

**Mayor's Downtown Advisory Commission Quarterly Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2020**

Commission Members in Attendance: Margaret Borg (Retired Attorney), Sue Wilkins (Missoula Correctional Services), Ethan Smith (Police Department), Eran Fowler Pehan (Housing & Community Development), Bryan von Lossberg (City Council), Elizabeth Marshall (Palace Apartments), Theresa Williams (Reaching Home Coordinator), Ginny Merriam (Mayor's Office), Ryan Boyd (Salvation Army), Dave Chrismon (Downtown Ambassador), Randy Krastel (BID Police Officer), Lt. Jake Rosling (Police Officer), Keithi Worthington (City Attorney), Juanita Vero (County Commissioner), John Engen (Mayor) and Ethan Lerman (Municipal Court Judge)

Commission Members Absent: Dan Cederberg (Attorney) and Amy Allison Thompson (Poverello Center)

Others in Attendance: Heidi Bakula (Mayor's Office), John Wood (Practicum Student for Randy Krastel) and Kristen Patton (Poverello Center)

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of October 22, 2019 were approved as submitted.

1. Public Comment - None
2. Introductions
3. Current Issues Update

- Winter Shelter Update

Kristen Patton of the Poverello Center attended the meeting for Amy Allison Thompson. As of January, they were halfway through the winter shelter season. They were still trying to figure out what their staffing level should be. Many of the folks from the Reserve Street encampment were coming to the Poverello Center for shelter. They had 200 people total in the two facilities. They were having to call first responders many times for issues at both shelters.

Ginny Merriam added that she and the mayor met with first responders to look at models for in-house security, plus they needed to find a way to fund it. She thought if they hired security with EMT training it would be helpful. The mayor could ask private donors for a donation.

Ethan Lerman suggested hiring off duty police officers. Bryan von Lossberg said that they really needed people with medical training that could handle security issues. Ethan said he had seen off duty police officers hired in other cities.

Eran Pehan recalled that three-quarters of the calls to the Poverello Center were medical calls. Theresa Williams stated that the winter shelter program was an on-going discussion with community members and it was not MDAC's responsibility to solve it. MDAC could definitely help though.

Keithi Worthington thought that a security service could handle issues at the shelters better. Theresa Williams added that larger cities just hire more people when needed.

Ethan Smith said that the police department was tossing around the idea of a paid officer working at the Poverello Center. The clients tend to feel unwelcomed when police are present in uniform. Hiring an officer would also be very expensive, so private security would be better.

- Quality of Life Issues Downtown

Elizabeth Marshall said she did not have much to report because of the weather. Alcohol seems to be a seasonal factor when crowds gather at night on the sidewalk.

Randy Krastel commented that he had not had many downtown calls because everyone was in a shelter, although he responded to the Poverello Center a lot. People do not see him downtown and wonder where he is. He diverted sixteen people from downtown and all but one had gone home. He now has a debit card he can use to help people with expenses, for example, if they need to travel to get to a job or if they cannot apply for a job without ID. Three different banks downtown are funding his debit card. He also makes sure the person he is sending out of Missoula has housing on the other side and can be successful.

Ryan Boyd explained that the Salvation Army was packed with people. Since the Poverello Center was handling distribution of clients to each facility there was no one just hanging around anymore. They also installed a camera at the Salvation Army so they can keep track of what is occurring there. Right now they are helping with rental assistance requests and are giving out some bus tickets.

Dave Chrismon talked about the graffiti on the Union Club, which caused thousands of dollars in damage. They cannot paint over brick since it is a historic building. Lately the graffiti downtown has been up high and they cannot address it due to liability issues. The downtown area has been amazingly calm. There were a few folks with serious mental issues, but not many people were out and about. The trash, vomit and defecation were half as bad. The Clarkfork Inn by the Poverello Center had been a problem as far as people's behavior, trash in the alley and people just hanging out.

Keithi Worthington added that they had seen an increase in citations for trespassing, assault and criminal mischief at the Poverello Center due to the amount of people seeking shelter. She thought it would be good to have more coordinated knowledge about folks going through the system.

Randy said he spoke with a social worker at St. Patrick's Hospital that had funding to get people home. He is looking into working with her.

Ethan Lerman asked about the people being trespassed every night from the Poverello Center and what happens to them. Theresa Williams said they set up meetings with their providers to problem solve. The Poverello Center really needs to let her know who these people are, and they have been doing that. Theresa then follows those people to see where they end up. Sometimes its jail or the state hospital.

Keithi thought it would be good to know who is being trespassed and if there is an intervention. Theresa said she would work with the Poverello Center on a communications plan.

Randy said that many times there were circumstances where people were waiting on a payee. Theresa said that the Coordinated Outreach Team could help get that information.

Theresa said there were currently 175 people at the Poverello Center and 65 at the Salvation Army. At night they can house up to 200 if the temperature drops below zero.

Margaret Borg reported that she has seen no issues when she was downtown. She saw a lot of panhandling along N. Reserve.

Bryan von Lossberg and Ginny Merriam commented that the downtown felt safer. The downtown had really changed.

Sue Wilkins said she has seen many homeless people wandering around where she works.

Theresa added that on January 30, 2020 there would be a Point in Time Count. This helps Montana get the funding it needs. Theresa also said that they do an unsheltered count at the encampments, usually sunset to sunrise. Project Community Connect will take place on January 31, 2020 and many organizations participate, including help from city offices on warrants, etc.

Mayor Engen said that the investment they have all made in the downtown for the last decade, and the last 3 – 4 years, was finally paying off. Many people were participating, he hoped to continue it and spread west. It seems the issues moving west are different from the downtown issues. Other investments were addressing needs at a basic level, the Trinity Apartments will help and they would all continue to chip at the issues.

Respectfully Submitted,
Heidi Bakula, Executive Assistant