

**Meridian City Council Work Session**

**May 9, 2023.**

A Meeting of the Meridian City Council was called to order at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 9, 2023, by Mayor Robert Simison.

Members Present: Robert Simison, Joe Borton, Brad Hoaglun, Jessica Perreault, Liz Strader and John Overton.

Members Absent: Luke Cavener.

Also present: Chris Johnson, Bill Nary, Bruce Feckleton, Scott Colaianni, Kris Blume and Dean Willis.

**ROLL-CALL ATTENDANCE**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Liz Strader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joe Borton
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brad Hoaglun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Overton
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jessica Perreault	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke Cavener
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor Robert E. Simison	

Simison: Council, we will call the meeting to order. For the record it is May 9, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. We will begin our City Council work session in just a second. No hurries. No rush. We are all good. With roll call attendance.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Simison: Next item up is adoption of the agenda.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Seal: Councilman Hoaglun. No changes for this work session agenda. So, I move adoption of the agenda as published.

Overton: Second.

Simison: Have a motion and a second to adopt the agenda. Is there any discussion? If not, all in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it and the agenda is adopted.

MOTION CARRIED: FIVE AYES. ONE ABSENT.

**CONSENT AGENDA [Action Item]**

- 1. Foxcroft Apartments Water Main Easement ESMT-2023-0071**

2. **Turin Plaza Sanitary Sewer and Water Main Easement ESMT-2023-0061**
3. **Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Decision and Order for Southridge No. 3 (VAR-2023-0001) by Engineering Solutions, LLP., located at 1938 W. Henry's Fork Dr.**
4. **Resolution No. 23-2386: A Resolution Vacating a Portion of an Existing Public Utility, Property Drainage, and Pressure Irrigation (PUDI) Easement in Lot 10, Block 8 of Southridge Subdivision No. 3, Being More Particularly Described In Exhibit "A"; and Providing an Effective Date**
5. **Resolution No. 23-2387: Authorizing Donation of Surplus Playground Equipment to LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry, Inc.**
6. **Resolution No. 23-2388: A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Meridian Setting Forth Findings and Purposes to Declare Surplus Property (#51/200 Print of Artwork by Jerry Snodgrass); and Authorizing the Meridian Parks and Recreation Staff to Convey Such Property to the Meridian Library District**

Simison: Next up is the Consent Agenda.

Hoaglund: Mr. Mayor, I move approval of the Consent Agenda and for the Mayor to sign and Clerk to attest.

Overton: Second.

Simison: Have a motion and a second to approve the Consent Agenda. Is there any discussion? If not, all in favor signify by saying aye? Opposed nay? The ayes have it and the Consent Agenda is agreed to.

MOTION CARRIED: FIVE AYES. ONE ABSENT.

#### **ITEMS MOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA [Action Item]**

#### **DEPARTMENT / COMMISSION REPORTS [Action Item]**

##### **7. Building Safety Month Proclamation**

Simison: Next we will go on to Item 7, which is under Department/Commission Reports is the Building Safety Month proclamation. If I could have Mr. Freckleton join me at the podium, as well as with any members of your team that you would like to call out, because since they are here we might as well get them out of their chairs; right? Okay. You guys could stand wherever you want, but we appreciate -- appreciate you being

here. So, I'm just going to read the proclamation, then, I will turn it over to you, Bruce, for -- Bret, for any comments you guys want to make from that standpoint. So, whereas It Starts With You, the theme for Building Safety Month 2023, encourages us all to raise awareness about building safety on a personal, local and global scale and whereas each year in observance of Building Safety Month people from Meridian and all over the world are asked to consider the commitment to improve building safety, resilience and economic investment at home and in the community and to acknowledge the essential service provided to all of us by local and state building departments, fire prevention bureaus and federal agencies in protecting lives and property. And whereas building safety and fire prevention officials, architects, engineers, builders, tradespeople, design professionals, laborers, plumbers and others in the construction industry are dedicated members of the International Code Council, a nonprofit that brings together local, state, territorial, tribal and federal officials who are experts in the build environment to create and implement the highest quality codes and whereas modern building codes include safeguards to protect the public from natural hazards, such as snow storms, wildland fires, floods and earthquakes and whereas the City of Meridian is committed to recognizing that our growth and strength depends on the safety and essential role our homes, buildings and infrastructure play, both in everyday life and when disaster strikes. Therefore, I, Mayor Robert E. Simpson, do hereby proclaim May 2023 as Building Safety Month in the City of Meridian and encourage all citizens to join us as we participate in Building Safety Month activities and recognize that those that help to strengthen our community and to protect us in the buildings where we live, work and raise our families, dated this 9th day of May 2023. So, thank you for all that you all do every day out there in the community and, Bruce, with that I'm going to turn this over to you and we will do pictures afterwards.

Freckleton: Thank you, Mayor and -- and want to thank members of the Council for the ongoing support that you always provide for us. You know, we -- we -- we go through our code cycles, we are in front of you for code adoptions and that sort of thing, but today I just really want to -- just to highlight the staff that we have here at Meridian that -- that carry on the duties every day to make sure that our built environment is -- is safe and sustainable for our community and we have -- we have electrical folks here, we have plans examiners, we have building folks, mechanical. Bret Caulder, our building official, he is here as well. So, again, thank you for all you do for us and -- anything you want to say, Bret? Okay. All right. Thank you.

Borton: Mr. Mayor, can I make a quick comment?

Simison: Absolutely.

