

Missoula City Council Committee of the Whole Minutes

October 21, 2020

1:30 PM

ZOOM Webinar

Members present: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, John P. Contos, Heather Harp, Jordan Hess, Gwen Jones, Julie Merritt, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka, Bryan von Lossberg, Heidi West

Members absent: Jesse Ramos

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

1.1 Roll Call

1.2 Approval of the Minutes

September 23, 2020 minutes.

The minutes were approved as submitted.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Bryan von Lossberg went over rules.

Public comment not on the agenda - seeing none

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Emergency Winter Shelter Contract and Update

Eran Pehan - Office of Housing and Community Development. Emergency Winter Shelter Contract and Update presentation. Asking Council to authorize Mayor to sign this contract. She gave a history of Poverello Center and it's partnership with the city. Discussed difficulties COVID has presented.

Amy Allison Thompson - Director of the Poverello Center. Discussed plans for this winter which include a new Johnson Street emergency shelter. In the past they used to partner with the Salvation Army for over flow, COVID won't allow this. The Johnson Street space to house up to 150 people. Poverello center is experiencing a shortage of shelter beds because of COVID safety regulations and many other shelters are not able to be open due to COVID, many of which provided shelter during daytime hours. Johnson Street proposal is for a 24 hour shelter. Following strict CDC guidelines for Poverello Center and Johnson Street - 6ft between sleeping spaces, meal service compliance, cleaning protocols, and regular screening of guests. If a guest is experiencing symptoms, they connect them to medical care and don't receive services until they have been evaluated. They haven't had a ton of problems with COVID - lucky that their protocols are working. Working with health department to provide sack lunches at new site, hoping to provide 1 warm meal/day, which will be made at the Poverello Center and taken over to Johnson

Street, they don't have a commercial. Having an open house Thursday 10.29.20, from 330-7 to see new location. The Poverello Center holds monthly neighborhood meetings to hear from neighbors about any issues and brainstorm together, and the same will be provided at the Johnson Street location. First one is 11.11 at noon, over Zoom. Challenges in preparation - staffing for new location, hope to have 4 staff at all times. Need supplies - blankets/sheets/warm weather gear. Asked for referrals and supplies.

Bryan von Lossberg - asked about winter shelter operational time frame.

Amy Allison Thompson - The winter shelter will operate from 11.1-3.31, typically the coldest months of the year.

Bryan von Lossberg – Would like to hear about the preemptive planning for this weekend's cold weather.

Amy Allison Thompson - This weekend they are worried about the colder temps and are trying to come up with a quick plan. The Salvation Army has agreed to open their space as an emergency temporary shelter for this weekend. Open from 8pm-730am both nights.

Ginny Merriam - Communications Director - knows they will need to have a robust communications plan because it's a big change for the community. Put together a team from the City and County, the Poverello Center and the Office of Housing and Community Development. Contracted Big Sky Public Relations for public outreach. Highlights: ongoing meetings with external and internal stakeholders and retailers in the mall, press release 10.20.20, communications to the 4 neighborhood councils that are in the Johnson St neighborhood, a mailer will go out to over 6000 business and residents within 4 mile radius of Johnson Street center, inviting to open house 10.29 330 -7pm, submitted plan to the Health Department for open house safety measures, Engage Missoula page where people can find info, make comments and ask questions. When the space is ready, they will shoot a video and take pictures to post on the Engage Missoula page. There are 4 engagement opportunities for public - this meeting, on Friday at 9am Amy and Ginny city talk radio, open house Thursday 10.29 and Engage Missoula page.

Bryan von Lossberg – Clarified that the opening of Johnson Street is Sunday 11.1, and that the Salvation Army is providing temporary shelter this weekend.

Amber Sherrill - Spoke to the open nature of the space, says it seems ideal. Asked Amy what the most current count of homeless looks like, and if the Johnson Street space is enough space with COVID requirements.

Amy Allison Thompson – They don't have a specific count right now. They have a best estimate from connecting with their homeless outreach team for numbers. Johnson Street could sleep more than 150 if needed, the only limiting factor would be staffing issues. Will reach out if this becomes a challenge and will continue to reevaluate.

Amber Sherrill – Asks to clarify meals

Amy Allison Thompson - 1 hot meal and sack lunches, for sure 1 hot meal

Sandra Vaseka - 3 questions - Will emergency shelter allow substance abuse? There is concern about the nearby schools and parks. Are there plans to address this? Is the money already budgeted for?

Eran Pehan- It is already budgeted for. The City and County are both contributing \$50,000. The remainder of costs covered through federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In regards to schools, there is great communications in place with schools nearby other locations.

Amy Allison Thompson – In terms of issues related to nearby parks, encourage people to call homeless outreach team. Additional capacity from 3 additional FTE increase to outreach team due to COVID. Planning on having these locations be low barrier - means they are welcome to be onsite as long as their behavior is ok, it is not based on sobriety.

Julie Merritt – The usage numbers with the Salvation Army has historically been low the last couple of years. Are we expecting more people to use the new shelter?

Amy Allison Thompson - Yes, there is a significant need due to capacity being restricted at the Poverello Center.

Julie Merritt - Asking for a constituent – There was a mention of packaging and redistribution of donated items, will this include retail distribution?

Eran Pehan - This is a separate issue that will be presented in the Administration & Finance meeting regarding a contract for another property.

Stacie Anderson – Suggested that in the letter to the neighborhood, provide the homeless outreach team number and instructions on how to join monthly zoom neighborhood meeting. Will there be transportation coordination to new center?

Amy Allison Thompson – They do not have plans for transportation this year, because it's on a bus line. And think there will be 2 separate groups, using one shelter or the other, no need to be going back and forth. Also both sites will be open 24 hrs/day.

Stacie Anderson - At the Poverello Center there are wrap around services/case workers. Will these services be available at the Johnson Street center to reduce the need to go back and forth? Will it essentially be a fully operational center like the Poverello?

Amy Allison Thompson - Yes, services will be exactly the same.

Heidi West - Which bus line? Is there thought to extend bus hours? Are there access points for service for people they wouldn't typically house? For example unhoused families, who recently lost their home, what are the best entry points to direct them to in the community?

Amy Allison Thompson - The bus line is bus 2, already communicated with Mountain Line so they are aware they might see more traffic. There is no discussion of extension of routes. Direct people to 211, great option to get info on resources, the YWCA will be managing emergency family center and the Family Promise Program.

Julie Merritt – Mentioned that Wednesday at noon neighborhood meeting precludes council members from participating, is it possible to think about another day?

Amy Allison Thompson – Yes, will reconsider so there is opportunity for attendance.

Bryan von Lossberg – We can take this into account when we plan committees that day.
Discussed specific action for contract prior to Gwen Jones making a motion.

Authorize the Mayor to sign a contract for services with the Poverello Center for \$100,000 for the provision of Emergency Winter Shelter Services.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, John Contos, Heather Harp, Jordan Hess, Gwen Jones, Julie Merritt, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka, Bryan von Lossberg, and Heidi West

ABSENT: (1): Jesse Ramos

Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)