

**Downtown BID Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at the DMP Conference Room**

**Present:** Scott Stearns, Ellen Buchanan, Luke Jackson, Chris McClead

**Absent:** Charlie Beaton, Karen Sippy, Michael Albritton

**Guest:** Christine Littig

**Staff:** Jack Hall, Jake Treece (Linda McCarthy absent)

In President Charlie Beaton's absence, Scott Stearns called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm.

**MEP BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION**

Littig reviewed the MEP business development position that is partially funded by the Downtown BID. Littig handles a large portion of Downtown Missoula economic development work while also serving the broader county. There is an upcoming meeting for Littig, Grant Kier, and Linda McCarthy to discuss the progress and results of the last three years in this role. McCarthy and Littig met at the end of 2025 and reiterated the need to maintain quarterly reporting. Littig shared that the quarterly reports would continue to track steady progress. Stearns encouraged that Grant Kier present to the board at least once per year.

Littig reported many successes for 2025. Missoula Makers saw significant growth and expanded into two locations on Front Street. Bernice's Bakery completed a successful expansion. The Lords Jeweler building sold recently. FMC Books reported that business is going well. Littig reported 45 business retention and expansion conversations in 2025.

There were three business attraction efforts focused on bringing businesses into Missoula from outside the region, including a restaurant in Sheridan, Wyoming, a home goods and cooking school concept in Billings, and a vintage comics store. Additional conversations included a retail store in Bozeman and a coffee shop and women's clothing concept from Bozeman. Other projects include a bagel shop startup, Bake Sale's purchase of retail space, Aralia Health looking to expand, and Green Source working with MEP on expansion. MEP has also been in discussion with other industries, including architects.

Littig also had many discussions about Downtown SAM with businesses. She focused outreach on businesses along Higgins, Front, and Main Streets that could be impacted. Of the 19 business owners she spoke to, several reported being down 20–30% in retail sales compared to 2024. The remainder reported that sales were generally flat. Among restaurants surveyed, two reported flat sales and one reported increased sales. Littig noted that while many businesses share similar concerns, the factors affecting each business vary. Regarding Downtown SAM, Littig emphasized that main sidewalk construction is not expected to begin until 2027. Many

businesses reported feeling fairly informed, while some rely on the Downtown Missoula Partnership for updates. Three businesses indicated they were unaware of the project.

A key question from business owners is how many parking spaces will ultimately be lost downtown. Downtown SAM is currently at 60% design, and the final number of parking spaces that may be removed is not yet known. Loss of parking and potential loss of revenue were identified as major concerns, particularly for retail businesses.

Discussion also included Southgate Mall, which is reportedly seeing strong traffic. The board discussed opportunities to better understand and potentially capitalize on that traffic Downtown. Southgate Mall is utilizing PlacerAI, and there was a call for Hall and McCarthy to explore this tool further.

### **APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETINGS**

The Board opted to defer approval of the January minutes to the next meeting.

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

Hall reviewed the Balance Sheet and noted that assessment payments for November and December were received, bringing the checking balance closer in line with last year's numbers. Net income for January is currently at \$6,943.50. Approximately \$202,709 in income has been received in tax assessments from July to January. However, the current overall net income is negative -\$56,332.

In reviewing the P&L, Hall noted garbage and city contract expenses are on track. Last year included higher snow removal expenses due to heavier snowfall. January expenses included paying half of the commitment for on the Downtown Policing contract, which has resulted in lower expenses than originally budgeted.

Other expenses included minor costs for supplies and gas, as well as regular Clean Team expenses. The upcoming quarterly business development payment will be reflected soon.

Hall also noted a time delay in the BID payment to the Downtown Missoula Partnership for salaries and benefits. The check has been written and signed and will appear in the February financials.

### **DOWNTOWN MAINTENANCE & CLEAN TEAM**

Hall reported that both the Clean Team and maintenance team have struggled to find consistent tasks due to the lack of snowfall. The team has focused on cleaning and repairing grates, removing leaves, sweeping, and maintaining Caras Park.

### **DOWNTOWN POLICING**

There has been no success in hiring additional Dedicated Downtown Police Officers, so far. Castro is expected to conclude service in March. A one-year contract renewal is upcoming.

## **DISCUSSION ON DOWNTOWN BUSINESS SUPPORT FUND**

Hall provided an overview of the proposed business support fund, which could be similar to the support effort created during 2020 to assist with COVID impacts. The Missoula Downtown Foundation will lead the fundraising campaign, though it is still unclear whether funds will be collected directly from businesses. Each partner organization will be asked to support the fund. In 2020, the business grants were flexible, and the disbursements were generally \$1,000 and \$1500 for MDA members. The BID Board expressed general support for the concept. All agreed the Downtown SAM project could be disruptive and suggested that a targeted program with specific metrics for grant eligibility would be beneficial.

## **PARTNER UPDATES: MDA & MDF**

Hall shared updates from partner organizations. The MDA Awards Annual Banquet was successful. The Après Alley Pop-up on February 6 was also successful. Winter BrewFest is the next big event on February 28. MDA is also hosting Downtown on Tap Feb. 24 at the Comfort Inn, as well as a new Speed Networking social happening this Thursday, Feb. 19.

On the Foundation side, Hall reported that the application period for the Arts and Culture Impact Grants closed on February 28.

Repainting of the Caras Park Bandshell is nearly complete. The Beartracks Underbridge lighting installation is scheduled for Monday. and installation of the street skating are scheduled for the end of March.

With no new business or trustee comments, Stearns adjourned the meeting at 4:25 pm.