

University District Neighborhood General Meeting

Tuesday, October 11, 2022
UM Theater

Call to Order with Introductions: Kalina Pritchard called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM. Those in attendance mingled and enjoyed pizza and cookies before the meeting. **Chairperson Darcy Caron, Rick Caron, Brandon McMahon, and Secretary Jennifer Copley** introduced themselves to the audience. **Kat Crowley, Emily Ferguson, and Allison Wilson** introduced themselves as Neighborhood Council delegates from the University of Montana.

Report from the Missoula and UM Parking Offices with Discussion: Kalina Pritchard presented ground rules for respectful discussion, asking those in attendance to defer questions until after the presentation by Ian Ortleib, Missoula Parking Services Director, and Bill Donovan, UM Parking Services Commissioner.

Ian reported that the Missoula Parking Commission aims “to provide and manage parking and parking alternatives.” Ian invited those in attendance to attend regular meetings and presented a parking spaces inventory.

- The city has about 1056 spaces with 850 requiring permits. Parking spaces are enforced Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.
- The Parking Commission has completed a study of MPC management and operations and a review of jurisdictional boundaries.
- To meet the diverse parking needs of the University area, the city agency has hired expert consultants to guide the process, and requests for proposals have gone out. The Parking Commission hopes the contracted consultants will begin their study in December of 2022 with the review ongoing until February 2023, public review until June 2023, and a final report completed in August 2023.
- Completion of the inventory of parking spaces is ongoing with a utilization survey between October 12 and October 19.
- Collaboration with the University parking office under Bill Donovan is ongoing.
- Both Parking commissions are looking at alternative modes of transportation: UDASH, Mountain Line, and Missoula in Motion.
- Ian says the Missoula Parking Commission invites communication with his office by contacting him at 406-552-6243 or ortliebi@ci.missoula.mt.us.

Vickie Watson asked if local citizens would be guaranteed parking by their homes. Ian responded that consultants will explore that issue.

Robin Kent asked if one side will be reserved and the other side of a street open for parking. Ian again said that no such decision has yet been made.

Gwen Jones, city council representative, took the microphone to review the history of the current parking regulations. She urges all to listen to what the parking experts will say, with

the goal of more equitable parking access to better accommodate UM students and staff. Gwen says that, given the high costs, a UM parking garage is not on the radar.

Robin Kent pointed out that enrollment is down and inquired about why there is such a big parking crunch now to which **Bill Donovan** reported that from 9 AM to 2:00 PM the UM Mansfield library parking lot is usually completely full.

Dillon Sherlock reminded attendees that much of the parking in the area is from Hellgate High School.

Rick Caron, while applauding public transportation, urged the city to check the impact of speed limits in the area. If we are going to encourage pedestrian or bicycle traffic, he said, we need to reduce the speed of traffic to make nonvehicular commuters safer. He reports serious injuries and 57 accidents in his neighborhood over a six -year period. Ian responded that he will work with the city transportation department to explore these concerns.

John Taylor remarked that the bicycle lane on 6th street that seems to be improperly used by both bicyclists and drivers. **Gwen Jones** argued, in response, that the creation of the one-ways took years of study and has been a huge success. The changes required cooperation with state agencies, but the state would not agree to slower traffic on Highway 200. Further change, she said, will have to be incremental.

John Taylor also addressed the issue of parking on game days. Cars routinely park in yellow zones or block driveways, he said, because of lack of law enforcement. **Gwen Jones** responded that on game days the police are busy and not prioritizing parking issues. Games days bring a lot of money into town, but issues remain.

Tim Descamp asked if the universities could build better parking, but **Bill Donovan** responded that UM does not have the funds to add to existing parking on campus.

Dave Noel from Beverly Street noted that the term of the study contract does not include football season. **Gwen Jones** responded that the parking commission only manages Monday to Friday parking issues, and games occur on weekends.

Rick Caron suggested that students would prefer free parking off campus to the increasing costs of parking on campus. **Bill Donovan** retorted that the University is exploring the issue of cost of parking on campus. Rick suggested getting students involved in the UM study.

Jenny Mostafavi, who lives across from the campus, says she sees again and again how students get around the parking regulations. Seven parking spaces on her property are often filled with people illegally parking on game days.

Report from Missoula Storm Water Specialist with Discussion: **Marie Noland**, Missoula Maintenance and Program Specialist, addressed Jacob's Island water quality issues near the area of the dog park.

