

Riverfront Leadership Team Meeting
15 February 2024
Willard Alternative School
1545 - 1700

Roll Call/Introductions: Riverfront Leadership Team (RLT) members present for this meeting were: Eva Dunn-Froebig, Danny Gundlach, Tristan Hustler, Tyler Warren, Jonathan Qualben, and Deb Bonk. Kalina Pritchard was also in attendance. Other attendees included: Bob Giordano, Executive Director of the Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transport (MIST), Andy Drobeck and Phil Keating representing the Missoula Fire Department (MFD), and Linda Helding. The team had a quorum to conduct business.

Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting: A recommendation was made to correct Bob Giordano's title in last month's meeting notes (18 January 2024). That was approved and then a motion was made and seconded to approved the notes.

Missoula Union Firefighters Local 271: Andy Drobeck and Phil Keating provided some background on their engagement with the RLT and other Neighborhood Councils in the coming weeks. Their overall goal is to explain and socialize the current needs and challenges that MFD is facing meeting the needs of its mission. These engagements are taking place in advance of anticipated proposals to the Missoula City Council later this month to request additional funding for MFD.

Some of the key points highlighted by Andy and Phil included the following:

- Operational staffing at the MFD has not been added since 2008.
- Calls for service have doubled since this last increase, doubling from roughly 6000 calls in 2008 to now over 12,000 calls annually.
- Missoula's population has grown from 68,660 in 2008 to an estimated 78,000 in 2024. This equates to 17 percent growth since the last staffing increase.
- In addition, Missoula's geographic size has increased 30 percent since 2008, with increased density through infill and multi unit residential housing.

In addition to these points, Andy and Phil noted that the staffing shortages are preventing the MFD from meeting National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) standards. Those not being met include:

- Arrival of First Engine on the scene in under four minutes.
- Arrival of all units for an initial full alarm within eight minutes.
- Numbers of firefighters available for initial deployment — this includes 15 for low hazard fires and 28 and 43 firefighters for medium and high hazards, respectively.

Andy and Phil noted that they are requesting one additional fire station, one additional fire engine company, and 20 new fire fighters. These additions would result in the following improvements for Missoula:

- Response Reliability and Faster Response Times. Fire units will more often be available to response to new 911 emergencies.
- Better Trained Firefighters. Additional staffing will enable more consistent training.

- Lower Property Insurance Rates. The MFD will be able to work towards a better insurance services office (ISO) rating which could lower property insurance roughly 10 percent for homeowners and businesses

RLT members asked a number of questions to better understand the overall cost. Andy and Phil were interested in ways to help get their message out. Eva Dunn-Froebig noted that the RLT would welcome their attendance at our next Riverfront Neighborhood Meeting circa April 2024 to educate neighbors on their request.

Continued Discussion of Transportation Safety Issues at Orange Street and Clegg Lane.

Bob Giordano and a MIST intern, Jack, were in attendance to continue our discussion about safety issues at this intersection. Their interest is in engaging the City Transportation Department about other possibilities, such as a roundabout, as opposed to a traffic light as the final solution. Team members were supportive of continuing this discussion with the City, but noted that getting a traffic signal installed was a near term priority for the Neighborhood. We would not want that held up as part of this continuing, longer term discussion. The RLT has decided to invite Bob and the City Transportation planners back to a future meeting to continue this discussion. Bob also highlighted that the MIST team will also come up with some ideas to improve use of safe signaling techniques for bikers in this area.

Concerns were also raised about unsafe pedestrian crossings at Russell and 3rd Streets. Apparently there are concerns about people crossing at locations besides those that have cross walks or flashing lights to alert drivers to pedestrians. The RLT will add this to the discussion items when the City Transportation Team is invited back.

Ideas Surrounding Houseless Neighbors. Linda Helding attended the meeting to present some ideas focused on solutions that would help control urban camping in the City of Missoula. She highlighted the development in her Riverfront neighborhood, alongside the existence of what appear to be permanent homeless camps. She highlighted the number of permanent camps her neighborhood experienced in the summer of 2023 and the expenses the City incurred in clean up. While recognizing that the City is working on a longer term solution, she highlighted several suggestions for controlling camping and the concerns that stem from it:

- Instituting reasonable camping regulations. She proposed treating urban camping the same as use for state and BLM campgrounds — essentially establishing a 16-day duration for camping in one site.
- Establishing toilet and shower facilities for campers to reduce the human waste challenges that arise from urban camping and making human waste bags available along the trails.
- Painting more curbs yellow to prevent the long term parking of RVs.
- Fencing off river banks and irrigation ditches, erecting no camping and no parking signs, and creating crews of homeless people who want jobs to do camp site clean up.

Kalina noted that the City Council is exploring options to possibly create a working group to dig deeper into the houseless and camping issues in Missoula. She noted that she would keep the RLT in the loop on these decisions so we would have an opportunity to weigh in with ideas down the road. The RLT also discussed inviting some experts from the Missoula Housing Authority to talk about the future for the Johnson Street Shelter and low-income housing availability.

The RLT had nothing to raise related to our budget and there was nothing of note from the most recent Community Forum meeting. Kalina did note that the City Council is interested in bringing

back Neighborhood Reports to the City Council. This will give the Neighborhood Leadership Teams an opportunity to highlight what they are working on as part of a rotating schedule.

General Meeting and Next RLT Meeting: The RLT discussed a timeline for our next general meeting, and we are shooting for mid to the end of April. We would use the general meeting to highlight the next Riverfront Neighborhood Clean Up, which will be held on 27 April. The team will reach out to the International School to see if they are willing to host our general meeting.

Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items. Eva noted that Engage Missoula is seeking public feedback on the potential establishment of a sculpture park in Silver Park. She encouraged team members to read the proposal and provide feedback, and to highlight this for other members of our community.

The meeting concluded at roughly 5PM. The next meeting of the Riverfront Leadership Team will be on 21 March at 3:45 at the Willard International School.