



**Rimrock Neighborhoods Task Force
Membership Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2024 ~ 7:00 PM
Mayflower Church**

Howard Evans, Vice-Chair called the meeting to order, welcoming members, guests & public officials.

Public officials present included

- Jennifer Duray, Deputy Director, City Public Works Department
- Mayor Bill Cole
- Vice-Mayor Mike Boyett (city council ward 5)
- State Representative Mike Yakawich
- Sergeant Stovall, Billings Police Department
- State Representative Denise Baum (also RNTF resident)

25 members were in attendance; a voting quorum was established.
3 of 4 board members were present - Tom Yampradit was unable to attend.

Minutes from the October 18, 2023 RNTF meeting were approved by unanimous vote, as distributed previously by email. Howard offered printed copies for anyone who needed them.

Note: one minor mis-spelling was recently found in the 10/18/23 minutes and that will be corrected in the minutes on the City website.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE:

Sergeant Stovall, Billings Police Department (BPD): (406) 208-5726

It was noted that Sergeant Stovall was recently promoted to another position, leading public relations outreach for the department, among other training and supervisory duties.

He recently started a new podcast called "FIVE O Forum". You can find links to the episodes on the BPD Facebook page, or search YouTube for FIVE O FORUM. Sergeant Stovall hopes to bring more positives from within BPD to the public, above and beyond what we normally hear on local news outlets.

Fentanyl Discussion: Sergeant Stovall led a discussion on the Fentanyl epidemic, which is a problem all across the country. He explained how our area is unique for a couple of reasons: (1) we are close to 2 reservations. Cartels are exploiting the law enforcement jurisdictional issues on the reservations to set up business. They are exploiting and threatening families, and recruiting people to move the product for quick cash. (2) We're on I90 from Minnesota to Seattle, and we're a place to stop off and move product.

There is also a circle of folks in Billings that BPD is continually dealing with for drug trafficking. BPD has a task force that is gaining national recognition for the amount of drug seizures they've

accomplished.

BPD officers are equipped with Narcan, to combat overdoses. It is available to the general public. Car Fentanyl is also out there and is 100 times more potent than Fentanyl.

Thefts: Sergeant Stovall shared that we've had a large amount of thefts from construction sites. Another common theft is from fly-by-night construction companies who collect money up front, then disappear.

Fatal Crash in January: Sergeant Stovall reported on the domestic violence case in January, where the offender took his own life by driving off the rims. A gruesome domestic violence crime occurred which led to the chase. The vehicle is still below the rims and will likely be removed by helicopter.

General discussion: Sergeant Stovall answered other questions regarding drugs, gangs, jurisdictional areas, high speed chases, porch thefts, staffing, how BPD responds to domestic violence calls, women on the force, and SWAT. The sergeant shared that Narcan is available at Riverstone Health (and he has since confirmed it is also available at Rimrock Foundation).

BYLAWS: Vice-Chair Howard Evans covered proposed revisions to our task force bylaws. Howard reviewed the requirements for voting, per our current bylaws.

- The first change - formally adopt our new meeting schedule of every other month, and formalize our meeting location at Mayflower Church. He explained that the membership survey from last fall led to our decision to change from quarterly to bi-monthly meetings. He also explained that this evening's meeting was in place of the January meeting, which was not held due to the All City Task Force Safety Meeting in January. Motion made from the floor to approve the change; seconded from the floor; approved by unanimous voice vote.
- The second change - to provide a "succession" path for when the chairman position becomes vacant. The change would allow the Vice-Chair to immediately step into the Chair role to complete the term. The change also defines how other board vacancies will be handled. Motion made from the floor to approve the change; seconded from the floor; approved by unanimous voice vote.

The updated bylaws will be attached to the email when these minutes are distributed, and will be submitted to the City for publication to the task force page on the City's website.

BOARD VACANCY: Howard Evans, Chair - opened the floor for nominations to fill the now vacant Vice-Chair position.