- The Missoula Valley Water Quality District, she said, found that county and city have been looking into water contamination issues. They learned that water samples above and below the island have low e-coli counts but admits that it is difficult to get adequate samples. It costs in the thousands of dollars to prove the source of fecal bacteria.
- Samples were inconclusive about the effects of pet waste on Clark Fork water quality, even though we know that, in general, pet waste harms water.
- The Missoula Parks and Recreation Director says that city now empties waste stations and checks refilling the mutt mitt stations from March to October. The difficulty is with folks not using them.
- Marie says that Jacobs' Island is incredibly popular for the 30,000 registered dogs in Missoula, and the Kim Williams trail is the most traversed in the city, even with dogs.
- The City has been putting up signage, hosting an information booth at Farmers Market, and encouraging pet owners to be more responsible.

Rick Caron asked about dog waste enforcement, reminding Marie of the leadership teams spring 2022 pickup of 29 pounds of dog poop in 30 minutes. Rick pointed out that random samples do not make sense when irregular rain is washing animal feces and urine into the river. Marie admitted that many measurements are necessary but have not been conducted.

Rick Caron further suggested that the dog park across from the mall is fenced, easy to clean. He asked if there is any thought of containing the size of the riverside dog park? He reported destruction of natural habitat along the river where children could once play. Marie responded that containment would be a great idea.

Mike Jacupcek said he wanted to speak up for dog owners, many of whom use the area and use it responsibly. He noted that Blue Mountain is rife with dog and horse waste and thinks that Jacob's Island is better cared for. Marie responded that there is no effort to do away with the Jacob's Island space. The city will put its efforts into educating users, not into changing perimeters of the current Jacob's Island dog park.

Report from University of Montana Delegates to the University District Council with Discussion: **Emily Steger**, Director of Student Engagement, and representative of UM Greek life chapters with 200 active members, reported that Greek life students do much voluntary work in the community, especially trying to alleviate student food insecurity. **Rick Caron** showed signup sheets for those in real need of getting leaves raked and snow shoveled: seniors with limited ability and the physically challenged. He encouraged residents to get help for those who might need help.

Kat Cowley, who directs UM's Bare Necessities and is home to the Neighborhood Ambassador programs said that her office helps put together neighborhood service programs, loaning out snow shovels and rakes to students. It also offers support services for student housing and food needs. Kat urges those with concerns or needs to contact her. She added that on October 22 there will be a drive to add food to the UM Food Pantry. "Can the Cats" is coming up in November with the same goal. Food collected will serve students on campus where about 2000 pounds of food given away to students each month. Kat said that the Food

Pantry at the ASUM office has a collection site open most days. Food collected in neighborhoods, she added, will go to the Food Bank.

Allison Wilson, Neighborhood Ambassador described her duty to include build good relationships with neighbors in the University area by encouraging mutual respect and communication. Her office teaches students about renters' rights and seek suggestions for events and ideas.

Reports from the Office of Neighborhoods with Discussion: **Kalina Pritchard** reports that the Higgins Avenue Corridor project seeks comments. **Darcy Caron** described the leadership team's efforts to get pickleball courts painted, pointing out that we need to develop a system for managing the nets and activities. Darcy said that we will be applying for another neighborhood grant for up to \$6000. She asked residents to let the leadership team know what ideas they have for the grant applications due by December.

Kalina Pritchard called for volunteers and/or nominees to the University District Leadership team. **Jenny Mostafavi, Hayden Whipple, Herman Haw** and **Jenny Alvauaje** were added by acclamation.

Report from the City Council with Discussion: **Gwen Jones** thanked old and new Leadership team members, including those from the University of Montana. Gwen said that with warmer winters and resulting icy sidewalks cause increased problems because the city does not actively enforce its ordinance requiring sidewalk shoveling. It is a complaint-based system, and the city will work with those failing to clear their sidewalks. She explained that Mayor John Engen has been replaced by Jordan Hess and mentioned the renaming of the Higgins Street Bridge to Beartracks Bridge. She urged all present to read the historical plaques on the southside of the bridge.

Mike Nugent also expressed delight with the dedication of the new bridge and promised to deal with concerns about speed issues. **Rick Caron** suggested the addition of speed humps, and Mike agreed that they may be considered on Arthur. Mike explained that Missoula is in the process of a code reform update. Consultants are now completing a code audit which will be followed by a robust citizen involvement period. He said that the city council heard a presentation on bear safety issues, with more problems this year than last. The city, Mike said, is exploring more bear-aware practices by residents.