Borton: Yeah. So, great proclamation, great timing and -- and in my -- in my private work I talk to a lot of developers and builders and one of the things that -- in addition to all the professional technical proficiency that your whole team has, Bruce, but you seem to be ensuring that they foster a customer service perspective, treating folks with respect, having problem solving solutions is sort of the focus, that starts at the top. So, to your whole team that's greatly appreciated in the community. You probably don't hear

it enough. You hear complaints and not the good stuff. But that aspect of what you and your department do, you do it really well. It's very important and it's appreciated by the community, that solution oriented customer service. So, keep up the good work, Bruce, and to everybody it's noticed and we appreciate it.

**8. Termination and Release of Impact Fee Assessment and Deferral Agreement between the Ada County Highway District, the City of Meridian, and Kam Realty, LLC (d.b.a. Kiddie Academy of Meridian)**

Simison: He said thank you from the cheap seats, but -- Councilman Borton. All right. With that we will move on to Item 8, the termination release of impact fee assessment and deferral agreement. Mr. Nary.

Nary: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Turn on my camera real quick. So, Mr. Mayor, I think council members know, but for the public's benefit we are -- the city is the conduit for collection of impact fees, both the fees that we charge for parks, police, and fire services, but also we are the vehicle for the collecting of the fees that Ada County Highway District charges for the use of the roads and so our normal course -- and Bruce can kind of explain the process wise, but our normal course is all these fees are collected based on our agreement with Ada county at the building permit stage. Occasionally -- and it's been a few years since we have done one of these -- based on varieties of reasons, a lot of developers may negotiate with Ada county -- or with the ACHD to pay the impact fees at a later point in time. Again, the fees are fairly -- fairly large, so they can be quite expensive and so that's often the reason why. We saw a lot of this during the last recession. We did this quite a few times during that. But we haven't done very many in the last five or six years. We just received this yesterday, so I apologize for the lateness of it. That's why I asked to put it on the agenda since we don't have a meeting next week and this is holding up a building permit to be issued. So, what happens now -- and, like I said, Bruce can go into more detail, but, basically, what we are agreeing to is that before we -- you have the certificate of occupancy for this -- for these structures, they will have to, then, pay their -- their ACHD fees at that point. So, they will have to pay the fees and the only reason it's on here additionally is there is language in there that's a little fuzzy -- now I didn't write it, the -- the -- ACHD did. Basically just says if somehow we error in not collecting a fee, they are entitled to seek any other type of compensation for that. I don't know what that means. I'm not totally sure what that means. I think I know what that -- what they mean by that, but I'm not certain. But there is a -- there is a risk and I asked Bruce to come and talk about it just so that Council was comfortable that the risk is pretty minimal and very unlikely to occur. But I did want to make sure you were aware of it. The language -- like I said, it's interesting -- the ACHD says if they error they are only subject to being required to perform. If we error they are entitled to whatever a court might think is reasonable. So, it's a little bit wonky, but it is their agreement and the developer has signed it. It would, then, go from us to ACHD to get signed and, then, recorded. So, maybe Bruce could explain kind of the process side.

Freckleton: Thanks, Bill. I think you did a good job of framing that up. As you mentioned, we -- we have had a few of these in the past. They are -- they are pretty simple for us to administer. All of the fees go into our permit software. Before it will allow us to issue the permit the fees have to be paid. So, I checked this morning, the -- the impact fees are already in the system. We are going to have to back them out if you guys agree to approve this -- this proposal, but, then, we will put them right back in again after the permit is issued. The next step in our system is it won't issue a C of O until the permit -- or until those fees are paid. So, as Bill mentioned, the risk is extremely low. If for some wonky reason it did make it through and we issued the C of O without the fees being paid, the building code does allow us to revoke the C of O as a -- as a safety net. So, that's -- that's kind of how we would -- we would administer it.

Nary: And I would add also, Mayor and Council, there is language in the agreement that authorizes us and the party -- the developer party has agreed to that we can also shut off services to the facilities if they don't pay the fees. So, there is other ways to collect it besides the building code. They are in agreement in this agreement to be able to shut off their services. So, we could shut off their water. We have shut off power when we have needed to. So, there are other means to collect it. So, I'm not really concerned, I just wanted you to be aware, because we haven't done one in a while.

Simison: Thank you. Council, any questions?

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Thank you. Thank you, Bruce. Appreciate you being here. Maybe I missed it, but what is the underlying rationale for why the developer is asking for this? Is it a hardship issue? Is it a timing issue?

Freckleton: It could be both. I think they like to keep their capital in the bank until the construction is completed, instead of paying -- paying that all out at the very beginning and, then, not being able to occupy the structure for three or four months.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Yeah. And if something were to happen, let's say the building were sold and it wasn't completed or some sort of similar circumstance, would the obligation to pay that fee transfer to the new owner?

Freckleton: Yes, it would.

Strader: Okay. Thank you.

Simison: Council, additional questions or comments or actions?

Hoaglund: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglund.

Hoaglund: While this is not something we do every day, I think the explanation is adequate. Sounds like there is a protection in place for the certificate of occupancy to collect those fees before that's issued and -- and -- and since they are not required to give a reason I guess we can -- I feel comfortable moving forward on this. So, Mr. Mayor, I would move that we agree to Item 8, the termination release of impact fee assessment and referral agreement between ACHD and the City of Meridian and Kam Realty that is before us.

Overton: Second.

Simison: Have a motion and a second. Do I have discussion? Mr. Nary, do we need a roll call?

Nary: Mr. Mayor, I just wanted to make sure that the maker of the motion -- are you doing both of them, which you can, or are you going to do one at a time? It doesn't matter.

Hoaglund: I'm -- I'm comfortable with doing both.

Nary: Okay. I just couldn't hear if that's what you said. I just wanted to clarify.

Hoaglund: Termination and release.

Nary: But, yeah, I think a roll call vote probably is appropriate, Mr. Mayor.

Overton: Second agrees.

Simison: Second agrees it is for both and does that change anybody's desire to have any discussion or comments? If not, Clerk will call the roll.

Roll Call: Hoaglund, yea; Borton, yea; Cavener, absent; Perreault, yea; Strader, yea; Overton, yea.

Simison: All ayes. Motion carries and the item is agreed to.

MOTION CARRIED: FIVE AYES. ONE ABSENT.

**9. Boise State University Students' Analysis of Housing in Meridian**

Simison: So, up next, No. 9, is the Boise State University Students Analysis of housing in Meridian and I'm going to turn this over to Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: Thank you, Mayor. First I want to say thank you to the Mayor's Office for their diligent help in -- in the process that we have gone through over the last few months of collecting some information and I want to say thank you also to my fellow Council for allowing me the opportunity to have the floor -- the seat -- well, not myself, but the -- the students to have the floor this evening and the time to share what they have found regarding in the state of housing in the City of Meridian. So, without a delay I would absolutely invite the students here to share their presentation. It's an honor to have you and we are excited to see what you have to share with us. One more quick note. It's my understanding they will be sharing more -- more general information in regard to the state of housing and the use of -- of income in relationship to housing costs and whatnot and, then, it sounds like we will have the opportunity to dive deeper into some portions of that information this fall and so I would encourage my fellow Council to ask any questions that they have and if the -- those questions are perhaps too detailed for this presentation, we will take note of those and see if we can't get them addressed in the fall semester.

Simison: Thank you. And welcome.

Smart: Are you ready for us?

Simison: Yes. If you would start off with your names that would be great and, then, we will go from there.

Smart: Great. My name is Sunny Smart and I am a resident of Meridian.

Spalding: My name is Kristi Spalding and I am a social work student at Boise State and not a resident of Meridian.

Spaulding: I'm Faith Spaulding and I am an economics and social sciences student at Boise State.

Rajbhandari: I'm Shiva Rajbhandari and I'm a concurrent student at Boise State and we are all part of a vertically integrated projects class at Boise State working with the community partner on addressing housing opportunities for all.

Simison: Thank you.

Smart: All right. We are going to be working off of two laptops here, so we will see how she goes; right? But first we want to thank you for having us here today. We were tasked with examining housing needs in the City of Meridian and this has been a really interesting and exciting project for us. When we started this we really wanted to have a clear sense of direction and what we should be looking at and so to find that we began to examine the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Meridian and felt like that gave us some great scaffolding and reference points. What we -- what we found is that this plan is a really robust and exciting vision for the city and as a resident I was excited to read through the plan. I had never done that and it made me excited for the possibilities

within an already great city. But we also wanted to find out where Meridian might not be yet meeting the goals that you have laid out and how that could be achieved. So, as we examined the plan a few things started to emerge for us and you will see them on your screen there. One is that there is a lot of language around Meridian being a community that is adaptable to change, so to the market and the needs of the citizens. Another is that Meridian is a city that wants to be a place where there is a diversity of housing types and incomes. And, then, the third is that Meridian wishes to be a city that continues with economic development, especially bringing in family wage jobs. Oh. Yep. Two laptops. There it goes. Okay. You just have to hit it harder. So, as we move forward through this presentation we will be focusing on the current reality in Meridian as it is compared to the Comprehensive Plan for the City. We will also focus on who is affected by the current housing needs and situation in the City of Meridian and, then, we will also be looking at some policy alternatives that the city might like to consider in light of the information that we will present. So, I'm going to turn this over to my colleague Faith.

Spaulding: To begin, knowing that Meridian is an amazing city with beautiful neighborhoods, bountiful outdoors with green spaces and access to recreation, it's a family oriented community with plentiful community programs, it makes sense that so many people want to move here, making this one of the fastest growing markets in the nation. We chose first to examine the market through a family that would like to move to Meridian in order to show what that process is like and what it's like to be moving into Meridian. This is the Smith family. They received a new job in the Treasure Valley and are looking to move to Meridian. They have two children and average about 58,000 household salary. They are looking towards renting, because they are new to the area and not financially prepared to have -- to own a home. Let's look at what the Smith family might find as they begin their search. On the low end of two-bedroom apartment rents is about 1,700 dollars. Plus there is a lot of hidden costs. So, while it might look like it's only 1,700 dollars, it's really over 400 thousand -- four hundred dollars -- 4,000 dollars to get into housing, making it unattainable for many families. This is including the deposit, first and last rent, application fees, administrative fees and there is even more fees, such as utility fees that might not be considered within this rent. So, let's take a closer look at cost affordability and accessibility of housing in Meridian. Starting in with cost affordability and, then, moving into income, to provide a general idea of income in Meridian we pulled out some interesting numbers. First is the per capita income of Meridian, which is about 40,063 dollars. Meanwhile, the median income for a household in Meridian is 85,200 dollars. Additionally 6.5 percent of Meridian's population is experiencing population -- poverty, while 6.8 percent of population that is under eight years of age -- of 18 are experiencing poverty. So, as we look towards the renters and owners, percentage of income to housing costs, renting and owner occupied housing status, public assistance and inflow-outflow data provides some insights of the cost affordability of housing in Meridian. The cost of living in Meridian is high, while the average household income is very high, too. In addition, a very small percentage of Meridian's populations are using public assistance income and SNAP, which gives the impression that housing is relatively affordable. However, as you look into the reality we see many households are considered cost burdened, while also the



majority of people who work in Meridian cannot afford to live in Meridian. We will come back to this later.

