DOWNTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT OF MISSOULA
Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2026 from 3–5 p.m. IN PERSON
at the DMP Office (218 E. Main) and on Zoom

Present: Charlie Beaton, Scott Stearns, Luke Jackson, Michael Albritton, Ellen Buchanan, Chris McClead

Absent: Karen Sippy

Staff: Linda McCarthy, Jack Hall, Jake Treece

Meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m.

ZOOTOWN FESTIVAL BY CREATOR/PRODUCER SCOTT OSBURN, WE'RE ALWAYS ON

Scott Osburn was present to speak during the meeting. Osburn provided an overview of his approach to coming to Missoula and bringing the Zootown Festival here. He worked with the City and County during initial talks leading up to the festival coming to Missoula.

Zootown Festival's second year was much larger, and improvements were made. The festival overall had a very positive reception. The Zootown Festival contract will be extended for the next 10 years, and the festival has helped fund new parking at the fairgrounds near the Missoula Butterfly House. The festival is continuing to grow while also trying to ensure it is not hurting local businesses, but rather supporting a gap in the current market.

Many artists who have never looked at Missoula are becoming intrigued and wanting to come out. Osburn is still very connected to the Knitting Factory and is working to form a partnership with them. Osburn is also responding to different RFPs and opportunities for festivals and concerts elsewhere.

Conversation ensued, with positive feedback from the board. Stearns questioned what Zootown Festival will do for Downtown. Osburn wants the festival to continue to become more involved, including potentially doing a Downtown ToNight collaboration.

Challenges remain around involving local vendors while ensuring they have enough capacity and resources to participate without selling out. A symposium may be held to help food vendors learn how to handle higher volumes. Another element being considered is how to ensure sound does not negatively impact residents in the surrounding area.

Zootown Festival continues to use resources and team members from the Knitting Factory to mitigate the need for additional bandwidth. Osburn is also helping with fair operations and strategy. He wants to support the fair, and the fair wants to support Zootown Festival.

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No edits were needed. Buchanan moved to approve; Jackson seconded; all approved.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financials as of August 31 were reviewed. There is approximately $234,000 in the bank account, slightly above last year. The BID will be in a deficit until December financials come in.

Garbage and City contract amounts are in for July and August. Revenue will likely go past the $1,500 budget. There is nothing out of the ordinary for expenses. Rent and utilities are being paid, along with biannual payments for the trucks. The $10,000 contribution to the HOT Team will be made in the upcoming months.

Within maintenance, there have been repairs and additional supply expenses, including can liners and gas. Joint marketing expenses came in for August, along with the July Clean Team contract and Republic Services payments.

Clean Team trash expenses have been paid. The BID will likely be moving to Grizzly Disposal. Republic Services is charging significantly more and adding numerous additional fees.

The board had no questions. Cash flow for this time of year is sitting where it should be.

MDF BUSINESS SUPPORT & RESILIENCY GRANT PROGRAM

Approximately $275,000 has been raised so far. About seven applications have been received, and the committee to review applications has been chosen. The first round of review will be in October.

It is likely that the Downtown SAM ADA ramp and trail widening work will not begin this fall. The Higgins conversion will likely begin in the spring. Downtown SAM costs are coming in much higher than anticipated, and winter work will be difficult. Federal contract review has been approved.

McCarthy does not see a need to change elements of the grant program based on where the Downtown SAM development currently stands. Tim France has been selected to be part of the review committee.

MDT permits will be a significant challenge.

PROGRAM UPDATES: MAINTENANCE, CLEAN TEAM, POLICING, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Maintenance managers have been doing well and are taking a well-needed vacation. They have also been helping with DMP operations and power washing projects.

There were no major updates from programming.

Former DDPO Officer Amanda Hardin will be retiring from the Missoula Police Department.

McCarthy has requested that Officer Rico Suazo communicate when he is on leave or vacation so DMP staff are aware. Suazo is having to clear multiple doorways in the mornings. Board members are asked to communicate if they see any problems.

The largest homeless and transient squatting problem is on Ryman Street near the courthouse. Homelessness challenges in Missoula persist, with approximately 200 people still experiencing homelessness. People are congregating at the courthouse and near the IT location, and the Poverello Center is also having to turn people away. Conversation ensued on frustrations and recognition of people experiencing homelessness in the area.

The BID is still seeing approximately a 2:1 ratio of openings to closings, with 19 openings, nine closings, and 10 expansions.

Conversation ensued on businesses trying to stay relevant and keep things going, including why many franchises and businesses are closing. Discussion also included businesses that have remained exactly the same, including maintaining the same menu and offerings.

DT MASTER PLAN UPDATES

There were very few updates.

The team expressed surprise about passenger rail potentially coming through Missoula. The board agreed that if rail service returns to Missoula, it will be imperative that it is strongly connected and accessible to Downtown.

The Orange Street Underpass recently had to close due to crumbling concrete. At the West Broadway/Toole/California roundabout, the project is moving toward a point where MDT will not approve the roundabout. The area has been approved for some signal improvements.

Conversation ensued on Montana Rail Link and BNSF.

PARTNER UPDATES FOR MDA & MDF

Out to Lunch and Downtown ToNight are complete, and the Caras Park season is closing out.

Arts & Culture Impact Grants are in progress, with the Natural History Center mural celebration scheduled for October 2. An alley pop-up will also take place October 2 from 4:30–7:30 p.m.

There have been challenges making alley activation projects happen, including in the Florence and Penwell Building alleys.

A Downtown Dialogue will be hosted on how to do pop-ups and other activations.

Planning and budgeting are underway for MDF and MDA.

Holidays on Higgins is coming up. Maintenance will begin hanging holiday décor.

River City Roots Festival was a success.

The strategic planning event will be Wednesday, October 21.

The board agreed to cancel the October 20 BID Board meeting.

DMP BOARD RETREAT: WED., OCT. 21 FROM 11 A.M.–5 P.M. AT STOCKMAN BANK

All board members have been invited to the upcoming DMP board retreat, which will primarily have a focus on staffing, capacity, and roles within DMP personnel.

NEW BUSINESS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The October 20th BID Board Meeting will be canceled.

TRUSTEE COMMENTS

To the chagrin of Ms. Buchanan, everyone commended her on her upcoming birthday.

ADJOURN TO: DRAW PROJECT INSTALLATION AND/OR CITY PARKS CONVERSATIONS IN KIWANIS PARK

The meeting adjourned at 4:08 pm.