

Downtown Business Improvement District of Missoula
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, November 17, 2015 from 3-5 pm at the DMP Office

Present: Tim France, Alan Newell, Charlie Beaton, Carma Gilligan, Craig Aasved, Dan Cederberg, Ellen Buchanan

Staff: Linda McCarthy, Robert Giblin, Leidy Wagener, Laurie Johnson

MEETING COMMENCEMENT & INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS & PUBLIC COMMENT

Sherri Odlin, Manager of 911, Adriane Beck, Office of Emergency Management Director, Chris Lounsbury, Missoula County COO, Undersheriff Jason Johnson, and Officer Andy Roy were introduced as guests.

DISCUSSION ON DOWNTOWN SAFETY & 911 CALLS WITH MISSOULA COUNTY GUESTS

France presented the reasons behind this meeting, mainly to communicate the efforts of the BID to ensure Downtown is clean and safe, and to determine how communication can be more effective between the BID and 911. The BID has worked with the City Council to enact Downtown ordinances and implement the Downtown police officer and ambassadors. France suggested his experience and feedback from others indicates a negative experience when calling 911 due to the long list of qualifying questions by dispatch, as well as a lack of response. France also noted the attitude of the person answering 911 calls is negative or seems like they are too busy to take the call. He would like to rectify that and find ways that 911 calls can be more effective. Buchanan asked for clarification on what information the dispatcher has to get from every caller.

Lounsbury offered a significant amount of background information on staffing and operations and invited all to tour the dispatch center and witness daily operations. He emphasized only one individual answers all 911 calls for the city and county and then prioritizes each call, which is why people are often put on hold. Then that individual calls upon one of four others in the office to dispatch city police, county sheriff, or emergency services (i.e. fire and ambulance). There are only four call centers of the same size in the state of Montana: Missoula, Billings, Bozeman and Kalispell. The one exception to this process is when there is an auto accident, and all the phones are ringing at once then everyone in the office answers the phones.

Odlin noted the set number of questions the dispatcher must ask helps determine how to prioritize and send out the call. Usually the dispatcher is getting the information while those questions are being asked. The questions are related to the “who, what, when, where, why” of the situation. Lounsbury said that 911 technologies are old because it has to be reliable so they don’t rely on the caller ID or location information that comes through the computerized system, especially with calls coming from a cell phone, which is also why the operator must ask for the address.

Newell asked about other types of questions asked, which varies from call to call. Questions help determine who and how many people respond to the situation (i.e. fire, police, etc.). For transient issues, there is a fine line between sending an officer and sending an ambulance and a fire truck. The questions are also in place for officer safety. Buchanan asked why they would need the home address of someone calling 911 while walking around downtown. Odlin responded that the address is also used for follow-up. Newell expressed the feeling that there is some resistance from downtown businesses to call 911. Cederberg suggested changing the order of the questions so the most relevant information is obtained by the dispatcher prior to asking questions

pertaining to follow up, he also agreed that his experiences calling 911 have usually been negative. He also expressed his concerns relating to an incident he had after calling 911 and then seeing several police cars drive by the situation without stopping. Odlin replied that once a call has been dispatched, it is out of their hands, but that most calls are dispatched immediately, especially those relating to people on the sidewalk harassing those walking around downtown. France said that he often uses other resources (Ambassadors, DDPO, Homeless Outreach Team) before calling 911, mainly because some of his calls are not life threatening so he understands how things are prioritized, but there are times when he has to call 911 and has had both negative and positive experiences. For medical calls, dispatchers are trained for medical dispatching and they are required to follow the guidelines outlined in the training.

Newell asked if there was a citizen's advisory board for 911 to get public feedback. Lounsbury said that there is a 911 advisory board made up of many different entities as well as citizens and they meet every other month. That board is appointed by the City Council. Buchanan suggested having a Downtown representative on the advisory board. France asked about dispatching to the court house where the grounds under city jurisdiction and inside the building is under county jurisdiction and whether county officers have the ability to enforce city ordinances in such locations. Johnson said they don't, but they do address the issue and call in a city officer if they see something go on. Lounsbury asked if there was a regular meeting that they could attend to get more feedback on a regular basis. He also reported that 911 calls are public so they could compile a report to present and assess possible issues.

