City of Missoula, Montana
Item to be Referred to City Council Committee

Committee: Land Use and Planning

Item: An Ordinance to amend Title 20, City Zoning – Extreme Weather Shelter

Date: September 5, 2019

Sponsor(s): Jen Gress

Prepared by: Jen Gress

Ward(s) Affected:

☐ Ward 1 ☐ Ward 4
☐ Ward 2 ☐ Ward 5
☐ Ward 3 ☐ Ward 6
☒ All Wards ☐ N/A

Action Required:
Discuss and recommend direction.

Recommended Motion(s):
I move the City Council: Direct Development Services staff to distribute draft amendments to include the use Extreme Weather Shelter in title 20 for comment, conduct a Planning Board public hearing, and then return to City Council for final consideration.

Timeline:
Referral to committee: September 9, 2019
Committee discussion: September 11, 2019
Council action (or sets hearing): TBD
Public Hearing: TBD
Deadline: N/A

Background and Alternatives Explored:
During extreme weather, Missoula lacks adequate services to address the increased need in our shelter system. This results in unsafe overcrowding in our permanent shelter system. It also results in people remaining outdoors, in encampments, or in other places not meant for human habitation during extreme weather, jeopardizing their safety and well-being.

In the winter of 2018, the Poverello Center served an average of 195 individuals per night. Rising shelter numbers has created a strain on both staff and the facility, which led to the shelter placing a 175 person limit on the number of people it can shelter.

In prior years, Union Gospel Mission (UGM) operated a winter shelter program at their Toole Avenue location. The City’s Zoning Ordinance, Title 20, addresses Emergency Homeless shelters. Per Section 20.40.045 this use requires conditional use review, and in early spring of 2018, UGM was notified they would be unable to continue operating a warming center in the Toole Avenue location without obtaining a conditional use permit. To comply with zoning, the facility would need significant modifications to meet the requirements set forth in the ordinance and so UGM decided to discontinue providing the winter warming center service.
In 2018, after months of community planning, the Salvation Army agreed to host a winter shelter program at their facility on Russell Street, which met the criteria addressed in Section 20.40.045C, Design. Because of the time of year, and the urgency to get a facility in place, the City Council held a public hearing allowing the facility to operate without going through the conditional use process and approved an interim ordinance allowing the Salvation Army to provide this service from December 11, 2018 through April 1, 2019 subject to process requirements.

Planning for the upcoming winter season began in March of 2019. The effort has secured dedicated funding from the City of Missoula and Missoula County and is in the process of identifying locations to host an Extreme Weather Shelter. Churches, or Religious Assemblies, are the most frequent host of temporary, weather related shelters across the nation.

Current zoning regulations do not differentiate between temporary/extreme weather shelters and an Emergency Homeless Shelter (Section 20.40.045) operation. Proposed amendments will define a temporary/accessory Extreme Weather Shelter and will apply the use in the Religious Assembly use definition.

To protect the public health, safety, and welfare of individuals during the fast approaching coldest winter months, staff requests Council make a motion to hold a public hearing at the City-County Planning Board and return to Council with recommendations.

Financial Implications:
None

Links to external websites: