

**SOUTH SIDE TASK FORCE MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2016
REGULAR MEETING 7:00 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.
FRIENDSHIP HOUSE
3123 8TH AVENUE SOUTH, BILLINGS, MONTANA**

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)

Community Development – Brenda Beckett (15 minutes)
Northern Plains Resource Council – (15 minutes)

Neighborhood Concerns

Treasurer's Report

Committee Reports

Correspondence

New Business

Old Business

Review and Update of Task Force Goals

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 Matt Lundgren, Chair, at 259-5569, Pastor
Dale Metzger, Vice Chair, at 2483978, Jim Ronquillo, Treasurer, at 252-5353
or Mary Westwood, Secretary, at 259-3756.**

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

January 21, 2016

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

Present: Emily Aerts, Danny Ball, Fran Ball, Jan Begger, Brenda Blackman, Mike Blackman, City Council Member Brent Cromley, Linda Deavila, Dale Fincel, Georgia Geigle, Melissa Henderson, Linda Kelly, William Kelly, Matt Lennick, The Reverend Matt Lundgren, Pastor Dale Metzger, Perry Moler, Tony Nichols, Denis Pitman, Jim Ronquillo, Jolene Schaff, Paula Schilke, Denise Smith, Drew Thompson, Angela Tschacher, Mary Westwood, Sarah Woodrow, City Council Member Mike Yakawich, and Michele Zahn.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Matt Lundgren at 7:00 p.m. Introductions of all present were made and all attendees were welcomed. Treats were provided by Jim Ronquillo and Friendship House.

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

Officer Matt Lennick of the Billings Police Department introduced his partner Tony Nichols and talked about an increase in graffiti appearing on both the South Side and the North Side. It's believed five or six young individuals are responsible for this tagging and though they use some gang insignia, the officers do not believe they are actually that involved with gangs. A new business in Downtown called Underground Krew near the Army Navy store has been selling spray paint for graffiti art so it is hard to discourage. Lundgren suggested that both the South Side and North Park Task Forces might consider getting together to do a cleanup of unwanted graffiti, possibly enlisting the assistance of some of our young people. Mary Westwood asked if any of the young people found to do graffiti were required to clean up their creations. Lennick said some do that but their parents and the juvenile court need to give permission for that to happen.

The officers also passed out some ride-along forms for anyone who would like to observe police work up close. Paula Schilke talked briefly about her experiences working at Crimestoppers.

City Council Member Brent Cromley said things are changing with the Council with four new council persons being sworn in. It does look like the City may consider adding an additional resource officer to Downtown. Also, it appears the Council will be looking at the issue of raising pigs and bees within City limits. And they will be discussing the issue of dogs being allowed in City Parks on a leash.

City Councilman Mike Yakawich showed the group his copy of the City Budget and passed it around. He said the issues involving the Library had finally been resolved and he encouraged people to report abandoned vehicles to Code Enforcement so they could be taken care of.

Representative Kelly McCarthy said he is one of four legislators who serve the South Side Neighborhood in the State Legislature for four months every two years. Issues of interest to us which he wanted to bring to our attention include the underfunding of Child Protective Services and efforts to help them get more resources in the future. There is also some concern about Tax Increment Fund (TIF) Districts and abuse of those entities by some people and communities. Some want to take that tool away for improving parts of a community. Jim Ronquillo pointed out that the school revenue is not impacted in any way by TIF districts. McCarthy said the State was in great shape overall revenue wise.

Michael Blackman talked about what Connections offers to the South Side community. Connections is a community center sponsored by the Southside Community Fellowship of the Baptist Church. It is located at 3115 6th Avenue South. Contact can be made by phone at 254-2864 or by Internet at www.scfbillings.com. The facility is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 1 to 8 p.m. and for worship on Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Blackman said a free supper with dessert is served Wednesday from 6 to 7 p.m. and a sandwich and soup supper is served on Monday and Friday from 5 to 6 p.m. Other free services the group offers are tutoring and Bible school for grades 1-6, adult Bible study, English as a second language, piano lessons, and relationship counseling. In addition the facility, which can serve 80, is available for events, with just a refundable cleaning deposit. There is also a picnic area in back of the facility. Blackman introduced his wife, Brenda who helps him at Connections and is responsible for the good food and offered to give anyone a tour of their facility.