McCarthy asked about how statistics are maintained and what kind of reports could be generated. Lounsbury responded that they can pull stats based on geographic area and type of call, day, week, time, etc. McCarthy presented the Ambassador stats to give an example of what information may be useful. The BID also gets downtown police stats, but did not have the most recent stats at this meeting. The BID uses this information to gauge their effectiveness. It would be useful to be able to tell people who they should call for specific problems, because the default is to direct people to 911. The BID wants to communicate to stakeholders in a way that is meaningful for them. Buchanan said that it would probably be useful to get together in the late winter/early spring to come together and have unified talking points/ways to reach out to the public regarding Downtown resources. Cederberg suggested that communicating to ratepayers and property owners what to expect when they call 911 may also be beneficial and could be done during the annual ratepayer meeting. Odlin noted the feedback about negative experiences is very valuable and helps her work with the dispatcher to improve or explain why the call was received a certain way.

McCarthy distributed the Business Guides. France thanked the guests for coming and all agreed that this was very beneficial for gaining some perspective and starting a more collaborative effort moving forward. McCarthy asked about the ratio of calls from downtown vs. other areas in the city. Odlin said there aren't more calls from downtown and she believes that the calls from downtown have decreased. The 911 department reports to the Missoula County Commission. Cederberg asked about how easy it is to pull a specific report from 911, and the response was that it is not hard, but it is more time consuming for older years because they changed systems in 2014. McCarthy asked the guests for their feedback on the safety downtown. All agreed that they feel much safer now than they used to and that downtown is a safe place to be. Odlin, Beck, Lounsbury, and Johnson left the meeting.

McCarthy asked for Andy Roy's feedback and he reported that he has received feedback similar to what others have experienced when calling 911. Discussion regarding reasons behind negative experiences ensued. Roy reported he has a lot of people who just call him on his cell phone rather than going through 911. He does dispatch the situation after receiving those calls so that they are documented. Ambassador Laurie Johnson said it is beneficial for people to call the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) but there is no documentation of those calls to include in stats. Buchanan asked if the HOT keeps stats and we could get access to those, which they likely do keep stats. Travis Mateer has announced he will be leaving the Poverello Center and will help find a replacement upon his departure in February.

ACTION ITEMS

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MINUTES

Newell moved to approve the September minutes. Cederberg second the motion, and the minutes passed unanimously.

REVIEW & POTENTIAL APPROVAL OF THE DOWNTOWN MISSOULA PARTNERSHIP (DMP) CONTRACT

Newell reported that the DMP Board agreed to send the contract to other boards for a 4-year renewal approval. He noted some minor cost increases for each of the organizations and the plan to credit the carryover funds against the costs of 2016, which has the end result of keeping the BID's contributions the same as it was in 2015. Giblin presented the contributions for each of the organizations. Discussion regarding specifics on the contributions ensued. Buchanan asked about a calculation of the exact amounts of the contributions, and McCarthy responded the calculations were accurate to their original projections. Discussion ensued around the Foundation's commitment on the long-term basis, and Giblin noted his estimation on the MDF increasing its overall contribution to an estimated 7% in two years. McCarthy reported that the MDF did receive a capacity grant from Wells Fargo.

Newell suggested the clause for termination under dissolution should be re-worded. Buchanan asked for clarification on that point. The clause notes the partnership would be dissolved and renegotiated if the other organizations want to continue. She suggested rather than dissolving the partnership, having some sort of mechanism for renegotiating the contract should be included in the agreement. Cederberg believes there is advantage in continuing the Partnership with one fewer member so that clause will be added. Discussion regarding specific language of that clause ensued, and a more accurate correction will be forthcoming.

Newell moved to approve the DMP contract. Cederberg seconded the motion. Six board members voted in favor of approval with Gilligan abstaining from the vote.

NON-ACTION ITEMS

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

McCarthy reported the planning process is underway and is a significant process, which will determine where transportation funding will go (i.e.: Front & Main Street Conversion, Higgins Bridge renovations, Broadway Corridor improvements). She encouraged all to attend the meetings because the more Downtown representatives are present, the more say the DMP/BID has in the process. She distributed materials from the meeting.

DOWNTOWN PROPERTY VALUES SNAPSHOT

McCarthy presented a snapshot assessment of Downtown property values and distributed information detailing value comparisons from 2006 and 2015. Discussion regarding the change of different values ensued. Beaton asked how to get metrics used to determine property values. The city overall has exceeded projections, but the Downtown area values went down slightly.

FINANCE REPORT

Giblin presented the balance sheet for October, which is less than last year due to the payment to wayfinding. There was no tax assessment revenue in October for the BID, which can happen once in a while and is reflected on the profit and loss statement. The BID made payments to the DMP in October, which was recorded on the expenses statement. Gilligan asked about the administrative cost to the ambassador, which is broken down by quarter. The Clean Team contract includes the purchase of the table at the Diamond Gala. Gilligan presented a thank you letter written by the Clean Team to her and the BID. Going into start of November, the budget is over projections for expenditures from a cash flow standpoint. Gilligan asked about the annual liability line item from the check register, which is for the entire year and does not include the directors and officers portions.

