

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING
November 14, 2012 – 4:00 p.m.
Room 326, City-County Building

1. Call to order, introductions, opening comments – Mayor Smith called the meeting to order. Commissioners Elsaesser and Thweatt were present. Commissioners Ellison and Haque-Hausrath were excused. Staff present was: City Manager Ron Alles; Executive Assistant Clinda Feucht; City Attorney Jeffrey Hindoien; Fire Chief J.R. Feucht; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Human Resource Director James Fehr; Public Works Director John Rundquist; Assistant Public Works Director Phil Hauck; City Engineer Ryan Leland; Golf Course Superintendent Larry Kurokawa; Golf Pro Scott Longenecker; Police Chief Troy McGee; and City Clerk Debbie Havens.

Others in attendance included: HCC members John and Cyndi Forbes, Paul Montgomery with Anderson/Montgomery Consulting Engineers, Helena Parking Commission Director Dave Hewitt, Eric Regensburger and Mark Annas.

2. **October 24, 2012 and October 31, 2012 Administrative Meeting Summaries** – The October 24, 2012 and October 31, 2012 administrative meeting summaries were approved as submitted.

3. **Commission comments, questions –**

A.) Upcoming Appointments – Mayor Smith will be recommending the following appointments at the November 19th city commission meeting:

Bill Roberts Golf Course Advisory Board

Appointment of Dave Bauer to a first term on the Bill Roberts Golf Course Advisory Board. Term will begin upon appointment and expire October 30, 2015.

Public Art Committee

Appointment of Moira McNutt to an unexpired term as a representative of an Art Organization on the Public Art Committee. Term will begin upon appointment and expire December 31, 2014.

Appointment of Joshua Fruge to an unexpired term as a citizen at large representative on the Public Art Committee. Term will begin upon appointment and expire December 31, 2014.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated he is comfortable with the board appointments being recommended by Mayor Smith. Commissioner Thweatt noted there are two applicants who do not live in the city limits. Mayor Smith stated he took that into consideration; however, after looking at the qualifications he made his recommendation and asked Commissioners Elsaesser and Thweatt to support it.

B. Commission Comments – Commissioner Thweatt stated he invited Parking Commission Director Dave Hewitt to the meeting to discuss parking fees; and Mark Annas and Eric Regensburger to discuss quiet zone. Mayor Smith commented that these two items are not on the agenda; however, if there is time under public comment, the commission will accept public comment.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated the plastic's drive went very well. The city is a partner and city employees assist with the event.

4. **City Manager's Report**- City Manager Alles recognized Clinda Feucht on her retirement and spoke on the five city employees retiring by the end of December 2012.

Manager Alles stated he prepared a public service announcement on the snow removal policy. In addition he sent the commission the City's Snow and Ice Removal Plan and a short brief on Winter Snow Plowing for 2012-2013. He asked the commission to review his email and give him any feedback. Manager Alles complimented the street division for the work they have done with getting the streets cleared. Commissioner Thweatt asked if priority is given to the steeper streets. Manager Alles noted the crews follow the snow removal plan and plow the snow routes first, the major arterials, collectors and then

residential. Director Rundquist stated once the main roads are taken care of the steeper streets are taken care of.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked with the latest storm, do the crews begin plowing when the snow starts falling. Director Rundquist stated the street crews have been out since the major storm hit trying to get a handle on the streets.

Manager Alles commented if a complaint is received, a specific staff person follows up and tries to resolve it. Director Rundquist stated in addition to the snowplows, there are two pickup trucks with plows on them that are handling some of the miscellaneous complaints.

Mayor Smith noted there are berms that affect accessibility for disabled citizens. The crews will begin to remove and clean the intersections in the next few days. Manager Alles noted the snow removal on sidewalks policy is also enforced and staff works with community service to help citizens who cannot get out and shovel their sidewalks.

Mayor Smith asked if the Code Enforcement Officer could generate a sidewalk complaint by observing where a sidewalk needs to be addressed. Manager Alles stated yes.

