

University District Neighborhood Council Leadership Team Minutes

December 6, 2022

6:30 PM

UM University Center Room 215

1. **Introductions and Welcome to New Members** Those present included Chair, Darcy Caron; Rick Caron; new members Brandon McMahon and Jenny Moustafavi; UM's Kat Cowley, Allison Wilson, and Emily Ferguson-Steger; Neighborhoods Director, Kalina Pritchard; and Jennifer Copley, Secretary.

2. **Approve Meeting MINUTES for November 1, 2022** Rick moved and Jenny seconded a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Members approved the motion.

3. **Program Presentation: Transportation Department – Higgins Corridor Plan**

Ben Weiss, Senior Planner of Missoula's Transportation Planning Office, spoke about the developing Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan, Brooks to Broadway. Ben's staff studied the current area traffic patterns and projected models for the next twenty years, weighing in potential changing circumstances. The City also hired a firm to weigh business impacts of any proposed changes.

To meet community needs and win approval from citizens and businesses, a first round of public hearings happened one year ago. Based on citizen concerns, the City reviewed and amended the original proposal. A second round of changes followed. In the area studied, there about there about 55 crashes a year, one a week, with a quarter of those crashes resulting in injuries, Ben emphasized that changes are, therefore, necessary.

Changes proposed by the Missoula Transportation Planning Office aim to improve safety, better bike and car access, and maintain parking access. Over 70% of reviewers supported three lanes (two traffic lanes and one turn lane) with raised bicycle lanes and more available left turns. A few parking spots will be lost on the west side of Higgins near the Big Dipper. Almost no parking would be lost north of the river.

If it wins approval for its proposal, the City Transportation Planning Office will seek federal funds for the remodel. The City plan must also meet guidelines of and get approval from the Montana Department of Transportation. With safety as its priority, MDT allowed the City to seek a final review by constituents.

Rick Caron asked Ben if the development on the former Missoulian site would impact the plan. Ben responded that the City has not yet held discussions about off-street parking with the developers of planned development on that site. Others in attendance discussed the through traffic on State Highway 12 and learned that a \$10,000 study showed such traffic constituted only a very small fraction of daily traffic. Ben showed

those in attendance the proposed bike lanes, additional left turns, and traffic flow changes.

Rick described some of the problems with speeding motorized bikes. Jennifer added concerns about speeding motorized scooters on the Riverfront Trail. Ben informed the leadership team that state law allows bike riding on sidewalks and does not cover motorized bikes or scooters. On a positive note, Ben explained that recent changes have increased ADA accessibility.

Rick urged Missoula's Transportation Planning Office to consult with Beach Transportation to be certain that all proposals could effectively accommodate school bus turns. When Ben said that Hellgate High School daily accommodates three buses, Jennifer reminded Ben that with school events there could be many additional buses using the Hellgate area.

The City will hold a public meeting on the Missoula's Transportation Planning Office proposal on Thursday, December 8. Ben urged members to attend or to offer comments about the proposal on the City website's Engage Missoula link.

Jennifer volunteered to draft the letter of support for the proposed changes, sending it to Darcy by December 10. Because of taxpayer discontent with rising property taxes, Rick suggested that the City inform voters federal funding sources for any major projects funded with federal grants. Jenny moved that we add to our letter of support for the street proposal, Rick's suggestion that the City's federally funded street improvements be marked by a sign acknowledging federal funding. Members supported Jenny's proposal, agreeing to review a draft online so Darcy could submit a final copy to the City.

4. Discussion of Neighborhood Grant Application Update Darcy reached out to Lincoln at Missoula's Parks and Recreation Office. Citing safety concerns, Lincoln opposed developing the ball playing area in Bonner Park. Darcy learned that the City is cooperating with a Missoula volleyball organization to make major volleyball improvements in another city park. The group had concerns about Bonner Park's playing area because of its proximity to a street. Lincoln, however, did say that the Bonner Park volleyball area needs new edging, new sand, new poles, and a new net.

Given that information, Darcy suggested that in the spring, the University District Leadership team should meet with Lincoln in preparation for submitting a grant next year. As an alternative, Kalina suggested that we might seek funding for the Bonner bicycle racks discussed at a previous meeting. Alison suggested a bike pump for Bonner, as well. Allison, Darcy, and Jennifer volunteered to work on the grant due in December.

At our February meeting, we will look at information about the AARP grants not due until March 22.

5. **Community Forum Report** Due to snow, illnesses and other concerns, the meeting was cancelled.

6. **UM Representatives Reports** – Katrina reported that the Neighborhood Ambassadors program will be closed in the new year. She feels that student-neighborhood resident conflicts can be handled through the University District Neighborhood Council and other existing offices. Because of City funding, Kat remarked that she should have been included in the talks that led to the UM decision and will investigate to see if she can do anything else to support student involvement with the University District. Members expressed concern that students continue to serve on the leadership team. Kat said she will continue to attend the University District meetings and will explore creating a kind of internship for a student who would act as a liaison with this group. Kalina concurred that a paid intern may be able to advocate for students more effectively.

Jennifer asked if students had felt unwelcome in Neighborhood Council meetings. Allison reported that the June meeting had felt uncomfortable, especially with tension between students and adult residents on parking issues. Kalina remarked that other leadership groups have been unwelcoming to students and renters.

Emily has received a request for more shoveling and volunteers. Emily says her crews feel useful in the neighborhood, though they, too, have felt disrespected by neighbors. Like Kalina, Emily spoke in favor of the internship proposed by Kat. Emily expressed optimism about getting young people involved in future positive service in the neighborhood and promised to find storage for the rakes and shovels formerly housed by Neighborhood Ambassadors.

7. **Leaf Raking and Snow Shoveling Report** Rick complimented UM student athlete, Alfred Peterson, for his leadership of UM athletes who volunteer to rake yards, and in the case of this autumn, shoveling leaves from under snow. The Athletic Department raking and shoveling volunteers contributed 279 volunteer hours. Currently, eight athletes are shoveling five sidewalks every time it snows. One of the recipients donated \$300 to the athletic fund. Rick also complimented Allison for hauling the rakes and shovels to work sites. Emily will get students from Greek houses to help over the Christmas break

8. **Missoula Neighborhoods Report** Kalina Pritchard had no additional report besides helpful suggestions offered in the grant planning discussion.

9. **Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items** No nonmembers were in attendance, so no comments were offered.

10. **Announcements** The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 7, in Room 215 at the student center.