

MISSOULA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

CONDENSED BOARD MEETING MINUTES

October 19, 2020

FINAL

A Regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency was held on Monday, October 19, 2020 via Zoom in the Council Chambers, 140 W. Pine, at 12:00 p.m. Those in attendance were as follows:

Board: Karl Englund, Nancy Moe, Ruth Reineking, Melanie Brock, Tasha Jones

Staff: Ellen Buchanan, Chris Behan, Annette Marchesseault, Tod Gass, Jilayne Dunn, Lesley Pugh

Public: Linda McCarthy, Missoula Downtown Partnership; Nathan Mcleod, City of Missoula Parks & Recreation; Joe Easton, Missoula Parking Commission Board; Tiffany Brander, Missoula Parking Commission; Missoula Access Community Television (MCAT)

CALL TO ORDER

12:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 21, 2020 Regular Board Meeting Minutes were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Englund announced the numbers to be shown to call in for public comment. There were no public comments.

ACTION ITEMS

North Riverside Parks & Trails Master Plan – Request for Acceptance (Marchesseault)

Marchesseault said the North Riverside Parks & Trails Master Plan is an outgrowth of the Downtown Master Plan that was adopted last fall. She said the initiative was led by the Missoula Downtown Partnership and City of Missoula Parks & Recreation Department. MRA provided some funding and Marchesseault sat on the leadership committee for the Plan. Dover, Kohl & Partners (DKP) completed the Plan, and Marchesseault said there is still some editing in the narrative report that is ongoing. The intent is to get adoption for the Plan from a number of groups including the MRA. Linda McCarthy, Missoula Downtown Partnership, and Nathan McLeod, Parks & Rec, were present to provide a presentation.

McCarthy thanked the Board for supporting the planning projects the Missoula Downtown Partnership has embarked upon the last few years. She said McLeod has served as the staff lead on this secondary planning process since the completion of the Downtown Master Plan in August 2019. McCarthy said this planning process began at the time the Downtown Master Plan was finished and is a secondary, deeper dive on the parks & trails north of the Clark Fork River from Missoula College to Russell Street. Much of what has happened on the south side has already been planned and developed, but there are many things on the north side that need to be connected and enhanced.

McCarthy said the Missoula Downtown Partnership raised money and hired DKP to do the secondary planning process. Right about the time they were ready to roll out the Master Plan to the public in March was when COVID-19 hit and they had to pivot everything to a digital platform. McCarthy said DKP knocked it out of the ball park. They put together several videos last spring to give people a 3-D view of the proposed improvements. She said despite moving to the digital platform, there has been very good engagement from the community on this planning process. Over 2,000 Missoula people have touched the Plan at some point over the course of the last year, many of them viewing videos and filling out online surveys.

McCarthy said the goal of this secondary planning process is to improve sustainability and environmental quality of the parks, river trail and river corridor. It is also to increase park space and relocate surface parking to celebrate the river, enhance functions and programming. She said East Caras Park is generally used seasonally and there are between 80-100 events per year there. When there aren't events going on it typically sits quiet. McCarthy said COVID-19 has really shown them that Caras Park, in particular, is really good for events only. They want to change that and make it more accessible and inclusive for everybody.

McCarthy said over the course of the last 12 years there have been 3,000-4,000 new housing units developed downtown. Parks and trails are really important to downtown residents, many of whom don't have their own yards. She said other park goals include year-round utilization and improved river access, while reducing erosion from overuse in the wrong areas by creating formal access points.

McCarthy said another goal of the Plan is to improve, widen and connect the Riverfront Trail System. She said there are still some connections to make on the north side of the river. More and more people are using the trail system and it needs to be widened. The infrastructure of the parks also needs to be reorganized to better serve the public and be more inclusive. There also needs to be improved access to the trail corridor.

