

**MISSOULA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
**CONDENSED BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**September 21, 2023**

**FINAL**

A Regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency was held on Thursday, September 21, 2023 in the Hal Fraser Conference Room, 140 W. Pine St., and via Microsoft Teams at 12:00 p.m. Those in attendance were as follows:

**Board:** Tasha Jones, Ruth Reineking, Jack Lawson

**Staff:** Ellen Buchanan, Annie Gorski, Tod Gass, Jilayne Dunn, Lesley Pugh

**Public:** Nancy Moe, former MRA Board member; Emily Harris-Shears, City of Missoula; Jeff Smith, WGM Group; Martin Kidston, Missoula Current, MCAT

**CALL TO ORDER**

12:00 pm.

Jones chaired the meeting.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

[August 17, 2023 Regular Board Meeting Minutes](#) were approved as submitted.

[August 24, 2023 Workforce Housing Working Session Meeting Minutes](#) were approved as submitted.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no public comments or announcements.

**ACTION ITEMS**

[Workforce Housing Program – Request for Approval \(Gorski\)](#)

[Guidelines](#) | [Outreach Strategy](#) | [8-24-23 Memo](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Power Point](#)

Gorski said the packet contains materials that were shared at the August 24<sup>th</sup> Work Session. Following the Work Session with the MRA Board, staff presented similar information to City Council at the Housing, Redevelopment and Community Programs Committee (HRCP) meeting. Councilors had several questions and overall the conversation was very positive. Gorski said in the packet she summarized the key recommendations from the August 24<sup>th</sup>

Work Session which were to make modifications to the Guidelines and/or suggestions on how to communicate the Guidelines if the Board approves them today.

Gorski reviewed modifications made to the Guidelines since the Work Session. One was to reiterate that this is a Pilot Program and staff will come back to the Board in October 2024 with a summary of how the program is working and discuss any modifications needed, knowing there may be discussion needed prior to that date. The second was a question about acquisition of land within a manufactured home park. The fact that acquisition of land, if those manufactured homes are income eligible, could be an eligible expense within the Guidelines. Staff will communicate that through outreach moving forward. Third was a clarification regarding developer fees. The language reflects discussion from the Work Session and will continue to be refined moving forward and staff will come back to the Board if there are further changes needed. Last, language was added so it is clear to anyone reading the Guidelines that any exceptions to the Guidelines must come before the MRA Board for approval.

Gorski said the packet also includes an Outreach Strategy. If the Board approves the Guidelines today, staff will work to make sure everyone in the development community and broader public are aware of the program. Gorski also mentioned that based on news articles regarding the Work Session and Committee meeting, she has received calls from four interested developers.

Jones said all of the information included in the packet will be valuable for individuals who plan to get educated about the program. Gorski said the other thing staff has discussed is putting together a webpage dedicated to workforce housing that includes all of the information and materials about the program. It would be updated on a regular basis.

Reineking asked if there was a priority in the draft outreach schedule. Gorski said the plan is to start with an email blast that would go to prior MRA applicants and stakeholders. It will include a link to the webpage and Guidelines, as well as ask for interest in coming to presentations.

Lawson thanked Gorski and all staff that worked on putting the program together. Looking back, there was a tremendous amount of research, interviews and meetings dealing with learning curves which has led to this Pilot Program. Looking forward, this will be difficult and challenging work that is important. Reineking said the response staff has had from a couple of news articles is encouraging.

Buchanan said Nancy Moe, former MRA Board member, was present. She said during Moe's time on the Board there were many discussions on housing and this is a significant milestone for MRA. Moe said she looked through the materials for the meeting and did find the MRA approach to be comprehensive. She congratulated everyone on the creative challenge of using the new Legislation. It is a milestone and puts Missoula in the forefront again of using this Legislation. She said she appreciates the involvement of the community and City Attorney's Office, and hopes staff is successful in educating the public, including the professional community.

Jones said this Pilot Program is a fabulous and exciting time. The Board looks forward to the first project coming in.

**REINEKING: I MOVE THE MRA BOARD APPROVE THE WORKFORCE HOUSING GUIDELINES AND DIRECT STAFF TO PREPARE MATERIALS AND RAISE AWARENESS WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY SO THAT APPLICATIONS CAN BEGIN TO BE ACCEPTED BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR.**

**Lawson seconded the motion.**

Buchanan thanked Reineking and Lawson for their time as part of the Working Group.

**No further discussion. No public comment.**

**Motion passed unanimously (3 ayes, 0 nays).**

**Bitterroot Trail Lighting (URDs II & III / Wards 3, 4 & 5) – Request to Award Professional Services Agreement (Gass)**

Gass said today's request is to enter into a Professional Services Agreement for design and engineering to kick off the Bitterroot Trail Lighting project. Staff hopes to put the project out to bid next spring and have it constructed next summer. This project was approved by the MRA Board as part of the FY2024 MRA Community Investment Program (CIP). It is also listed in the URD II Strategic Exit Plan as a high priority project.

