

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING
May 13, 2020 – 4:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/4129664351>

1. **Call to order, introductions, opening comments-** Mayor Collins called the meeting to order. Commissioners Dean, Logan, and O'Loughlin were present. Commissioner Haladay was running late but will be present later.

Staff present: Interim City Manager Melinda Reed; City Attorney Thomas Jodoin; Police Chief Steve Hagen; Transportation Systems Director David Knoepke; Budget Analyst Chris Couey; HPAC Chair Susan Steffens, Vice-Chair Kristin Drees; Peggy Benkelman;

2. **Administrative Meeting Summary** None.

3. **Commission comments, questions-** Mayor Collins asked for comments and questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Logan had a comment in the context of the last few days given the ongoing budget work sessions and feedback that's been received from constituents, relative to residential solid waste and Saturday's discussion. There are some concerns the first of which pertains to residents who use the transfer station and the impact that closing Sunday has caused; it's been closed as an adjustment to COVID-19. This has clearly impacted city residents and their use of the facility. Sunday is a time that fits people's lives and when the City looks at re-opening again sometime in the future, whenever that might be, it warrants a discussion about whether changing the hours on weekends is a long-term approach. Commissioner Logan commented that he'd like to continue the discussion and see more study done on the issue before going down the path of limiting hours on weekends. Another issue is a question that Commissioner Dean brought up, given the financial revenue struggles that the City will be seeing, he thinks the warm storage building in the residential solid waste fund should be passed by this year, since that's going to cost \$1.35 million.

Commissioner Dean's follow-up comment in response to Commissioner Logan's thoughts is that is also why on Saturday she'd asked to see an analysis of what the cost benefit would be; it's important to evaluate the resources that would be expended and the services that the City would be providing. Services need to be addressed above everything else and given the cost of the warm storage building that's something that needs a harder look since things are going to continue being hard financially for the community and for the City.

Mayor Collins commented that he knows Commissioner Dean did ask for that analysis and the director did agree that he would put that together and since that's being worked on, then after the numbers come together the Commissioner will look at it again for discussion.

Commissioner Logan stated that after a few days' thinking about the issues he wanted to bring it up as an individual Commissioner.

4. **City Manager's Report-**

As a general comment going into her report, Interim City Manager Reed would like to thank everyone who's been involved with budget work sessions so far, which have been productive; she appreciates the Finance Department getting the information out.

- a. **COVID 19 Response-** Interim City Manager Reed reported that City services continue to be modified throughout Phase 1 and there is an ongoing effort to inform the public so

please check the City's website as the information is being put out there. Regarding wastewater testing, the results have been delayed for two weeks and the City will ensure the public is informed about those results. Interim Manager then turned the discussion over to Budget Analyst Chris Couey for a review of utility billing inserts.

Mr. Couey reported there is an update on the RFP for the utility billing inserts. Those are not done on-site, rather it's done out of state. The contract was going to be due at the end of July and there have been some issues with that in the past where people aren't getting their bills until after they receive their delinquency notices for non-payment. The City put out a new RFP including some of those stipulations. There have been three bids received, two of which are from out of state and one is local. One of the out of state bidders included the ability to do things like color inserts so they have been taken out of consideration. Of the other two bidders, the local company came in at about \$25 less than the out of state company. The City feels it will be a better service to have a quicker, 3-4 day turnaround from billing to when customers should receive the bill, as compared to the 10-14 day turnaround for out-of-state billing. A local company will also make the process more efficient. Staff has estimated the personnel time, etc. that's spent could come out to \$1300/month given the time they spend correcting errors due to late receipt of bills. The City has chosen to go with the local provider for utility billing and inserts.

Ms. Reed then provided a brief update on the downtown parking situation and this will be brought to the full Commission meeting next week. A survey has been circulated that was conducted by the BID; it appears the preference is to support some form of reduced or free parking downtown. There will be more information for the next Commission meeting so the Commission can consider how to move forward in June. Direction on specific information the Commission would like is welcome, and David Knoepke is available to answer any questions.

b. Open Container Update - Ms. Reed referred this update to Police Chief Hagen.

Chief Hagen reported that last Monday there was a meeting with people from downtown and other interested parties; Pete Zuckeburg put the meeting together. The State Department of Revenue was also brought into the conversation since one concern was liquor license restrictions that would prevent businesses from serving alcohol outside of their business. After that discussion, only one business has expressed interested in moving part of their business outside, which was Riley from Ten Mile Brewery. Chief Hagen is meeting with him again tomorrow to discuss his plan. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis looking at safety issues. HPD will work with the Parks department because Riley will be taking his business out into the Walking Mall. The normal permitting system will be used, which typically takes 30 days to get approved, but this should be able to get turned around in about seven days. Riley was the only one expressing interest, and at the Monday meeting Chief Hagen explained that changing the City ordinance would be a much bigger course of action and possibly is something to look at doing next summer. For this summer, businesses who want to expand outdoors the permitting system is the best option.

