

## **Citizen Conservation Board (CCB)**

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

May 13, 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) Becca Boslough
- 5) Ann Brodsky
- 6) Steven Costle
- 7) Elizabeth Grant
- 8) Patricia Heiser
- 9) Lucy Lantz
- 10) Carlin Onstad
- 11) Makenna Sellers
- 12) Richard Sloan
- 13) Brian Solan

### **Board Members Not Present:**

Denise Roth Barber (excused)

### **City Staff Present:**

Patrick Judge, Sustainability Coordinator

### **Others Present:**

Hugh Zackheim, Chair, Sleeping Giant Citizens Council

Dr. Gregory Thomas, Interested Citizen

### **Call to Order:**

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

### **Minutes:**

Richard Sloan moved adoption of the April 8, 2021 minutes. Brian Solan seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Guest Speaker – Hugh Zackheim, Sleeping Giant Citizens Council (SGCC)**

Following last month's meeting, SGCC was invited to inform the CCB about its upcoming "Solarize Helena" campaign. Hugh delivered the presentation, with Makenna and Mark chiming in.

They made the following points:

- SGCC is the Helena-affiliate of the Northern Plains Resource Council, with ~160 local members.
- SGCC works on a variety of topics related to sustainability, conservation, local foods, clean air, clean water, and clean energy. SGCC engages the legislative process, and hosts events like the Helena Sun Run, in partnership with Helena Vigilante Runners.
- The "Solarize" model was started in Portland, OR, and has been successfully used in communities across the nation and in Montana (Missoula, Livingston, Red Lodge, Billings, Glendive, and now

Helena!). The goal is to break down some of the barriers to rooftop solar and assist multiple households to move through the process together. Some key obstacles include:

1) Cost – even though solar is cost-effective over the long term, with a payback period of 8-12 years, it does require a fairly significant upfront investment (~\$10,000). Solarize helps connect people to financing options, whether it be the City of Helena's Zero-Interest Residential Loan Program, the State of Montana Low Interest Loan Program (administered by DEQ), or private lenders.

Unfortunately, the \$500 state income tax credit was repealed this last legislative session, but the valuable federal income tax credit is still in place for the next couple of years at least (covering 26% of the cost in tax years 2021 & 2022). The Solarize approach can also help secure affordable panels through bulk-discounts, etc.

2) Complexity – the Solarize program makes it easy for homeowners, with a simple application, a pre-selected installer, and advice along the way.

3) Customer Inertia – the Solarize program helps overcome customer inertia by making the process fun and easy. Homeowners can move through the process with their friends and neighbors, and follow a specific timeline designed to inspire prompt action. Having a "time-limited offer" creates a sense of urgency consistent with the goal of getting the group to "go solar" all at once.

- The Solarize Helena Steering Committee has 17 members and 3 sub-committees, with good progress already being made. An RFP was sent out to a half-dozen potential installers in the tri-county area. Proposals are due at the end of the month, at which point an installer will be selected.

- The role of SGCC as the Community Organization is to:

- pre-select the installer
- compile financing information
- provide assistance along the way
- create a buzz ("solar is not for the few, but for all!")
- organize fun gatherings
- sign people up!
- celebrate the successful conclusion of the program (bike tour, etc.)

- Specific approaches to outreach and education include:

- educational events (such as a MREA "Solar 101" webinar in June)
- "Solar Ambassadors" (people who already have solar who can answer questions)
- sending out mailers
- hosting house parties
- creating and maintaining a website
- note that many of these events will be virtual, so they can be recorded

- The program has a goal of 8-12 homes as they ramp up this year, with more to come in 2022.

A group discussion ensued regarding how the CCB could engage with this effort, how building codes play into it, and how issues of equity can be prioritized.

### **Waste & Recycling Committee:**

Ann Brodsky reported the following:

- The Committee met with Public Works Director Ryan Leland and City Solid Waste staff recently (April 20), and had the chance to review the proposed solid waste budget. One big item is the Solid Waste Master Plan, estimated to cost ~\$300,000. There will be a 7-9 person steering committee, which will include a representative from the CCB Waste Committee, which is great.

- The Waste Committee will be meeting again this coming Monday (May 17, 5:00 pm).