Gass said the Bitterroot Trail is a prominent trail through the urban core of Missoula. It stretches 50 miles from downtown Missoula to Hamilton, MT. It traverses both URD II and URD III. Lighting the trail has been a long-term desire of MRA and the Parks & Recreation Dept. with the purpose of enhancing safety for all trail users. Without support from the URDs, Gass said the prospect of lighting the trail is uncertain.

This project would install high-efficient trail lighting fixtures that are compliant with current City Parks' standards. The project scope is 2.7 miles from the Bitterroot/Milwaukee Trail intersection by Wyoming Street down to the east side of the South Reserve Pedestrian Bridge. It includes the area located in between the URDs and those trail fixtures are proposed to come out of URD III funds. Gass noted that State law allows funds to be spent outside of a district boundary to make infrastructure connections and this falls under that.

Staff advertised a Request for Proposals (RFP) this summer and a selection committee reviewed the proposals. Cushing Terrell was selected as the project engineer. MRA staff and Cushing Terrell worked to put together a complete scope of services for professional services at a cost not to exceed \$65,072. Staff is requesting approval of that amount to enter into a Professional Services Agreement with Cushing Terrell to begin the trail lighting project.

Reineking said this project is a big deal and it has been needed for a long time. It will change that trail and the use of it, especially during the fall and winter seasons with the shorter days. She thanked staff for moving this forward. Buchanan said it is a project that would not happen without MRA funding. Reineking said it is part of MRA's core mission.

Gass said MRA built the trails and coming in to finish them and get lighting on them seems like a logical next step. Dunn said staff just attended the annual River Road Neighborhood meeting and one of the things they have been trying to do for years is get additional lighting along the Milwaukee Trail through the neighborhood, but there are no funds available to do that. She said they know it is a huge value to the community and neighborhoods.

Jones asked what was left, if anything, for the trail. Gass said staff is looking at the final piece which is the Montana Rail Link (MRL) bridge project, picked up at the intersection of the Milwaukee Trail and across the river to Broadway Street to connect to a trail piece MRA completed a few years ago along Pine Street. Buchanan said that will dictate what happens with that trail as it goes through the Old Sawmill District. There is also another little piece that is floating between URD II and URD III where they need improvements to the width of the trail, but MRA can't participate in that. It will likely be a grant that gets that work completed, but the lights will be placed there.

Reineking referred to MRA's mission of economic development and elimination of blight and recalled there have been developments that wanted access to this trail and MRA could end up getting more requests from developers that want to do work along the trail because it is going to be a great amenity for any developer. Buchanan said that happened in URD III when MRA put sidewalks in. Gass said the trail lighting makes it more inviting and will be a great catalyst.

Buchanan said at the River Road Neighborhood meeting staff got questions about why MRA would spend money on trail lighting instead of putting money into affordable housing. Staff pointed out that lighting the trail makes it accessible to people who need to be in affordable housing who may not own a car. The lighting will make it usable any time in the winter and help people feel more safe and comfortable. She said ideas tend to get bucketed, yet it all works together.

**LAWSON: I MOVE THE MRA BOARD AUTHORIZE MRA TO ENTER INTO A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH CUSHING TERRELL FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES INCLUDING DESIGN, ENGINEERING AND CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION FOR A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$65,072 AND AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT.**

**Reineking seconded the motion.**

**No further discussion. No public comment.**

**Motion passed unanimously (3 ayes, 0 nays).**

### **NON-ACTION ITEMS**

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **Director's Report**

#### *Midtown Planning Efforts*

Buchanan said there are committees meeting weekly with the consultant team. They are making good progress and staff hopes to meet deadlines they are shooting for to be in a position to start applying for federal funding.

#### *Scott Street Area Redevelopment*

Buchanan said City staff and Ravara are trying very hard to finalize the agreements that are still outstanding with that project. By the end of the calendar year they hope to have it to a place where construction can begin in the spring for both infrastructure and housing components.

### **FY23 Budget Status Reports – June 2023 updated 9-14-23**

### **FY24 Budget Status Reports – August 2023**

Dunn said she is still using last year's taxes and mills. Staff expects to receive new numbers any day since tax bills are about ready to be sent out. Buchanan said they will show the taxable value going up and the mills are going down. She anticipates there will be a low, double digit increase in MRA revenues. Dunn said once those come out, the City has asked for a remittance from MRA and will likely come to the Board in October with that request. Buchanan said luckily Missoula has successful URDs that can help get through tough budget times. Not every community has that. MRA will keep doing projects and getting things done, staff just may have to prioritize accordingly with respect to where the money comes from.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **OTHER ITEMS**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 12:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lesley Pugh