudon. There were two reasons for the visit. One was to let him know that the committee has concerns to share with him. Two was to let him know what the committee has done and is continuing to do. They discussed having the ordinance in place for this season and the numbers that Keithi had pulled from the citations issued. They asked if the court had the tools necessary to deal with these citations. Judge Loudon agreed to use more tools when dealing with the transients. There were a couple of 'tools' discussed:

- COP – Municipal Court Probation
- Community Service Program run through Municipal Court – this does not cost the offender money.

Margaret was happy with the outcome of the meeting. Ginny confirmed that Keithi and Margaret would continue working on this. Margaret said these programs would be diverting people into a different aspect, a punishment aspect. It would motivate them to change their behavior because they would feel the repercussion. Dave Strohmaier said the community service program may be what gets this headed in the right direction. Kim Murray said it would work as a deterrent and could be positive enforcement. Jason Wiener asked if it is different than the Missoula Correction Services' program. Margaret said with that program, they have to pay to be in it. Judge Loudon has philosophical differences with how that program is run. This will go through Municipal Court and it is free. Most agencies aren't interested in supervising these types of people. Kim said nothing can be put into place right now due to funding. Rod Austin said jail time should be put in the ordinances. Dave said jail time was not a recommendation of the subcommittee. Rod said he like the community service, but it could be taken another step. With this population, they may not show up for their community service. If jail time was added, that could be the

next step if they didn't show up. Jason said he would like to hear from the jail to discuss how jail time would help.

Missoula Emergency Services

Rod Austin invited Don Whalen, Director of Missoula Emergency Services Inc. (MESI), to join the meeting. He had spoken with Don about the cost of responding to the calls in the downtown district. Don said the conservative number of what has been written off between January 1 and July 31, 2010 is \$120,867. It is not uncommon to transport the same person three or four times a day. Fire and police respond to each of these calls also. MESI budgets for this every year. Susan Hay Patrick asked if this amount is consistent from year-to-year and Don said yes. Jason Wiener asked if the ambulance service would be interested in a program to help alleviate some of those calls and Don said yes. Rod said there are some resources that could be directed toward better living. Jason asked Don if he had ideas on how to prevent those behaviors and Don said most of the calls are because of intoxication. Leanne Vreeland said 42 percent of the patients received in the ER are due to alcohol. The hospitals at times are at capacity, and these same individuals are brought in several times a day. That limits the capacity the hospital has for taking other emergencies.

Jason asked what the people who sell alcohol have to say about it. Rod said Worden's knows when not to sell and who not to sell to. They are allowed to purchase a certain amount a day and then they won't sell to them anymore. Keenan Witt said they get others to buy for them or they wait for the next person to come on shift to buy more.

Eran Fowler asked if treatment is being discussed as a way to decrease the cost to the community. If there was treatment, the number of ER visits would decrease as well as the cost for all the services. Don said most of them just need to sober up, so if there was someplace to take them besides the hospital, that would eliminate a large cost also. Melinda Mason said she would like to discuss treatment with the director of Turning Point. Sharehouse had a detox program for years. Susan from the Human Services Committee said she would contact Tim, the director of Turning Point. Kim Murray said she would like the whole committee to hear what he has to say.

Melinda said one problem with this population is income. Housing becomes really limited. Karl Pare of the Missoula Housing Authority said a majority of their tenants have SSI or a small income. Melinda said they have short tracked two people to SSI in the last year. The mental health SSI numbers are low. Treatment is expensive and they prioritize those who are motivated and will be successful.

Updates from Social Services Committee – Jason Wiener and Susan Hay Patrick

- **Poverello Update**

- **Salcido Center Closure and Results**

- The Salcido Center is now closed. The Poverello Center is still providing as many services as possible.

- The Poverello Center is moving forward with renovations to the day room for the Salcido Center. It is expected to be fully operational by October 1. There will be logistical issues to deal with once it is operational.

- They need to have modifications done to have a separate entrance. It is important to have clients who are trying to stay sober stay away from those who are not, which

requires a separate entrance. There are no sleeping arrangements for those under the influence.

○ **Excess Capacity Winter Shelter Discussions**

Ellie Hill said the Poverello Center has 70 beds and they are over capacity one-third of the year. They have people sleeping on the floor. Over 95 people is over the fire code. It is not uncommon to have 111 people when it is below 20 degrees. She said the Poverello Center didn't create the homeless problem, they should not be the only ones trying to find solutions.

