

**Downtown BID Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, January 20, 2025 at the DMP Conference Room**

Present: Charlie Beaton, Ellen Buchanan, Karen Sippy, Michael Albritton

Absent: Scott Stearns, Luke Jackson, Chris McClead

Guest: Rachel Huff-Doria

Staff: Linda McCarthy, Jack Hall, Amber Gagen

Charlie Beaton called the meeting to order at 3:12 pm.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER MINUTES

Sippy made a motion to approve the December minutes with no proposed changes. Buchanan seconded the motion. Beaton called for a vote and all were in favor.

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF DMP 5 YEAR FRAMEWORK

McCarthy presented an overview of the DMP five-year framework, which had been approved by the DMP Board the previous week, and reviewed feedback received to date. Huff-Doria highlighted the BID-specific elements of the framework, along with the broader ideas and planned initiatives. She noted that Priority Three in Section Three is particularly important for BID renewal, as well as Priority Five related to marketing and communications support.

The board discussed concerns related to potential property tax shifts from residential to commercial and the importance of proactively addressing this issue ahead of BID renewal. There was also discussion regarding the timeline for business support funding and the importance of continuing this funding beyond the DT SAM program. BID renewal emerged as a recurring theme throughout the discussion. Sippy suggested clarifying language by adding “Caras Park” where applicable to avoid confusion.

Sippy moved to approve the proposed DMP 5 year framework. Albritton seconded the motion. Beaton called for a vote and all were in favor.

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF 2026 WORK PLAN

McCarthy provided an overview of the attached one-year work plan for 2026, which was developed in-house to include greater detail and performance metrics. She noted that the plan had already been reviewed and approved by the DMP Board.

Sippy moved to approve the 2026 Work Plan. Albritton seconded the motion. Beaton called for a vote and all were in favor.

APPOINTMENT TO THE DMP BOARD

McCarthy shared that both Beaton and Stearns currently serve on the DMP Board, with Beaton’s term set to expire.

Sippy moved to reappoint Beaton to the DMP board. Albritton seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Hall presented the balance sheet as of December 31, noting that the absence of November and December assessments from the City significantly impacts the current financial picture. Assets remain unchanged, while equity appears skewed

due to the missing assessments and is expected to normalize once those funds are received. Policing expenses have been invoiced and should soon be reflected in the budget from MPC and MUTD. Maintenance expenses included items such as tire changes and a leveling kit. The BID ratepayer mailing and calendar were distributed, with 410 sent out. Streetscape maintenance remains in line with the budget. Although the budget currently appears negative, these figures are expected to change once outstanding City and County funds are received.

DMP COMMITTEE SIGN-UPS

McCarthy reviewed the current committee roster and 2026 sign-up needs, emphasizing the need for a private-sector representative on the Master Plan Committee. She also encouraged board members to consider serving on the advocacy and business support committee to provide additional insights and perspectives. McCarthy invited interested individuals to attend committee meetings prior to committing to service. Additional discussion included potential committee participation related to NRSP&T, ice planning at Bess Reed Park, and building relationships with the Avrill Group.

MDA AWARDS BANQUET: KAREN SIPPY NOMINEE

McCarthy shared that the MDA Awards Banquet will take place on January 29 at the DoubleTree. An invitation has been extended to the Avrill Group to present, though a response has not yet been received. She also highlighted that Sippy has been nominated as Downtowner of the Year.

DOWNTOWN MAINTENANCE & CLEAN TEAM

McCarthy reported that the lack of snowfall has created a temporary gap in typical winter maintenance work, allowing the team to focus on leaves, organic matter, and decomposed granite in tree wells. She also shared that the maintenance team completed an alley activation project, with a First Friday pop-up planned for February in partnership with neighboring businesses Toffier and Rice. Additional activations with seasonal themes are being explored. Discussion included ideas such as dinosaur footprints, public chalk art, and activations north of Broadway.

DOWNTOWN POLICING

McCarthy reviewed year-end downtown policing and community support statistics, highlighting notable cases included in the report. Officer Hardin remains on light duty due to an injury sustained in October, and Officer Castro will transition to patrol when weather permits. As a result, seven-day-per-week downtown coverage is not currently being provided. The board discussed changes in downtown coverage over time, potential contract adjustments when coverage levels do not align with costs, the role of private security or downtown ambassadors, and the need for a broader discussion ahead of contract renewal.

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ACTIVITY

McCarthy shared of the recent press release highlighting a strong year for downtown businesses, despite early concerns in 2025. Discussion followed regarding residential activity and upcoming or potential development projects. McCarthy also shared a summary prepared with Littig that outlined key wins and areas for improvement.

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN UPDATES

McCarthy shared that the zoning code remains under review and continues to receive significant feedback, with downtown zoning expected to remain largely unchanged. DT SAM is targeting 60 percent design completion by February, with additional public outreach still to occur. Downtown Dialogues was recently held with 20 attendees, including new participants, and focused on preparing for change, particularly during periods of construction.

PARTNER UPDATES: MDA & MDF

Hall reported that ticket sales for the Awards Banquet are trending higher than in previous years. Winter BrewFest planning continues to move forward. Dine Local Week will take place January 26 through February 1, featuring special offers throughout the week with 20 participating businesses. The MDF calendar and tax letter mailing have been distributed. Arts and Culture Impact Grants are open through the end of February. The Legacy Trail and wayfinding kiosks have been officially completed, and District Gateways have been identified as the next downtown project. A

donor art concept is currently in development, and a spring campaign is forthcoming. The MDF Fall Campaign exceeded its \$50,000 goal, and the third relinquishment of the Caras Park Endowment held with the Montana Community Foundation was completed. Work is underway on the annual report, which is expected to be released in conjunction with the Annual Awards Banquet. McCarthy also shared the three proposed concepts for the Caras Park donor recognition art piece that were presented to the MDF Board.

NEW BUSINESS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

McCarthy shared that she will be traveling to Palmerston North, New Zealand, Missoula's sister city, from February 14 through February 24.

TRUSTEE COMMENTS

Sippy raised a question regarding the orientation of bench seating outside the Merc, specifically whether seating could face the building or possibly the other bench instead of the vehicles.

The meeting adjourned at **4:59 PM**.