September 13, 2021

Mayor and City Commissioners of Helena
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

RE: Citizen Conservation Board request for consideration of board extension

Dear Mayor Collins and Commissioners Dean, Haladay, Logan, and O’Loughlin,

The Citizen Conservation Board (CCB) of the City of Helena respectfully requests you to consider 1) Amending Section 5 of City Resolution 20375 to extend the CCB. Without this action, the CCB will sunset January 28, 2023; and 2) Amending Section 1 of Resolution 20375 to add two additional At-Large Members to better represent our community.

As stated in the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change press release, “it is indisputable that human activities are causing climate change, making extreme climate events, including heat waves, heavy rainfall, and droughts, more frequent and severe.” [1] Over the next century our summers in Montana are expected to continue to get hotter and drier, and our average annual snowpack will continue to decline. [2] Wildfire seasons are expected to continue to lengthen, and severe droughts will become more frequent. These expected climate changes will have significant impacts to our agricultural community, our water supplies, our forests, and our overall health. [1] The IPCC also stresses that, “unless there are immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to 1.5°C will be beyond reach.” [1]

Since its formation in 2017, the CCB has made significant strides implementing Helena’s 2009 Climate Action Plan, striving to both mitigate climate change and also prepare for the inevitable changes and challenges our community will face. To date, the City of Helena, with advice from the CCB, has:

- Committed to take steps to power our community with 100% clean electricity by 2030 (Resolution 20592);
- Set the groundwork to improve our waste management system and reduce our waste footprint (Resolution 20643);
- Launched a water conservation education and outreach program in 2021 that included workshops and trainings for residents, as well as the development of a “Water Wise Helena” information pamphlet for distribution; and
- Included climate and sustainability-related recommendations and input on the 2020 City Growth Policy

While as Board members we are very proud of the City’s many accomplishments, there is much more work to be done. In the coming years, the CCB plans to continue to advise and work with City staff to create a stronger, healthier, and more resilient community. Examples of our most recent work include:
• Taking steps alongside other cities in Montana to help implement Helena’s 100% clean electricity commitment;
• Working collaboratively with the Public Works Department to develop a Strategic Plan and a Master Plan for waste management, consistent with the City’s waste reduction resolution; and
• Improving upon existing water conservation education and programs, aiming to reduce Helena’s per capita water consumption to less than 100 gallons/person/day.

There has never been a more critical time for the City of Helena to maintain a specialized board committed to climate and conservation issues. We believe our City will need this action-oriented Citizen Conservation Board to continue to assist the City to realize the goals of the Climate Action Plan, recent energy and waste resolutions, and goals set forth in the most recent growth policy, now and into the foreseeable future.

In closing, the CCB requests the Helena City Commission grant the Citizen Conservation Board continued existence by eliminating the sunset clause that would otherwise terminate the CCB (Section 5 of Resolution 20375).

In addition to striking the sunset clause (Section 5), in order to better represent our community, the CCB requests the Commission also amend Section 1 of Resolution 20375 and add two At-Large board Members, for a total of 16 Conservation Board Members.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Diana Hammer
Chair, Citizens Conservation Board

cc: City Manager, Rachel Harlow-Schalk
    Environmental Regulation Pre-Treatment Manager, Ed Coleman