5. Committee discussions

- a) ADA Compliance Committee, Audit Committee, Board of Health, Civic Center Board, Montana League of Cities and Towns - Mayor Smith stated he is looking forward to working with Alec Hansen with the Montana League of Cities and Towns in the upcoming legislative session.
- b) IT&S, Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Committee (NMTAC), Board of Adjustment, Pre-Release Screening Committee – No report given.
- c) Audit Committee, City-County Weed Board, Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC), TCC –Commissioner Elsaesser reported MBAC hired Joe McClure as their Executive Director; Mick Johnson with MDT attended his last the TCC meeting, there are a few MDT projects in Helena that will begin in 2013.
- d) BID/HPC, City-County Parks Board, TCC, L&C County Mental Health Advisory Committee – Commissioner Thweatt reported the Mental Health Advisory Committee is moving forward to allocate the grant they received to build a crisis house. The HPC met on November 13th and they are having a difficult time financially. They have submitted a request to raise the parking fines and it is currently with the city attorney's office for review. There is also concern with the Chamber of Commerce moving their offices outside the downtown area.
- e) Audit Committee, City-County Administration Building (CCAB), Public Art Committee, Intergovernmental Transit Committee – No report given.
- f) Helena Citizens Council – HCC member Cindi Forbes report nominations for officers will be held in November. The HCC members in District 7 are currently holding their district meetings at various businesses within the district with positive feedback from the businesses.

6. Department Discussions

Parks & Recreation

Golf Fees – Manager Alles introduced Golf Pro Scott Longenecker and Golf Course Superintendent Larry Kurokawa who reported with continued rising costs and the need for capital improvements, city staff strives to operate the course within a financial strategy that can meet operational and capital improvement goals. Every year city staff and the Golf Advisory Board (GAB) review the season's expenses, revenues and revenue trends in comparison to budget projections.

The following observations were noted for the 2012 season:

1. Golf revenue is definitely dependent on weather and it was a good weather season for golf. Compared to the 2011 season, the golf course has seen a decrease in expenditures and an approximately \$76,000 increase in revenue. In total for 2012, there is \$165,875 in revenue over expenditures, our best season ever;
2. A total of 45 junior passes were sold this season, 18 more than last year. However sales generated \$27,038.00 less in revenue than last year. (In 2012 the cost of a junior pass was lowered from \$360 to \$165). The goal was to increase junior play; this was a good start;
3. Course observations... generally seeing more young adults and juniors playing;
4. There was an increase in revenues for lessons, driving range, merchandise, and concessions.

Even with a revenue profit at the end of the 2012 season, city staff and the GAB are recommending increases to some fees. The recommendations are for itemized changes to the existing fee schedule rather than an across-the-board percent increase. Recommendations are based on identifying opportunities for increase, decrease or restructure (eliminating some fee services) and discussion of the market “tipping point” for certain fees.

Using the 2012 counts (rounds played), the recommended rate increase would yield approximately \$26,996 in additional revenue. The rationales for proposed changes include;

1. Season pass increases are based adding \$1 for the number of times played to break even based on the proposed 18 hole fee increase;
2. The linear trend for the last four years has been a decrease in 9-hole play. It would not be wise to raise 9-hole fees or punch cards. Need to target recreational 9-hole players;
3. Keep daily cart rates the same. Fleet is an older condition, already priced high for the market; pass holders are “invested” in the game of golf, perhaps less fickle in regards to the economy, weather, etc.;
4. Continue to promote off-season golf simulator;

Commissioner Thweatt stated he received compliments on the grooming of the cross-country ski trails at the golf course. Mayor Smith noted it is the Last Chance Nordic Ski Club that grooms the trails.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked for clarification on the cart rental; Golf Pro Longenecker explained the proposal and noted the Golf Advisory Committee has reviewed staff’s recommendation and supports it.

Commissioner Elsaesser complimented staff for the condition of the golf course and the recommendation.

Public Works

City Manager Alles spoke on the importance of the current transportation plan and the update that will be completed by 201. He also complimented and recognized Mick Johnson with MDT for working with the city of Helena.