c. Update on Downtown Distancing and Hygiene Measures – Ms. Reed reported there was a preliminary meeting with Transportation, Parks, and Community Development to discuss what to look at as far as hand washing and/or hand sanitizing stations both downtown and other high-traffic areas like bus stops. This discussion was to get an idea about cost and location. There's another meeting set for next week and it will

be brought to the Commission. There's also another conversation happening with the new TIF Advisory Board to see if this is a priority for them. Direction is welcomed on this issue, but right now they are just looking at moving this forward. At this time Ms. Reed took questions and comments about open containers, downtown hygiene and parking.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked Chief Hagen about the normal permitting process being for one specific event one day, so as these permit requests are being considered is it possible for people to submit applications for longer periods of time? Chief Hagen answered that is exactly what the process will be; in this case they are working with Riley to get the permit extended through at least the end of May and working with the Parks department to determine the best option for all involved. The process will be adjusted as needed but he doesn't think it will be a problem having permits lasting several weeks as long as the insurance each company applies for will accept the extended timeframes.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked Interim City Manager Reed about the issue of possibly using TIF funds for sanitizing stations. What is the timeline for the TIF Advisory Committee or is there something the Commission will need to provide for a short-term, COVID-specific solution while waiting for federal resources, as well. Is it up to the TIF Advisory Board to make those decisions? Ms. Reed answered that the City is moving forward with identifying costs and locations for these items in order to submit that to FEMA as COVID-related expenses, while considering the TIF Advisory Fund as an option. If there's a desire to expand the project or have locations outside of downtown to be covered by FEMA, then key places will be mapped out and costs identified to keep the process quickly moving while identifying funding options for it. With the Commission's direction the City would like to put forward an option that will be something the City would do regardless of what revenue stream is supporting it to ensure that the City will be able to provide options downtown in order to facilitate re-opening.

Commissioner Dean expressed excitement that a local company is going to be used for utility billing. She then asked Chief Hagen about the conversations he'd had with local business; her understanding is that Department of Revenue was going to change the timeline about how they were going to support local businesses during COVID with regard to liquor licenses. Was there a discussion about that in the initial conversation, and what is DOR using to move things along? Chief Hagen confirmed there was a discussion that DOR was going to try to speed up the process; he's not sure if that's happening or not. As HPD works with businesses on this they are informing people that just because the City approves the permit, they also need to ensure they work with DOR to be compliant with licensing. He doesn't know if DOR is actually expediting the process, but they said they would.

d. HPAC – Ghost Sign Presentation – Interim City Manager Reed reported that there will be a presentation about ghost signs by the Public Art Committee and she turned the floor over to whoever is doing the presentation.

Kristin Drees, the vice-chair of the Helena Public Art Committee, presented information that was compiled by Pam Attardo to the Commission about ghost signs, which are advertising signs originally painted on the sides of buildings in the downtown area. Page 12 of the agenda lists the number of signs around town that should be refurbished, priorities for the Public Art Committee and information about costs. Susan Steffens, the

chairman of the Helena Public Art Committee reiterated what Kristin said about the signs generating tourism and business in Helena.

Commissioner Dean asked Ms. Steffens about the two signs the Committee had discussed wanting to get refurbished – while one is on the side of On Broadway, what is the second sign and what would the cost of the second sign be? Ms. Steffens provided further details about the second ghost sign – it's still undecided, but the Committee will be voting on that at an upcoming meeting. Commissioner Dean asked Mr. Couey about the money budgeted, about \$50,000 from the General Fund under the City Manager's budget. The question is whether all of that funding is still intact, and then what is it allocated for.

Mr. Couey answered that the funding in that particular account has had multiple claims on it over the last few months from many different people and organizations. The Interim City Manager and assistant to the City Manager, Amanda Opitz, have been looking at who and where the City can appropriate some of that money; they would be able to provide a better answer at this point as far as how they've decided to allocate those funds for this year. Going forward into next year, there is a line allocated under this fund for \$20,000 at this point, specifically for ghost signs. This year, the \$50,000 of downtown initiative funds, there are a few other claims to that from the former City Manager.

Interim City Manager Reed explained at this time she does not have a clear answer on that question; these funds have been placed in the 2021 budget and her office is trying to identify how the downtown Helena funds were promised. This has not been resolved yet, but her hope is that will be done soon. Commissioner Dean requested that the Commission be updated on that.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked Mr. Couey if previously the Public Art Committee had some funds that were allocated for their budget. From looking at the minutes on page 23 of the packet, from an administrative meeting, HPAC came forward with their priorities but Commissioner O'Loughlin's take on it was those priorities were subject to what was available in their budget. There were some early conversations last year about reducing HPAC's budget by \$8000 but the Commission ultimately did not do so. What was the HPAC's budget and how much of it has been expended?

