

# **Helena Citizen Conservation Board (HCCB)**

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

October 8, 2020; 4:30 PM

Meeting held virtually via Zoom

## **Board Members Present (7 out of 13 members required for a quorum):**

- 1) Lisa Fairman, Chair
- 2) Denise Roth Barber
- 3) Ann Brodsky
- 4) Steven Costle
- 5) Diana Hammer
- 6) Patricia Heiser
- 7) Mark Juedeman
- 8) Shane Sater
- 9) Makenna Sellers
- 10) Brian Solan
- 11) Valerie Stacey

## **City Staff Present:**

Patrick Judge, Sustainability Coordinator

## **Others Present:**

Paden Wallace, Energy & Transportation Subcommittee Member

Dr. Gregory Thomas, Interested Citizen

## **Call to Order, Welcome, and Board Vacancy Report:**

Lisa Fairman called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm. She welcomed all participants, led a round of introductions.

Patrick Judge gave the board vacancy update: one of the two "Environmental Organization Representative" positions came open with Brian Fadie's departure. The vacancy was advertised, and several applications were received by the City Clerk. The City Commission will deliberate on the appointment at its October 21 Administrative Meeting (4:00 pm). Formal approval will take place at the October 26 Commission Meeting (6:00 pm).

Patrick noted that Brian Fadie's departure also created a vacancy in one of the two Vice Chair positions. Diana Hammer observed that under the Bylaws, all officers are to be elected annually. It has now been more than a year since the last election took place (September 12, 2019). Lisa Fairman added the topic to today's agenda.

## **Minutes:**

Mark Juedeman moved that the September 10, 2020 meeting minutes be approved as written.

Brian Solan seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **Waste (and more) Subcommittee Report:**

Co-Chair Ann Brodsky reported the following activities:

- Follow-up Waste Reduction Meeting (9/14/20)
  - targeted to those who had indicated an interest (~20 participated)
  - three break-out groups (food waste, recycling, construction & deconstruction)
  - notes will be posted on HCCB website soon

- the next meeting will likely be focused on public education
- Landfill Site Visit (9/25/20)
  - interesting and informative!
  - for what it does, the landfill is clearly a well-run operation, and the operators are rightly proud of it
- Looking into reactivating or relaunching a Zero Waste Helena Facebook page
- Looking into internal procurement and recycling policies (modeled after State of MT)

Co-Chair Denise Roth Barber added:

- we've built a good relationship with City solid waste staff
- hoping to meet with them soon to address the "elephant in the room"
  - our goal is to dramatically reduce solid waste
  - but the City/County could face severe budget impacts as a result
    - (due to the current financial structure of tipping fees, enterprise funds, etc.)
  - the water committee members noted similar concerns in that arena
  - how can these tensions be resolved? is it possible to re-structure the funding?
    - additional complexity comes from the interlocal nature of the operation
      - (shared City-County governance)
  - another area of possible tension: the City's desire to protect/develop water rights

### **Water Subcommittee Report:**

Valerie Stacey and Diana Hammer reported:

- making progress on 4-6 "Water Makeover Workshops," to be piloted this winter
  - 1) Introduction & Getting Started
  - 2) Home Water Audit & Tips - Outdoors
  - 3) Outdoor Water Strategies - Watering & Landscaping
  - 4) Home Water Audit & Tips - Indoors
  - 5) City Water - Infrastructure & Opportunities
  - 6) Water-wise Demonstration Garden
- confirmed that they are also looking into metering & billing issues, such as:
  - deployment and capabilities of the new meters with leak-detection alerts, etc.
  - electronic bills do not currently include any usage information
  - neither paper nor electronic bills include any history data
  - are the differentials between the tiered water rates sufficiently large?
  - could "social norming" signals be included, such as the average Helena usage?

### **Energy & Transportation Subcommittee Report:**

Chair Mark Juedeman reported:

- the letter urging the County to support the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority was delivered
- the Montana Passenger Rail Summit was held on 9/17/20 (literally hundreds attended!)
  - Helena Mayor Wilmot Collins was featured in video presentations that were shown
- topics discussed in last week's subcommittee meeting included:
  - electric vehicle charging stations (on-hold due to legal concerns with DEQ contract)
  - DEQ's proposal for a statewide "Clean Cities" chapter (U.S. DOE program)
  - 50 kW renewable energy project (likely to be located at vehicle maintenance shop)
    - Pat thanked the "NRG Com" members for assisting with the USB application!
  - NorthWestern Energy's proposed \$1 million "Helena Pilot" project
    - looking at distributed storage; roughly 20 units co-located with transformers
    - could help improve reliability, and provide voltage & frequency support
    - could help integrate additional renewables & dispatch low-carbon energy

- does not currently include a direct renewable energy investment
- Ann asked for an update on Montana's energy code adoption process, currently underway. possible that municipalities will gain additional powers to encourage solar no one knew the latest, but Ann offered to do some more research and report back
- Ann asked about the current status of negotiations with the utility. Patrick reported that the "Utah-model" legislation was on-hold, pending the election more progress has been made in the area of "Green Tariffs" Makenna commented that the value of such a program is definitely in the details

### **Public Outreach Subcommittee Report:**

Chair Lisa Fairman reported that the subcommittee has been on-hold, but will be reinvigorated soon. (helped, in part, by a new Public Information Officer? to be hired sometime after 10/19)