Centennial Trail – Preliminary Design and Proposed Construction Schedule –

Manager Alles reported that he recently took Tom Walsh with MRL, Paul Montgomery, Transportation Engineer Jonathan Knowles on a tour of Centennial Trail and addressed the right-of-way needs of the city in order to complete Centennial Trail.

Paul Montgomery gave a PowerPoint presentation that included Overall Project Layout, Project Phasing, Project Schedule, Ongoing Project Activities and Funding.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if the right of way for Henderson Avenue were approved what is the timeline for the bridge on Henderson Avenue to be built. Mr. Montgomery stated if the right of way was obtained in the very near future the bridge could be included in the next construction season; however, if the right of way isn’t approved, it would not be included. It does not make sense to pay for the design of the bridge until the right of way issue is resolved.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked for an update on the acquisition of MRL right of way. Manager Alles stated he put a hold on the design of the bridge on Henderson Avenue until the right of way is obtained. He recommends that an alternative at-grade design for pedestrian/bike access across Henderson Avenue needs to be looked at. Mr. Montgomery gave the specifics of the crossing.

Discussion was held on the distance of the proposed bridge to the train tracks. Paul Montgomery stated the ideal location of the trail would be 50’ away from the tracks.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated the city needs to do what they can to include the bridge into phase one. Manager Alles stated for safety reasons the bridge makes the best sense; however, he is not willing to have the design work done prior to the right of way being obtained from MRL.

Commissioner Thweatt asked why Alternate A, the at-grade crossing, is considered dangerous. Mr. Montgomery gave an overview on the traffic flow and noted that drivers currently cannot see the pedestrian crossing from a safe distance.

Commissioner Elsaesser noted the commission approved approximately \$75,000 for improved pedestrian crossings along Centennial Trail and asked if the funds could be utilized for this project. Manager Alles stated he would give a 90% yes. Until the final design is finished, he has asked staff to install stop signs at the current crossing going east/west for use by pedestrians and bicyclist

Manager Alles spoke on the next step of securing the right of way from MRL. Mr. Walsh is very open to looking at the request; however, he did not indicate immediate support.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if MRL gives the city right of way 100' feet away from the tracks instead of the recommended 50', are there design barriers. Paul Montgomery stated the curves have been designed to accommodate pedestrians; if the right of way were 100' feet away the trail would be much straighter. Commissioner Elsaesser asked for the design for the crossing Benton Avenue. Mr. Montgomery stated there are two alternative designs for Benton Avenue, one at grade and one an underpass.

Mayor Smith stated the railroad does not readily or easily relinquish right-of-way, it is a long process and he would not want to hold the entire project up until a decision on the right of way is received. The city needs to be flexible with the design and may need to deviate away from the needed right of way.

Commissioner Elsaesser commented he is very pleased on the progress that has been made; he also would support looking at an at-grade crossing on Henderson Avenue in addition to the proposed bridge.

Manager Alles spoke on other improvements being considered on Henderson Avenue and committed to move forward with the Centennial Trail Project. Manager Alles addressed the ongoing maintenance issue of Centennial Trail once it is built.

Mayor Smith stated he too is concerned with the additional work load of the Parks & Recreation Department and noted the commission will have to address it during the budget discussions.

MAP21 – City Manager Alles and City Engineer Ryan Leland referred the commission to the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, MAP-21 Summary and Highlights that included Highway Program Highlights; Accelerating Project Delivery and the Transit Program. There was also a MAP 21: MDT Implementation Schedule.

Transit Superintendent Steve Larson gave an overview of the Transit Funding that will be allocated through the MAP21; two programs that will be affected are the New Freedoms and the East Helena Route. These two programs are funded through FY2013 but will be eliminated if new funding is not identified.

Mayor Smith stated the change of command seems to be in place with the implementation of MAP21 and he is comfortable with the city of Helena having to compete for funding of specific projects.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if the NEPA process changes with this. City Engineer Leland stated the proposal is to streamline the environmental process and the state will have to take on more responsibility on the environmental reports.