Mr. Couey explained that for the HPAC their budget is fund 233. For FY20, they were allocated from the general fund \$12,000 and there was a donation of about \$7,000 so in total they had \$19,000 for this year. So far \$7500 has been spent from that. Looking at next year, there was a \$30,000 donation the HPAC was expecting from the Boundy family and which would then be expended on a memorial sculpture. The City is only providing the same \$12,000 that they had done previously. Commissioner O'Loughlin clarified that if what's reflected in the FY21 budget is in addition to the \$20,000 previously allocated. Mr. Couey explained the \$20,000 is not specifically the HPAC's budget; it's in the City Manager's budget for next year. Commissioner O'Loughlin commented for areas like this former Commissioner Noonan's institutional knowledge was always helpful; he had emphasized that by building up the HPAC's fund over time that allowed them to be able to do bigger projects. Commissioner O'Loughlin asked Ms. Drees and Ms. Steffens about the timeline of doing the ghost sign restoration projects, and if they're anticipating, assuming they have the needed resources, doing these projects in the summer of 2020.

Ms. Steffens explained they do not anticipate these being done this summer in 2020. COVID-19 notwithstanding, it would require putting it all together too quickly to do this summer. HPAC is also working on two other projects – traffic signal box designs, and the Boundy memorial sculpture. The hope with the ghost signs is to get underway in the spring of 2021 or possibly fall 2020. It's also possible there might be access to some

private funding through the building owners where the signs are being worked on, if businesses want to donate.

Peggy Benkelman, HPAC Coordinator, commented that in the packet is a letter to former Commissioner Noonan from former City Manager Ana Cortez, dated August 13, 2019, that specified they did want to move ahead with the project. Also, it had already been discussed at an administrative meeting September 18, 2019 – the Commission and the City Manager wanted to approve the ghost signs. HPAC was hoping to stay with that and get at least two ghost signs done. HPAC already has the money in their budget and are currently working on the traffic signal box project, which is \$9,000. Since the Boundy sculpture is privately funded there's no cost to the City for that.

- e. **HPAC – Crosswalk Painting Presentation** – Interim City Manager Reed reported there's another HPAC presentation about the crosswalks and turned the floor over to HPAC representatives.

Sandra Hines, representing the Holter Museum of Art as the Education Director, reported that the Afterschool Teen Arts Council (ATAC) has been working on a community arts project since January; the proposal is painting the crosswalks at Lawrence and Last Chance Gulch, near Bert & Ernie's, Wells Fargo, and just down the street from the museum. The meeting packet includes images about the project. Ms. Hines then handed floor over to Megan Lund, who will discuss the ATAC and their goals for this project; after that Janaina Viera-Marques will explain the plan for implementation.

Megan Lund introduced herself to the Commission and explained the project of the ATAC and the committee's goals. Ms. Hines then introduced Janaina Viera-Marques, the lead artist on this project. Per the packet the goal had been to finish this project on Vigilante Day but that did not happen. The project is still being planned subject to the COVID-19 crisis and CDC and Lewis & Clark County guidelines are being followed. ATAC is looking to the Commission for permission to do this project and guidance on obtaining any needed permits; Ms. Viera-Marques will now speak briefly to this.

Ms. Viera-Marques explained that ATAC is very excited about this project which is a wonderful reflection of the Helena community. The plan is to implement the project as soon as CDC guidelines dictate how it should be done. Starting to paint would be done very early in the morning and go until mid-afternoon when the painting would be done on the crosswalks. The content of the paintings will be about the history of Helena and of Montana and it will be done in a way to beautify the city. ATAC has been reaching out to citizens and expects to be able to finish this painting in one day, so they are asking the Commission for support in making this project happen.

Transportation Systems Director David Knoepke commented that the department has been working with ATAC on this project; from the standpoint of maintenance there are concerns with the paint colors. Acrylic paint has been tested outside and this type of paint can wear differently depending on tire paths, so at some point if the project is approved, the paintings would wear away and the City would then have to go in to chip-seal or fog-seal the intersection and then re-stripe the crosswalks. Another concern is that after contacting MDT, since Last Chance Gulch is an urban route in their jurisdiction, there was no firm answer but apparently MDT is reluctant to approve a project like this at this point. They thought it might be better implemented on private property. The City could look at alternate locations for this, such as the Walking Mall where there is lots of foot traffic and visibility. Either way, Transportation will work with the Commission and ATAC to determine the best path for this project.

Mayor Collins asked Mr. Knoepke about his comment that he's not certain that MDT is in favor; does that mean it's not definite and that the City can still work with them? Mr. Knoepke answered that ATAC would have to submit an application to MDT for review, which could be done while the City is still under Phase 1 reopening; that could give MDT some time to look at the project and make a decision and present the City with questions. Mayor Collins explained to ATAC members about the application process, that should be started and then the Commission can see where it goes from there.

Commissioner Dean thanked the Holter and the members of the ATAC for their leadership on this project. There are examples of this sort of project nationwide and they've been very successful and done lots of good for local neighborhoods; she expressed the hope that this is something that the Commission can work with the City, the Holter and the students on to make sure everything is compliant while also supporting the project. In other neighborhoods that have had projects similar to this they have also experienced pushback from regulatory bodies, but in the end upon project completion they've been embraced by their communities and have presented no impediment.