Spalding: Okay. So, now we are going to look at the availability of housing units in Meridian and so the first thing that I want to talk to you about is -- no, that one's fine. Sorry. Go back. Okay. So, the first thing I want to talk to you about is vacancy rates and what they are and why they are important. So, just like economists use a natural unemployment rate to help measure the health of the economy, there is also a natural rental vacancy rate that can help measure the health of the housing market and so that number is four to five percent. That generally means that the market is in equilibrium and so anything above five percent is understood to be that that market has more supply than it has demand. Anything under four percent indicates that the market has more demand than it has supply. So based on data that was gathered from a national mortgage lending company they found that the current vacancy rate of Meridian right now is 0.5 percent. So, based on what we now know about vacancy rates we know that 0.5 is underneath the four percent natural rental vacancy rate, which indicates that there is not enough supply to meet the demand. So, what kind of housing mix exists in Meridian right now? We know that it's about 83 percent single family dwellings and about 16 percent other, which includes multi-family buildings of various sizes, and we also know that this is roughly what the future of Meridian is going to continue to look like, because in the code audit conducted by WGI -- WGI last year they found that nearly 88 percent of residentially zoned land that's going to be used in the future doesn't support or permit the building of multi-family units. So, another thing that I wanted to talk to -- talk to you all about was the Housing and Urban Development fair market rent values, which is a number that HUD releases every year for many local markets. You can go on their website and choose which market you want to look at and it shows you what the fair market rent values are and those values represent what the cost is to rent a moderately priced dwelling unit in any local housing market. So, I went to HUD and I grabbed those values that they had released for 2023 in Meridian and I compared them to a number of listings that I found looking as a consumer on Zillow and so what I found on Zillow was that there was 253 available units to rent in Meridian it's like as -- I'm sorry. Since last week was when I looked and out of those 253 units 69 of them were multi-family units, which includes apartments and condos and townhomes and the remaining 184 of those units are single family dwellings. So, when I compared the values of those listings to the HUD fair market rent values what I found was that only 16 of the multi-family units out of the 69 met the HUD fair market rent value and, then, for the single family units only seven out of the 184 met the HUD fair market rent values. And so sometimes those numbers can be hard to visualize. So, we did create some visualizations for that. Oops. That went too fast. Okay. So, this is a visualization of the 69 available units that are currently open to rent that are multi-family units and the blue houses indicate how many of them meet the HUD fair market rent values for this year. We also put together a visualization of the single family dwellings and same thing the blue houses indicate how many of those meet the HUD fair market rent values. So, when you combine these two categories in total out of the 253 available units that are open to rent now only about nine percent of them meet the HUD fair market rent values. So, what this -- since there is limited availability in Meridian right now it means that

people who are looking to move to Meridian often can't, because things aren't in their price range or there is not anything available, but we also wanted to know what this means for people who are already living in Meridian and what it means for people who are currently working in Meridian and what we found is that there may not be as much overlap between those two groups as we thought. More specific data from the in-flow, out-flow analysis conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau was able to give a better insight into cost affordability and the availability in Meridian. This data shows us that residents of Meridian tend to earn more money each month when they work outside of Meridian than those who both live and work in Meridian. Additionally, the majority of workers who are employed in Meridian live outside of Meridian. We can see this as we see the shift in daily traffic on that map and the majority of workers who live in Meridian do not work in Meridian. This data shows us that for residents who work in Meridian it may be more difficult for -- to afford to live in Meridian than for residents who work outside of the city. For every family wage position there must be lower wage positions to support it. That means that if Meridian wants to draw family wage businesses to the city it must also be able to house the lower wage workers as well and we are not currently seeing that in the status quo.

Smart: Okay. So, we have discussed what it might look like for a family who would like to come into Meridian and some of the barriers they might face in finding available housing and affordable housing, but what about residents who are already here? We wanted to look at how they are being affected by housing, by the price of housing, so this is the Alfred family and they live in Meridian. They are a multi-generational household. They are considered living in extremely overcrowded conditions, which we will get into, and they are currently renting. Who knows how to move this one, because I do not. Thank you. We specifically wanted to look at overcrowding to see if this was an issue for the City of Meridian and let's go with a couple definitions first. Overcrowding, as far as HUD is concerned, means that you have one and a half or more people per room in a household and then -- well, actually, sorry. Overcrowding is one or more person. Severely overcrowded is one to one and a half or more people per room and extremely overcrowded would be if you had two plus people per room and it's important that we also recognize that per these guidelines a room is not just a bedroom. So, when you think about your house, if you have a living room, you might have an enclosed porch. These things are considered rooms where people might stay and so you have to look at the number of actual rooms in a home just excluding bathrooms, kitchens, hallways, unenclosed porches. Those are not rooms. And, then, you consider that overcrowding would be one or more people have to share all those spaces. So, in looking at the data, according to the American Community Survey, five years from 2021, there are approximately 595 overcrowded households in Meridian and of these 465 are deemed -- are -- sorry. Four -- yeah. Four hundred and sixty-five are deemed overcrowded, sixty are severely overcrowded and seventy are extremely overcrowded. And of those extremely overcrowded all of those are rental households. Okay. I'm going to let you move that. So, while Meridian may not have a statistically large overcrowding problem as compared to the whole population, something interesting began to emerge as we looked at areas of overcrowding on the census map and that is that it -- a lot of the overcrowding seemed to be concentrated around schools, which led

