

Citizen Conservation Board (CCB)

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2021; 4:30 PM

Meeting held virtually via Zoom

Board Members Present (8 out of 14 members required for a quorum):

- 1) Diana Hammer, Chair
- 2) Mark Juedeman, Vice Chair
- 3) Valerie Stacey, Vice Chair
- 4) Ann Brodsky
- 5) Steven Costle
- 6) Elizabeth Grant
- 7) Patricia Heiser
- 8) Lucy Lantz
- 9) Carlin Onstad
- 10) Denise Roth Barber
- 11) Richard Sloan

Board Members Not Present:

- 1) Becca Boslough (excused)
- 2) Makenna Sellers (excused)
- 3) Brian Solan (excused)

City Staff Present:

Chris Couey, Budget Analyst

Patrick Judge, Sustainability Coordinator

Others Present:

Paul Pacini, Energy & Transportation Committee Member

Paden Wallace, Energy & Transportation Committee Member

Call to Order:

Chair Diana Hammer called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm and welcomed all participants.

Minutes:

Mark moved adoption of the February 11, 2021 minutes. Richard seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Guest Speaker – Chris Couey, Budget Analyst:

Chris updated the group on the status of the FY 2022 budget process:

- The Finance Department has received the initial "Department Budget Requests"
- These requests (submitted by all City Departments) include both operating and capital expenses.
- Next, a comprehensive draft document will be developed and forwarded to the Manager.
- The Manager reviews the document and make her changes to it (this occurs in mid-April).
- This "Preliminary Budget" will be released in early May.
- Public input is formally solicited at that point, and at several additional steps to come.
- The next step is a series of Commission Work Sessions to review and adjust the budget.
- The draft budget is then noticed for formal action; adoption requires two separate votes:

Resolution of Intent, followed by the final Budget Resolution on a subsequent agenda

- Final adoption takes place in June – the 2022 Fiscal Year begins on 7/1/21.
- In total, there will be 5-6 formal opportunities for public input.
- Public input has already been gathered, to some degree, through tools such as "Balancing Act" and the <http://beheardhelena.com/> webpage.

Chris also mentioned that the "cloud-based invoicing software upgrade" has been prioritized. Among other advantages, this should facilitate more sophisticated online water-billing (with water conservation benefits).

Dick and Denise both emphasized the importance of engaging the budget process early, before things get locked in. They also spoke to the role of the Helena Citizens' Council, and its Budget Committee. Chris noted that the HCC recommendations run through the City Clerk and the Commission, and that the HCC budget statement is included in the final budget document.

The group thanked Chris for his presentation, and Chris departed for another meeting.

Following some discussion, the group arrived at a consensus position in support of the proposal to add 0.5 FTE to the Sustainability staff. This would bring the staffing level up to 1.0 FTE (as was recommended in the 2009 Climate Action Plan) through the hiring of an additional part-time staff person (or a full-time staff person who splits their responsibilities). The group opposed the proposal to relocate the current Sustainability Coordinator from the City Manager's Office to the Public Works Department. Dick Sloan and Ann Brodsky agreed to write a draft letter to the City Manager stating the Committee's preference that staff be kept in the City Manager's Office and present that to the full Board for consideration at its April meeting. After some discussion, the Board agreed the letter should include a statement of support for the additional half-time Sustainability staff.

Energy & Transportation Committee:

Committee Chair Mark Juedeman and Pat Judge reported the following:

- Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) – L&C County Commission will host a formal hearing (and potential vote) on whether to join the BSPRA on March 18, 9:00 am. Paul Pacini echoed Mark's comments about the importance of this hearing & vote.
- Fleet Assessment – this topic will be discussed at an upcoming Committee meeting with City Transportation staff and Alicia Cox of the Yellowstone Teton Clean Cities (also March 18, at 2:00).
- NorthWestern Energy "Helena Pilot" R&D Project – site visits at RMDC's River Rock Residences and the City Transportation Shop will take place on Friday, March 12. Paden would like to attend.
- Sustainability Report – still crunching the numbers, but it's looking good that the City government met the carbon reduction goal from the 2009 Climate Action Plan (20% below 2007 by 2020).
- Mark will deliver the Committee's work plan to Diana soon.

Waste & Recycling Committee:

Co-Chairs Denise Roth Barber and Ann Brodsky reported the following:

- On February 22, the City Commission adopted the Waste Reduction Resolution on a 3-1 vote – a triumphant conclusion to more than a year's worth of effort! The Independent Record ran a front-page story about it. The resolution was assigned a number – 20643 – and can be viewed here: <https://www.helenamt.gov/government/city-commission/city-of-helena-resolutions/2021-1>
- Denise and Ann alerted the group to House Bill 407, which would strip Montana local governments of the ability to regulate "auxiliary containers" including plastic bags, utensils, etc.: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/billhtml/HB0407.htm>
- The next "Community Conversation on Reducing Helena's Waste Footprint" will feature Leigh Ratterman, the Zero Waste Manager from Home ReSource in Missoula. The (revised) date for the event is: Monday, April 5, at 7:00 pm. The event will be hosted by Resilient Helena.
- Denise will deliver the Committee's work plan to Diana by the end of March.

Water Conservation Committee:

Patricia Heiser and Valerie Stacey reported the following:

- All 3 "Water Wise Workshops" have been piloted now. They will be offered to the public in the April-May timeframe. Reservations will be limited to 20, but the recordings will be open to all.
- The Committee is still working on the "Water Wise Garden/Yard Tour" to showcase examples of water-wise landscaping. They encouraged CCB members and interested parties to let the Committee know about any 'water-wise landscaping' examples around town.

Outreach & Education Committee:

Diana announced that the Committee reconvened recently (she, Lucy, and Pat; Brian is also a member but was unable to attend). They're working on an outreach strategy and template materials, and will be looking to become more active, especially with the new City Public Information Officer starting soon.

Tree Planting Team:

Diana thanked Lucy for being involved in this project as well. Partners include HHS Green Group, City Arborist, Growing Friends, and 6th Ward residents. The plan is to offer subsidized trees to property owners along a 12-13 block stretch of Lyndale and Hannaford. Members of the Team, and possibly the HHS Green Group, are planning to assist with the planting.

Emerging Issues / Other Business / Announcements / Public Testimony:

- Diana noted that the 51st celebration of Earth Day is fast approaching – April 22, 2021. Val and Patricia were very involved in the planning last year, but do not have the capacity to "drive the boat" this year (although they will happily contribute as helpers in the boat!). Denise noted that we are still facing some of the same obstacles to in-person events as last year. She suggested an Op-Ed. Richard stressed the importance of people taking action to reduce their personal carbon footprints and "taking personal responsibility for energy conservation." In this spirit, the Op-Ed could include suggestions of "3 things you can do" from each of the committees. Diana will work with Pat on an initial draft.
- Diana invited anyone on the call, including the public, to share any other comments or questions they might have. There was no public comment.

Next Meeting:

Diana announced that the next regular CCB meeting will take place Thursday, April 8 at 4:30 pm (via Zoom). Please contact her with any agenda items. Diana and Pat will be reaching out to key City personnel in water treatment and wastewater treatment as possible guest speakers.

Adjourn:

With no further comment from the board, staff, or public, Diana adjourned the meeting at 6:04 pm.

Minutes prepared by Patrick Judge.