

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING
October 12, 2011, 4:00 p.m.
Room 326, City County Building – 316 N. Park Avenue, Helena

1. Call to order, introductions, opening comments – Mayor Smith called the meeting to order. Commissioners Cartwright and Elsaesser were present. Commissioners Ellison and Thweatt were excused. Staff present was: City Manager Ron Alles; City Attorney David Nielsen; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Police Chief Troy McGee; Community Facilities Director Gery Carpenter; Parks & Recreation Director Amy Teegarden; Parks & Recreation Administrative Assistant Carol Kirkland; ACHIEVE Intern Rachel Franklin; Recreation Supervisor Debbie McLarnon; Executive Assistant Clinda Feucht and Deputy City Clerk Robyn Brown.

Others attending all or a portion of the meeting included: Lewis & Clark County Community Health Promotion Division Administrator Dorothy Bradshaw; National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Representatives Maggie Cooper and Zarnaaz Bashir; HCC Representative Lora Behlmer and Independent Record reporter Piper Haugen.

2. **September 28, 2011 Administrative Meeting Summary** – The September 28, 2011 administrative summary was approved as submitted.

3. **Commission comments, questions –**

A. Upcoming Appointments – There are no appointments on the October 17, 2011 City Commission meeting agenda.

Commissioner Elsaesser indicated he would be sending the Commission, Manager Alles and staff more information regarding his recommendations on the recycling program.

He spoke of witnessing the placement of the pedestrian bridge at the Capitol Interchange on October 11th; it was very impressive to watch its installation. Commissioner Cartwright recommended the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) be recognized for their work on the pedestrian project by holding some type of ceremony. Commissioner Elsaesser noted MDT hopes to open the bridge to the public on November 4, 2011.

Commissioner Cartwright spoke of previous discussion related to amending city ordinance to allow the possibility of a variance to allow museums to serve beer and wine during art shows. Community Development Director Sharon Haugen reported the Zoning Commission will hold a hearing on the proposed variance on November 8, 2011; the City Commission will vet the issue at its first meeting in December.

4. **City Manager's Report**

City Manager Alles reported there have been comments from the Commission regarding contact information on the city's website. While the layout may not be perfect, by going into each city department's webpage you can find contact information for staff. He noted he has not heard of any citizen not being able to reach who they need at the city. He explained IT is working to upgrade to software that would allow for problem-reporting; however, there are issues with the software originally chosen. IT staff continues to work on the matter. Commissioner Cartwright urged staff to provide a "contact us" link on the city's homepage. Commissioner Elsaesser thanked staff for working on the issue and recommended the website be updated to include a problem-reporting feature.

Manager Alles referred to the public hearing on the Caird property schedule for November 7, 2011; Commissioner Thweatt has requested the hearing be moved to an alternate meeting date. Manager Alles explained staff has followed the standard procedure for scheduling the hearing before both the Zoning Commission and City Commission and doesn't recommend re-scheduling it as it would not serve the applicant well. He does not believe it will provide an undue burden to the public or Commission to hold both the distracted driving ordinance and Caird hearing on the same night. There was Commission concurrence to hold the hearing as scheduled.

Mayor Smith referred to an article in the Missoulian regarding Helena's deer management program. Manager Alles replied he had not seen the article but noted staff has been contacted by other Montana cities and communities in other states asking for information on Helena's Urban Wildlife Management Plan.

5. **Department Discussions**
Parks & Recreation

Centennial Parks, Phase II – City Manager Ron Alles reported staff is ready to provide an overview of Phases I and II of the project and construction plans for this winter and next spring/summer. Community Facilities Director Gery Carpenter gave a power point presentation detailing the Phase I and Phase II

improvements. He noted it will take two to five years to get the native grass portions of the park growing; those areas are not irrigated. Seventy construction days were lost due to rain; that has put the grass-seeding portion of the project behind and there is not much grass infill. This will require re-seeding and intensive maintenance and care to get it growing healthily. He explained due to the work required to grow the grass the park will not be ready for full occupancy next summer and the Parks & Recreation Department will need to work with the public to alert them to the ongoing construction and seeding of the grass and the need to stay off portions of the grass. He explained the baseball fields will be ready for use next year and the bmx track needs to be relocated. The project was originally scheduled to finish in August but due to complications from the weather, substantial completion is now scheduled for May 2012.

Parks & Recreation Director Teegarden explained Phase II of the project will concern park amenities. She has been in contact with stakeholder groups regarding the various amenities, such as an all-accessible playground and bouldering wall, and these groups are starting to fundraise and do grant work. Staff needs to reach out to the bmx and dog park groups. The location of picnic tables, benches and garbage receptacles still needs to be decided. Director Teegarden noted the Friends of Centennial Trail group has been fundraising and there will be a kiosk area to display donor bricks.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if all the trees will be irrigated. Director Carpenter stated yes. He asked if there are problems with people using the trails outside of the grass/sod issues. Director Carpenter stated right now the problem is the only access the contractor has to the site is through the trails since the rest of area has been seeded. The trails cannot be damaged but there is competition between citizens and the contractor for their use, which can also be dangerous.