McCarthy said a lot of the Plan details and goals are included in her letter that was attached to Marchesseault's memo. She said there is still time to make textual changes, but the renderings will likely remain as is. The Missoula Downtown Partnership is working on a multi-agency adoption process this week. In addition to MRA, they are also presenting to the Missoula Downtown Foundation, Missoula Downtown Association and the Business Improvement District. They have been in front of the Missoula Parking Commission, Parks & Recreation Board (no formal action taken), Destination Missoula, and Tourism Business

Improvement District Board. McCarthy said they will be in front of City Council in November for the final approval of the Plan.

McCarthy said there are a handful of projects that are navigating into the implementation phases, one being the Higgins Avenue Bridge upgrades. There are also some new and different plans for under the Bridge. There is work being done on the NorthWestern Energy substation and they are working with the Public Art Committee to wrap the substation in art. City of Missoula Public Works Dept. is working on a stormwater infiltration system that will go underneath the green hill in Caras Park, and there is opportunity to do additional improvements there. McCarthy said as things navigate in that area, they will likely widen the trail too.

McLeod said the Plan also includes Kiwanis and Lyon's Parks. They are more neighborhood-centered parks and focus on the needs of neighborhood residents within the immediate envelope around them. He said there are some potential projects that might be moving forward with those soon. He said Ron's River Trail that runs along the north bank of the river connects all of the parks. The plan includes proposals to better integrate the trail into the parks. There are some links in the trail missing along the riverfront and the Plan proposes future connections to keep the trail along the river as much as possible.

Brock said this is very exciting and thanked everyone for their work and time put into making the Plan. She asked how crucial the conversion of Main and Front into two-way streets is in achieving the smooth traffic flow into these redesigned areas. McCarthy said that is in the Downtown Master Plan as a high priority, but funding has been a barrier to getting that project done. She said primarily, it does not need to be done in order to incorporate the park improvements. However, the Ryman/Front Street intersection, which is the primary entrance to Caras Park, could be a pinch point.

Reineking said McCarthy's letter talks about the Higgins Avenue Bridge construction and reclaiming and improving the staging area in Bess Reed Park. She asked for more information about that. McLeod said the Higgins Avenue Bridge is currently under construction for the next two years. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and their contractors are using portions of East Caras Park as their staging area, and to store equipment and materials. The Parks & Rec Dept. and MDT have an agreement in which MDT will give Parks & Rec some money post-construction to restore the areas in the parks affected by construction activities. He said one of the reasons they wanted to get the Master Plan done now is so that they can actually use that money to restore the parks in a way that allows them to move the plans forward. They have heard from multiple groups that the parking lot under the Bridge is not a very friendly space. It's dark, cold, and ugly and not a place you want to be as a pedestrian. They have heard from vendors that they do not want to be set up there because people don't want to go over there. He said part of the Plan is to activate that space and make it friendly for pedestrians and multi-use activities such as climbing walls, basketball or parkour, and vendor space or a place to sit during Symphony in the Park. McLeod said there are a lot of opportunities they want to create under the Bridge that could include lighting and artwork to make it feel like a better space. He said Parks & Rec talked with the Missoula Parking Commission (MPC) about this and have come to an agreement that parking will not be put back under the Bridge after Bridge construction is complete. Parks & Rec will move forward with the Plan and start to

implement some concepts from the master plan under there, which is the lighting, artwork and activity. The parking is going to go elsewhere, primarily in the Bank Street parking garage. McLeod said MPC has been great to work with and they are also very excited about the Plan and are willing to work together on the goal.

Reineking said she likes the way the plans look on the videos on Engage Missoula. She said she noticed there were a couple of ways to get from the Bridge down to the Parks. She asked if those have been approved and if MDT will be implementing them. McLeod said it is an ongoing conversation between multiple City departments and MDT. Their understanding is that MDT will allow the City to do the stairs and an accessible ramp off the side of the structure as long as it doesn't interfere with the structure of the Bridge itself. He said they would attach a separate structure to the Bridge, and MDT has said in conversations that they would allow something like that. McLeod said it is a huge goal from the Plan and important to have that accessibility from the Bridge. It is the primary entrance into the Park and the most heavily used.