Lundgren talked about the programs for youth available at the Friendship House. Because lack of education and poverty go hand in hand, Friendship House offers five core programs to try and overcome the problem. First, they offer a pre-school program which operates all day, every day. Then they have an afterschool program for kindergarten through 6th grade (K-6) and a summer enrichment program for K-6. They are also doing a Teen Cafe, where young people will have an open mic and will learn job skills like being a barrista. The other program works with parents and grandparents to help them have the skills to support and encourage their young learners by making them the best they can be through counseling, classes and events like Women's Boot Camp. Friendship House also encourages recreation with an Open Gym on Tuesdays and hopefully, a new \$39,000 playground. The children also garden and sell their

produce at the Gardeners Market in South Park. Lundgren said, as a result, Friendship House students are improving an average of 1.2 grade levels a year.

One member expressed concern about the City not taking care of the trees on the boulevards. It was explained that trimming the trees is the responsibility of the homeowner, even though the City owns the land on which they stand.

People were reminded that they can make anonymous complaints to Code Enforcement if they are worried about retaliation from their neighbors.

A member said she has had several packages stolen off her porch and other members said they had had similar experiences. The police officers encouraged them to make reports and to watch for suspicious characters going onto peoples porches when they are not home. Fran Ball talked about a call she got from someone claiming to be with the IRS and wanting money now. No one should fall for this scam, she said.

Treasurer Ronquillo reported that there is \$1,743.56 in the checking account and \$3,212 on our CD.

Michele Zahn said Phillips 66 will hold a retreat for the Citizens Advisory Council on Saturday and they will talk about the Meet in the Park Event. She asked if there was anything else the group wanted her to talk about and Westwood suggested she ask Phillips for a \$25,000 contribution to build the bathroom near the spray park in South Park.

Melissa Henderson said Riverstone Health has begun planning for an addition to its Clinic on South 27th Street that will improve services to the community.

Mike Yakawich reminded everyone that the Easter Egg Hunt will be on Saturday, March 26th this year and he asked for \$1,000 to purchase supplies for it. The group voted to authorize this expenditure.

Denise Smith said the Rescue Mission will be holding a garage sale of housewares and other items the coming weekend and the next to clear out merchandise in the space they own on Minnesota. Then, they will close for a month to remodel the kitchen and work with people on running the store.

Westwood reminded people that there are many openings on City Boards and Commissions that could use a South Side resident and she encouraged members to apply for those positions through the City website.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

The next Regular meeting of the Task Force will be held on THURSDAY FEBRUARY 18, 2016, at 7 P.M. at the Friendship House, 3123 8th Avenue South, Billings, Montana. Treats will be provided for all. So ask your friends and neighbors to join the South Side Neighborhood Task Force for our next meeting and help make Our Neighborhood the best part of Billings.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Westwood
Secretary

PLEASE REVIEW GOALS FOR OUR NEXT MEETING!

SOUTH SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD TASK FORCE GOALS

(Approved 2013)

1. Add 10 new members to our Task Force.
2. Recruit and mentor new leadership for the Task Force.
3. Replace South Park curbs and gutters and add a spray park and wading pool.
4. Replace Highland Park curbs and gutters.
5. Add 5 new blocks to Neighborhood Watch, including block parties and help with signs.
6. Support more single family home ownership in the South Side Neighborhood.
7. Organize and encourage new activities to enhance the use of South Park.
8. Reach out to and encourage South Side businesses to attend our Task Force meetings.
9. Address drug houses, gang issues and graffiti in our Neighborhood whenever possible.
10. Seek to address homelessness and transient issues in our Neighborhood.