Mayor Collins concurred with Commissioner Dean in expressing support for the project but also appreciated Mr. Knoepke's point about working with MDT to see the project to completion. He asked for feedback from Mr. Knoepke to let the Commission know what they can do to help things move forward.

Commissioner Logan commented that he attended a meeting between HPAC, the Holter and ATAC where a presentation was held at Bert & Ernie's – that was before the shelter in place order was implemented, and it was a great presentation and very heartfelt. Particularly as it's been shown how youth have been impacted by staying at home and online learning, and being limited in their interactions with the community, Commissioner Logan stated he feels this is a great project and outlet for teenagers that would add beauty to the community.

Interim City Manager stated that the last item on her agenda for this meeting is about the discussion at the Saturday work session regarding solid waste and solid waste diversion. This has two parts where direction will be needed: first, increasing the City's contribution to the recycling program – if that is the Commission's intention then the City will start the resolution of intent process. Secondly, there appears to be interest in other solid waste diversion options, and if that's something the Commission is interested in providing direction to explore for the future, rather than in the immediate short-term of within this fiscal year's budget.

Mayor Collins commented that there's no problem with those options being pursued and he would encourage the Commission to move forward. Commissioner Dean expressed agreement with Mayor Collins and commented that it will be important to involve Patrick Judge as well as the Citizen Conservation Board which is also looking into zero-waste opportunities. Mr. Judge would have recent notes from those meetings and some work had been started there. Any opportunity to start pursuing a more aggressive waste diversion program is important. If increasing the City's contribution to the recycling program is important and a good place to put resources, Commissioner Dean expressed support for that as long as all waste reduction opportunities are being maximized.

Commissioner O'Loughlin commented she would support moving forward with Commissioner Haladay's proposal to increase the contribution to recycling. There hasn't yet been a specific proposal for solid waste diversion but that's something the City should keep looking at and potentially build out over several months, including work sessions so Mr. Judge can provide the Commission with updates and potential options and timelines. In the context of the FY21 budget, Commissioner O'Loughlin expressed support for the current proposal.

Commissioner Logan stated he's open to discussion on the solid waste diversion but is also comfortable with the City's contribution to the recycling program as it stands.

5. **Litigation Strategy-** City Attorney Jodoin provided updates on two items. Regarding Beattie Street, yesterday Judge Seeley denied the plaintiffs' request for a preliminary injunction and dissolved the temporary restraining order, so the City can move forward with work on the Beattie Street trailhead and street improvement project at any time. Helena Sand & Gravel will need a few days to mobilize and plans to start Monday morning. Per Judge Seeley's order work can only be done between 8:00 am-7:00 pm, which was going to be standard operating practice on this project regardless.

Mr. Jodoin provided an update on the second item which is the retaliation lawsuit that the Montana Independent Living Project has brought against the City. Since the last update to the Commission, the Montana Supreme Court denied their request for writ of supervisory control and sent it back to the District Court. Mr. Maffitt, a party to that complaint, voluntarily withdrew, so MILP is the only party left. It's now being structured so that MILP can properly appeal the District Court's decision about whether MILP has standing to make a retaliation complaint before the City gets to the next step. The City has a mediation scheduled with MILP on May 21 to be attended by City Attorney Jodoin, Murray Warhank representing the City, and an MMIA representative.

6. **Department Requests-** No requests were received.

7. **Department Presentations-**

- a. **Public Works/Engineering – Presentation of Rodney Street Reconstruction Phase 1 – 90% Design Update.**

The City's design consultant, CDM Smith, will be presenting an update on Phase 1 of the Rodney Street Reconstruction Project. The project is to reconstruct the curb, gutter, sidewalk, street, water mains, and sewer mains from Broadway to 9th Ave. The consultant's first design, based on the City Engineering Standards, included 10-foot travel lanes, 6-foot parking lanes, 2-foot curb and gutter, 7-foot landscaped boulevards, and 5-foot sidewalks with curb extensions (bulb-outs) to enhance pedestrian safety and provide additional greenspace.

Through the four public meetings on the project, the overwhelming comments were to maintain the feel of the existing street, keeping or replacing trees, and enhance the landscape. Business owners voiced concerns over narrowing of the street to the City Standard 10-foot travel lanes and the bulb-outs. The major concerns for the business owners from narrowing of the street was the impact to on-street parking, delivery trucks, and safety for exiting from parked cars. There were additional concerns from the business owners that the bulb-outs would impact on-street parking and turning movements of delivery trucks. As a result of the public meetings and business owner concerns, the design has been modified to increase the travel lanes to 11-feet and reduced the bulb-outs for easier truck turning movements in the business section, Broadway to 6th Ave. The modifications to the City Standard Design will require a deviation for wider travel lanes and eliminate or reduce landscaping and trees in the business section. The total estimate for the project, engineering and construction, is between \$2.65 Million and \$3.5 Million. The break down for the high estimate is \$820,000 for the water, \$620,000 for the wastewater, and \$2,065,000 for the street. As in the current proposed budget, Wastewater and Street Maintenance will require a loan for the project.