Reineking said Marchesseault's memo says the North Riverside Parks & Trails Master Plan has been adopted and approved by the MPC, but today said it was before them and has not been approved. She said she is glad they won't require parking under the Bridge anymore, and asked if it is their intention to adopt it before it goes to City Council. McCarthy said MPC unanimously approved the Plan last Tuesday.

Moe said the Plan covers phases of implementation, but without stating priorities or a timeline. She asked about those and also what funding is going to be looked at or is identified. McLeod said they did show phasing in the Plan and it is conceptual in nature, trying to show how the different elements of the Park could be broken up in a logical way. He said everyone has different ideas of priorities for the Park and the way it will be implemented will be opportunistically. For example, the raised lawn adjacent to the pavilion in Caras Park is going to be one of the first things that happens solely because the infiltration gallery is going to be installed in that spot in a year or so. Parks & Rec has asked Stormwater and their consultants to put the hill back as a flat lawn so that portion of the Park can be moved forward. The other spot that would happen soon is under the Higgins Avenue Bridge because that construction project is happening now. Another opportunity is the electrical substation. NorthWestern Energy has been in conversation with the City about doing a big art wall around the substation to screen it. McLeod said there aren't other projects that have been specifically identified as being the next thing to happen, but they will be looking at what could happen based on opportunities with other types of construction and funding opportunities. If a large grant were to come through for trail construction, that would be something they could jump on and start to implement widening Ron's River Trail.

Moe asked if there is an economic advantage or disadvantage to not having stairs be part of the MDT project on the Higgins Avenue Bridge. McLeod said stairs are part of their plan. They are installing stairs in approximately the same location on the west side of the Bridge as they are now. Although the stairs MDT intends to install are less grand than those envisioned in the Plan, they will be functional and they may be reusable in another place if they decide to go with something different. Buchanan said there has been a lot of discussion around the stairs. Part of the public wanted to reuse the stairs that are there now and adapt them to current codes. That is not economically feasible because they

would have to be taken apart and reconfigured to meet American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. She said a lot of the concern has been that the stairs that are proposed as part of the Higgins Avenue Bridge project by MDT are basically just a utilitarian way to get from the Bridge down to the Park. Buchanan said she has viewed this and talked about it in multiple meetings and from the standpoint of the Downtown Master Plan and the vision for Downtown Missoula and Caras Park, they are a temporary solution. They will functionally get you from the Bridge down to the Park until such time as it is decided how best that should happen for a permanent solution. As McLeod pointed out, the stairs that are being proposed can simply be unbolted and used elsewhere, just like the stairs that are out there today. Long-term, the City would love to see a ramp on the east or west side, and monumental stairs from the Bridge down to the Park. Buchanan said the resources are not there right now to do that. The City chose to put its resources into widening the Higgins Avenue Bridge and having really good bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in addition to the vehicular accommodations. She said that is the big picture of what is going on with the vertical circulation from the Bridge down to the Park.

McCarthy spoke to the funding sources. She said the phasing is not 1,2,3,4, but rather chunks of phases that could be taken up at any time independent of others. They envision it will probably be 10 years before they get the aspirational plan fully implemented. One of the disadvantages they have right now is that they don't know what the total cost is and it has been challenging to understand what the cost of the phases will be for two reasons. One is that they didn't go far enough in the contract or pay for the engineering component to understand what is underneath the pavers and the lawn. Second, it is such a crazy moment in time that estimates and bids are skyrocketing through the roof. McCarthy said it is really hard to know in a normal scenario what the total costs of each of the phases would be. She said there is not a single source of funding to complete the projects. They need to look at multiple funding sources and it could include user fees, City Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Open Space bonds, grants, work from the Army Corp of Engineers or MDT, City or County, etc. This Plan doesn't go so far as to identify the cost of every item or which funding source should connect to it. It will be up to them in the implementation phases to cobble together the funds to make the phases happen as opportunities present themselves. Moe asked if MRA will be given an opportunity to examine discreetly some of the projects. McCarthy said absolutely.

