

University District General Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2022 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

1. Welcome by Darcy Caron University District Leadership Team Chairperson, Darcy Caron, called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM. Also in attendance were Kalina Wickham, Neighborhood Specialist, and Kelly Elam, Office of Neighborhoods. Representing the Missoula City Council were Mike Nugent, Ward 4; Daniel Carlino, Ward 3; and Gwen Jones, Ward 3. All members of the University District Leadership Team were present: Brad Cederberg, Rick Caron, and Jennifer Copley, Secretary. Representing the University of Montana were Kat Cowley, UM's Bear Necessities; Emma Kiefer, Neighborhood Ambassador; Allison Wilson, Neighborhood Ambassador; and Lacey Zinke, Director of Student Involvement. Neighbors in attendance included Chira Gingerelli-Hegg, Josie Johnson, Vickie Watson, Morrison Brown, Gia Randono, Debra Postma; Beverly McNamara, Molly Galusha, Dick Adler, Carol Kramer, Brandon McMahan, and Lee Huffman. Debra Postma, Associate Planner for the City of Missoula, attended to address the audience. Darcy began the meeting by listing for attendees links through which members could get more involved in Neighborhood affairs. Links included the following:

- **Missoula Neighborhoods** <https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/298/Neighborhoods> ;
- **Engage Missoula** <https://www.engagemissoula.com/> ;
- **Griz Hub** <https://grizhub.umt.edu/> ;
- **ASUM Bear Necessities** <https://www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/bear-necessities/default.php> .

2. University Neighborhood Traffic Updates Deborah Postma, planner in the Traffic Department, reported that the project to develop the areas north and south of the Higgins Street Bridge is seeking citizen comment before plans are finally drawn. Debra said she has no idea when the Higgins Street Bridge itself will be completed.

Debra invited members to several meetings dealing with transportation policies.

- Virtual open houses March 31, at 12 PM and 6 PM.
- Presentations to city committees:
 - Bike Pedestrian Board, March 14 from 6:15-8 PM;
 - Transportation Policy Coordination Committee, March 15 from 1:30 to 3:00 PM;
 - City Council on March 16.
- Citizens may comment at <https://www.engagemissoula.com/higgins-avenue-corridor-plan>

Recognizing the importance of biking and walking in the University area, the city is working on projects in the neighborhood. Consequently, the city seeks comments about any snowplow problems created by blocking sidewalks with snow and seeks comments about enlargement of traffic circles to make them more functional in slowing traffic. The city also hopes to improve traffic circles on Maurice.

Rick Caron spoke in support of the traffic circles at the corner of Maurice and Woodworth, saying that racing and speeding has diminished with traffic circles. Darcy asked for clarification of plans on Maurice, and Rick showed a model of how cars could be slowed around traffic circles, showing a diagram of a more effective traffic circle on Wyoming Street.

University Avenue is recognized as a neighborhood greenway as is Gerald Avenue. The city seeks input from neighbors about the plans. Those with interest about greenways or traffic issues can contact Deborah Postma (PostmaD@ci.missoula.mt.us).

3. **Bonner Park Neighborhood Grant Proposal** The University District grant proposal seeking improvements in Bonner Park will be submitted before due date of March 18. Brad Cederberg presented the Bonner Park Survey results. Darcy explained the purpose of the proposal based on the Bonner Park Survey.

- (1) Adding pickleball lines to existing tennis courts;
- (2) Exploring the addition of senior exercise equipment to Bonner Park.

Jennifer reminded those in attendance of the addition of the Bonner Park perimeter to the city Rx Trail system with just 3 times around park equaling a mile of walking or jogging. Members asked for community letters of support for the grant proposal. Rick talked about popularity of adult exercise equipment and popularity in other nations.

GRANT REQUESTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overlay tennis courts with pickleball court lines• Cost \$1100• Anticipated completion – spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contract a landscape architect for a preliminary study for an adult outdoor exercise pad• Cost \$3900• Anticipated completion of survey – fall 2022• If found feasible, future neighborhood and private grants will be sought

4. **UM Neighborhood Involvement** Kat Cowley, Director, Bear Necessities, an agency of the Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) reported that her new agency exists to help university students meet basic needs. Kat shared her business addresses.

- kat.cowley@mso.umt.edu
- **Bear Necessities** <https://www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/bear-necessities/default.php>
- General Information about UM activities: <https://grizhub.umt.edu/>

Allison Wilson, Neighborhood Ambassador, said her group is preparing newsletters to educate student renters about their rights and responsibilities. Allison is organizing a contest so artists can submit ideas for an art installation in one of the traffic circles adopted by the Neighborhood Ambassadors. They are also working on a food drive. Emma Kiefer, Neighborhood Ambassador, is working on a website, as well as Instagram and Facebook pages to update the community on activities. The Neighborhood Ambassadors website is under construction and will be up to date soon.

- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/asumneighbors/>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/UMNeighborhoodAmbassadors>

Lacey Zinke, Director of Greek involvement at UM, reported that Greek Life students joined to help with leaf raking and snow shoveling. She reminded those in attendance that many students in Greek communities are their neighbors and encourages people in the neighborhood to contact her if they

have concerns. Rick expressed gratitude for this partnership with the University. Brad added his thanks to Lacey and Rick for working on the raking and shoveling programs.