Mayor Collins commented that he's received emails from residents in that area indicating that this project will decrease the width of the street. From Mr. Young's explanation it appears that there will actually be an increase so he asked for some clarification.

Mr. Young explained that that the widening he was speaking about is in the area from 6th to Broadway in the business district area. North of 6th, up to 9th, the design follows engineering

standards for parking and driving lanes. On those three specific blocks the width is proposed to decrease from 31.9 feet curb-to-curb to 29 feet. This allows more boulevard space for the trees, which was a large part of the public response, but it also follows the complete street engineering standard which streets are required to meet unless the department receives Commission approval.

Mr. Leland commented that the way the roadway is currently constructed is wider than the city standards. The design itself is to go to city standards, which would narrow the street, and with the original design it's going out a little wider than standards. The current proposal is to narrow the street but it will still be wider than the approved city standards for street width. The standard for a travel lane is 10 feet, which is in the design, and in the business district it's been expanded to 11 feet but as it exists today it's at 12 feet. There will be some narrowing of the street but it will still meet city standards.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked first of all, going back to the bulb-outs, they've been reduced from the original design; based on attending a listening sessions she heard that that's been adjusted. Upon following up with area businesses they indicated that was the first time they'd heard about it. She then asked staff if they would be able to meet individually with business owners to discuss the changes to the bulb-outs in the design – was that able to happen, and secondly what feedback has been received about this?

Mr. Leland answered that staff has been meeting with most of the business owners and anyone else who wants to talk about it. Some of the business owners are still unsatisfied with the bulb-outs and want them removed. The design team felt that having bulb-outs made the design more pedestrian-friendly and safer so they'd try to keep those in such a way as to accommodate turning movements. Some business owners would prefer the bulb-outs be removed and the street be left as-is without landscaping. Removing the bulb-outs would reduce the amount of landscaping, and that was another comment that came up during public meetings, that is people want to see more landscaping and greenery in the area.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked about Mayor Collins' point about street width. One of the comments that has been received was regarding snow removal and snow plowing and how that might further narrow the street. She asked for staff response to that issue relative to how reducing the width of the street by two feet will look like in winter.

Transportation Systems Director David Knoepke answered that this section of Rodney has been added to the snow removal area but didn't have to deal with that area much due to light snowfall this winter. In the future, snow will be removed more often. There will be a berm from minimal snowfall but for larger snow events the department will handle snow removal both on Rodney and in the downtown area.

Commissioner Logan asked Mr. Leland about the impact of the bulb-outs on on-street parking. Mr. Leland referred this question to Shaheen for a full answer, but this will really have minimal impact on the area because an attempt was made to keep everything within the striped no-parking areas.

Shaheen commented that in general the bulb-outs generally match where parking is prohibited by yellow paint. Since the project has mimicked the area's parking there will be minimal impact to on-street parking. As far as narrowing the street, one block where most comments were received is between 5th and 6th Ave. People were considered about the width there and the project design is widening the street on that block by two feet.

Mr. Leland explained he was done with the presentation and can take further questions or any direction from the Commission as far as being ok with the street widths and bulb-outs.

Commissioner Dean asked if the neighbors and businesses were notified that this presentation was on the agenda for this meeting. Mr. Young stated that there is a spreadsheet showing the sign-in sheet contact information from all the public meetings; last week an email was sent out to all the contacts that the department received, about 70 people, reaching out to them about it. One party responded electronically with comments since she wouldn't be able to attend today.

Commissioner Dean asked if the department felt like the concerns brought up by the area residents and businesses have been sufficiently addressed or if per neighborhood comments if the issue of street widening/narrowing has not been addressed sufficiently. Mr. Young answered that the specific letter that they received brought to light the compromise that was being sought. Many participants at public meeting said they wanted to keep the tree-lined street and boulevards. Currently many of the trees planted on Rodney are planted two feet off the curb; when the street goes to city street standard width and reduces the north end a little, it will improve the distance from the curb to those trees. It sounds like as far as snow berms on the curb, that might be more of a street maintenance issue to be worked on with operators and snow plows, if they aren't clearing snow off the road. The boulevard is there to catch that snow so it should be on the road. Per Mr. Knoepke, in the business district snow will be removed after large snow events, and north of that area it's important for operators to understand they need to get the snow on the boulevard.

Commissioner Dean commented that first of all, another public meeting isn't necessarily needed but maybe something like a quick survey to the 70 people on the contact list. Based on information she's received in the last week it's unclear if all of the neighborhood's concerns have been completely addressed. There might still be confusion about what has and has not been fixed. Secondly if there could be a Major Projects tab built on the City's website to include big projects like this and related information, to help make it easier for people to know where to go to look for information. Since this will be a major project this is something Commissioner Dean would like to see posted along with all the scans, comments from public meetings, project timeline, and the updated project phases. This particular project might be a good opportunity to set something like that up so people know where to find information as they need it.

Commissioner Logan asked about hearing comments from members of the public and Mayor Collins commented that the Commission will hear from the public at the appropriate time.