to the question of whether children are being disproportionately affected by overcrowded housing conditions and this is important to consider, because for children who live and grow up in overcrowded conditions their outcomes are much poorer with mental health, physical health and school achievement. So, one way that we can look at children being affected by overcrowding is through McKinney Vento data and I will explain what that is, because you may not be aware. McKinney Vento is a federal program for homeless youth and it is administered through school systems. So, for a child to be considered homeless under McKinney Vento it's the things you might imagine, that they live in a shelter, a hotel, a car. They are completely unsheltered. But what's interesting about McKinney Vento is that it also includes youth who live in what they refer to as doubled up conditions and so these are children or whole families that now must live in someone else's residence due to financial barriers, unsafe housing, that sort of thing and so we worked with the West Ada School District to determine the children in the district that are under the McKinney Vento program and so what we found out as of April 19th is that in West Ada -- and I'm going to read these, so that I don't mess the numbers up for you. There are 704 students considered homeless under McKinney Vento general guidelines. Of those 704, 639 are considered homeless due to doubling up. Those 704 total students represent 493 households. What we don't have data for is how many households are represented just by the doubled up population. But we, then, searched within 83646 and 83642, because we know that the school district covers more than just the City of Meridian. So, in 83646 there are 153 students who qualify for McKinney Vento and of those 150 are doubled up. In 83642 there are 189 students that fall under McKinney Vento, with 154 of those students doubled up. So, added together there are 342 homeless students in Meridian with 304 of these students being doubled up. So, I also want to talk to you about how a family, like say the Alfred family, becomes homeless or considered doubled up in Meridian and while we don't have exact numbers for this, what we do have is anecdotal evidence gathered from the social workers in the district who are the ones that administer McKinney Vento. So, I was curious to know how does the family end up on the McKinney Vento program and she said -- the ones -- the two that I spoke to said that most often what they see is that families are renting and, then, the landlord is selling the home for a price that they cannot meet and so they go to move, but rent has grown so high that there is nowhere to move into that they can afford, especially as you saw with the Smith family trying to move into Meridian, the cost of just getting into a new place, first and last month's rent, all of these things. So, she said most of our families would need about 5,000 dollars up front to be able to move and, then, be able to sustain rent, which is not plausible for many families. On top of that, a lot of them do qualify for Section 8 vouchers, which they have in hand, but what they are finding is that there is little to no Section 8 housing in Meridian, but there are many many landlords who will say they have Section 8 available, will take the application fees from families, sometimes an application fee per person in the family, but there are no units and these are families that cannot afford to be paying the application fees to begin with and they keep shelling out money for these things. She also said part of the barrier is that families can often afford the rent. They are finding ways to afford it, but because on applications they are required to make triple the amount of rent, they don't match that criteria, so no one will rent to them and she also said what's amazing is she has families

who pay up to 3,000 dollars a month to live in hotels in Meridian and still cannot qualify to pay rent in an apartment or a home. So, that's how families are getting on McKinney Vento. So, then, I asked what are you seeing long term or how do you see a family move out of the McKinney Vento program and what they see is that there are some families who find a way to find housing within Meridian and that's wonderful for them, but for many of them what they are seeing is they are moving out to Caldwell, they are moving out to rural areas and living in a trailer sometimes without plumbing and electricity and all of these things and so what this is telling us is that Meridian is actually losing residence due to the current state of the housing market and, again, while we don't have exact numbers, this is what the school district is telling us they are seeing pretty consistently with these families.

Rajbhandari: So, we didn't want to recommend specific policies for Meridian, because you guys are the policy experts, but we did want to look at some of the ways that peer cities to Meridian have evolved their existing policy in order to -- to kind of fix some of the problems that -- that we outline and -- and many cities across the country are experiencing similar problems as -- as they grow. So, we -- we kind of looked -- we divided policy alternatives into short-term, medium, and long-term solutions. In the short term rental assistance for cost burden households could do the most to help keep families housed within Meridian and -- and prevent families from -- from having to leave Meridian if as -- as rents increase and -- and they can no longer afford their homes or might have to double up. Reducing parking minimums also can reduce the cost associated with development and specifically the cost associated with the development of affordable housing and that's a really easy fix that -- that the city can -- can make. And in the medium term we looked at subsidizing more affordable housing units and this -- this can look like direct subsidies from the city or it can look like changing zoning requirements to incentivize more affordable housing and -- and this is something that many peer cities that have taken on to keep -- keep folks housed and to, you know, bring rents closer to that equilibrium rate. And, then, finally, in the long term the -- the policy alternatives are expanding multi-family zoning for -- for renting and I'm going to say the bad word, it's up zoning, which is increasing density, especially along high -- high traffic areas and that can decrease the cost associated especially with commuting, you know, and -- and help keep families working, you know, build living, working areas within -- within Meridian and -- and, then, expanding public transit as well can help reduce those costs associated with commuting and often that goes hand in hand with -- with up-zone as we are seeing in the city of Boise with that -- that battle right now. So, those are kind of some of the ways that -- that we determined the City of Meridian could -- could help evolve existing policy and take the pressure off of low income households and house -- and cost burden households in order to, you know, keep Meridian livable and make Meridian more livable for families.

Spaulding: On the last slide of that presentation there is a QR code. This QR code links you over to our website that we built. This website does contain a lot more facts, figures, graphs to show visualization and we also have -- go ahead. QR codes. But just so that this is a long list -- lasting impact of information on everybody and you can spread out that information, so we would like to open up for any questions.

