

**Downtown Business Improvement District
Board of Trustees
Tuesday, July 17, 2012 from 3-5 pm**

Attending: Tim France, Rich Huffman, Charlie Beaton, Carma Gilligan, Dan Cederberg, Alan Newell, Ellen Buchanan

Staff: Rod Austin, Julie Walsh

Guests: Darrin Muir, Josh Pollarine, Jenny Mueller

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 pm.

Introduction of Guests and Public Comment

Darrin Muir and Josh Pollarine introduced themselves as representatives of Next Exit History, and Jenny Mueller introduced herself as the new Program Director for the Missoula Downtown Association. There was no public comment.

Next Exit History (Newell)

Newell announced Muir and Pollarine would make a short presentation on Next Exit History, a smartphone app that provides information about historical landmarks.

The presentation began with a short promotional video, followed by a more detailed PowerPoint describing the interpretation project of the University of Western Florida, Next Exit History. Detailed information about the Smartphone Application (App) itself can be found at uwf.edu/NextExit or nxtexithistory.com. The following excerpt is from the UWF webpage:

“Next Exit History is a project of the Departments of History and Engineering and Computer Technology at the University of West Florida, WUWF Public Media, and the University of South Florida Libraries’ Florida Studies Center.

The project gathers site-specific, scholarly content on historic communities and reproduces it in engaging electronic media, that incorporates rich metadata, including GPS information for use over a variety of delivery models.

The immediate goal of this project is to promote Florida history by creating audio and audio-visual historical podcasts, of 50 Florida towns. To be eligible for inclusion, a community must have a core of standing structures of historical significance and be easily accessible from one of the state’s four Interstate highways: I-10, I-75, I-95, or I-4. The podcasts that are produced as part of this project constitute an electronic repository of scholar-certified, historical content that is accessible to the general public.”

While this project originated in Florida, historical sites are being added around the country. There are now 52,502 sites listed and these additions are ongoing. UWF students are currently traveling the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, adding sites along the way. Sites can be input on the Next Exit History website, and interpretation, both text and voice, can be accessed by anyone with a Smartphone. There is also a “Backpack” feature, allowing users to download information on sites they plan to visit, yet know they will not have cell reception by the time they get there. There are “layers” of information users can select to narrow their inquiries, such as cemeteries, buildings, or cultural attractions. Themes can also be created, such as ghost towns in the area. Users also have the ability to upload their historical visits to social media websites.

After the guests finished explaining the UWF project, Newell expressed interest in setting up a contract for this digital tool to better promote Missoula’s attractions. He described it as a valuable opportunity to draw attention from travelers and increase awareness of a community’s resources. He said questions to ask include:

What is the cost of a contract?

Are there any ways Historical Research Associations (HRA) could offer services to maintain Missoula’s Next Exit History presence?

Can this be used as content for Wayfinding?

Is there a possible market to attract business participation?

How would we track the usage of this app?

What information would we want regarding downtown?

What is in it for the community?

How can Historical Research Associates (HRA) license the use of this app for business?

Newell said this project would require some of Rod Austin’s and Linda McCarthy’s time, managing content and proposing advertising opportunities with businesses. If France would allow, Worden’s could be the guinea pig. France supported the idea. Newell clarified that he is not making an ask from the board, simply generating group interest. It seems that long term we could make money off of this project. We would want to communicate to the community that if it invests, it will get something in return. Buchanan suggested the money that the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) has, for which it does not have intentions. Newell expressed hopes to fund it with revenue and perhaps set up an institute to manage it. Credibility is a goal, as the App should be easy to use and reliable. Newell wants to explore licensing this App to be used for business profit, as UWF does not use it this way. Austin said he wondered about the advertising side of this tool and how the community would buy into it. It does not need to be used solely for history, as cultural attractions and businesses can be added as sites. Newell said we could keep track of which businesses report customers who said they were directed to that business using the App. It would be ideal to get this working in August or early September. Austin agreed that there is a lot of potential here. France, Huffman, and Buchanan said they like this idea. Newell said he might ask for an endorsement in the fall. Buchanan asked who would be inputting the site content, and Newell replied this would be a separate business. Community groups may take interest in uploading content and we can work with them, teaching them maintenance and training. Buchanan made a note that microbreweries would be good and popular content.