Moe asked about the parking and places like the Wilma that use it. McCarthy said there are two sections of parking underneath the Bridge. The section north of Caras Drive will remain as is and that is primarily utilized by the Wilma residents. Parking on the south side of Caras Drive has primarily been relocated into the Bank Street parking garage, which is around 60 spaces.

REINEKING: I MOVE THE MRA BOARD ADOPT THE NORTH RIVERSIDE PARKS AND TRAILS PLAN IN ITS FINAL FORM AND DIRECT STAFF TO FORWARD THAT ACTION TO THE CITY COUNCIL PRIOR TO THE PUBLIC HEARING WHICH IS EXPECTED ON NOVEMBER 2, 2020.

Brock seconded the motion.

Joe Easton, MPC Board, said MPC addressed this Plan at their meeting last week. It was unanimously endorsed. They all support the vision and the plan for renovating and changing Caras Park. MPC had one recommendation for a text change which was written and agreed to by McCarthy at the meeting which articulated the timing of how decisions would be made to remove the surface parking lot in Caras Park. He said the Bridge lot spaces are being accommodated in other structured parking and can go forward without much impact on their operations. When MPC turns its attention toward the structured parking and making it into the visuals seen in the Plan, they want to stress that there had to be a plan or executed vision of how that parking was going to be replaced. It just wasn't going to be taken up without additional spots relocating somewhere else in the downtown or within the parking district. McCarthy and McLeod understood that, and with that small change in the narrative about the proposed parking structure, MPC adopted and endorsed the Plan 5-0.

Tiffany Brander, MPC Director, expressed her support of the North Riverside Parks & Trails Plan as a citizen and as the MPC Director. She said the MPC did approve the Plan last Tuesday and she voiced her excitement for the Plan and said they are looking forward to participating and ensuring that there is a significant process to find and/or replace parking in advance of the transformation of parking. She said MPC is happy to answer any questions or concerns regarding parking.

Reineking echoed Brock's comments and said this is a really exciting Plan. She was at several of the stakeholder and public meetings, and when she looks at the Plan it looks like Missoula to her. They have accommodated so much of what Missoulians want. Moe agreed with the previous comments on the Plan and appreciates the process it went through as well as the number of engaged citizens in the process. She congratulated everyone and thanked them for their time in putting it together.

No further discussion. No further public comment.

Motion passed unanimously (5 ayes, 0 nays).

NON-ACTION ITEMS

STAFF REPORTS

Director's Report

Buchanan and Rob Gannon serving as DS Interim Directors

Buchanan said Development Services (DS) has been minus a Director for quite some time now. Don Verrue stepped out of retirement and acted as Interim Director to manage on a day to day basis the comings and goings of DS. Verrue's ability to continue to do that ended last week because he is retired and can only work so many hours before it starts to have an adverse financial impact on him. Rob Gannon is a new employee who has been brought on by the City as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). He comes here having managed the transit district for King County, WA and oversaw 4,000 employees there. Buchanan said after discussion with Administration, she and Gannon have agreed to be Interim Development Services Directors. He will take care of Departmental management, including personnel issues, and day to day administration. Buchanan will work with staff on regulatory issues that come up where they need some decisions about how to proceed. In

talking with Englund, the commitment she made is that MRA is 100% her first priority and she will manage to take on this additional responsibility for a short period of time while DS settles on a new Director. She said she will manage to do that without adversely impacting what is going on with MRA. Thus far, it is working out well. DS has a great staff and they need some leadership. She will not be in the minutia of DS, but rather will be working with senior staff and downline staff to work through issues and make decisions. DS is understaffed right now and overburdened, and the department is in the process of getting hired up completely. There will be a training period for new employees. She said the corollary to that is that the City has done a national search and narrowed candidates. They are in the process of trying to work with the preferred candidate to see if they can make it happen for them to relocate here and become DS Director. There are a lot of challenges right now with things, not the least of which are COVID-19, housing and other things that are changing in Missoula right now. Some of those things that are changing are all the more reason DS, which is critical to development, needs leadership. Buchanan said she was happy to answer questions. If the Board has objection they can discuss and rethink it. She said nothing that is involved with her taking this on are things that she hasn't done for long periods of time throughout her career including zoning, subdivision review, building permits, etc.

