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PROJECT:	<b>Virginia City – Nevada City Historic District Master Planning Montana Heritage Commission</b>	PROJECT NUMBER:
MEETING LOCATION:	<b>Virginia City -Walking Tour Community Meeting in City Gym</b>	MEETING DATE: <b>25 February 2008</b>
MEETING SUBJECT:	<b>General State of Affairs</b>	PREPARED BY: <b>Nathan Blanding</b>

PUBLIC MEETING NOTES- at *gymnasium* (notes from Public Comments)

1. Thompson-Hickman county library is bursting at the seams and needs expansion storage for book collection.
2. Old school house in town is structurally unstable on the upper levels. Currently housing city offices.
3. County office expansion plans were stopped by public dissent against the jail expansion that was included. Staff are currently working in hallways. Additional parking was part of the proposed expansion.
4. Charity Fector (sp?) is the current county planner and Jim Jarvis (sp?) the assistant planner.
5. Concern expressed by Eli over the lack of plans to prioritize properties under MHC. Desire for some properties to be put back on the local property tax roles was stated.
6. Night watch officer position has been cut recently. General consensus of vulnerability in community expressed as the position kept fire danger, vandalism and theft under regular watch. There is no town police force.
7. There is an apparent need for a storm drainage system in the town, but there is reportedly no big problem to structures with the regular melting/runoff season.
8. The last election had 185 ballots sent out, but the opinion that the actual, living population might be more like 140-160 people.
9. There is a county Emergency Medical Service plan in place.
10. There is a Fire Plan being formalized between the local volunteer fire department and the county fire department to clarify who responds to fires in Virginia and Nevada Cities.
11. Twin Bridges and Ennis host the two closest airports.
12. There was a clear love-hate relationship between the local population and the tourist season. Statements that seasonal employees should be bussed in and out every day apparently stemmed from problems with alcohol parties by the summer staff in years past.
13. "Daylight Village"- a non-historic creation of the Bovey era just north of the main street in Virginia City has been used as summer staff quarters in the past and was reportedly kept in line with a strong headmistress. The facilities have been all but written off by the MHC staff due to their general poor condition.

14. Pedestrian crossing signs at Nevada City crossing to the train depot have helped but not solved the danger to visitors there.
15. The road into Virginia City from the East slopes down at around 6%-7% grade and although there is a gravel emergency truck ramp, its location and usefulness is questionable. The smell of overheated brakes from RV and semi-trailer traffic is common and a concern to the community.
16. Zoning as a controversial issue was raised repeatedly. Zoning ordinances seem to be applied in an inconsistent manner in the view of locals and is generally considered not to be user-friendly.
17. Chuck Herringer is said to be an owner of many properties in the valley.
18. County and City Growth Policy Plans are said to be in place.
19. A "building boom" is currently happening as there were a record of 12 house permits issued in the city last year.
20. Zoning the open space between the two cities has been tried but failed due to excessive controversy.
21. The introduction of a Town Pump gas station in between the towns could be "a big problem".
22. The issues of employee housing was brought up. Liability problems from existing substandard lodgings were mentioned.
23. Private business operators and employees often camp out in tents or live elsewhere and commute in.
24. The trailer park is making efforts to expand capacity.
25. Bonanza Inn has reportedly attracted good volunteers.
26. There is a need for a good Laundromat and basic facilities in town. Some argument about the viability of a local grocery, gas station, and convenience store was had.
27. There has been one local store that carries a small amount of groceries, but most residents commute to Ennis or Bozeman for supplies.
28. There is a good little farmers market established off a historic seed stock garden that has been well received by locals and tourists alike.
29. A gas station/convenience store "could be OK".
30. Visitor information is sorely lacking. The Depot and Museum offer visitor maps of the district, but are not clearly marked as visitor centers and most visitors miss them until the end of their visit, if at all.
31. Tourists are viewed as a necessary evil.
32. Bus tours used to deliver visitor to the district until 1995.
33. Local business has a habit of fighting for their share of "the pie".
34. Having people come to learn about the history of the place, gain an education in old-world skills, and developing a respect for the past would be an ideal improvement over simple consumer tourism.
35. "Living History" is very positive for Virginia City.
36. Art district zoning was mentioned with positive reactions.
37. Recent Victorian dances held in the local gym have been well attended.
38. The 3% resort tax generated from tourism was said to generate around \$60K in 6 months. This was compared to the \$20K annual property tax generated the MHC properties were estimated at. The apparent benefit of having State ownership was begrudgingly recognized. For reference, it was noted the Bovey used to pay around \$8K/yr for property taxes to the state.

39. Deb and Rick (café owners) said they would welcome an extension of the season beyond just the summer, and that year-round activities and the addition of a local gas station would be desirable.
40. Locals see their location and lack of marketing resources a problem for business.
41. There exists many ties to the community in Ennis that are viewed favorably but winter tends to interrupt reliable connections.
42. The need to identify strategic partnerships was recognized.
43. Development concepts need to be presented visually.
44. Partnerships with other parks and historic sites need to be developed.
45. MHC could start targeting leases- seeking out specific trades and artists to add to the quality of the visitor experience.
46. Tennant leases need utilities...