Simison: Thank you. Council, questions?

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: This is really interesting. First of all, I just want to start by thanking you guys so much for all the work you did here. This has been really interesting. So, Sunny, Kristi, Faith and Shiva, I really appreciate it. Just some questions. So, actually, to be honest, I'm surprised -- it looked surprisingly positive to me compared to what I would have expected, if I'm being honest. That's just my initial reaction. Like 23 percent of our inventory being at HUD fair market value, that actually like pleasantly surprises me compared to what I would have expected to see. I was curious -- looking at some of these policy alternatives, if you guys have further information or studies on the effectiveness of those alternatives. I know there is the scope of what you are doing for your class, so I totally appreciate that, but if you could lead us to some resources that would help us to just understand the, you know, efficacy of some of these different policy alternatives and the reason is, you know, like when I hear something like, you know, maybe we should subsidize more affordable housing or reduce parking minimums, I think it would be really great if we had examples of cities where we could show, hey, this was effective in this city. I hear all the time about cities doing all kinds of things to try to help, but I don't often hear that something is working. So, that -- that's one question that I had.

Rajbhandari: Yeah. And -- and thank you for making that point. I think it's worth noting that some of the data that -- that we used -- most of it came from the American Community Survey, which was in 2021 and that was a five year period. So, most of this data, honestly, is -- is coming from before or -- or during COVID and so the -- the -- especially like the overcrowding data I think. And so the place that Meridian is in right now may be -- may be different and I think, you know, your personal experience might speak to that. As far as looking at the policy alternatives, we have a list of peer cities and -- and kind of -- some of the similar ways that they have approached this problem and -- and we would be happy to share those with you. It's difficult sometimes to determine like a causal relationship between one policy and one -- and -- and one outcome, because often the way cities approach this is, you know, in a multi-dimensional fashion and so -- so it's difficult and there is -- there is, honestly, like -- there needs to be more research into each of these policy alternatives, but we can certainly share with you some of the ways that peer cities across the country and in Idaho have approached this within kind of a budget and -- and the relative efficacy of those.

Spaulding: And if you look towards our website within the existing -- of all the existing policies there is quite a few links to other websites that provide what peer cities have done and how effective they have measured it within their city and even looking towards how some cities have -- instead of getting to this point where there is that overcrowding, the unaffordable affordability, and the nonavailability of it, they evolved their policies while it was happening, so while it might not seem like there was like a direct correlation

to the situation that Meridian is in, there is quite a difference in reaction that created the ability to evolve their policy.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Just one more sort of a question, maybe reflection and a question together. So, it sounded like you looked at the -- it sounded like you looked at the Comprehensive Plan and if I'm following you there was an audit and it sounded like 88 percent doesn't permit multi-family. What's really fascinating to me is like if we get a -- it's internal, like a community development dashboard every month, and I have been following that and if I look at the last couple of years the proportion that we are actually building and permitting of multi-family to single family is much higher weighted to multi-family than I would have expected. So, you know, just rough proportions, like just under a thousand I want to say multi-family units last year and something in the magnitude of like 1,500 single family. So, like what's interesting to me is we are building a lot of multi-family. If I look at your affordability it seems like we are not doing -- I mean 20 percent -- it's not great, but it's not as horrible as I would have expected. So, it seems like our multi-family we still have some -- you know, roughly 20 percent of the units are somewhat affordable, but the single family is not affordable at all. So, it actually leads me to an interesting question, which is are we missing a little bit on more affordable single family homes based on what you guys have seen or is that just leaping too far?

Spaulding: Affordability overall is one of the problems. One of the biggest things about affordability within the single -- the single unit dwellings -- or the single family dwellings is that that is kind of the American dream that Meridian has been following where families usually want to have their own dwelling. However, there isn't availability or even -- like they are making the fair -- fair market rate. That's because like as a college student I know so many college students who are renting in Meridian, a single unit dwelling, because the apartments are so expensive where they don't meet the apartments necessary, but they would prefer to be in an apartment complex or even just in general there is not enough supply. We can see that within the vacancy rate. When we are looking at the supply of whether even multi-family housing or single family housing, there is not enough supply in any way to meet the demand of people coming into Meridian or people who are trying to stay in Meridian. So, that's where we are seeing some of those problems and some of those like -- though there has been a high amount of growth within multi-family housing in Meridian in the past few years, it's still not enough to catch up where the demand wants it to be.

Rajbhandari: And it's worth noting like the -- the -- the way to meet that supply is to allow more access to multi-family housing. So, it's good that -- that that's what the -- you know, that's -- that's what you all are doing already. Because, you know, at the end of the day at -- at some point Meridian is going to run out of space and already is and -- and, then, single family housing, right, isn't -- you can't keep developing single -- single family housing unless you are cutting the size of those lots and so to the extent that like

people just need a place to live, multi-family housing is -- is the way to lower costs and lower cost for single family housing as well, because when there is more availability you know that's just going to lower the -- the market rate.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Just to reflect back on what you guys are saying, yeah, I mean that makes sense to me. I think what's really interesting and the challenge for us, right, is, for example, some of the policy recommendations, like reducing the parking minimums, that works really effectively in a city that has public transportation and a robust network of that. Like we have just begun with like a couple of bus lines and it's really like -- it's fairly infrequent. We are working on that, but we are at a different place in our development where, you know, we -- we want to try to put that density I think on those transportation corridors to your point to help with the affordability as well, but this is a lot to -- to contemplate. I really appreciate you guys doing the work and certainly, you know, a lot to chew on. I -- I'm looking forward to sort of digging in, maybe if you have a paper or the -- kind of footnotes and everything and if you are available to discuss further I would love to -- to talk about it in more detail for sure. Thanks.