MUDT Short and Long Range Planning (Austin)

Austin passed out information retrieved from the Mountain Line website, which summarizes the planned adjustments for bus routes. He made note that the Business Improvement District (BID) has not been asked for a letter of support, yet he thinks it is important for the BID board to be updated on this news. He mentioned the last public meeting will be on Thursday, which board members are welcome to attend. He reported there will be 15-minute service throughout the transit line in the coming years, along with the elimination of some routes. He is not sure whether there is controversy in these changes, as people who live in several areas will be losing routes. There will be shuttles twice in the morning and twice in the evening for El-mar Estates and elsewhere. Gilligan expressed concern that residents at The Springs will lose transportation. Austin said the service behind Home Depot will not terminate, but become less frequent. The change will happen just before the start of the University of Montana's fall semester, near August 27. A route might not go to the mill site, and Route 1 will become 15-minutes service to downtown, UM, and Southgate Mall. These are high commuter use locations. Buchanan emphasized that this route is to aid employees, not shoppers, and Austin mentioned that parking rates will increase downtown soon after this change to encourage ridership.

France asked whether there has been a pushback. Austin answered the pushback has been far less intense than he had expected. Buchanan explained that people in Target Range are not happy, although they have quite low ridership. Austin said they make a legitimate argument, for they are paying into the service and Big Sky High School is in that area.

Austin wondered whether Missoula will get a functioning urban system from this change. While Newell hopes it will fix the downtown parking problem, Austin said people will continue to drive downtown anyway.

Director's Report (Austin)

Downtown Master Plan – Update

Park Place Parking Structure:

Buchanan reported most of the concrete in the parking structure has been poured, leaving just the stair towers. The aluminum sides will not arrive until late August, so that moves the opening from September to October. The public art for the structure is close to being chosen. The Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) board has approved funding for raised pedestrian crosswalk from the parking structure. MRA will pay to put it in as a safety measure. France mentioned that the Missoula Parking Commission is involved in fixing the interior of the building.

(Buchanan departed the meeting to attend another meeting.)

Implementation

Austin reported Wayfinding fundraising is in motion, as \$92,000 has been fundraised. This is only \$8,000 short of the highest goal, and \$17,000 above the lowest goal. An RFP for design will soon be sent out. Beaton asked if now is a realistic time for Wayfinding planning. Austin said the hard part is finding \$1 million to implement what has been planned. That may likely be an overestimation, but it is the goal. Beaton asked where the money will come from. Austin mentioned the City of Missoula, Parks and Recreation, Big Sky Trust

Fund Grant, Missoula Parking Commission, Missoula Downtown Association (MDA), BID, and the MRA. Fundraising is being headed by Destination Missoula, and Austin expressed worry that the organization would have trouble finding funds for Wayfinding as a whole.

Committees

Business Development Committee (formerly Recruitment and Retention)

Austin announced that he has taken over Jessica Daniels' work on the brochure and has been interviewing people for one hour. Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will look forward to having this brochure as they travel around the countryside.

Employee

No meeting.

Streetscape

No meeting.

Marketing

Austin said the committee is working on branding downtown. France reported they have been having very productive meetings, starting with working on a one-word description of Missoula Downtown's branding promise. The committee agreed on the word "connect." Now the committee is ready to discuss the specifics of coordinating a branding campaign. Each organization needs to have discussions about how they are going to get fully on board. Mary Ellen Campbell has been great. She knows the right questions to ask and gives homework to the committee. Beaton said she is a professor and consultant, and that we are getting her guidance for a great bargain. France added that before the committee knew how efficient and focused she was, it already knew she was an enthusiast for Downtown Missoula. Beaton mentioned it is a good idea to have branding done before Wayfinding.

Other – Clean Team, Tree Grates

Austin reported that a year ago, the city had many tripping incidents. The Clean Team is not covered by City of Missoula insurance. Dan Smith is great at writing reports. He records the location of tree grates that need work, and the BID fixes them. Cederberg voiced that he is not keen on the idea of putting ourselves in the liability line if we are just reporting what we see. We do not have a duty to maintain, but we can report.

Ambassadors Report

Austin mentioned that the Downtown Ambassadors have had increasingly fewer problems with transients downtown. People parking at Caras to use Brennan's Wave or float have been keeping transients away from that public space.

Approval of June 19th Board Minutes

Beaton motioned to approve the minutes. France seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Financial Report

Austin reported May financials were incorrectly sent via email, as he had looked for them in Robert Giblin's June financials folder. Giblin stores the June financials in July's folder. Once the mistake was noticed, correct financials were added to the hard copies of board packets.

Newell said the year-end financials in the report will not be adjusted. Health benefits may have been recorded wrong. Austin reported overall that the BID finished the year well, with good timing on financials that will help with this fiscal year.

Regarding the lawsuit, the adjuster contacted the plaintiff's lawyer. It appeared they did not have enough information, so they will not serve us unless they get better information.

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.