DMP, MDA, MDF Reports

DMP – McCarthy reported that the DMP board is working on contract renewal and wrapped up staff reviews for everyone. Budget was put forth and will be approved at next meeting. In January, the three bodies will reappoint their representatives to the DMP board.

MDA – McCarthy reported that end of year promotions are underway and the budget and the DMP contract will be presented next month. The officers for next year were approved at the last meeting, and Aimee McQuilkin will serve as president next year. All who were up for renewal are renewing for another 3-year term. The Annual Awards Banquet will be in January at the Wilma. The Downtown Holiday Party will be on Thursday, Dec. 10. The 2016 calendar has been sent to print and will be included in ratepayer communications in the New Year.

MDF – McCarthy reported the MDF is working on the 2016 budget and work plan. The Friends of Downtown campaign is underway and they will be reaching out to all board members from all DMP boards for contributions. They will have some board turnover next year and board development is also underway. Roemer's campaign met the goal for its contribution to the holiday décor project.

Project Updates

Bridges – Buchanan reported that the City Council approved issuing bonds for District 3 and they are prepared to award a bid tomorrow for the Reserve Street Bridge. McCarthy reported that additional funding will be sought out for the additional 7 feet on the Higgins Bridge.

Parking Meters, Bike Parking, Wayfinding, Traffic Signals, & Powder Coating – McCarthy reported the new meter implementation project is underway. The city will convert 30 of the old meters to bike parking by taking the old meter head off and bolting on a new frame, funded by the City bicycle/pedestrian office. They have agreed to have them powder coated black per the BID request. There was discussion about whether it would be beneficial to keep some of the poles in place for wayfinding as well, but it is not certain if that is an option or not. Some wayfinding signs will go on current light poles and some will need new poles and that project will start in January. Parking meter go live date is Dec. 9, which means that four consultants will come in to help the Parking Commission with the software merge. A press conference and how-to video will be released on the go

live date as well. The rest of the month will be dedicated to communication and outreach. The old meters will be removed in the first quarter, but how they will be decommissioned until then is unclear. Feedback has been received from retailers regarding the timing of the rollout during the holiday shopping season, but the “Go Live” date can’t be pushed back due to logistics. The Parking Commission will not be focusing on ticketing in December, but more on education and outreach. Everyone is working on meeting negative feedback head on with positive talking points and outreach.

McCarthy reported on the new traffic signals and that a request has been put to MDT to powder coat the poles. Buchanan is working with many departments on reserving funding for getting that done. Several solutions to funding have been discussed, but none have been determined at this point. Cederberg asked whether the wayfinding funding could be used for that project, but that isn’t possible due to the terms of the TIIP grant. Beaton brought up the new sign for the Westside neighborhood and why they didn’t follow the wayfinding guidelines. Buchanan said that the main issue was cost and that they tried to incorporate those designs, but were unable to conform to those guidelines despite the efforts of MRA to make that happen. Neighborhood signage was discussed during the design process; all the construction documents were shared with the Westside Neighborhood planning team, but they were unable to find anyone who could follow that design in their budget.

Placemaking – McCarthy reported that holiday décor repairs are complete and décor installation is underway. Parks & Recreation hangs the décor. MPC is going to donate the old meter heads to the MDF; the MDF board discussed using them as a fundraiser by selling them or using them for public art. Installing a “parking meter garden” was also discussed and using them for fundraising for specific programs (i.e.: purple meters for the foundation, orange for the HOT, etc.). She asked for feedback on those ideas with mixed response. The parking commission has started a list of people who want them, so send those who ask their way.

Business Development – McCarthy distributed the list of new activity, which is full of lots of movement and new business. The UM School of Journalism wants to do a story on all businesses that have closed in the last year – McCarthy sent her that list as well as lists from the previous two years and requested a copy of the story. Discussion regarding the status of the Merc and other older buildings in downtown ensued.

Marketing – McCarthy reported on the Fourth Quarter holiday promotions.

Master Plan – McCarthy reported with the school bonds passing, the MCPS now has the funding to help with the broadband project. At the last meeting, the cost estimate to build out was determined but did not include maintenance and management. Bozeman brought together several banks to fund their project up front. The project was phased out, and McCarthy distributed a map of those phases. A non-profit should be created to manage the system. Buchanan asked who was being brought in to spearhead that non-profit. Newell said MCPS is going to go after an RFP for service, but not sure whether that is a possibility. One anchor is needed, which in Bozeman was the School District.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion ensued regarding the valuation for the water system that was presented today.

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 pm.