

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING
April 3, 2013– 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, Ellison, and Thweatt were present. Commissioner Haque-Hausrath was excused. Staff present was: City Manager Ron Alles; Deputy City Attorney Thomas Jodoin; Public Works Director John Rundquist; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Fire Chief Sean Logan; HCC Coordinator Kelli McLane; and City Clerk Debbie Havens.

Others in attendance included: HCC Representative Roy Henry, IR Reporter Al Knauber and Paul Cartwright.

2. **March 20, 2013 Administrative Meeting Summary** – The March 20, 2013 Administrative Meeting summary was approved as submitted.

3. **Commission comments, questions –**

A. **Upcoming Appointments** – Mayor Smith recommended the following appointments:

**Helena Open Lands Management
Advisory Committee (HOLMAC)**

Appointment of Craig McLane to a first term on HOLMAC. Term will begin upon appointment and expire June 30, 2015.

**Non-Motorized Travel Advisory
Council (NMTAC)**

Reappointment of Greg Olsen to third term on NMTAC. Term will begin upon appointment and expire March 31, 2016.

NOTE: Due to the high turnover on NMTAC, it is my recommendation to reappointment Mr. Olsen to a third term.

**Tourism Business Improvement
District (TBID)**

Appointment of Jim Tucker to an unexpired term on the TBID. Term will begin upon appointment and expire April 20, 2016.

Commissioners Elsaesser, Ellison and Thweatt concurred with Mayor Smith's recommendation for board appointments.

Mayor Smith stated he needs to leave the meeting at 5:00 p.m. He then announced Commissioner Haque-Hausrath delivered a baby girl on March 30th.

Commissioner Elsaesser reported he, Commissioner Ellison and City Manager Alles attended Senator Baucus' press announcement on the 2013 Economic Summit in September.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated he received an informal request for traffic calming in Great Northern area and will forward it to City Manager Alles.

4. **City Manager's Report**

Grant Applications – HAZMAT and Montana Memory Project – City Manager Alles reported Fire Chief Logan will be submitting two grants; one for HAZMAT training for the entire fire department and one to the Montana Memory Project that would digitize the historic city commission minutes.

Manager Alles reported the deer program is winding down; the last count was 140 deer. He also reported that HATS Superintendent Steve Larson informed him Salt Lake Express will be providing bus service to Helena, beginning April 4th.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if a letter of support for a grant from the Canyon Ferry Trust to assist with the protection of the Charles VanHook wetlands was sent. City Manager Alles stated he submitted a letter of support to Kathy VanHook.

Due to Fire Chief Logan not staying for the Engineering Standards discussion, Commissioner Thweatt asked if a fire truck has to be in front of the structure to fight a fire. Chief Logan stated it would be the first choice; however, he would not blanket state it.

5. Department Discussions

Public Works

Engineering Standards – City Manager Alles and Public Works Director John Rundquist referred the commission to the spreadsheet that listed comments received and staff's response. Manager Alles asked at the end of the discussion he would like to discuss the process moving forward.

Comment 48 – Commissioner Haque-Hausrath asked if it would be possible to get an example of a current existing street for each type of street. Staff is working on this and a presentation will be provided.

Comment 62 – Commissioner Thweatt thanked staff for the spreadsheet; he then noted the design speeds in this table usually exceed the speed limits in Helena. He asked how do design speeds relate to speed limits; how are speed limits set and how do traffic calming measures relate to design speeds. Public Works Director Rundquist stated for city streets the speed limit is set by ordinance and state routes are set by Montana Department of Transportation. Deputy City Attorney Jodoin clarified state law sets urban routes at 25mph, if a city wants deviate from that a speed study is required.

Commissioner Thweatt asked if city code sets the 25mph. Deputy City Attorney Jodoin explained state law sets urban routes at 25 mph; the city could increase the speed limit by conducting a speed study. However, the speed limits can only be lowered for school zones.

Comment 82 – Commissioner Haque-Hausrath has asked if the driving lanes could be narrowed. Director Rundquist noted that AASHTO, ITE and Emergency Services recommend 10-foot travel lanes for local streets and 11-foot travel lanes for collector streets. Director Rundquist stated the commission could decrease the driving lanes to 9-feet for local with the availability of the curb and not parking.

Commissioner Thweatt asked for the official names of ITE and AASHTO and where do the recommendations come from and is there a scientific basis for them. Director Rundquist stated there is a scientific basis on the recommendations from ITE and AASHTO.

Discussion was held on how the various standards are set including speed, width, type of road (collector, minor collector), and a vision on what the street is going to be used for.

Commissioner Thweatt asked if the standards consider a narrower road to calm traffic. Director Rundquist stated he does not believe that is part of the criteria.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated he would be comfortable with the one-foot reduction that would include the use of the gutter. A main concern of his would be there is a sidewalk and if there is a tree near the sidewalk and how close the vehicles would be allowed to park to the sidewalk and tree.