Mr. Young stated in response to Commissioner Dean's question, on the public works page on the City's website, there is a public works projects link on the right-hand menu; Rodney Street, Knight Street, Front Street and Beattie Street are listed there. A link to those projects on the City's Home Page is something that could be discussed with Amanda Optiz and could easily be done. Commissioner Dean responded that the easier it can be made for public access the better.

Mayor Collins commented in response to Commissioner Logan there will be public comments on this topic, so for those attending who will presenting comments please be aware public comment will be coming up.

Ms. Reed commented before Parks, Recreation & Open Lands make their presentation, Commissioner O'Loughlin was having technical difficulties and is working on getting back into the meeting; she indicated she does have a couple of questions. Ms. Reed indicated Commissioner O'Loughlin will come back with her questions related to Rodney Street before public comment in order to avoid delaying the meeting.

b. Parks, Recreation & Open Lands – Helena Open Lands Recreation Plan Update – Public Involvement

Director Kristi Ponzoso, Jonathan Bartsch of CDR Associates and Deb Halliday of Halliday & Associates reported that starting in Spring 2019, the City of Helena engaged CDR Associates to lead the Helena Open Lands Recreation Plan update. The CDR team interviewed 50 individuals from 23 organizations or affiliations and reached out to nearly 80 individuals from 38 organizations or affiliations. From these interviews key themes emerged. In Fall 2019, CDR engaged Halliday & Associates to design and facilitate three community workshops to gather input on key themes. More than 100 people participated in the workshops. In addition, an online survey generated more than 150 responses. The community input helped guide the City of Helena's Open Lands Recreation Plan update.

The intent of the Helena Open Land Recreation Plan is to be an accessible, usable

guide for current and future decision making and to guide not prescribe. The City of Helena envisions this plan to serve as a guide for current and future decisions. The City recognizes that uses and demands will continue to change over time. This plan sets out broad guidance and a collaborative process to equip the community's stewardship of HOL.

The Parks Department brought the Final Draft of the Open Lands Management Plan, Recreation Chapter to the January 13th City Commission Meeting for consideration. Direction was received at that meeting to bring back to the commission the specific public involvement process outlined in Chapter 7. A draft of the public involvement process (attached) was offered by several user groups who worked together to come to consensus on what the public involvement process should look like. The Parks Department reviewed the process and made some minor changes that are reflected in the document. The proposed public involvement process is a robust and usable guide to engage the public on major recreation projects on open lands. The Parks Department would like final adoption of the Open Lands Management Plan, Recreation Chapter and accompanying public process appendix.

Lisa Bay, representing Helena Hikes, spoke regarding the draft public involvement process that was reviewed by the Parks Department and expressed appreciation for the Commission's commitment in 2018 to a public involvement process regarding Helena Open Lands as well as transparency in City services. Helena Hikes supports the adoption of this chapter and the public involvement process that's being presented, however the ad hoc committee had concerns about two other issues. One is providing an introduction to the public involvement process and giving it context about why it is needed; secondly, draft protocols for public involvement with the City updates the Open Lands Management Plan as opposed to public involvement related to major HOL projects.

Lindsay Gilstrap, representing the Helena Trails Alliance, spoke regarding the draft public involvement process being presented today and expressed support for the draft plan as it reflects the interests of a range of stakeholders in the Helena community.

Eric Sivers, representing the Montana Bicycle Guild, spoke regarding the value of bringing to City staff a starting position that had broad consensus among the three groups for the Parks Department to start their review of this process and expressed appreciation for the Department's receptivity to that.

Commissioner Dean asked if the Commission could get a copy of the other pieces mentioned by Ms. Bay. She also asked for Ms. Ponozzo's feedback on whether it's appropriate to do that all at once. Her second question is regarding section 3.1 in the draft about the release for public review project analysis reviews of all major projects at least five days in advance of the Major Projects Open House and if five days is enough advance notice given the length and technicality of some of these analysis reviews.

Ms. Ponozzo replied that Ms. Bay can provide the other two documents and is welcome to do so. The Parks Department has seen those documents but for the purpose of this meeting the goal was to provide the Commission with the specific public involvement process document per the Commission's direction. Regarding Section 3.1 the language states "at least five days in advance." Attached to the agenda is the project analysis form so these won't be hundreds of pages per project, but the language in the plan could be adjusted to reflect a longer period of time for public review before the Open House.

Mayor Collins commented "at least" means that's the minimum amount, but it can always be more, i.e. the documents could be presented two weeks ahead of time. Director Ponozzo confirmed that was correct.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if the Commission wanted to go forward with the Recreation component or hold off on that and do an update on the full plan; that question came up in January and she wondered if that's something the Department is still seeking direction on.

Director Ponozzo answered that this is no longer an issue, it was addressed at that previous meeting. The Department is not seeking an update on the entire plan, specifically they are focusing on the recreation plan because that's where there were issues. She clarified that at this point she's asking at whether this is ready for official adoption and would like feedback from the Commission.

