

University Neighborhood Council Leadership Team Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2023

6:30 PM

University UM Center

In attendance: Rick and Darcy Caron (members), Jennifer Copley (member), Esteban Castillo (FSI), Emily Ferguson-Steger (UM) and Kelly Elam (City of Missoula),

Absent: Allison Wilson (member)

Guest: Emily Armstrong (Community Development – Houseless Program Manager) and Captain Matt Stonesifer (Missoula Police Patrol Division)

Minutes for March 14, 2023 and April 11, 2023 were approved as submitted.

Captain Stonesifer is the Captain of patrol. He is responsible for officers in uniform. He was promoted to this position in Sept. 2022 with sixteen years of service which includes a detective, supervisor, and the SWAT team.

Homeless populations – what has changed?

There are more unhoused folks due to the lack of housing and nowhere to go. The root causes is substance abuse, opioid epidemic, synthetic fentanyl, the removal of mental health safety nets, the economy, and America's housing crisis.

Specific law enforcement role:

It is harder to engage with many of the homeless because there are different tiers of homelessness. Many homeless people have jobs and walk among us every day and we don't know it. Many of them are living in their cars or wherever they can safely sleep for the night. Many put up a front to strangers and many are in survival mode because of constant cycles of drama and trauma.

Law Enforcement's Dilemma:

The 9th Circuit District Court ruling prohibits the criminalization of homelessness in places where there is insufficient shelter and prohibits camping/living in trailers in public spaces. It also prevents prosecution and targeting by law enforcement. Ticketing someone doesn't work because many have no means to pay the fine.

Everyone is human and there is a level of comfort in engaging with our neighbors including those who appear to be unhoused. Finding a way to respectfully coexist is the key. If someone is breaking the law, please call 911 and do not try to take the law into your own hands.

Missoula PD is not here to "move folks along" and Police aren't here to make the unhoused population hide. The goal is to ensure that all people are law abiding

with their goal to also ensure health and safety. Police are perceived as forceful and cause tension and that is not the case.

The Mental Health Crisis Team is available Monday - Friday 10 AM to 8 PM and people can call 911 and then ask for them.

Mobile Support Team – Emily Armstrong

The mobile support team is in collaboration with the Crisis Intervention Team and the EMT's are licensed clinicians and she noted, 65-70% of clients are housed.

Question about plans for summer camping since the camp near the Fort and Reserve Street has been shut down.

There are challenges to provide places to go as the COVID stimulus ran out of funds, and no operating partners to help, and that is also causing a staffing issue. Funding is a constant struggle and tax dollars are used to fund two of three current staff members.

The HOPE Mission collaborates with United Way, the City on Missoula's current temporary housing space. The Johnson Street facility is run by the Poverello Center which ran out of funding and closed.

A question about Missoula capping the unhoused population size based on the services we have available?

Not at this time, the majority of folks who are unhoused in Missoula's most recent zip code is from Montana and many are from Missoula or surrounding areas. People have a hard time leaving Missoula as it costs money to move.

Question about how do we support our unhoused population or be better neighbors?

Be active, the underlying challenges is funding and support from the State and national level. People are encouraged to call 911 when folks are being unsafe. Think about financial contributions to places like United Way or the housing solutions fund and advocate for the homeless population.

Question about increased level of criminal activity in Missoula?

Captain Stonesifer said that is difficult to track but were not seeing an explosion. He mentioned a good book to read called Gift of Fear by Gavin De Becker

Maurice Avenue Panting Update

There is \$200 grant funding for plants in the traffic circle/boxes.

Spring Clean-up

The spring clean-up and Pickleball event went well. Brad and his two sons came and the dumpsters were full. The Janette Rankin circle clean up date is to be determined.

Budget:

\$1141.82 remains for this year's University Neighborhood funds. Some ideas are to purchase sandwich boards, plants, pre-print postcard save the dates for the fall general meeting. Emily will provide UM food prices and will bring to June's LT meeting.

Missoula Parking Commission underway

Rick said they will meet in June, and August and then will begin implementation. The City hired a consulting firm from Denver, CO. The City Council would like to continue moving forward as they govern the parking in the downtown and University District.

Bonner Park grant approval (bike rack)

Darcy said they are waiting on approval for the next steps.

Announcements:

Jennifer will send thank you notes to our two guest speakers from tonight.

Darcy rotates off in November as the LT chairperson.

Community Forum will meet on June 22, 2023

Beginning September the LT will meet on the first Tuesday of the month at the UC from 6:30 – 8 pm.