### **Staff Report:**

Patrick presented an overview of the Draft Annual Sustainability Report. Reporting of this type was directed by the Commission in 2017 (Resolution 20347). In addition to several appendices, the draft report currently includes the following five chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Progress Report on the 2009 Climate Action Plan (CAP) and its **44** recommendations:
  - 13** are "complete" -- examples include:
    - Sustainability Coordinator Position
    - Citizen Conservation Board
    - Tiered Water Rates
  - 21** are "underway" -- examples include:
    - City Renewable Energy Project (\$90,000 included in the FY 2021 Budget)
    - Reduce Per-Capita Water Use from 175 gpd to 100 gpd (currently at 154 gpd)
    - Divert 35% of Helena's Solid Waste (progressed from 14% to 22% in FY 2019)
  - 9** are "incomplete" -- examples include:
    - Biomass and Biodiesel
    - Zero Net Energy Goal at the Waste Water Treatment Plant
    - Pay-As-You-Throw Solid Waste Disposal Fees
    - Fees for Plastic Bags
    - the City may wish to re-visit some of the "incomplete" proposals the technology & thinking around some of the items have changed since 2009
  - 1** is "unknown" -- reduce "plug loads" in buildings
- Several "beyond the plan" accomplishments are identified as well -- examples include:
  - Zero-Interest Residential Renewable Energy Loan Program (2015)
  - Curbside Recycling (2016, replacing the City's former "blue bag" program)
  - 100% Clean Electricity Goal (2020)
  - Funding for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (2020)
- Overall, Patrick characterized progress on the 2009 CAP as "mixed"
  - the 2009 CAP did not just sit on a shelf neglected -- much has been done . . .
  - however, the City has fallen short of several benchmarks envisioned for 2020
- Chapter 3: City Government Energy Use Inventory & GHG Assessment Update
  - the 2009 CAP included an energy reduction goal of "20% below 2007 levels by 2020" as of 2019, the City has reduced its energy use ~4% encouraging that we're on a downward trend, especially with city growth but disappointing that the pace is slower than hoped for
  - the 2009 CAP also had a carbon reduction goal of "20% below 2007 levels by 2020"

as of 2019, it appears that the City has already met that goal, with a 28% reduction!

this is mostly attributable to the "greening of the grid" . . .

the Pacific Northwest region has reduced its carbon intensity by 25%

(coal plant retirement, increased wind, increased hydro efficiency)

so that's very encouraging, even though the City can't really claim much credit for it

(this year's report used regional grid figures to maintain consistency with 2009 CAP)

(next year's report will look at local, NorthWestern Energy-specific carbon intensity)

- substantial City energy bill savings compared to 2001: more than \$600,000 annually!

however, this does not include the up-front costs of the efficiency investments

still, very impressive!

- Chapter 4: Helena Community Energy Use Inventory & GHG Assessment

- this analysis was new, and relies upon the community-wide (city boundary) data for:

- electricity (from NorthWestern Energy)

- natural gas (from NorthWestern Energy)

- gasoline (from Montana Department of Transportation)

- diesel (from Montana Department of Transportation)

- solid waste (City figures for transfer station waste-to-be-landfilled)

- this broader analysis is important, as City govt accounts for just 1% of the energy & carbon!

- City govt uses proportionately more electricity & diesel; proportionately less gasoline

- natural gas is pretty close

- carbon intensity of community = 18.6 metric tons CO<sub>2e</sub> / person (vs 20.3 MT/person U.S.)

- seems like a fairly good result, especially considering Montana's high heating needs

- on the other hand, the city boundary contains essentially no heavy industry

- so that could partially explain our lower-than-average emissions

- (this calculation did rely on the NorthWestern Energy-specific electricity mix)

- (Pat's college students typically come in around 10 MT/person, which makes sense)

- Chapter 5: Looking to the Future (current and new sustainability projects and goals)

- continue work on the 2009 CAP recommendations

- maintain the "complete" items, and move more items into that category

- brainstorming for possible new projects and goals

- solid waste

- waste reduction, or zero-waste goal

- "universal" curbside recycling & composting

- swap events, similar to Boxing Day (held in Helena 1985-2000)

- energy & transportation

- 100% clean electricity goal -- implementation

- energy monitoring software

- energy performance contract(s)

- passenger rail

- fleet improvements

- water

- public education workshops

- tree-planting project

- staffing capacity

- additional 0.5 FTE?

- Energy Corps, or its successor?

- preparation of a new Climate Action Plan (Bozeman just released a new draft)?

- many other possibilities! please contact Pat with any suggestions

- Ann Brodsky provided some good feedback on the draft (proof-reading & substantive suggestions)

others are welcome to weigh in as well, but need not feel pressure to do so

**Emerging Issues / Other Business:**

In the interest of time, Lisa Fairman suggested (and the group agreed) to postpone the following topics to the next regular meeting:

- 1) report from Makenna Sellers on Bill McKibben's webinar (10/5/20)
- 2) winter planning retreat, similar to the one that took place last year (12/14/19)
- 3) election of officers

**Public Testimony:**

Lisa Fairman invited the public to share any comments or questions they might have. There was no oral testimony. Dr Thomas provided some written comments during the meeting through the "chat" function. He suggested revising the Bylaws if the board finds them to be too vague or restrictive (regarding noticing, etc.), and offered to get us in touch with a University of Montana professor who regularly counsels city and county governments on such topics. He also suggested that the HCCB advocate for passenger rail at a joint City-County meeting. To proceed, the City Clerk (Dannai Clayborn) could add it to the agenda at the City Manager's request.

**Next Meeting:**

Chair Fairman announced that the next HCCB meeting will take place Thursday, November 12 at 4:30 pm. The meeting will again likely take place via Zoom. As always, please forward any suggested agenda items to Lisa.

**Adjourn:**

With no further comment from the board, staff, or public, Lisa adjourned the meeting at 5:58 pm.

**Minutes prepared by Patrick Judge.**