Smart: I will just -- I will just add something that Council Woman -- I always want to say Congress Woman, but maybe one day; right? We don't know. Council Woman Perreault brought up at the beginning this is a kind of hundred mile out view in some ways; right? There is a lot to consider with housing and growth in Meridian, as you well know, and so, really, even with the recommendations and the data we have provided we see this as an opportunity for you to decide, okay, which of these pieces feels like something we want to explore more, which of these feels like something we would like to research more, dig into, look at the policy recommendations, which piece of data do we really want to know more about and -- and so that's our hope is that you can take these pieces and decide which of these feel really pertinent, which of them feel like things we want to understand more and which feel like things we can begin to tackle and we would be happy to continue the conversation at any time and we would also be happy to in the fall do more work if that is something that is helpful to the city if you have an area -- a direction you would like to go in and, then, that's something we would be willing to consider. So, thank you.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglun.

Hoaglun: I think, Sunny, you are the one who brought this up about application fees.

Smart: Yeah.

Hoaglun: And I was just curious what -- are you finding a serious situation in Meridian? I mean because this is something that -- that's -- if someone's representing something

and they are charging fees for that -- I mean we are getting into the area of fraud. If they don't have what they are advertising and whatnot, I mean -- and -- and like you said, if -- if someone is on the lower end of the income line, that's -- they can't afford that and they have to find housing and so what -- what did you uncover? I know that wasn't part of the overall look, but if you kind of gleaned anything I would be interested in -- in learning more.

Smart: Yeah. And, again, it's anecdotal; right? It's what's being reported. But it -- from what was told to me it does seem to be a pretty prevalent issue that happens with these families. I would have to go back and look at my sources, but recently I was looking for Section 8 housing in Meridian I believe I found one maybe available unit and that does not match with multiple families being told, oh, yeah, file an application or multiple applications. We have units and, then, they never hear back or it was magically filled as soon -- you know. So, this is, again, the information from the district. But what I was told is that this is a pretty prevalent problem for many of these families and it does feel predatory.

Hoaglund: Thank you. Appreciate that. Yeah. We know -- we -- we recognize that landlords -- there is a cost to these things. If they have to run background checks, do different things, credit checks, whatever that is for that operation, but if they are taking that and nothing -- and they don't have it available as -- as they say they do, that -- that to me is very serious.

Perreault: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: I can share some more information with Councilman Hoaglund on that at another time. It's -- it's an inventory issue, but it's also -- the city of Boise has attempted to maximize the -- the amount of fees that can be charged to an individual or family, but, then, the landlords have come up with other fees with different names and added them on. So, instead of one application fee we have got the application fee and the processing fee and this fee and that. So, there is -- we can kind of -- I'm happy to share kind of some of the history and background on what's happened and -- and there has been bills that have gone before the legislature to try to manage this at a state level. But, yeah, I absolutely be happy to share more about that with fellow Council. I got a quick peek. Oh. I got a quick peek at the slides before the presentation and had e-mailed several questions to your team already, which I will follow up with that and make sure that those questions get answered and sent to fellow Council. But just really quickly for everyone's sake, I was wondering if you could share with us in your slides the -- the definition for -- the definition of poverty and the definition of cost burden. Like what's the actual financial definition of that? Is that -- is that a percentage that an individual or family is using to spend on their housing? Is it like a HUD category that says if you are a family of four and you make under a certain amount you are in poverty? Can you share that with us real quickly?



Spaulding: So, poverty is set by the poverty line set through just the federal regulations of seeing what the cost of living within an area is and estimating where that would be where you are not able to sustain yourself -- sustain yourself for actually living and that is dependent on all -- like your income, within your family size, who all is living with you, roommates, those types of things, dependencies and everything. However, cost burden is where you are spending over 30 percent of your income on only housing. So, this is making it so that people are having to fork out so much money within their housing that they are unable to provide for food or they have to go without heat for a month just because they have to make that rent. So, that's where the cost burden is coming up and this is just a HUD rate and it's shown within the U.S. Census, too.

Perreault: Mr. Mayor, follow up if I may.

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: So, when -- when the professors and I had originally talked about this project, the intent was to kind of hone in more on that poverty and cost burdened side of it and I think we will get a chance to do that hopefully in the fall, because what we -- we wanted to know -- and it kind of took on a life of its own, but it also revealed a lot more information that even I haven't thought about collecting, which is helpful, but what I'm hoping we can -- can look -- look more at in the fall is what -- out of a sampling of individuals in our community how many of them are spending more than 30 percent and especially more than 50 percent of their income on housing? Because they think that that -- no matter what their income is and no matter what size of house, that is the -- kind of the -- the one statistic that -- that takes all the rest of the variables out and really gives us an idea if people can afford housing or not, because it doesn't look at renters, it doesn't look at owners, it doesn't look at age, it doesn't look at anything else, it just says am I spending more than the -- than the cost burden definition from HUD on my housing and, you know, we -- we don't know if the answer to the question for those folks that are doing that is do they move to another city; right? We -- we can assume that maybe they have that option, but maybe those cities have inventory issues as well. So, we don't know that there is other options for folks that are in that cost burden place, we can only assume that within our own city what -- what will help that cost burdening is to create more inventory. The challenge that I have learned through -- over the last year is that there is an assumption that building more units, more inventory and more multi-family specifically, helps the affordability problem overall and statistically we have seen that that's not true and so I think there is generally that conversation that has to be had is building more unit -- can we out -- can we build our way out of this affordability problem and the statistics nationwide are saying no. So, we have to decide is building more the solution or is more affordable housing the solution? Do we take what we have and make it more affordable in some way and there are two very different ways to go about solving the problem; right? So, I think that that's been something that's been really interesting that's kind of made me change my mind, because I went into this research on affordable housing when I first started this about a year and a half ago thinking, oh, let's just figure out ways to build more. Surely the normal economic idea of more supply will affect demand and demand will affect supply and that should work itself out. But,

