

University District General Meeting Minutes

October 10, 2023 6:30 PM UM University Center, Theater

Introductions and Roll Call Kalina Pritchard called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Those in attendance had the opportunity to mingle with neighbors, enjoy light refreshments, and provide input via posters regarding concerns and ideas for the university district leadership team. Kalina Pritchard and Melissa Glueckert introduced themselves as Program Specialists for the City of Missoula Neighborhoods. Chairperson, Darcy Caron, Rick Caron, and Jennifer Mostafavi were introduced as University District Neighborhood Leadership Team members. Esteban Castillo and Emily Ferguson Steger were introduced as Neighborhood Council delegates from the University of Montana.

Presentation on Local Government Review Study Session. Geoff Badenoch from the League of Women Voters shared information about the potential government review study session. Every ten years Montana voters are given the opportunity to vote on whether to review the form and powers of their local governments. This is mandated in the Montana Constitution and Montana State statutes. Voters in Missoula County and the City of Missoula will see this question on their ballots in the June 2024 Primary Election. If voters approve the local government study process, they will elect a study commission in the November 2024 general election. The people elected to the study commission will examine City and County government, services to the people, and make recommendations to voters about any changes, if any, are warranted. This is a process of governance, not politics.

University District Parking Plan Update. Ian Ortlieb from the Missoula Parking Commission shared that a consulting firm has been hired and a committee was formed to study multiple parking concerns including the Residential Permit Parking Program that directly affects the University District Neighborhood. Attendees were reminded that the RPPP was developed in 1986 to ensure safety for its residents and to reduce serious parking overload problems. Currently, the parking system in the university neighborhood does not support itself. Attendees voiced concerns over potential changes to the program or expressed concerns that streets without the RPPP were experiencing the serious parking overload problems the program was intended to eliminate. It was also noted that parking for Hellgate High School students and staff also posed a problem for residents. The City continues to study parking concerns and look for solutions.

Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan Update. Aaron Wilson, Infrastructure and Mobility Planning Manager, presented an overview of two projects that are part of the Downtown Safety and Mobility Project (DowntownSAM) – Higgins Avenue from Brooks to Broadway and Front and Main Street two-way conversion between Orange and Madison. The City of Missoula applied for and received a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant. It will take 2-3 years to complete final construction drawings and agreements before construction can start. The City intends to construct the project in phases over 2-3 seasons to minimize construction impacts on businesses and downtown traffic. The DowntownSAM project will create safer streets for walking, biking, driving, and public transportation; improved access and circulation for Downtown businesses, workers, residents, and visitors; an inviting streetscape that showcases Downtown Missoula as a destination; and support economic health and investment in Downtown. Public input will be considered in the final design.

UM Student Neighborhoods and Greek Outreach. Esteban Castillo shared that Greek Life was working on a plan to rake leaves for university neighborhood residents.

Report from Missoula Neighborhoods and University District Leadership Team. Darcy Caron shared the two recent Neighborhood Grants that were completed at Bonner Park – Pickleball court lines drawn and a bike rack that secures up to 12 bicycles. The FY24 grant cycle is coming up, applications are due November 22nd.

Elections. Kalina Pritchard called for volunteers and/or nominees to the University District Leadership Team. Rick Caron commented that being a member of the leadership team is a great way to become an active member of the community and to learn about city proposals, projects and programs. He strongly urged attendees to consider joining the leadership team. Shirley Morkrid and Aaron Hedges were added by acclamation.

Report from City Council. Gwen Jones, Daniel Carlino, and Mike Nugent shared a few thoughts and answered questions from attendees.

Public Comment and Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.