Commissioner O'Loughlin expressed appreciation for the question of the five-day review period being raised and stated she'd be more comfortable if the standard language was at least ten days since for some major trail projects there's lots of feedback. She commended Director Ponozzo for the work that's been done proactively in the last year to get this information out, since in the past it's been challenging for the public to understand what's happening; she would support a tweaking of the language to allow for a longer public review period unless staff have concerns. She expressed appreciation for having a much clearer public information component of the Plan and is in favor of moving forward with approval.

Commissioner Dean expressed appreciation to all involved parties including the consultants and the three community groups. Mayor Collins concurred with Commissioner Dean in expressing gratitude towards the various parties who were able to come together for one cause, and for the robust public involvement; he is comfortable moving forward towards approval of the Plan.

Director Ponozzo clarified that she will be looking to take this to the next Commission meeting and put it on the consent agenda. Mayor Collins stated he was fine with that and asked for any objections. None were received. Mayor Collins asked Interim City Manager Reed to put this on the agenda for the next Commission meeting and she stated she would do so – it will either be on the next meeting agenda or the meeting following that.

c. Community Development – State of Montana Presentation of Montana Heritage Center Concept

Community Development Director Sharon Haugen introduced this evening's update on the Montana Heritage Center, on which in the future the Commission will be taking action. The first action will be on May 18 to address whether or not to close 6th Ave. Ms. Haugen turned the floor over to the State of Montana and their consultant Cushing Terrell.

The State of Montana presented the most current designs and concepts for the new Montana Heritage Center and answered questions regarding the proposal. They presented information concerning their public outreach process. The staff from the Department of Administration design team presented the newest concepts for the Montana Heritage Center and answered questions and addressed initial concerns from the Commission.

Commissioner Dean thanked the State of Montana and Cushing Terrell for their work on this project. She commented that looking at the history of the development of cities often you'll see the staple of the city being located at the end of a major road; in Helena 6th Ave. dead-ends at the City County building. In this new scenario the other end of 6th Ave. would then be the location of this new building that Helena would be lucky to have. She expressed excitement about this project both for Helena and for Montana in general.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked about the timeline for the full project since it has to go to a formal Commission meeting for vacation of 6th Ave. Cushing Terrell responded that they'd like to proceed with some further site work and parking development on the north end along 9th Ave. and 8th Ave. at some point this fall to alleviate traffic congestion that results from the Legislative Session, as well as some utility work. For the major construction of the addition, that would start in April or May 2021. The timeline is impacted by the actual construction, moving historical staff into the new addition, and then a renovation of the existing space; this is a long-term project.

Commissioner Logan expressed appreciation for a great and informative presentation.

Mayor Collins requested any public comment on all of the department presentations.

Tracy Kenyon with Montana's Credit Unions presented the Commission with comments regarding the Rodney Street development and expressed general support for the project but indicated there are some concerns about the bulb outs given delivery trucks that are seen on Rodney several days a week. She expressed appreciation to Mr. Young and Commissioner O'Loughlin for their communication and responsiveness. She also expressed concerns regarding the beautification aspect of the project since their building at the corner of Rodney and Breckenridge has no outside water and they will have a hard time with maintenance of added vegetation.

Commissioner O'Loughlin indicated she has more questions regarding Rodney Street but is fine with waiting on that until after public comment.

Doug Miller, 1213 9th Ave., commented regarding the new Montana Heritage Center and expressed concerns regarding overall traffic throughout the Capitol Complex and the closure of 6th Ave. through that area.

Evan Hammer, 1203 9th Ave., commented expressing concerns about the closure of 6th Ave. and traffic in residential areas around the Capitol Complex.

Charlie Carson, owner of the B&B Market, spoke in agreement with Ms. Kenyon with regards to the bulb outs as far as delivery trucks especially in the winter. He asked if the Commission would consider a new special improvement lighting district for Rodney St.

Greg Wirth, 501 State Street, commented on the Interim City Manager's report about the crosswalk painting as he attended the Holter ATAC presentation on behalf of the Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council. NTAC supports the proposed crosswalk painting project, and also supports the Rodney Street reconstruction project including curb bulb outs.

Commissioner O'Loughlin indicated she had technical difficulties with her Zoom connection; muffled audio ensued and the connection was lost.

Interim City Manager Reed stated that as far as any further direction needed from the Commission, she would ask for any further input and discussion regarding hygiene and hand sanitation downtown and at other strategic locations. She also stated that the parking discussion will also be brought forward should there be further direction there before it's brought to a full Commission meeting.

Commissioner Dean commented that the parking survey was helpful and it's important to get input from businesses since things are beginning to open up more down there. One thing that might be helpful is what do members' phased re-openings look like, and is there any anticipated timeframe for when traffic might be up more.

Mayor Collins told Interim City Manager Reed that the Commission will let her know if there is any further direction before the next Commission meeting.

Interim City Manager Reed clarified that she will speak with the BID and others to prepare a memo about parking prior to the next Commission meeting and circulate it, and also in regards to the downtown hygiene situation.

Commissioner O'Loughlin continued to have technical difficulties and was unable to re-connect to the meeting.