Commissioner Thweatt noted the recommendation is for 10-foot driving lanes; he asked if it would be advisable to give the commission the discretion of allowing for 9-foot driving lanes. Director Rundquist reiterated that the 9-foot driving lanes with no parking with curb on each side are allowed, the recommended standard is 10-foot driving lanes

Paul Cartwright suggested the actual references be checked out by staff; he offered to meet with staff to review other standards that are available for consideration. There are standards in the city ordinances and standards for engineering standards and they are two different things.

Comment 87 - Currently there are a variety of street widths throughout the city; minimum driving lane width should remain as in current ordinance; 9-foot for local roads, 10-foot for collectors and 11-foot for arterials. These were discussed when the ordinance was adopted and are allowed by AASHTO. Director Rundquist noted staff chose 10-foot minimum to set a standard; which is a narrow driving lane if cars are parked on both sides.

Pau Cartwright commented it is important to have standards; however, it is also important to look at how the streets actually work. He gave examples of the roads in the Barney Subdivision have smaller driving lanes and Gilbert Street is 30-foot wide with parking on both sides and asked if there are problems or not.

Mayor Smith stated he is not interested in reducing the minimum street width. Commissioner Thweatt noted he is in conversation with Commissioner Haque-Hausrath on this issue.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if a developer wants a narrower street is there a variance process. Director Rundquist explained if a developer proposes ROW widths less than what is in the subdivision regulations, staff would look at the request and may bring a variance forward for commission consideration.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated he is okay if a variance is requested. City Manager Alles stated staff and the development community is asking the commission to set a minimum street width within the engineering standards. Within that number, the components of the complete streets policy will be implemented. If a developer wants to reduce the ROW, they would have to come before the Planning Board and ultimately to the city commission.

Comment 109 – Commissioner Haque-Hausrath has recommended that bike lanes are required, unless certain criteria are met or commission approval is obtained. Director Rundquist referred to the complete streets check list and noted that bike lanes are required.

Commissioner Elsaesser stated he concurs with staff, the complete street check list already addresses bike lanes; not every street is going to have every complete street component.

Commissioner Thweatt relayed that Commission Haque-Hausrath has commented that currently bike lanes are considered; however, she would like them to be required. Commissioner Thweatt would support the city having the discretion of requiring bike lanes. Mayor Smith concurred with Commissioner Thweatt.

Comment 23 – Commissioner Elsaesser asked if grey water irrigation of the boulevard landscape features be allowed. Director Rundquist stated use of grey water for irrigation is not regulated under the Engineering Standards. However, this could be a problem with our MS4 Stormwater permit as grey water is not a permitted discharge. In addition, other public health regulations may apply.

Comment 91 – Commissioner Elsaesser asked that all storm grates be wheelchair and bike friendly. Director Rundquist concurred and explained how staff is proposing to replace the current storm grates.

Comment 105 - Commissioner Elsaesser referred to the following comment from Commissioner Haque-Hausrath – Local Streets, Item A.3: Does it require commission approval to install a bike/ped path instead of a sidewalk and staff's response that changes has been made. He then asked for clarification on what changes. Deputy City Attorney Jodoin stated this is addressed in the complete street check list. Director Rundquist will provide the changed language to the commission.

Comment 4 – Commissioner Ellison stated after hearing from several engineering firms, he suggested to add a specific timeline for the city to grant approval (10-15 working days) after development requirements have been met; and adding a dispute resolution procedure for escalating appeals to the city manager. Such an interim step, short of legal action in court, would help to resolve, in a timely manner, questions of whether or not this acceptance policy has been met. He believes a policy would send a positive message to the development community.

City Manager Alles noted the city currently uses a similar process with the zoning ordinance, a person could go the department director and then onto the city manager.

Director Rundquist spoke on the context of staff's comments; there is a set process for plan review. He explained city staff's goal is to review and approve submitted plans in set timeframes; however, there are circumstances out of staff's control that may extend the time when approval can be issued. He explained there are times when staff request that the plans be revised and be resubmitted; however, the developers will resubmit without addressing staff's concerns.

Comment 10 – Commissioner Ellison clarified that he was asking the question if PVC should be allowed as a standard instead of ductile iron; he was not making a recommendation. He will have a follow-up conversation with City Engineer Leland.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if other cities in Montana allow PVC. Director Rundquist stated some cities do, most require the iron pipe. Developers and engineers might argue PVC is cheaper than iron pipe; however, overall after installation and maintenance, the costs are about even.

Commissioner Ellison commended staff for the spreadsheet; it has been very helpful and answered his questions. He is looking forward to moving the Engineering Standards forward.