Eran Fowler met with the Missoula Ministry Association to discuss interfaith emergency shelter. The congregations would provide the space, food, etc for one week at a time. This resulted in valid concerns about safety issues, if those under the influence would have to be housed and if there would be a paid staff member there. The safety of the congregation members who volunteer was important. There was no support offered at this meeting and the majority was not interested. Brenda Desmond is on the board at First Presbyterian and said it may be a surprise who will step up.

Safeway is totally full of storage. Jeff Fee, President of Saint Patrick Hospital, is speaking with his Senior Management Team regarding a role that St. Pats could play in helping to provide shelter for the winter.

There were 246 hotel vouchers given out last year through Salvation Army. The funding source for HUD is not supposed to be for emergency shelter. Human Resource Council has emergency shelter funding. Jason Wiener asked if Salvation Army participates in ARHC. Eran said they are a member but do not attend. Keenan Witt said there will be a new Major in November. Salvation Army gets \$50,000/year; \$25,000 for winter emergency shelter and \$25,000 for expenses such as a car breaking down, medical emergency, rent, etc. ARHC money goes to people with the ability to pay for shelter. Human Resource Council has a program for those in the process of applying for SSA or SSDI that will provide housing and then gets reimbursed by Social Security. About 50 people a month are going through that program.

Jason asked how many square feet is needed to house extra people. Ellie said an average of 5 – 20 people over the code stay at the Poverello Center. Bunk beds are supposed to be three feet apart to follow code. Ellie said the Missoula Independent called her asking what is being done about breaking the fire code this year. Options were discussed of possible other housing. Nick Roberts asked if the Poverello Center is willing to staff the facility and Ellie said there would be a paid staff member as well as volunteers.

- National Guard facilities at Fort Missoula – Nancy Harte is speaking with them
- Fairgrounds

Julie Weaver said the committee is on the right track. If two or three larger groups stepped forward, others would follow. It is better to have more sites than not enough. Barbara Berens asked if there is heating at the fairgrounds. The buildings are rented and there could be scheduling problems. Kim Murray said she would check into this. Steve Earle, the Fairgrounds Director, has worked on these issues when he was the Director

for Mountain Line. Transportation would be necessary, so it would be easier to have everyone in one location. Keenan said Steve is willing to help. Susan Hay Patrick said she would contact Steve Earle and Dan Cravy, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church.

- **Long Term Plans to Address Homelessness**

- **Ten Year Plans from Similar-Sized Communities to Address Homelessness**

Jason Wiener said he has reviewed the assistance model from Fort Collins, CO. It took six years and \$.5 million to create it. The company could be used for technical assistance for Missoula. Missoula has already done a lot of the work, but there is still a lot of data needed.

Susan Hay Patrick said this is more immediate than ten years. Kim Murray said the short term is the serious problem. There will be long term problems and education will be important.

Ellie Hill has done a lot of research on ten year plans and there is a lot of information that is applicable to Missoula.

- **Needs Assessment Update**

The one consultant that had been chosen could not do the needs assessment. The second consultant would have four-to-six people doing phone interviews. There will not be an RFP. Susan Hay Patrick said she would have volunteers, they would just need to have training. Ginny Merriam said any questions about the needs assessment need to go to Mike Barton or Cindy Wulfekuhle in OPG.

Rod Austin said he is concerned about the group not having experience doing this kind of work. Ginny said she did not get that impression. Walla Walla College was suggested and Ginny said the group did not want a local connection. Dave Strohmaier said they want to execute this survey this fall.

- **Social Services Inventory**

Jason Wiener said Peggy Seel has done an exceptional job on the inventory.

Update from Image and Outreach Committee – Ginny Merriam

Update for Real Change/Power of 10 Check Presentation Event

It is the end of the match period. The match this year was \$10 to \$1 (or \$10,000), so not as much has been raised. It was successful because of public awareness. There was good coverage from the Missoulian, television stations and radio.

The last few years there have been check presentations with a large check given to each of the agencies. One year was at the Food Bank and one year was on the lawn of the Poverello Center. Ginny asked for ideas for the check presentation this year. She also asked if people have ideas after the meeting to email her.

- Julie Weaver said since one of the checks is going to the Salcido Center, it could be done there in conjunction with a story about them reopening. A tour was also suggested for this event.
- Brenda Desmond said it could be combined with the Grand Opening of Higgins Avenue. Ginny said it would not be good to combine those two events.

Ginny also asked for other possibilities for an agency to match the funds as the current foundation may not do it again. Anna Martello, Waddell & Reed and the Brandon Foundation were suggested.

Miscellaneous business and discussion

None

Date of next meeting:

October 5, 2010
Jack Reidy Conference Room
1:30 – 3:00 pm