

Missoula City Council Committee of the Whole Minutes - DRAFT

**June 8, 2022
12:45 PM
ZOOM Webinar**

Members present: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, John P. Contos, Jordan Hess, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka, Heidi West

Members absent:

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

Minutes from May 25, 2022, were approved.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Security Data Review

Information only.

Montana James and Rikki Henderson presented on the security provided in neighborhoods related to unhoused residents (see attached slides and recorded presentation). Including information on the contract with Rogers International which is managed inside the City's Community Planning, Development, and Innovation Department (CPDI).

Council Questions

Jill Bonny with the Poverello Center spoke on a survey conducted by their organization of guests and staff regarding security at Poverello and Johnson Street shelter in March of 2022. Overwhelming number of guests responded that security had gotten better. Overwhelming number of guests said that safety at the shelters had improved in the period in question. Guests noted that uniforms and gun were unnecessary or unduly militant. Staff were also surveyed, divided into direct care staff and administrative staff, overwhelming response that security had improved and both locations felt more safe. Staff also responded that they felt that security were a partner in their work. Would like to see a female staff member. Would prefer security personnel not carry guns and wear everyday clothing.

Gwen Jones said that when this program started there wasn't good information how this would look but survey seems that both Poverello clients and staff see this is positive. Jill Bonny responded that there were some growing pains but there was also a lot of collaboration including weekly meetings to tweak responses and communicate about

issues regularly. This year was better at Johnson Street as they grew in experience after the first year.

Gwen Jones asked April Seat of the TSOS about that site. She responded that security has been great, although people weren't sure how it would be received initially. April responded that security personnel are building relationships and are on site frequently as it is a 24/7 facility. Described the security staff as a huge asset. Has heard positive feedback from the neighborhood members and businesses as well.

Captain Rosling spoke on four use-of-force instances. He also spoke on the reduction in the calls to the Police Department during the time that the Rogers International service.

Daniel Carlino noted that in some areas of the survey almost the same number of respondents felt less safe as those who felt more safe, and asked if others believed this was a success. Montana James responded that that survey question was one data point of many, and the Poverello survey had different responses. April Seat responded that these programs are new and need to be adjusted over time, and the importance of the presence of security. Captain Rosling responded that the Police Department doesn't have the staff to provide the kind of constant contact that is needed to keep people from setting up camp in surrounding area.

Kristen Jordan had concerns about the survey and that the questions may have had a bias; and asked about what the program metrics were ahead of time. Montana James spoke about right-sizing the police response in these areas, particularly looking at types of calls, also looking at the impacts on the neighborhoods (anecdotally there are fewer complaints from neighbors in these areas). Montana James responded that there was not the budget or time for a statistically valid survey.

Kristen Jordan asked about the training that the security company has. Security personnel are licensed, and the contract requires additional training including Native and cultural training, de-escalation, LGBTQ training, etc. Gwen Jones asked that Montana James provide the training requirements in future presentations.

Jennifer Savage asked a question for Jill Bonny regarding guest data, and whether the Poverello survey was broken down by gender. Jill Bonny responded that they did not break it down by gender. She also mentioned that she didn't want to share percentages from the survey due to the power dynamic between the administration and guests.

Jennifer Savage asked a question of Captain Rosling, whether the Police Department has concerns about Rogers International using force. He said yes, the Police Department prefers that they never use force. It appears the four times that force was used it was within the scope of the contract.

Mike Nugent mentioned that during a tour of the authorized campsite a woman specifically sought out the council members to thank them for the security presence. Question for Captain Rosling, has Rogers International promptly and fully cooperated when use of force was necessary? Captain Rosling responded that there were some rough patches in the beginning, but it's gotten better through weekly meetings and defining appropriate responses. Rogers's staff does wear body cameras and the police seize those after incidents. Due to the difference in training, when the police respond to a call involving Rogers it is as though it is a citizen versus citizen concern.

Mirtha Becerra spoke to the fewer calls she's received from her ward residents and improved safety for unhoused women in these sites.

Sandra Vasecka said that in her ride along someone said that the police can't act unless the Poverello staff press charges. Jill Bonny said that it is not the police's job to enforce their rules, and security helps fill that role. Captain Rosling said that the fewer calls frees the PD up to go to other calls, and it was frustrating for PD to be called just to have someone removed.

Heidi West mentioned that she's had requests from constituents in Ward 1 to expand the security presence.

Stacie Anderson asked if this is a best practice in peer cities. Jill Bonny responded that she wasn't aware of similar circumstances because the security personnel are not physically inside the Poverello facility. Montana James responded that staff have toured other out-of-state facilities and many of them have on-site security, as well as looking at research.

Public Comment

Joe Pascasel (sp?) commented on that this meeting was an endorsement of security, not necessarily of Rogers International. He also highlighted the comment that not all security personnel were adequately trained in de-escalation. He also reiterated that a third of the respondents felt less safe.

3.2 Downtown Master Plan – 2021 Accomplishments & Update

Information only.

Linda McCarthy spoke on the Downtown Master Plan (see attached slides and recorded presentation).

Heidi West asked a question about business openings and closings. Linda McCarthy responded that they've been tracking this since 2009 and the numbers were the same in the pandemic as before, 2:1 openings to closing. Similar cities have vacancies that are much higher, often areas that have a higher level of national brands suffer more as opposed to local brands.

Jordan Hess stated that he looks forward to this presentation annually and thanked them for their good work downtown.

Gwen Jones thanked them for the presentation and mentioned that visitors noticed a sense of community when visiting our downtown.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Committee adjourned at 2:29pm.