

## **Missoula City Council Public Safety, Health and Operations Committee Minutes**

**June 14, 2023**

**10:00 AM**

**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, Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka, Heidi West

**Members absent:** John P. Contos

### **1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS**

#### **1.1 Roll Call**

#### **1.2 Approval of the Minutes**

##### **1.2.1 Approval of PSHO meeting minutes of June 7, 2023**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kevin Farmer is a resident in the 4th Ward. Mr. Farmer states that he and his neighbors have been directly affected by the opening of the Johnson Street Shelter for the last two winters and have serious concerns about the potential opening of the shelter this summer. Mr. Farmer says that he and his neighbors agree that should the shelter be reopened, they would like to see more stringent rules placed on the residents there. In addition, he and his neighbors would like the mayor's office and Poverello Center to have regular and direct contact with the neighboring community. They would also like all of Missoula to be aware of what is being done for a long-term solution to the situation plaguing the city.

Furthermore, he and his neighbors would like to see the area of the Johnson Street Shelter be developed as once was proposed for economical purposes, not homeless camping mitigation. They would like to know what sort of security measures will be implemented to mitigate the increase in crime in the surrounding area once the shelter is opened this summer. They would also like to know if the Mayor's office explored more legal options within the bounds of the ruling of the 9th Circuit Court to implement legal precedence on a local level. They would also like to make sure that the Poverello Center is held accountable for the resources provided at the Johnson Street Shelter are not only assisting those in need but, operating within certain restrictions so that they safety of the surround community is the highest priority.

Mr. Farmer also asks if the Mayor's office and the City Council considered obtaining accurate data on our homeless issue. He asks if there has been consideration of a new facility being built using the found data and not just getting people off the street during inclement weather and during tourist season. He and his neighbors would like to see a long-term solution.

Karl Spitzmacher suggests that the city is managing displaced people at a loss and should consider doing so for a profit.

### **3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

#### **3.1 Referral-Surplus Resolution for Fire Department Equipment**

Philip Keating, assistant fire chief, is requesting that they surplus two 2011 Skiddoo water rescue craft. They intend to trade them in to Gull Goats and use the Skiddoos as a down payment on a jet motor.

**Moved by:** Amber Sherrill

Approve a resolution declaring certain City of Missoula Property as Surplus and Authorizing its disposal and or sale.

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka, and Heidi West

ABSENT: (1): John P. Contos

**Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)**

#### **3.2 Declare an Emergency Regarding Homeless Encampments, Direct City Staff to Develop Short-Term and Long-Term Solutions to Protect Public Health and Safety and Manage Current Unhoused Crisis Across Missoula**

Direct administration to immediately develop a short-term plan identifying one or two publicly owned areas to establish a nightly sleeping area allowing those experiencing homelessness to sleep for evening hours and close each morning to clear the space for cleaning and site maintenance during daytime hours and return to council with an operating plan decision.

Ask the mayor to make an emergency declaration regarding homeless encampments in Missoula to provide emergency powers and funding.

Direct administration to provide weekly updates to council and the public regarding staff actions around urban camping.

#### **3.3 Direct administration to Develop Short-Term and Long-Term Solutions to assist the unhoused and address urban camping to Protect Public Health and Safety**

Committee Chair Stacie Anderson said that today's meeting is not to discuss the Mayor's declaration of an emergency and any of the associated mills to be discussed with that. That will be under a budget committee at some point in the future as the Mayor and his administration and staff work to bring that item forward.

Eran Pehan with CPDI said that their presentation today is an update of what they are doing in regard to the current emergency declaration and how they are working to address the rise in urban camping. She states that CPDI agrees that the proposals found in Counselor Mike Nugent's referral are best practices that are used around the country.

Ms. Pehan says that the issue is capacity and that CPDI is extremely limited financially to support these types of programs in the Missoula community.

Emily Armstrong, the Houseless Initiatives Program Manager for CPDI, gave an update on current efforts. She states that they intend to create a continuum of options that create services that can wrap around any person who loses their housing regardless of their circumstances. She points out that the team at the City is most effective in partnering with community agencies and serves as the backbone to the system. She maintains that the City's role is as the architect of the community, they collaborate with community partners, they contract out funds, manage grants, and provide funding.

Ms. Pehan emphasizes that they are not service providers and community partners are continuously asking them not to be service providers. She states that their community partners said that the top priority right now is more shelter and that is where CPDI should direct all of their funding and that is what they have done.

Council member Daniel Carlino says that MRA (Missoula Redevelopment Agency) recently granted \$700,000 for redeveloping a bank so, he has a hard time believing that the city doesn't have the money.

Ms. Pehan states that MRA has been exploring the cost of renovations to Johnson Street Shelter and will be submitting an official request.

Kevin Hunt noted that in Ms. Pehan's presentation it was never mentioned that Missoula citizens would be included in the discussion. He states that he enthusiastically endorses both of Counselor Nugent's proposals, predicated by the three words, not limited to. He is concerned that the city would build more and that will attract more people to move here. He believes the City Council should pursue a revenue neutral means of funding, deal with the issues of security and outreach. One solution Mr. Hunt offered was to have the mayor ask the governor to activate the Montana National Guard to build barracks. He says that the 10-year-plan was a failure and something else needs to be done. He went on to say that increasing property taxes should be avoided, and that the entire city be declared in blight. He believes that we have a very service resistant population of unhoused people. He states that the average period of time they are unhoused is two years. He states that the current focus is compassionate but persistently concentrates on the people who are most service resistant. He also suggested that a property tax break be given to any landlord who agrees to both rent to compliant reentry program participants and to accept Section 8 vouchers, among other ideas.

Council member Gwen Jones says that City Council will do the best they can in the short term but, her biggest priority is winter shelter. Although she believes staff is already working on this, they need clarification and communication between the legislative branch and the executive branch.

**Moved by:** Daniel Carlino

Direct administration to provide a menu of long-term community partnership shelter options for council consideration, including costs and potential challenges. These options should include but are not limited to:

1. A long-term transitional community with tiny houses or shelters, assigned campsites, and RV spaces similar to the planned community in Austin, Texas.  
<https://mlf.org/community-first/>
2. A permanent shelter for year-round one-night accommodations operated similar to traditional shelters in Missoula.
3. Creating an additional 30 units of transitional housing and wrap-around services similar to those to be opened this summer

AYES: (11): Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka, and Heidi West

ABSENT: (1): John P. Contos

**Vote results: Approved (11 to 0)**

**Amendment:**

**Moved by:** Amber Sherrill

Recommended motion: That City Council will receive updates from City Staff every three to four weeks.

AYES: (3): Stacie Anderson, Amber Sherrill, and Sandra Vasecka

NAYS: (8): Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino, Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kristen Jordan, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, and Heidi West

ABSENT: (1): John P. Contos

**Vote results: Failed (3 to 8)**

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

12:26 p.m.