

Missoula City Council Committee of the Whole Minutes - DRAFT

September 28, 2022

1:00 PM

Council Chambers (in person) or TEAMS (virtually)

Attend in person: City Council Chambers, 140 W Pine, Missoula MT

Members present: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka

Members absent: John P. Contos, Heidi West

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

1.1 Roll Call

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

Committee minutes from September 21, 2022.

Approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Ward 2 Vacancy Appointment 2022 - Interview Selection

1:05 - 1:40 - Sierra Farmer Interview

1:40 - 1:45 - break

1:45 - 2:20 - Teigan Avery Interview

2:20 - 2:25 - break

2:25 - 3:00 - Derek Hitt Interview

3:00 - 3:05 - break

3:05 - 3:40 - Charles Shane Interview - Withdrew

3:40 - 3:45 - break

3:45 - 4:20 - John Rowan Interview

4:20 - 4:25 - break

4:25 - 5:00 - Rebecca Dawson Interview

5:00 - 5:30 - Public Comment

Gwen Jones explained the interviewing process and time limits (35 minutes per interview). Summary of answers provided below.

Sierra Farmer

Question 1: Was born in Missoula and gives her a unique perspective. Wants to help the growth in a meaningful way. Doesn't want to look back and think that the community missed the opportunity for meaningful growth. Knows that this is a huge commitment with late nights and tough decisions. Was raised by small business owners and this is her community. Finished her master's in public administration and has worked for small businesses and worked for the DNRC, including planning and policy experience. Understands that sometimes council is just working within tough bounds. Wants to work in a collaborative, solution-oriented manner, not just on pet projects.

Question 2: Role of the city council person is to do the research and understand the issues, and to be a bridge with the community. Important to understand the issues and be able to explain them to constituents in the community.

Question 3: Attended the Local Governments Citizens Academy and thought it was a great experience. One of the things that she is passionate about is making local government more accessible, for example the county commissioners' podcast. Important to make issues easier to understand. It's good get in front of issues before things become negative or controversial. Would make things easier to understand on the website and maybe do a podcast.

Question 4: Biggest issues in the next two years will likely be housing and finding ways to manage public safety for a growing population. Funding first responders and those who are seeing the growth in the community, at a lot of different levels, such as the planning department who seem overwhelmed. Finding ways to support the staff. Long term, looking at alternatives to property taxes.

Question 5: I do [feel the city provides good value for the property tax dollars]. We have so many resources here, there's a reason that people are moving here. But some funding sources, like ARPA, are going away. The city really is doing its best with the way funding is and the way the city is growing, there are tough decisions but sometimes the city has to say no. Will have to be creative in the future as the budgets become smaller and needs become larger.

Question 6: Yes, I would run for Ward 2. Thought that might run in a long time, but this opening meant this was a good time to apply. Likes the idea of learning first then being able to properly campaign with more knowledge of city needs.

Question 7: I do work full time for the DNRC and have two small kids, but she does have support of her employer. Completed grad school while working full time, so knows how to balance time.

Question 8: I would say that I do want this position and I think I would be a great fit. Being from Missoula gives a unique perspective. Goal would to be a solid collaborator. Understands all of the community that is Missoula, and wants what is best for the community. Would be a strong advocate for Missoula because she loves it and is looking out for the best interest of the community.

Teigan Avery

Question 1: I want to serve on city council because I care, and I want to be involved in enacting policy now and for generations to come. There's a bench on the M trail with the quote "economics explains everything." Has an undergrad and master's in economics and explaining human behavior through math, through economics, would really contribute to understanding on city council. As was a campus athlete and was expected to volunteer and be involved in the community, including Red Cross volunteering. Bring an interest in research and is a proud "nerd" which is an asset she brings to council.

Question 2: Understand the role of a council person to be a trustee and to serve the best interest of the people, which may not always be what is popular. Gave example of the 4th Street parcel and the Reed development that was not popular but is in the best interest of Missoula's long term goals.

Question 3: In bid for mayor had a lot of support from 18-to-30-year-olds, and would continue the engagement of that demographic. Has social media savvy, such as her food of the week posts. Engaging school kids is educational and also engages their parents. Would engage through trail work and athletics as well.