No nominations were made; nominations will remain open until the vacant position is filled.

If nominations are received prior to the March 20th meeting, we will vote at that time.

Members interested in serving as Vice-Chair should reach out to the RNTF Board at rimrocktaskforce@gmail.com

STORMWATER FEE ISSUES - presentation, Q&A:

Jennifer Duray, Deputy Director of Billings Public Works, City of Billings

Contact info: durayj@billingsmt.gov (406) 657-8239

Jennifer shared a presentation on the City's proposed change on how the city bills stormwater fees, and upcoming proposed program changes for our stormwater system..

- Stormwater fees are currently billed on property tax statements. The City has proposed moving

- stormwater fees to the monthly utility bills. Both methods are allowed under Montana law.
- The City's position is that billing on the utility bill instead of the tax bill offers transparency, as people would see the fee on the bill 12 times a year, versus once.
 - The City holds that billing on the utility bill is more efficient making it less costly..
 - The biggest reason for this change is to decrease the amount of cash reserves the City is required to maintain, which would free up about \$1 million which could fund projects or help offset rate increases.
 - Jennifer went through a set of frequently asked questions and explained the process that City staff will use with City Council to approve or disapprove of the change.

In addition to the stormwater billing method, the City is reviewing everything about the stormwater program. This work has been done in cooperation with a committee that includes homeowners. They've identified 3 primary problems.

1. Inequitable rate methodology
2. Underfunded
3. No system development fees that would help offset user rates

Jennifer covered how the City is proposing a change in how storm fees are assessed. The City's position is that the new methodology will be more equitable. All residential units would end up with the same rate regardless of how much impervious area they have. Commercial properties will be based on how much impervious area they actually have.

Jennifer discussed the underfunding of the wastewater system, stating it's never been adequately funded, which has caused maintenance and improvements to be deferred..While there have been small increases in fees over the years, those increases have not kept up with inflation or provided enough funds for needed upgrades. Therefore we have a very reactionary and crisis-driven storm water program.

Jennifer discussed the options City staff will take to Counsel to determine the pace of rate increases that are needed to keep the system functional.

Lastly, Jennifer shared how fees are charged to developers for building permits when new developments are added to the system. Most of the time it's about \$1,000 per new hook-up to the stormwater system.

Jennifer took questions about how fees will be assessed, what developers must pay, how the City's insurance works, stormwater issues on top of the rims, and where stormwater flows to.

There was a question about pavement cracks on N27th & on Zimmerman (though she couldn't speak to the cause, or to DOT's comments about it.)

WEST END DEVELOPMENT - AND IMPACT ON TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TO RNTF AREA: Howard Evans, Board Chair, and Leslie Cooke, Board Secretary

Howard kicked off the discussion, explaining that a new multi-family, high-density zoning change is proposed in Copper Ridge at the far end of Rimrock Road (70th & Rimrock; final phase of Copper Ridge development) This addition to Copper Ridge is being named "The Trestles".

Leslie attended the West End Neighborhood Task Force meeting as a guest, to hear the presentation by the developer's agent.

The area is already zoned residential. The zoning request is to allow higher density, multi-family dwellings of various sizes. We are told that the zoning change, if approved, would mean approx 150 more dwellings than the original zoning.

The West End Task Force members had concerns including increased traffic. Howard stated that the RNTF board is concerned about the increased traffic, especially since the Inner Belt Loop (IBL) will open next year, putting pressure on Rimrock, Zimmerman and Highway 3. This proposed development has the potential to compound the increased traffic above and beyond what the IBL will cause.

We held an open discussion with members about traffic and safety issues. Mayor Cole participated. Howard stressed that the task force board wants to advocate for us to improve safety. Many comments were made by members that supported that statement.