Englund said when Buchanan talked to him about this it looked to him like once she made the commitment she did, MRA would continue to be well served by her. He said it looked like an opportunity for MRA to play its part and as part of City government to help out when things are needed. The other piece important to him is that he knew Gannon when he was at the University of Montana before he was at King County. He is very competent and he will work with MRA a great deal on making this work and understanding that Buchanan's primary duties are to the MRA. He said if he was concerned that wasn't the case, that would be something different, but his experience with Gannon is that he will use Buchanan's services wisely and understand her first commitment. Buchanan said one thing that makes it not difficult to squeeze in is that all of the other things she does with her life, other than MRA and work for the City, are gone right now because of COVID-19.

There were no other Board comments. Englund said that is an indication of the Board's understanding that Buchanan is a very competent person and she is trusted implicitly. Buchanan said the other piece of this is that MRA has a dynamite staff.

601 W. Broadway

Buchanan said MRA is working with DS and Parks & Rec on rezoning of 601 W. Broadway. It is the piece of property at the west end of Riverfront Triangle that was formerly Tire Rama and has been vacant for many years. Buchanan said the City thinks it will be a catalyst for piquing interest in moving Riverfront Triangle ahead. It is unfortunate, logically, that it will develop before everything falls into place with the Riverfront Triangle because they are co-dependent. She said she is looking at it as a positive and an advantage to lighting a fire under some folks who may want to invest in the property to the east between there and Orange Street Bridge. She said City staff is talking to other folks about Riverfront Triangle and feels moderately optimistic in the ability to move something forward there. Missoula is a hot ticket item in the world right now and there may be some folks willing to reinvigorate that discussion – maybe even some of the former players.

Communication Plan

Buchanan said MRA has an agreement in place with Six Pony Hitch, LLC (6PH) and is ready to move forward and initiate meetings. Dunn said she and Pugh have a meeting with Spider McKnight from 6PH on Wednesday to talk about how to start that process and set up interviews according to the Scope of Services. Englund said Brock has agreed to help on this too.

West Broadway Plan

Buchanan said the City did get the Big Sky Trust Fund grant for \$25,000. Staff will be incorporating the required language into that contract with DKP and beginning that process as expeditiously as possible.

Scott Street Property

Buchanan said the City has a developer that is quite interested in taking advantage of Opportunity Zone (OZ) benefits as well as the fact that the property is in an Urban Renewal District (URD). They are looking primarily at housing, along with mixed-use. She said they understand there has to be a public process around that in terms of input from the Northside Neighborhood and other interested parties in the area. They are discussing whether they should focus strictly on the developable part of the property the City just purchased or if they should look at other available properties and do something more comprehensive. The OZ possibilities are really constrained right now with timing. Benefits start to diminish at the end of December. The other piece is the election coming up in November. There are varying opinions in Washington D.C. on the federal level about this program, so how the election results could impact it are still an unknown.

Buchanan said all of the above projects are exciting and there is a whole lot happening in URDs, especially in the downtown area.

Budget Reports

Dunn said there are two sets of Rainbow Reports, one for FY20 and one for FY21. She is continuing to report out on FY20 until the audit is complete. The new FY21 reports do not have the updated mills because she just got the spreadsheet from the County on Friday. MRA has received the updated mills and next month they will be rolled into the Rainbow Reports. Englund asked if there was anything surprising in the updated mill numbers. Dunn said the new mills are .89382 for all of the Districts except for the 4-1C and the 4-1N, which are the Hellgate Elementary taxing jurisdiction areas of URD II and North Reserve-Scott Street URD. Last year's mills were .89417, so this year's are slightly down, except for the 4-1C and 4-1N which are slightly up from .874 to .879. Dunn said the significant difference MRA will see as far as the decrease in tax increment revenue in FY21 is going to be because of the decrease in the taxable values of the districts. MRA will see decreased revenue in all of the URDs because of the lower taxable values. There also were some appeals.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

OTHER ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lesley Pugh