Question 4: One key foundational issue is public trust. This has been challenged on all fronts, and we should do a better job explaining what we're doing. The city needs to advocate for itself as well as its constituents. Housing is the second most important issue and would bring evidence-based solutions as she studied these in undergrad. Also adapting to climate change and taking action now to set up for success. City of Missoula should take bold actions, like considering a carbon tax.

Question 5: Yes, I do feel the city provides good value for taxes, such as Mountain Line and water, but not sure that value is equitably distributed. There are many neighborhoods that lack streetlights, and this is an example of the clunky distribution of tax dollars. Progressive property taxes would be less regressive and might provide better value. All these things are about progress not perfection.

Question 6: Yes, I do plan to run in 2023. I think my talents would be suited to Ward 2 representative.

Question 7: Yes, I can commit to these activities. Personal wellbeing is important but have plenty of time between 2-3 days as a public health researcher and also substitute teacher.

Question 8: Would like to speak to fitness for the position in regard to age. Rhetorically, is there ever a right time to serve in public service or is anyone ever ready? I've already experienced hard things in life and am tough enough to make hard decisions.

Derek Hitt

Question 1: I would like to serve on city council because I want to serve my community. My talents are a little different than others, I'm part of the carpenters union and the AFL-CIO. I understand what it means to listen fully and tell people if you don't know the answer, and to be there to serve their best interests. Been a part of negotiations and policymaking. We need common ground to make things happen.

Question 2: The role of the city council person is to be an advocate of the ward and the city. I want to make the city better for my two children I adopted. Everyone has different opinions but to hear them out and find common ground.

Question 3: I would make myself available to every person in my ward, showing up is 90 percent and listening is the other 10 percent. And bring solutions, otherwise you're just complaining.

Question 4: Infrastructure, and everything that falls under that, like workforce housing and affordable housing, and roads. Making sure the city is more accessible, fair and comfortable.

Question 5: Yes, I believe we give a good value. I've lived in other places in Montana and visiting family love our parks and resources. Is there always something we can do better? Yes, but we're doing well.

Question 6: Yes, if I'm selected or not selected, I will run for that ward. It's a need to have someone run with a different perspective.

Question 7: My current schedule is a fulltime position and working with my employers to be available. Evenings, I'm available. I want to make myself available and present.

Question 8: I've been a part of those late nights; I know they are a slog. When I'm committed to something, I'm committed 100 percent. I'm there for the people who ask for me and I'll be there for the people of Missoula if I'm selected.

John Rowan (aka Jack Rowan)

Question 1: Want to be involved in the community. Involved for decades in professional roles, nonprofit work, and small business experience. Want to have others involved and help other get access and their voice heard. Was a writer and editor for the Forest Service during the public listening session process and work with local governments as they rewrote their rules. Well aware of how to deal with contentious public issues, but also involved in more common issues like the Missoula Food Cooperative, helping run the coop and listening to people's needs were experiences that speak to the role that city councilors do.

Question 2: My sense is that the role is primarily as a facilitator. Much of what happens is outside of committee work, in community events like Brewfest or a local rugby tournament. People look for ways to engage and express what is important to them. The role of councilor is to be present in the community to be approachable to hear the concerns that people carry with them every day.

Question 3: One example is speaking with the security officer on duty, we used to work together. He shared some perspectives on issues of importance, from his perspective of a specialized profession and his role in the community. The role is to acknowledge what is being said, to look for opportunities to deepen connections. In his role as a chaplain, it is important to go through things with people, not just listen to them. The number of nonprofits in Missoula is a way people express what is important to them, so being present for their activities and fundraisers is important for understanding their needs.

Question 4: It's hard to keep it to just the next two years. The biggest challenge is balancing our priorities, including affordable and emergency access to housing, not just for renters, but for homeowners too. Recognizing that there are no easy answers but looking for multiple answers. Preparing for climate change, transportation and infrastructure, building relationships with the state legislature and municipalities, looking

at local food structures. Can't just focus on one, so what solutions can tackle multiple problems.