Gwen Jones urged attendees to protect food sources from bears and to make other changes in human habits that attract bears. We need to "steer the ship in a new direction," she said. Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is tracking grizzlies in the Missoula area. Republic can make available bear-proof containers, for a little extra cost, but there is a shortage of supply right now.

Gary Bowne who lives on the corner of Arthur and Sixth expressed worries about the timber trucks moving through the city, causing disruptions at 3:30 am. Mike Nugent urges citizens to go the website of the State Highway Department to file complaints. The trucks have to get through the city following some route but are not supposed to be using jake breaks.

Vicki Sturgis on Daly Avenue expressed concern about crosswalks on Arthur. Having been hit by a car in the area, she reminded members of the traffic light near Hellgate High School. Who is responsible, she asked, and how can we get improvements? She asked, too, why all pedestrian accidents are not reported in the newspaper. **Gwen Jones** responded that she will meet with transportation officials and agreed that flashing lights near Hellgate have helped with safety where students cross the streets to playing fields.

Jennifer Copley noted that trees on Arthur are blocking the view of lights at the crosswalk on Beckwith. **Rick Caron** added that the Arthur crosswalk may need repainting.

Near the Roxy and Senior Center, **Lee Grandpre** noticed a speeding front loader. **Gwen Jones** responded that the new plan for the Hip Strip is being formulated and includes studies to improve traffic safety in that area. **Mike Nugent** reminded attendees that much depends on state law.

Vicki Watson from Daly Avenue addressed the aesthetic impact of the Missoulain area development and the winter practice facility that will impact the neighborhood. She asked that the City Council urge the University to seek public input about protecting the river corridor. **Mike Nugent** expressed appreciation for Vicki's concerns but reminded those in attendance that the University can do whatever it wants to do on its land. The council also has no authority, Mike said, over the proposed Missoulain area development because the current proposal follows the city's established growth guidelines. Mike explained that the developer has a website where interested parties may schedule time to talk with the developers. Mike said he supports public comment opportunities.

Gwen Jones added that she had some discussions with the Missoulain area developer and expressed to the developer her hopes that housing will support a spectrum of income groups. The project will not impact existing open space along the river, space purchased by an open space bond years ago. She reminded those in attendance of the city's efforts to bring forested parks along the river corridor. She posited that the growing and changing city of Missoula must eventually sprawl all the way to Frenchtown or build in-fill. She said that the city's regulations have drawn fire from the legislature which thinks Missoula is over-regulating.

Gwen Jones talked about the Crisis Service Levy on the November ballot and would benefit our Mobil Support Team that assists in police dealings with mentally troubled individuals and assists in the jail diversion and Crime Victim Advocate programs. Once grant funds are gone, Gwen said, the budget will be very tight.

Mike Nugent added that he also supports the Mobil Support Team to help emotionally troubled individuals, over 60% of whom are unhoused. He gave an example of a circumstance that enabled a social worker-paramedic to prevent unnecessarily jailing those in crisis. Mike said that the property tax system is broken, and the levy will fill the gap for programs cut by the state legislature.

Kalina Pritchard said that the city will hold an open house to inform the public on these issues on Thursday. As a body, the city council did vote to support the placing of the Crisis Service Levy on the ballot.

Rick Caron voiced his concerns about the very large number of whitetail deer in this Missoula. Rick asked if the city had plans to do anything about the deer problem. **Mike Nugent** responded that Helena has a proactive program with the mule deer there, but when the culling stops, the deer return. The issue of the deer population came up in the bear study, but no clear solutions emerged. Gwen Jones added that discussions continue, but bears have become the issue of more immediate, pressing concern. If we get the bears under control, she said, we may focus more on the deer. People are deeply divided on the deer issues here. A count is a first step. **Rick Caron** responded that a UM student did such a study of which **Mike Nugent** said, the city is aware.

Adam K. asked if anyone was doing anything about deer waste. **Mike Nugent** answered that the issue would not be addressed. **Gwen Jones** explained that the larger impact is deer-to human confrontations and deer-to-pets conflicts. We have, she added, 40,000 dogs, not 40,000 deer!

Public Comment and Adjournment: **Jenny Mostafavi** reported on her family's popup free store which gave out 436 raffle tickets and almost a thousand bags of sorted items, with only one garbage bag left over.

At 8:00 PM, shortly before the meeting adjourned at the end of the public comment period, over 40 residents were still in attendance.