

# Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission

## Minutes ~ January 10, 2012

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Rod Austin (Downtown BID), Margaret Borg (Attorney), Barbara Berens (County Auditor), Eran Fowler (Poverello Center), Laurie Johnson (Downtown BID), Ginny Merriam (City of Missoula), Susan Hay Patrick (United Way), Rob Scheben (Police Department), Keithi Worthington (City Attorney)

**Commission Members Absent:** Brenda Desmond (District Court), Melissa Gordon (OPG), Leslie Halligan (County Attorney), Julie Hilley (Owner, MKLauren), Melinda Mason (WMMHC), David Pierce (Salvation Army), Vacant (Food Bank), Keenan Whitt (Homeward), Dave Strohmaier (City Council), Leanne Vreeland (St. Patrick's Hospital), Jason Wiener (City Council)

**Others In Attendance:** County Commissioner Michele Landquist, Melani Coyle, Commission Secretary, Bruce Russell, Laura Jensen

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

### **Public Comment:**

Bruce Russell spoke about the need for bathrooms in downtown. Ginny had mentioned to Anne Hughes in the Commissioners Office that the commission would be discussing revisiting the issue of bathrooms in the downtown area and Anne passed the information along to Mr. Russell, who came to the commission encouraging a restroom project.

Mr. Russell is a medical sociologist and was a field medic in the Army, he said. He stated this is a health matter and passed out a photo of a bathroom model used in France. He said house foreclosures have forced citizens into the public areas, and there is more of a need for 24-hour restroom facilities. This model is not much larger than two times the size of a telephone booth and is suitable for transportation hubs, such as transit stations. It is too small to use as a wash-up or changing room and is more secure as it is round, so there are no corners to hide around. Drawbacks are that it is a French model, so there would be the expense of getting it here, and it is not handicap-accessible. He is hoping the commission will look into public restrooms in the downtown area. He did not know the brand or the cost, but said it is plumbed, so it is not an easily moved unit.

Discussion followed about other cities that are struggling with this issue also, and many are talking about public restrooms and implementing plans. A vibrant, economical city needs to look into this issue. It is unfair to businesses for people to go in just to use their restroom. There was a committee formed that was looking at models and funding sources, but there were a lot of issues that came up such as security and maintenance.

Laura Jensen, who was part of the Occupy Missoula camp, said that waking up in the middle of the night and having to walk to the Oxford in the ice and cold took her 18 minutes. A couple of nights before, the Ox quit allowing non-customers to use the bathroom. Her friend went to the Oxford and was told that, and then wet herself because there was no other bathroom to use. She said dogs are allowed to urinate and defecate all over the place, but someone on two legs can be denied restroom facilities. There are enough people around the Courthouse that would use a portable toilet.

**Approval of Minutes:** October minutes were approved

### **Committee Updates:**

**Crime and Prevention – Keithi Worthington and Rob Scheben**  
**Implementation of Community Service and Misdemeanor Probation Update**

The committee is working on ordinance violations through December 2011. The new judge met with Municipal Court on Monday, January 9. After she has time to adjust, they will meet with her and Tina Schmauss to discuss misdemeanor probation. It is important to have it done this month because the budget cycle is starting.

***Real Change Promotion – Ginny Merriam***

Ginny asked for more volunteers for this committee. This year, it needs to work on new funding sources for the Real Change program, as the current match is only available for one more year. A sign-up sheet was passed around for those who wanted to sign up to be on the committee.

***Built Environment***

No Update

***Human Services – Jason Wiener and Susan Hay Patrick***

The committee is following a model of the Climate Action Plan for Reaching Home: Missoula's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. The task force is holding meetings with focus groups as part of their work.

Michele asked for specific information for all programs with income criteria, such as Human Resource Council, OPG, etc. so if a citizen comes into their office they might be able to help them. It is not as easy to get help as it appears to be. There needs to be a single point of entry with staff that knows all the programs and can download the correct applications. Gypsy Ray of Mountain Home Montana is a big advocate for this. There is definitely a need. OPG gets 1,000 new applications a month for food stamps. The first question on an application needs to be "do you vote/when did you last vote" and candidates' profiles really need to be examined. The single point of entry is a good idea and needs to be in a centralized location.

**Brainstorm about what the commission will take on this year**

**Work plan for the coming year:**

- Human Services Committee will continue work on the 10-year Plan to End Homelessness.
- Crime and Prevention Committee will work to establish misdemeanor probation and/or community service programs for misdemeanor offenders.
- Real Change Committee will expand the funding base for the program and replace the \$10,000 match, which expires at the end of this year.
- Built Environment Committee will be revived (needs a new chair) and reopen study of public restroom possibilities for downtown. Previous work a couple of years ago found some alternatives but no funding. Today, there seems to be more political will to find a solution.

Poverello relocation. Some MDAC members may be interested in forming a committee to help with the move to a new location.

**Miscellaneous business and discussion**

Respectfully Submitted

Melani Coyle

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