### **Energy & Transportation Committee:**

Mark Juedeman reported the following:

- The Committee met on May 8 to visit with Kevin Cray of the Coalition for Community Solar Access, and Tim Rehder of EPA District 8. The topic was how to facilitate Community Solar in Montana, potentially by reaching out to rural and agricultural communities.
- On April 30, Mark and Pat participated in a recorded interview for the "Local Energy Rules" podcast with John Farrell. This is part of the Institute for Local Self Reliance's Energy Democracy project. John was interested in hearing the story behind Helena's 100% Clean Electricity resolution, and the progress we've made toward implementation. The program will air in a couple of months.
- Pat reported some good progress on the energy-efficiency front. John Campbell, a Butte-based engineer, performed site visits in Helena on May 5th. John has worked with the City on previous efficiency projects, both at the Ten Mile Treatment Plant and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. He is proposing to swap out all remaining non-LED lights (FY2022?), and to install improved blowers at the Wastewater Plant (FY2023?).

### **Tree Planting Team:**

Carlin Onstad said there was not much to report, but thanked the group for its enthusiastic support of the recent tomato- and pepper-plant sale at the Capital High greenhouse. The event garnered some great press coverage:

[https://helenair.com/news/local/capital-high-to-sell-first-crop-from-new-greenhouse/article\\_92a8a8f2-2b2f-5b28-8382-3650025cd021.html](https://helenair.com/news/local/capital-high-to-sell-first-crop-from-new-greenhouse/article_92a8a8f2-2b2f-5b28-8382-3650025cd021.html)

### **Outreach & Education Committee:**

Elizabeth Grant reported the following:

- The Committee met recently (April 26), and was delighted to have the new City of Helena Public Information Officer Jacob Garcin in attendance.
- The Committee would like to change its name to "Outreach & Communications Committee." The Committee won't be doing the majority of the education itself, but rather supporting the educational efforts of other CCB committees by providing templates, letterhead, policies, timelines (calendar of annual events the CCB could piggy-back on), etc. Examples of the latter might include:
  - International Earth Day (April)
  - National Recycling Day (November)
  - 6th-Ward Harvest Party (September)
- The "Com Com" will be meeting again this coming Tuesday (May 18, 2:00 pm).

### **Water Conservation Committee:**

Patricia Heiser & Valerie Stacey reported the following:

- The Water Makeover Series is underway! The workshops are being recorded, and will be available for viewing.
- On May 4, Stan Bradshaw presented the first workshop "Introduction and Getting Started."
- On May 11, Patricia Heiser presented the second workshop "Indoor Home Water-Saving Strategies."
- On May 18, Diana Hammer will present the final workshop "Outdoor Water Strategies – Lawns and Landscaping."
- In addition, Valerie Stacey is finishing a "Water Wise" booklet that will have a print-run of 8,000 copies. It will also be available electronically. This is a joint project with the Water Quality Protection District.
- Finally, the Committee will be organizing a "Water Wise Tour" showcasing water-conserving lawns, landscaping, and gardens. This will take place later this month or early June.

### **Emerging Issues / Other Business / Announcements / Public Testimony:**

- Diana asked the group to be thinking about budget items they wished to weigh in on. Pat will circulate the budget requests he submitted, for the group's review.
- Diana also asked the group to be thinking about energy, water, and waste-related policies that the CCB could potentially advance to the Commission for its consideration. For example, would it be possible to require that new public housing projects include solar PV, similar to earlier projects at Ptarmigan Apartments, River Rock Residences, and Broadwater Village?
- Pat alerted the group that the Commission will be considering "first passage of an ordinance adopting the State of Montana's adopted 2018 edition of the International Energy Conservation Code" this coming Monday (May 17, 6:00 pm). Mark Juedeman volunteered to attend and offer supporting comments (but not on behalf of the CCB, which hasn't had time to notice this as an agenda item for official discussion or vote).
- Diana noted that the HCC is working on recommendations to the City Commission on the topics of water conservation and the water-related impacts of rapid growth in the valley.
- 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, June 10 at 4:30 pm via Zoom. Please contact her with any agenda items.

**Adjourn:**

With no further comment from the board, staff, or public, Diana adjourned the meeting at 6:01 pm.

**Minutes prepared by Patrick Judge.**