Question 5: Yes, I think it's amazing what we do with our budget, including knowledgeable city staff and partnerships. The city has made some incredible investments, especially in the last 10 years. We need to look at ways to build partnerships to address needs without just looking for more money to fund another project. Parts of the city are not served by Mountain Line. Areas where bike lanes end after 6 blocks. We need to work with others on these things.

Question 6: I have run for city council before and I have the experience of going door to door and to neighborhood councils, etc. I feel like I can say I do intend to run, and I have a pretty good idea of what it means to commit to running.

Question 7: Yes, I'm able to make this commitment. I work a .8 position and my managers have supported my efforts and are willing to adjust my schedule as needed. I'm also on-call for two weeks out of the month 24/7, so I understand what it means to make plans and have to adjust.

Question 8: My preference is to be involved in collaborative bodies, not necessarily be the decisionmaker, and I see city council as fitting into that. With that, I recognize that I'm not a specialist. It took me until I was in my thirties to realize I was not going to be like that. I like to explore and learn about new things. I've worked on housing and economic development, been involved in the Missoula Urban Demonstration Project, been involved in elections, and was on the elections advisory committee. I've been involved in the Missoula Outdoor Cinema for 15 years and the Missoula Folklore Society. And has made documentaries and gotten to see a lot of the state. I have a tremendous amount of conflict resolution experience. Purchased his first house in 2021 and was a tenant before that, renters are often seen as transient but are really long-term members of the community. I believe I am the oldest member of the applicants, but I have the energy and willingness to be engaged in the community.

Rebecca Dawson

Question 1: I would like to serve on city council to serve our community. I grew up in Stevensville and going to Missoula was "going to town." I'm a member of Bikers Against Bullies, which was founded here in Missoula. It's a nongovernmental nonprofit and we talk to kids about being friends and try to teach empathy and other perspectives. We've focused on putting buddy benches in schools and we talk to the kids about the bench and using them to include people who need a buddy. I would like to expand on that with the adults in Missoula. I moved to Salt Lake City and experienced many things from city life and life struggles that I bring to city council. BAB also helps with providing Christmas celebrations to local nonprofits. I bring real world experience and was inspired by Mike Nugent's speech about reaching across the aisle.

Question 2: I believe a city council person's role is to be a voice for the residents of the ward. You're going to meet people out in the community, actively listen, take the ward constituents' concerns into consideration while voting. It's not possible to vote in a way that makes everyone happy, but it's important to take the voices of the community into consideration as well as the overall wellbeing of the city.

Question 3: Be available, getting your information out there in a variety of manners. People don't always know who to talk to. The more people see you and feel comfortable with you, the more engaged people will be. As that positive word spreads well all gain the trust of the people of Missoula.

Question 4: I think taxes and crime are things that are going to become more difficult. Our population grew faster than infrastructure, we also need balance funding for new projects with needs of elderly and younger citizens. We don't want to tax them out of the city. Increased crime means calls for first responders also need to be supported.

Question 5: This was hard, I think sometimes yes and sometimes no. We need to take a needs versus wants approach. We need to make sure that we're spending money in a way that gets the most bang for our buck, to make sure our money is going towards things like sidewalks. Despite the legislature limitations, we need to conserve our resources as much as we can.

Question 6: Ward 2 is going to be a very crowded race. Yes, I plan on running. I ran before and intend to give it another shot.

Question 7: On the family front, my family can work it out. My employer said that this was important and that I can adjust my schedule as necessary.

Question 8: Thank you for your patience. I've run for this before, the first time I learned a lot about city government. It's been fun for me to help educate my friends and help people understand more about city government. Inspired by what the city has pulled together to do. Would appreciate working with you all.

Public Comment

Carol Bellen commented as former resident of Ward 2 and volunteer and serving as a school board trustee of Lowell School; spoke on behalf of Jack Rowan. Spoke to his work on Home ReSource, the Missoula Food Coop, work with Quakers, etc.

Kevin Hunt commented in favor of Jack Rowan.

Andi Hessel (sp?) commented with the hope that those who are not selected will continue to be involved.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 5:00pm.