Commissioner Cartwright asked if Carroll College is working to make connections to the park. Director Carpenter stated he and City Manager Alles have discussed the issue and he believes it can be worked out in future if Carroll College is interested; at this point in time there aren't any areas where the trail system connects to the college.

Commissioner Cartwright discussed the trails on the south side of the park and their access to the parking lot. Director Teegarden stated additional curb cuts will be installed in the southern portion of the parking lot but probably not until next year. Director Carpenter noted since the State of Montana owns that portion of the parking lot, staff must work through them to install the curb cuts and provide the corresponding ADA requirements and access.

Mayor Smith expressed concern about how to manage the "openness" of the park until its ready to be used by the public. Mayor Smith recommended greatly limiting access to park until its ready for citizen use. Director Teegarden expressed concern for the existing contract with Helena Sand & Gravel; the park is still considered a construction site and the contractor is ultimately responsible for the site. She also discussed resource damage, after the ground freezes it may not hurt the property if citizens go off-trail but it would set a bad precedent for the spring when the ground has thawed and is soggy and construction begins again. Does the city really want to jeopardize the long-term quality of the park and create long-term maintenance issues or just communicate to citizens that staying off the park will result in long-term gain.

Director Carpenter recommended formulating a specific plan to notify the public to stay off the trails as Helena Sand & Gravel will still be liable for the site. Mayor Smith and Commissioner Elsaesser concurred with Director Carpenter's recommendation. Commissioner Cartwright also agreed but with three caveats. There are three segments of trail that have been used historically in the past and are fairly small that should remain open - the bike path that runs past Old Glory Flag, the trail that runs from Carroll College to the underpass, and the stretch along Lyndale Avenue; everything else should be off-limits to the public. Commissioner Elsaesser concurred with Commissioner Cartwright's concern regarding closing historic areas of use. Manager Alles noted the entire park is a construction site and staff has been given direction to treat it like any other construction site and limit access by the public. Commissioner Cartwright stated this site should be treated just like any other motorized project, meaning it should not be totally shut down unless absolutely necessary. He commented that he does not want non-motorized projects being treated differently than motorized. It was decided this item would be placed on another Administrative Meeting agenda for further discussion.

Manager Alles alerted the Commission that staff is working to manage dust on the project.

ACHIEVE Grant/NRPA Presentation – Manager Alles introduced Parks & Recreation Director Teegarden to update the Commission on the ACHIEVE Grant. He also introduced Zarnaaz Bashir and Maggie Cooper from National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) who were in Helena to perform a grant-required site visit.

Parks & Recreation Director Amy Teegarden reported in March 2011 the City of Helena was awarded a 2011 CDC's Healthy Communities ACHIEVE Initiative Grant. The assessment phase of the project has been completed and a draft community action plan has been developed.

The ACHIEVE Project includes one community site visit by National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) representatives. Director Teegarden again introduced Zarnaaz Bashir and Maggie Cooper from the NRPA and announced they are in Helena to meet with project staff and community representatives regarding Helena's progress. She noted they had toured the community.

Maggie Cooper, NRPA; gave an overview of the NRPA's history, function and services. She also explained the history and purpose of the ACHIEVE Grant Program. Ms. Bashir and Lewis & Clark County Community Health Promotion Administrator Bradshaw also spoke in support of the ACHIEVE Program.

General discussion was held on the city's goals and policy objectives that have resulted from participation in the ACHIEVE Program. Some of the proposed goals and objectives are: how to promote more physical activity in the community; where to locate a clearing house of information on Helena's recreation possibilities; targeting less tobacco use in the community; and more healthy nutrition consumed in the community and by youth. Director Teegarden noted she has learned a lot about how community-based change does produce results.

Director Teegarden noted the ACHIEVE grant is a 3-year program that began in March 2011. By March 2012 a final community action plan will be completed and the group will be working on implementation.

Commissioner Elsaesser noted the City of Helena has continued to fund recreation and parks programs through these tough economic times. Discussion was held on the creation of a metropolitan parks district.

6. Committee discussions

- a) ADA Compliance Committee, Audit Committee, Board of Health, Civic Center Board, Montana League of Cities and Towns – No report given
- b) Audit Committee, Board of Adjustment, Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Committee, Intergovernmental Transit Committee – Ms. Sarah Sadowski is the new NMTAC President. Commissioner Cartwright noted City Engineer Leland gave an excellent presentation at the October 11th NMTAC meeting.
- c) Helena Chamber of Commerce, Information & Technology Services (IT&S), Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC), Pre-Release Screening Committee – No report given
- d) Audit Committee, City-County Weed Board, Public Art Committee, TCC – No report given
- e) BID/HPC, City-County Admin Building Board, City-County Parks Board, TCC – No report given
- f) Helena Citizens Council – No report given

7. Review of agenda for October 17, 2011 City Commission meeting – No discussion held.

8. Public Comment – No public comment received.

9. Commission discussion and direction to City Manager – No discussion or direction given.

10. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.