

Helena Citizen Conservation Board
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

April 17, 2019

Mayor Collins and City Commissioners
City County Building, Room 323
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

Lewis and Clark County Commissioners
City County Building
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

Dear Mayor Collins, City Commissioners, and Lewis and Clark County Commissioners:

Helena's Citizen Conservation Board wrote the City in early January to formally recommend the City hire a Sustainability Coordinator in fiscal year 2020. (A copy of that letter is enclosed.) Our Board recently learned there has been some conversation about a joint hire for a Sustainability Coordinator by the City and County. We are writing now to endorse such a position because many of our conservation concerns and strategies to address them extend beyond City boundaries.

As brief background for the County Commissioners, the Citizen Conservation Board was established by the City of Helena in 2017 to recommend measures to the City to undertake sustainability measures to protect our community and help combat climate change. We are a volunteer Board, we meet monthly, and many of us are employed or are students. Some of us have technical expertise, others of us do not. What has become apparent to our Board is that for our local governments to undertake a cohesive and strategic approach to energy conservation, a full-time staff position is necessary.

Other Montana communities have made this commitment. The City of Missoula employs an Energy Conservation Coordinator, and Missoula County has both an Energy Conservation and Sustainability Coordinator and a Sustainability Educator. Bozeman employs both a Sustainability Program Manager and an Energy Conservation Technician, and the City-County of Butte-Silver Bow recently advertised for a Community Development Director to work, in part, on projects related to energy efficiency and sustainability education.

We are not writing to discuss the facts of climate change. Here, in Montana, we are all too aware that we are threatened with severe winters and summers, floods and drought, and more. These threats affect each of us in innumerable ways, including our health, our economic security, and the security of our natural resources. While we know you have taken measures to reduce energy consumption, we also know there is more to be done. Full-time staff is the most tangible and coordinated way to integrate energy conservation and sustainability measure into all local government operations, infrastructure, and services. We are confident that implementation of conservation, sustainability, and resiliency measures will produce energy and cost savings to our local governments and citizens, as well.

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

Sincerely,



Hannah Cail, Chair

Enclosure: January 11, 2019 Board letter to City

Helena Citizen Conservation Board
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

January 11, 2019

City Commission Office
City County Building, Room 323
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

Re: Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator

Dear Mayor Collins and City Commissioners:

We, the Citizen Conservation Board, formally recommend the City hire a Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator in the fiscal year 2020. The purpose of our Board is to advise the Helena City Commission regarding actions to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and to accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy that will benefit Helena's security, prosperity, and health. Since our first meeting in January 2018, we have spent our monthly meetings gathering information from various City departments (e.g., facilities, recycling, waste-water) about their programs with a focus on energy usage and conservation measures taken or being considered by the City.

Apparent after the informative presentation is the City's need for a more cohesive and strategic approach to energy conservation, which can best be achieved with a full-time, dedicated staff position. Nearly 10 years ago, the Helena Climate Change Task Force, our predecessor advisory body, published its 2009 Action Plan. At that time, the Action Plan recommended the City hire a Sustainability Coordinator to conduct education and outreach for businesses and residents on greenhouse gas reduction, water conservation, and other resource conservation measures. A detailed description of the Sustainability Coordinator is outlined on Page 16 of the 2009 Action Plan. In 2009, the City committed to hiring a 0.5 FTE position pending grant funding. However, we now request the City renew its commitment and fully fund a 1.0 FTE position as a FY20 budget line item not tied to unpredictable grant funding. We strongly believe that substantial energy savings will more than offset the cost of a Sustainability Coordinator.

The U.S. Global Change Research Program, created by Congress in 1990, recently published its Fourth National Climate Assessment. The government report details findings that are not surprising but are nonetheless alarming. Climate change is irrefutable, and the risks to human and global health are severe. We took special note of the report's Summary Findings:

Communities, governments, and businesses are working to reduce risks from and costs associated with climate change by taking action to lower greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation strategies. While mitigation and adaptation efforts have expanded substantially in the last four years, they do not yet approach the scale considered necessary to avoid substantial damages to the economy, environment, and human health over the coming decades.

City Conservation and Sustainability Coordinator

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Given the gravity of climate change to our city, state, nation, and world, in order to effectuate change at the local level, the City of Helena must prioritize hiring a full-time Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator to effectively explore, recommend, and implement conservation measures and to coordinate a comprehensive conservation strategy for the Helena community.

Many of Montana's cities already invest in Conservation & Sustainability Coordinators, such as Missoula, Bozeman, and Butte-Silver Bow. We ask the City of Helena to invest in the future of our community and fully fund a full-time Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator position charged with educating the public, monitoring the City's energy consumption, and recommending conservation and sustainability measures to help the City reach sustainability goals that prompted the creation of our Citizen Conservation Board in light of the Paris Climate Accord.

We cannot emphasize the importance of this recommendation enough. While we are working to make recommendations to the City on conservation measures, we are only a volunteer Board that meets only monthly and many of us have full-time jobs. The 2009 Helena Climate Change Task Force Action Plan recommended, and the City committed to lead Helena towards energy security, water conservation, and greenhouse gas emission reductions across every department of municipal operations. With a full-time Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator, the City can better accomplish the goals of the 2009 Action Plan and the Paris Climate Accord; therefore, we urge the City of Helena to renew its commitment toward our shared goals in conserving energy and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to the City's response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hannah Cail".

Hannah Cail
Chair