Charlie Carson addressed a question to the Commission about the hand sanitizer stations and if any would be placed on Rodney Street. Mayor Collins indicated he was not sure about that but it's being worked on. Ms. Reed confirmed they have just started identifying possible locations and they will get back to local business owners with more information.

Commissioner O'Loughlin re-connected to the meeting via audio only and indicated she had further questions on Rodney Street and where things are right now with that process, and if decisions were made while she was disconnected, or if that's being moved to another meeting for decisions or directions. Mr. Leland provided Commissioner O'Loughlin with an update on the status of the project. Commissioner O'Loughlin commented that she has further questions and it's important to provide that direction tonight. One question for Mr. Leland regarding meeting engineering design standards, did that take place with the West Main project and did that project

comply with those standards? Mr. Leland confirmed it did except for the boulevards did not go in there because they didn't have the right-of-way widths.

Commissioner O'Loughlin also asked about the Front Street project and any modifications there from the design standards. Mr. Leland stated there were not many modifications except for changing the bulb outs to allow for truck traffic in the area. Commissioner O'Loughlin commented her preference is to eliminate the bulb outs especially at Rodney and 5th, between 5th/6th and Breckenridge, given the number of comments that have been received about that and the amount of pedestrian traffic in that area. She asked if there might be an alternative traffic calming device that could help accommodate large delivery trucks.

Mayor Collins concurred on the need to be sensitive to area residents and businesses on that particular issue, indicated he would like to visit Rodney Street and asked Interim City Manager Reed if something could be arranged for tomorrow with any interested parties so that everyone can get a full picture of what incoming comments have indicated. Ms. Reed indicated she will work on arranging this with Mr. Leland for a visit tomorrow.

Commissioner Logan concurred with Commissioner O'Loughlin's concerns about the bulb outs but said he was comfortable with the street widths.

Commissioner O'Loughlin stated that there are design standards in place for a good reason but there are situations where existing streets that were designed prior to those standards as far as their impact. She expressed concern about Rodney Street being narrowed throughout that area and supports widening it beyond the standards but thinks the width should be looked at again. She's assuming the plan is to continue narrowing the street in future phases so something to think about is it necessary to narrow the street given it's a currently existing street.

Commissioner Dean indicated interest in attending the field trip to Rodney Street and she doesn't yet have enough information to make a decision on this issue right now. Having an idea about the options and pros and cons of each would be helpful and she hasn't gotten that clarity yet.

Mayor Collins reiterated to Ms. Reed the desire to have a time arranged for tomorrow to visit Rodney St. with Mr. Leland and other interested parties. Ms. Reed indicated she will email all the arrangements.

Commissioner O'Loughlin stated she is aware that ultimately a decision has to be made and there may not be an ideal amount of information; she's spent a lot of time considering the issue and is ok with other members of the Commissioners if they feel they need to do more work but the risk is delaying the project if direction is not provided by the Commission soon. She asked that the Commission set out a timeline for them to return to this and make a decision.

Commissioner Haladay joined the meeting via Zoom and apologized for being tardy. He commented on the idea of the field trip and the fact that some Commissioners are asking for more information while others are comfortable with Rodney Street as it exists today. In light of existing businesses such as the B&B Market, Grateful Bread, and Jester's, Commissioner Haladay expressed that he was comfortable with Commissioner O'Loughlin's approach that was concurred by Commissioner Logan. It's worth it to have the other Commissioners going out to look at the street and talk with local business owners, but he's more interested in directing City staff to move forward with the project at tonight's meeting, in order to avoid another two-week delay. There have been comments from the community about this project for years but it's never moved forward beyond budget and public involvement. He would like the Commission to move forward with this project tonight if there's no objection.

Commissioner Dean commented regarding the letters that have been received from area residents and comments that have been received tonight, there's a balance to be considered between the amount of green space and trees and the business areas. She doesn't feel like she necessarily knows if the neighbors are all comfortable with the solution that was presented to the Commission tonight. Per Commissioner O'Loughlin's suggestion that the bulb outs be removed, Commissioner Dean indicated she would like to see the pros and cons for each version since she hasn't see any plans presented without the bulb outs.

Mayor Collins asked for clarification on what Commissioner Dean's concerns were, and she answered that she doesn't feel like she has enough information to move forward with the plans that were presented tonight, which included the bulb outs. Recommendations have come from the Commission for no bulb outs, and no plans have been presented showing that option and what the repercussions of that would be.

Mr. Leland explained that if the bulb outs were removed and the street was left as is, then with some minor modifications Rodney would still look the same way it does today. Comments were received about wanting some green space in the business area, and the only way to do that and put in some trees would be with the bulb outs and narrowing the road as much as possible. That's something that could be looked at during tomorrow's field trip.

- 8. Commission discussion/direction to City Manager-** Mayor Collins confirmed with Interim City Manager Reed that a trip will be taken to Rodney Street tomorrow, and the Commission will be informed if there are any areas of bigger concern. Ms. Reed confirmed this trip will be scheduled for tomorrow.
- 9. Adjournment-** The meeting adjourned at **5:55 p.m.**