

**Downtown BID Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2024 at the DMP Office**

Present: Ellen Buchanan, Dan Cederberg, Carma Gilligan, Jim McKay, Karen Sippy

Absent: Charlie Beaton, Scott Stearns

Staff: Jack Hall, Amber Kukla

Guest: Christine Littig

Dan Cederberg called the meeting to order at 3:04PM

Business Development Overview & Discussion with Christine Littig, MEP

Christine Littig provided an update on business development for the second quarter. She highlighted the mixed landscape for Downtown businesses, where experiences range from positive growth to ongoing struggles. Discussion focused on the challenges within the service industry, particularly restaurants, which continue to suffer from workforce shortages. This issue, which affects the broader community, remains a concern. Littig emphasized the importance of educating the public on these challenges. Many businesses reported that concerts have provided a welcome boost to their sales, showcasing the value of entertainment in driving local commerce.

Littig also mentioned the surge in creative problem-solving among business owners, particularly for startups, as they grapple with securing physical spaces to operate. She noted that the commercial rental and leasing landscape has shifted considerably. The focus has moved toward pitches that emphasize a business's potential for success. Realtors, in particular, are now prioritizing business viability when deciding on leases, adding a new level of complexity for entrepreneurs trying to establish themselves.

In terms of financial opportunities, Littig highlighted some recent wins for the local business community, including Bernice's Bakery, which secured a \$50,000 grant. She also mentioned that numerous Main Street grants are now available, offering significant potential for business development. Littig stressed the importance of increasing awareness of these opportunities, and encouraging more local businesses to apply and take advantage of these resources.

In a discussion on increasing foot traffic in underutilized parts of Downtown, the group explored the possibility of shifting some festivals northward. The aim would be to draw more people into areas that see less activity, with events like temporary pop-ups and expansions of the Farmers Market being considered. The conversation touched on the logistics of these efforts, including suitable locations for such events, the staging of space, parking availability, and infrastructure needs.

Littig also shared her key takeaways from the recent International Downtown Association (IDA) conference, which reaffirmed the importance of data-driven decision-making. She noted that staying informed about innovative development projects, especially those spearheaded by developers with an interest in working in Missoula, is crucial. There was also discussion about expanding the boundaries of Downtown to ignite activity in new areas, emphasizing that this does not need to be a permanent expansion.

On the topic of housing, Littig reported that MEP and NeighborWorks Montana have come together to establish a housing investment fund, which now holds \$8 million.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Cederberg called for any review and or edits to the minutes. Gilligan commented on one minor spelling edit from “aging” to “again” on page 3. With no other comments, Carma Gilligan motioned to approve the minutes. Sippy seconded. All approved.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

In reviewing the Balance Sheet for September 2024, Hall highlighted the new line item for the purchase of our new Toyota truck for our maintenance team. He moved to the Profit and Loss noting the BID may see a slight change in numbers as the FY24 books are audited and finalized for the City of Missoula. The BID saw a \$7,500 collection from Mountain Line for the first half of their contribution toward the Dedicated Downtown Police Officer program. Hall noted the interest collected from the current CD. For collections, we are close to where we were last year. The final DMP payment will be taken out in October. We will also see a decrease in garbage removal moving forward due to one less pickup day given the slowing tourist season and less trash collection. Our cash flow is barely below projected, but nothing to be concerned about. Upcoming expenses were reviewed including the costs of the new truck, holiday décor, and miscellaneous other expenses around outfitting the new maintenance truck.

CLEAN & SAFE PROGRAMMING

Hall reported on the provided reports included in the board packet. We have seen an increase in business contacts with our officers in the last few months, noting September's increase, due in part to retaining Officer Hardin for the whole year. Officer Brown was promoted and Officer Castro has taken his place as a new Downtown Police Officer. A discussion ensued on the urban camping ordinance's effects on downtown and policing.

Hall moved to review the Clean Team data provided noting the upcoming leaf removal efforts we will be seeing. The map of where they covered and what days were discussed to see how much of Downtown the team covers. A discussion ensued on clean up from the storm, including tree/ branch removal and the effects of the storm Downtown.

MASTER PLAN UPDATES

Hall began with the news of the commencement of the Caras Terrace construction. Completion of the project is projected for mid-December, with the exception of railing and landscaping finishing in Spring of 2025. Rough grading for the ADA ramp has been completed. They have been utilizing the nice weather by working on Saturdays to get ahead of schedule as well. The Underbridge playground projects have wrapped for 2024, including the painting of the remaining bays and the completed pillar artwork.

Buchanan provided further updates regarding the code reform map, which has been released, and upcoming meetings related to the reform process. She also noted that the long-range planning initiatives, including the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails (PROST) program, are progressing well. The Downtown SAM group has established a working group that meets regularly, including a scheduled walking tour of the area. A project manager has been hired, and a request for proposals (RFP) has been issued for a design consulting firm. In addition, a request for qualifications (RFQ) is being developed for a construction team to carry out the project once the design is finalized.

PARTNER UPDATES

The Missoula Downtown Foundation recently concluded seven successful Past to Plate dinner experiences in partnership with Unseen Missoula, 1889, and The Depot to kick off the MDF's Fall Campaign. These dinner tours blend historical

information and local fine dining to put a spotlight on recent MDF projects. Both murals have been completed and an unveiling happened on Sept. 5 at the Dorothy Dragon mural. The MDF mailing will go out this week.

Kukla reported on the start of the holiday season, noting success with sponsorship sales for Holidays on Higgins and the new location at Residence Inn Downtown for Teddy Bear Tea Parties. Re-branding efforts are still underway in partnership with Bonfire, with the goal of a late January unveiling.

DMP STRATEGIC PLANNING: WED. OCT 30

Strategic Planning will take place on Wednesday, Oct. 30 from 12 – 5pm on the sixth floor of Stockman Bank. Lunch will be provided at the event. All board members are encouraged to attend if able.

NEW BUSINESS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- McCarthy will be back in the office Oct. 21.

With no new business or announcements, Cederberg adjourned the meeting at 4:18pm.