

CITY OF HELENA
SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION MEETING
January 8, 2020 - 6:00 P.M.
Room 326, City-County Building

Time & Place A special City Commission meeting was held on Wednesday, January 8, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., in Room 326, 316 N. Park Avenue, Helena, Montana.

1. Call to Order, Introductions, Opening Comments.

Mayor Collins, Commissioner Haladay, Commissioner Dean, Commissioner Logan, Commissioner O' Loughlin, City Manager Cortez, City Attorney Jodoin, and Interim City Clerk Dannai Clayborn.

No opening comments were made.

2. Commission Comments, Questions.

City Organizational Climate Survey to include City employees, outside community partners, and stakeholders.

Discussion

Commissioner Logan explained the reasons for he called for this special meeting. He stated that the elections in November recognized the problems with the direction of the City and how relations are strained within and without the City. He noted the loss of employees and employee morale. He stated the community is entitled to know the causes of these issues via an objective assessment like an organizational or climate survey. A survey would identify changes that need to be made and tools to do so. Commissioner Logan desired a limited scope survey addressing leadership issues, communications, and interpersonal relations. He asked if other commissioners were interested.

Mayor Collins concurred but wished for a broader survey to see how the City operations were running. He also expressed concern about how long it would take and the costs for a survey that would include all community stakeholders and partners were involved.

Commissioner Dean had personal experience with schools and that performance was dictated by culture and that if there was a failure of culture it is needed to step back and ascertain the reasons why. Commissioner Dean wanted to know why several individuals had declined to accept the finance director position. She also addressed Mayor Collins concerns and pointed to the joint City-County meeting the day before and highlighted the issue of communication struggles between the City, County, and Municipal Court.

Commissioner Haladay was not opposed to an organizational survey and thought one was long overdue, especially with regard to pay philosophy. He reiterated the Mayor's point about a limited scope of an organizational survey. Commissioner Haladay pointed to information regarding city turnover that showed turnover was not different than prior years. He also spoke about the use of temporary employees in historical practice. He was not against an organizational survey but needed to understand the scope better in order to understand the implications and costs. He reiterated a salary survey was needed this year.

Commissioner Logan spoke with several community stakeholders during his campaign and he got a real sense that there was a huge morale problem and was concerned that issue would get lost amongst bigger purpose. Mayor Collins stated he thought the scope was inclusive.

Commissioner Logan spoke that he would like the survey to focus on employee morale and if needed it could be limited to the city-county building and keeping the dimensions of assessment limited to address cost concerns. He also stated he and Commissioner Dean were not elected because of disagreement with City policy.

Commissioner Logan read an email from a constituent that explained some of the concerns that community partners were struggling to work with the City.

City Attorney Jodoin suggested that perhaps the Commission may want to have a closed discussion given the subject matter but could not readily explain the rationale for closure as it may create legal issues with regard to due process of a city employee.

City Attorney Jodoin recommended the meeting be closed pursuant to 2-3-203(3), MCA, to avoid discussion of a private personnel matter. Mayor Collins concurred and made a finding that the individual right of privacy outweighed the public's right to know. Mayor Collins closed the meeting.

CLOSED MEETING DISCUSSION

Mayor Collins re-opened the meeting to public and invited public comment.

Public Comment

Dr. Gregory Thomas, principal at Roostech offered his company's services to conduct the limited scope survey.

Discussion

Commissioner O'Loughlin recommended that the Commission direct City Attorney Jodoin to seek outside counsel to provide the Commission further guidance on how to move forward. Mayor Collins agreed.

Director Franco asked that the Human Resources be included, and Commissioner O'Loughlin concurred.

City Attorney Jodoin reminded the Commission that the information discussed during the closed portion of this meeting is private.

The meeting was adjourned.

/S/ WILMOT COLLINS
MAYOR

ATTEST:

/S/ THOMAS JODOIN
CITY ATTORNEY