Mayor Cole shared that as RNTF gets involved in advocacy, we need to think objectively about specific things we want the City to do to improve the situation. Approach requests as “do this because this objective data says to do this.” Traffic calming options should be explored, but they don’t eliminate traffic, but they do slow vehicles down. If parking were allowed back on Rimrock, speeds would immediately slow down. Other calming efforts are flashing signs, little bulb outs by cross-walks, etc.

Leslie asked Mayor Cole if this all is a City Council ask, or a City Staff ask. He responded it is “all of the above”. City Council will turn to City Staff.

Howard stated that within our task force area, we have the Rimrock Rd arterial, and the Highway 3 arterial. And we’re sandwiched in between. We haven’t brought up the Highway 3 issues tonight. We would like to address the issues not only of traffic, but of safety. Children crossing. Children playing. Mayor Cole said that will be a staff issue. And talked about cross walks with bump-outs.

Leslie clarified that of the 2 non-traffic-light crosswalks on Rimrock, 1 does have a bump out. The other does not and the paint is so faded nobody sees it, and it doesn’t have a lit signal. Mayor Cole said that would be a staff issue. He also suggested getting flashing lights and speed trailers.

We discussed more traffic signals on Rimrock. Maybe people would then avoid Rimrock and go to other east-west streets. Leslie shared that it’s been several years since the task force was told we were about to get a traffic light at Rimrock and Rehberg, and it still is yet to happen.

Leslie stated she’d like to start collecting these ideas. **Send your traffic improvement/calming ideas to the board at rimrocktaskforce@gmail.com and please be as specific as possible.**

Howard added that there is a possibility of a Molt Road Connector, which was proposed back in 2004 which would bring west end traffic up to Highway 3. It’s been tabled for quite a while due to opposition on the west end. But it is a possibility.

There was a discussion about the roads right by the new development, including a 2-lane north-south connecting Rimrock to Grand. Howard explained that a roundabout is planned there (Rimrock & 62nd). Discussion also included how Grand is really not an east-west alternative at the present time because of the 3 school zones between 62nd & Shiloh, and is only 2 lanes.

ZIMMERMAN TRAIL WINTER MAINTENANCE:

Lyle Gabrian shared that in February the trail was not taken care of as it normally has been. Lyle asked that we keep winter maintenance on Zimmerman a priority. Dave Mumford (director of public works when Lyle was RNTF chairman) stayed on top of the trail maintenance. **(NOTE: Since the meeting, Howard Evans has reached out to Public Works on this issue)**

ARMY RESERVE CAMPUS (LAASF):

Howard shared that we should have the Environmental Assessment Study (EAS) any time now for the expansion of the work, and we will only have 30 days to comment. He'll keep us updated once it's available. There are issues we need to keep on top of.

HELP A NEIGHBOR,**Kevin Moser, RNTF Board Member At Large**

Contact info: moser.construction@yahoo.com (406) 690-1718

With much good humor.... Kevin explained that we'd like to have a group of folks on hand to help if there's a neighbor in the RNTF area that needs help with graffiti clean-up, occasional snow or weed removal, etc. This isn't intended to be long-term weekly or monthly maintenance, just occasional help.

If you are interested in volunteering, reach out to Kevin at the contact info above.

Drawing for gift cards,**Kevin Moser, RNTF Board Member At Large**

As a thank you to folks for staying through the meeting, Kevin conducted a drawing for two \$25 Mountain Mudd gift cards.

The gift cards were donated by Moser Construction.

Congratulations to Fran and Larry for being drawn - Enjoy your coffee and/or tea!

Newsletter

Leslie introduced Anastasia Edwards, Big Sky Cyber Security Initiative, our cyber-security expert for the newsletter. Howard asked everyone to email us with newsletter topics. You can join her group on both Nextdoor and Facebook, and she welcomes questions.

Meeting adjourned at 9pm.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 7pm, Mayflower Church. Guest speaker will be a special agent with the FBI to talk about personal safety, cyber safety and scams.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie Cooke, RNTF Secretary
rimrocktaskforce@gmail.com