interestingly enough, that's not what's happening in housing for a variety of reasons, because it's complex; right? I mean you all attempted to go about this a variety of different ways and saw the complexity of how we even begin to answer the questions. I don't know. So, one more quick question. Just to clarify, the American Community Survey is that voluntary -- well, it's not technically voluntary, but it's a survey that the Census Bureau sends out on a monthly basis; right? And people are obligated to answer that survey. Do you have any more information on how the surveys are done or how they -- because I don't know much about it.

Spaulding: Dr. Cosgrove will probably answer that question.

Cosgrove: So, no -- Council Woman, no, no one is technically obligated. You don't -- it's not like the decennial census where they confirm that people have responded. So, it's a sample that -- that's conducted. I was recently included in the sample. I felt super privileged about that. But -- so, they do use not only mail but also text. So, they are trying multiple kinds of modes to reach different types of citizens and the battery of questions that they ask I think varies across the sample. As you all are probably familiar with, though, those samples are relatively small. They are not the full population like the decennial census, so the margins of error tend to be pretty high and it becomes difficult. I know that you have all experienced the frustration of trying to use that in a decision making capacity, because it -- it becomes stale relatively quickly or it's not as accurate as we might want.

Rajbhandari: And to the extent I think with data collection and Meridian actually like conducting its own survey, I think the intent of this project really is to bring some of the data that's already out there that you have in your data bases that the Census Bureau and the school district have and bring that to you all's attention, so that you can think about, you know, what more data do we need, because, honestly, it's -- I mean it's not within our capabilities to conduct, you know, some type of, you know, scientifically accurate sampling or -- or surveying and that can cost, you know, upwards of 50,000 dollars to get even just a few hundred -- a few hundred folks in Meridian surveyed in a representative sample and so that's something that I think if -- if the city wants to consider we -- we would be happy to, you know, continue to provide support on that. But I don't think that's -- that's not necessarily something that we can -- we can do with our -- with their own abilities.

Simison: Thank you.

Overton: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Overton.

Overton: Just a thank you for your presentation. It was -- it was very thorough. But you -- you got me alarmed at one point when you started talking about the number of homeless students and the numbers on the screen and just quickly -- I always get frustrated when I look at acts in different parts of our federal government that define

things differently and the CDC has a definition of homeless that's vastly different than the McKinney Vento Act definition. I would have never thought that we would have listed -- and I'm not -- I'm not trying to say it's wrong, but I think it needs more explanation that even people living with someone else in someone else's home under the McKinney Vento are listed as homeless if it's not their home. So, there is a lot of people in that group of homeless under McKinney Vento that -- that aren't the traditional definition of homeless and before we alarm everybody that we have got all these homeless people, I -- I -- I just almost want a little more transparency on how we are defining the term, because that really kind of shocked me. My -- we all know visions of homelessness. We see it all the time on the news. We would never see this and think this was homeless the way it's defined in the act and I -- just a little bit more transparency for everyone I think would also give you a lot more buy in for what homeless really is. That's my two cents.

Smart: Thank you for those comments. So, that is why, you know, we went through the definition according to McKinney Vento, because that is different than the CDC and that's for a couple of reasons. One is because there are children involved and, again, the outcomes for children who live in overcrowded conditions are not good. But the other part of that is that when people are doubled up that is considered unstable or tenuous housing, because at any time they could be asked to leave and if they are asked to leave that residence where do they go? And, then, we have the children we do have in Meridian who are living in hotels, who are in shelters, or are completely unhoused or living in cars and we do have the numbers of those children as well. So, we have to remember that that is why the McKinney Vento program operates the way it does, that we have very -- a very vulnerable population, which is children, that could be immediately at any time under that other definition of homeless, which is they have nowhere to go, because doubled up housing is unstable, inconsistent housing that can be pulled out from under a family at any time and that is why the government labels it this, so that those children now fall under an umbrella where someone in the school district at least is very aware and is trying to help their family get into stable housing, so they do not become homeless in the sense of having no shelter.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: I just wanted to thank you guys for presenting to us today and I can tell you you did so much hard work to put this together and it means a lot to us that you, you know, went through the effort of doing this for our city. So, thank you. And I wanted to also thank Council Woman Perreault, because she has been the most tenacious person in pursuing this topic and I'm in awe of it and she has just continued -- even though it's one of the hardest, most challenging topics to ever try to tackle, so I just wanted to say thanks for that.

Simison: All right. Thank you as well. We appreciate you all being here and -- and maybe we will be chatting some more again in the fall. Okay. Thank you. Council, we have reached the end of our agenda.

Hoaglund: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglund.

Hoaglund: Yeah. I move that we adjourn our work session.

Simison: Motion to adjourn. All in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it. We are adjourned.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:34 P.M.

(AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE OF THESE PROCEEDINGS)

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR ROBERT SIMISON

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE APPROVED

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHRIS JOHNSON - CITY CLERK