Molly Galusha asked if Lacey's program is encouraging recycling. Lacey responded that some chapters are adamant about recycling and will mention that at future meetings.

Lacey provided her professional contact numbers:

- Lacey.zinke@mso.umt.edu
- Fraternity and Sorority Involvement <https://www.umt.edu/fsi/contact.php>

5. **Report from the Office of Neighborhoods** Kalina Wickham, the city's new Neighborhood Specialist announced that Community Cleanup will be on April 30 at noon. Before that date, neighborhoods have to build a team to pick up supplies, do neighborhood coordination, and let Kelly and Kalina know what is needed. Then they need to start getting folks involved to help with cleanup, perhaps fraternities and sororities. Jennifer and Darcy said they will be glad to help with the actual cleanup.

Kalina explained that membership on Neighborhood councils is provided for by City Charter, and each elected team consists of 5 to 7 members who represent needs of their areas to the city and work to improve their neighborhoods. They report to city council and Community Forum and try to improve communication from their neighborhood to others and to city agencies. Kalina then facilitated election of new University District Leadership Team members.

Those nominated included Rick Caron, Darcy Caron, Brandon McMahon, and Jennifer Copley. Molly Galusha moved to approve the nominations. Brad Cederberg seconded the motion, and it was approved without objection. Darcy thanked all in attendance, expressing how much members enjoy working for the neighborhood.

6. **City Council Updates** Speaking on behalf of Ward 3, Gwen Jones, City Council President, thanked members for their work on the leadership team. She introduced Daniel Carlino from Ward 3 and Mike Nugent from Ward 4.

Gwen explained that Mayor Engen was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and looking into a treatment plan in his 17th year of service as mayor. As council president Gwen will step in to take on duties of mayor should there be a need. Gwen feels that the city has a "deep bench" that will keep the city moving forward. Gwen has called a meeting for March 15 at 5:15 PM at Council Chambers because of an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) being built in a neighborhood where there have been questions about permissions for building ADUs. The meeting will disseminate information about existing rules and explore what can be done to improve the situation.

Dan Carlino, newly elected in November, says he will attend the meeting. Dan brought up Vicki Watson's concern about the proposed dome at the UM and said that City Council has been asked to do away with special parking permits in the University District and will consider a proposal to rezone the entire city to match up with city goals for housing and environmental policy. Dan has been asked to carry a bill to reconsider the residential parking permits in the U District but promises it will be a long multi-year process with much community involvement. Carol Adler said that because the city is allowing more ADU's, there is little parking available for residents in the University district even with the residential permits now in place.

Gwen Jones retorted that the residential parking permits created in the 1980's have never been modified, even as student numbers have risen. Gwen reminded those in attendance that the Parking Commission has had 4 Commissioners in 6 years and believes that a parking study would cost about \$100,000. She said that she has walked the area to explore the problem. Like Dan Carlino, Gwen promised much public input into the process. Gwen said that city codes needed to be cleaned up and simplified to make process of building more homes quickly and efficiently. She argued that Missoula needs to address its housing crunch by figuring out how to fit more people into this valley and by bringing zoning policy into line into what our growth policy recommends. Montana, Gwen concluded, had the most people moving in of all 50 states and most of that movement was into Missoula and Billings, therefore cities must figure out how to make it all work.

Gwen also mentioned that Missoula has a new city historic preservation officer. Because extensive research has been done in the University District, Gwen recommends putting a link on the Neighborhoods website.

Molly Galusha asked, "How much of the so-called 'movement in' is the result of speculation?" Mike Nugent responded that it is very hard to track. Mike says his office relies on tax data and census data. The state limits what individual cities can do in the realm of landlord-tenant relations.

Gwen Jones said some communities have moved to put extra taxes on such speculation houses, but the state legislatures, not cities, may allow such taxes. Small Montana resort towns may conduct a vote to add a local option sales tax. Montana's state legislature has not granted such powers to cities like Missoula, however.

Mike Nugent introduced himself and offered any help that could be offered.

Rick Caron asked about whether City Council is concerned about battery charging stations for Missoula's electric cars. Gwen pointed out the charging stations near Adventure Cycling and suggested that charging stations are part of the infrastructure bill that has been before Congress. Mike Nugent has talked to Northwest Energy and found that the grid now in place cannot handle more than a couple of electric cars on each block. His office is beginning to look into the issue. Building code is set at the city level, so the city cannot unilaterally require charging stations on all commercial buildings, for example. Mike pointed out that car manufacturers need to come up with some sort of universal charging station format that would work for all.

Molly Galusha pointed out that solar panels would help support battery charging stations. Adding that not all Americans can afford solar panels, Rick urged ongoing discussions.

7. **Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items** Jennifer reminded members that at our last meeting resident Vicki Watson had asked us to comment on the building proposed by UM with its subsequent environmental consequences. Jennifer asked the Office of Neighborhoods explore the appropriateness of a Neighborhood Council commenting on university decisions that might impact their neighborhood. Kat Cowley said that the Food Pantry is still collecting food for needy students. Brandon, our new leadership team member, introduced himself to the membership.

8. **Closing & Adjournment** Before adjournment, the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 5, at 6:30 PM. Darcy Caron adjourned the meeting.