When the city updates the transportation plan, would it have to go through an EIS process. Manager Alles stated the new rules will assist the city in building them into the transportation plan and he concurs that the city will be in a good place to fund projects.

7. Review of agenda for November 19, 2012 City Commission meeting –No discussion held.

8. Public Comment – Helena Parking Commissioner Executive Director Dave Hewitt addressed the commission and spoke of the HPC's proposal to increase fines. At the present time, the fines for parking are in the city codes; therefore an ordinance will have to be prepared for first and final passage. The HPC staff and parking commission would like to get the process through and get the fine increase approved.

City Manager Alles noted staff is working with the HPC to consider increasing the fines by a separate ordinance. City staff is in the process of identifying all fees/fines that are set by ordinance and moving toward setting them by resolution. Manager Alles stated staff will be prepared to bring the ordinance forward in December.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if the Parking Commission supports the recommendation to increase the fines. Director Hewitt stated yes. Mayor Smith asked why the HPC hadn't made an annual recommendation to the commission to increase fines, like other city departments have. City Attorney commented once the HPC fines have been moved to the resolution form, the staff could bring a recommendation forward on an annual basis.

Commissioner Thweatt noted that Mark Annas and Eric Regensburger are present to discuss quiet zones within the city of Helena and noted the three of them met to discuss the \$75,000 that was allocated for funding of quiet zones. With the quiet zone study and the estimated costs, the \$75,000 would be enough to build two quiet zones.

Commissioner Thweatt asked is there a way to use the \$75,000 to build at least one quiet zone. Mr. Annas concurred with Commissioner Thweatt's comments on using some of the \$75,000 to move forward to build one quiet zone. Mr. Regensburger stated the entire quiet zone would not have to be constructed all at the same time; he would support building one or two at a time. He also asked if MRL has expressed an interest in funding any portion of the quiet zone or safety projects.

Mayor Smith noted discussions with MRL are very delicate and City Manager Alles will continue to meet with them to discuss mutual projects.

Mayor Smith asked what type of project could be funded with the \$75,000. Manager Alles stated he cannot speak directly to the funding of the quiet zones. Mark Annas spoke of specific projects outlined in the quiet zone study; he specifically mentioned the Joslyn and Benton Avenues as the two crossings that could have quiet zones built with the \$75,000. Manager Alles noted staff is looking at the lower cost alternatives identified in the quiet zone study. At this point, what does the commission want from staff. Mayor Smith stated the commission is in the very preliminary discussions on what projects to fund with the allocated \$75,000.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated his vision for the \$75,000 is Centennial Trail and areas where quiet zones are warranted to be funded first. He would support leaving the \$75,000 earmarked on an annual basis until there is adequate funding to address the ped/bike safety issues and build the entire quiet zone. He also stated MRL should be contacted to measure their interest in funding any portion of quiet zones. The goal is to have safer pedestrian/bike crossings adjacent to Centennial Trail and implement a quiet zone.

Mayor Smith asked Commissioner Elsaesser if he would support spending the \$75,000 on the two quiet zones being proposed. Commissioner Elsaesser stated if it accomplishes ped/bike safety, he would support it, if not, he would continue to add additional funding until the full quiet zone can be fully funded. Staff understands the direction of the commission and he believes that they will bring back a recommendation for consideration.

Commissioner Thweatt asked Director Rundquist would it make a safer crossing for pedestrian/bike traffic if the two quiet zones were built that has the medians down the street, as recommended in the quiet zone study. Director Rundquist stated staff would have to look at the street design. If the street was wide enough, it would be beneficial to both pedestrian/bike safety and reduce the horn noise from the trains.

Commissioner Thweatt stated he, Mark Annas and Eric Regensburger would support moving forward with the construction of two quiet zones. Commissioner Elsaesser reiterated his goal is to provide pedestrian/bike safety and implement a quiet zone, recognizing that it will take a few years to complete and fund.

Manager Alles stated staff has the direction from the commission and has been working toward that end. MRL will not pay for quiet zones; however, they may assist with funding safety improvements.

9. Commission discussion and direction to City Manager – No discussion held.

10. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.