

SOUTH SIDE TASK FORCE MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2015
REGULAR MEETING 7:00 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.
FRIENDSHIP HOUSE
3123 8TH AVENUE SOUTH, BILLINGS, MONTANA
(PIZZA WILL BE SERVED AT THE TASK FORCE MEETING. JOIN US!)

AGENDA

Meeting Called to Order

Introduction and welcome of all guests
Minutes of the last meeting
Visit with local City Council members, Law Enforcement (Your questions.)

Presentations (on programs and issues in Our Neighborhood)

Montana Rescue Mission Plans – (20 minutes)
SCRAP – (10 minutes)

Neighborhood Concerns

Committee Reports

1. Phillips 66 Report
2. Alternatives Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Grants Report

Correspondence

New Business

Old Business

Report of Nomination Committee
ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Adjournment

For Code Enforcement issues, call Tanya Punt at 657- 8288.

For Graffiti Removal, call John at 371-6901.

For Info on the Task Force, call Michele Zahn, Chair, at 652-3337, Matt Lundgren, Vice Chair, at 259-5569, or Mary Westwood, Secretary, at 259-3756.

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of
THE SOUTH SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD TASK FORCE

October 15, 2015

Friendship House, 3123 8th Avenue South, Billings, Montana

Present: Emily Aerts, Danny Ball, Fran Ball, Brenda Beckett, Jan Begger, City Council Member Brent Cromley, Kerri Seekins-Crowe, Maia Dickerson, Dale Fincel, Tami Kelling, Patt Leikam, Matt Lundgren, Pastor Dale Metzger, Jim Ronquillo, Paula Schilke, Denise Smith, Angela Tschacker, City Administrator Tina Volek, Mary Westwood, City Council Member Mike Yakawich and Michele Zahn.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Michele Zahn at 7:02 p.m. Introductions of all present were made and all attendees were welcomed. Zahn thanked Fran Ball and Matt Lundgren for the meeting treats.

No law enforcement was present for the meeting.

Maia Dickerson of Riverstone Health said the Gardeners' Market in South Park continued to grow this year and was a great success. The event saw a 40% increase in sales and over 1,000 people used the market. Each Thursday, an average of 244 people bought fresh produce at the event and there was an 11% increase in the number of South Side residents who used the market. Riverstone has a USDA grant for the next two years to keep the market going and to keep matching SNAP funds, which gives low-income people the opportunity to double the value of their SNAP resources when they buy food that is healthier for them. Cooking classes will be held again next year and the Master Gardeners will continue to work with kids on learning how to garden. Some 150 kids took advantage of the Master Gardeners workshops this year. There is also a possibility that the market might sell meat next year.

The Reverend Matt Lundgren said that a house on South 28th Street that had a significant fire is still standing and is a hazard in the neighborhood. The roof has burned away, but the only thing keeping people out of the structure is some yellow tape. He made a motion to write a letter asking the City to make certain the house is removed as soon as possible. Dale Fincel seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by the group.

Tami Kelling of Southern Lights said the apartment complex has been experiencing vandalism to cars and has also had issues with its elevator. There is also more graffiti and a car was stolen from a tenant. Kelling asked if anyone else in the area had been having similar problems and some of those attending said they had had similar issues, but that it was happening everywhere in town.

City Council Member Brent Cromley said the Council had a short agenda at its recent meeting. The Sierra dog park received lots of support and the facility at around 32nd and Daffodil is likely to be approved. Other people are also advocating for some smaller parks for dogs around the City. Cromley reminded people that ballots for the City Council election will be mailed out tomorrow and he urged everyone to vote.

Speaking as a candidate, Cromley said he has tried to stay active in the issues of importance to the South Side neighborhood and he hopes voters will consider that when they vote. Kerri Seekins-Crowe said she has had a lot of fun campaigning for the City Council post in Ward 1 and has met a lot of awesome people in the community. She said the City budget has exploded a lot and the City needs career-type jobs. She also feels there needs to be privatization of some public services so that the City has no long-term liability for pensions and businesses need less regulation. Cromley said that State did a reappraisal of property and, in order to keep taxes about the same, six of the Council members, including him, voted to cut the mills charged to taxpayers.

Paula Schilke said she doesn't understand how City and County officials think they can use a lower budget to do the same work for more people at a public level as the community grows. She wants a progressive, well-run system with people making good judgments, even if it involves raising taxes. Cromley said the City does have a very austere budget with only property taxes to support it. That is why, he said, the City has been trying to get a local option tax because outsiders don't contribute to the infrastructure and other City services they use. But the State Legislature has not yet given the City that option. Crowe said that people are concerned about all taxes and don't want the option tax to be in addition to what they pay now. She wants to streamline City services and make sure money is spent wisely.

Brenda Beckett, Director of the Community Development (CD) Division for the City, introduced Patt Leikam and said that she, along with Zahn is members of the Community Development Board. Kathleen Candelaria is also a member. Beckett's agency wants people to know what they are doing for the community. She also said there is currently one opening on the Board. The five-year goals of the Division are: Promote preservation of existing affordable housing supply, particularly in older neighborhoods; promote new affordable housing opportunities, and address housing and community development specific to lower income and special needs households. The South Side and one area of Billings Heights are most eligible for CD funds, but there has been a significant decrease in funds available and federal officials are leaning more toward

competitive grants. Billings does not have the large areas of poverty like some large cities do and so it is given less funds.

If there are ideas for CD projects, they need to go to the CD Division by the first week of December, Beckett said. People seeking help in rehabbing older homes or buying a home for the first time should contact the Community Development office for further information on programs available, or visit the office on the 6th floor of the Miller Building at the corner of Third Avenue North and North 29th Street.

Zahn reported that oil and gas prices were the focus of the Phillips 66 meeting with \$50 a barrel as the new normal price. The refinery is already working on its new \$390 million project to replace older equipment and eliminate waste in an effort to get more product out of each barrel of crude oil. Jupiter Sulfur will also be upgrading its facility, Zahn said.

Jan Begger said that Alternatives Inc. was honoring Betty Ann Rowan for her 28 years as director of the men's program at Alpha House.

Zahn proposed that the South Side do another mass mailing to all homes in the neighborhood and invite them to a pizza party at the November meeting. The group voted to do this and so everyone was **INVITED TO JOIN THE TASK FORCE FOR PIZZA ON THURSDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2015, AT FRIENDSHIP HOUSE, 3123 8TH AVENUE SOUTH AT 7 P.M.** Please come and bring your neighbors. Zahn said she would get the mass mailing out.

Denise Smith of the Montana Rescue Mission said her organization will hold an Open House on Wednesday, November 18, 2015, with tours from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. And anyone is welcome for lunch at the Mission from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. or for dinner at 5:30 p.m. at any time.

A nomination committee of Mike Yakawich, Dale Fincel and Jim Ronquillo was named and they will interview candidates for the officer positions for next year and report back to the group before the elections in November. Anyone else interested in serving on the committee is invited to contact Ronquillo.

Lundgren moved for approval of the September minutes and Dale Fincel seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented.

Lundgren thanked the City and the Parks Department for the new playground in South Park. He said the children who use Friendship House just love it.

Mike Yakawich urged people to continue working on the issues of abandoned buildings and abandoned vehicles as there has been a lot of that going on around the old Garfield school.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

The next Regular Meeting of the Task Force will be held on THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2015, at 7 P.M. at the Friendship House, 3123 8th Avenue South, Billings, Montana. Pizza will be provided for all. So invite your friends and neighbors to the South Side Neighborhood Task Force meeting and help make Our Neighborhood the best part of Billings.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Westwood
Secretary