From: chad rankin
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: homeless population & public health
Date: Friday, November 27, 2020 9:14:13 AM

Dear City Council Members-

I am sure that this topic is not a new one, however one that I believe deserves additional attention and clarity. My main question is what is the plan to address the growing homeless population in Missoula, specifically downtown and North Reserve?

I personally own an apartment building downtown where I am included in the BID program. Last summer, I discovered homeless people living in an unsecured storage area of the building and called the police to have them removed. The police were great, and did what they could which is basically to escort them off site. The following day, a representative from the city contacted the property management company that manages my property to inform them that I was required to make my property "less transient friendly" by fencing off the storage area and if I did not do this, that I would be fined by the city. I do not have any issues securing my property, both for the safety of the tenants and preservation of the building. The issue that I do have is being told by a city that I am required to make my property inhospitable to transients or face being penalized and fined, while that same city seemingly continues to turn a blind eye to the very same problem where compassion and helping has stepped over the line into enabling a problem resulting in a very serious risk of public safety.

On any given day, homeless people can be seen sleeping in storefronts downtown and even on the sidewalks of the courthouse. Last summer, my wife was downtown and helped a homeless person that she thought was having a seizure and called 911. When the ambulance and police responded, they had told her that the person had overdosed on drugs and that this was actually the THIRD time that they have revived the individual that day. This seems like an incredible waste of public resources and taxpayer money. The growing homeless camps off the North Reserve bridge is even more alarming. I do not understand why this population has been allowed to continue to not only live in an area where they are trespassing and their associated garbage, but now they have even been supplied with outhouses and a biohazard container for their illegal drug use refuse. I am not blind to the fact that social problems such as these are extremely complicated in exactly how to remedy. What I do not understand is why this population that poses daily public safety risks is continued to flourish unchecked? Last February multiple emergency vehicles including fire engines, ambulances and police cars had to respond and shut down one of the Southbound lanes on Reserve Street to a fire caused by a propane tank explosion at one of the homeless campsites. This summer, individuals from the same homeless camp area assaulted workers on the bridge performing night construction on the road because the workers were "making too much noise" next to their "home." Last week, a colleague of mine witnessed a homeless woman pull down her pants and defecate in the street (Great Northern Avenue) in front of the Lambros Building and then get on the bus. There are likely hundreds of other examples that I could list, and more accruing daily.

The health risks, especially in the pandemic era that we are currently living in, are obvious. The associated violence and property damages are upsetting. The strain put on public services, paid for by tax-paying, law-abiding citizens is very upsetting as well. Why are these people not prosecuted

and held to the same standards as other citizens? Continued inaction will only result in amplification of all of these issues and a sense of entitlement by the individuals that are taking advantage of the public's empathy.

If I am coming across as ignorant in this issue, then I apologize. Please tell me how I can personally help in addressing these various issues. If funds are needed, I have no problem donating and raising funds from others, as long as those funds and associated programs and policies result in actually addressing the problem as opposed to letting it continue to run rampant. I love Missoula and have lived here for the majority of my life. It has unfortunately over the past several years, devolved into a place where I do not feel safe having my wife and daughter travel alone. It is not too late to address these public safety issues, I just do not know how to accomplish this and I am hoping that someone on the council can tell me so that there is a tangible goal to work towards. Missoula is a great place to live, and can be safer once again.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration and I look forward to your response(s).

Sincerely,

Chad Rankin

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