Utility Corridors – City Manager Alles referred the commission to the page on Utility Corridors and reported City Engineer Leland worked with NorthWestern Energy (NWE) to develop the language; which is a consensus between city staff and representatives from NWE. Commissioner Ellison stated he raised this question and it looks like the questions and concerns have been addressed.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if NWE could be encouraged to locate the control boxes underground. Director Rundquist stated the signalization boxes, by code, have to be above ground.

Process – City Manager Alles recommended the city commission adopt the engineering standards first and then move forward with the subdivision regulations. Staff will clean up the engineering standards and bring them forward to the May 20th city commission meeting. He would anticipate bringing the subdivision regulations forward sometime in June.

Commissioner Ellison asked if there will be two public hearings on the engineering standards. City Manager Alles stated the engineering standards do not require a public hearing; however, public comment is received on all items on the agenda. Commissioner Thweatt stated he is willing to move forward; he is concerned that Commissioner Haque-Hausrath was not at today's meeting to hear the discussion. Manager Alles noted the commission always has the option of tabling an item.

Commissioner Elsaesser asked if the final draft version of the engineering standards would be available two weeks prior to being on an agenda. City Manager Alles explained the draft engineering standards the commission received will be the starting point; staff will bring forward their recommendations and the commission can offer amendments at the meeting. Once staff's recommendations and any amendments have been approved, a final document will be prepared.

Commissioner Ellison summarized the draft engineering standards will be on the agenda; the commission will then consider and either approve or deny staff's recommendations and any amendments offered during the meeting. The commission will then consider the engineering standards, as amended.

Paul Cartwright suggested that a comparison on the proposed standards to existing standards be done. If the engineering standards are adopted, staff should be prepared to explain what is wrong with the existing streets if they were built to the newly adopted standards.

Commissioner Thweatt asked if existing streets are below standards set forth in the draft, what problems would that create. City Manager Alles asked for clarification on what Commissioner Thweatt is asking for; are you looking for a comparison of the existing streets and if they were built to the proposed standards. Commissioner Thweatt concurred and stated if we have streets that were built under the existing standards and there are not any problems, why would we need to adopt higher standards

Deputy City Attorney Jodoin stated many of the existing streets currently do not meet fire codes. Paul Cartwright commented this is an example of where the city code and engineering standards have different language.

Mayor Smith left the meeting at this time.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser noted the Helena Zoning Code has changed substantially over the years and asked if that might be driving any of the increased requirements. Manager Alles stated he could not answer Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser at this time; he then addressed the driving lane width requirements.

Manager Alles asked the commission if they are comfortable proceeding as he previously recommended. Commissioner Ellison is comfortable moving forward; however, he too wants to make sure Commissioner Haque-Hausrath has had the opportunity to review the comments and document; if she isn't the commission has the option of tabling it.

Commissioner Thweatt stated he would like an express statement that traffic calming would be used in the design of streets that would discourage speeds in excess of what is posted. Director Rundquist stated it may be possible to have some language on traffic calming including on the complete streets check list.

Manager Alles noted he would put the Engineering Standards on the May 15th administrative meeting agenda.

Commissioner Thweatt stated there currently is not a statement on the complete street check list regarding traffic calming and he would like one included. Manager Alles asked for clarification on what Commissioner Thweatt's comments means; would any new road have to include traffic calming. Commissioner Thweatt stated yes.

Paul Cartwright concurred with Commissioner Thweatt's comments on traffic calming. There should be guidelines on when traffic calming would be necessary. If the proposal is to go with wider streets, it would be a good idea to have guidelines on traffic calming.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser stated he believes this is already implied within the complete streets check list. Commissioner Thweatt is looking for feedback to include language that would discourage speeds. Commissioner Ellison stated staff could develop language to be included in their recommendation or Commissioner Thweatt could offer an amendment.

Commissioner Thweatt asked what is the cost of stripping of bike lanes; share the road signs (sharrows) and the cost of maintenance. Director Rundquist did not have the information with him and would have to get it for the commission. He did note that once the paint is on the ground, it has to be repainted every year. Commissioner Thweatt commented the stripping and signs may make people more comfortable and encourages people to ride bikes. However, he believes eventually it will be a common practice and if the language is in the engineering standards it would be required until there was an amendment to the standards. There was general discussion on Comment 81, NMTAC's recommendation to add language for bike lanes and/or designated share the road with sharrows for minor collector streets.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser asked Director Rundquist to be prepared to address the driving lane widths. He also asked Commissioner Thweatt to follow-up with staff to answer his questions. The goal of the commission is to have safe streets.

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) 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 – No report given.
- d) BID/HPC, City-County Parks Board, TCC, L&C County Mental Health Advisory Committee – Commissioner Thweatt noted there have been concerns expressed regarding the location of the Crisis Stabilization facility; the concerns were traffic and parking.
- e) Audit Committee, City-County Administration Building (CCAB), Public Art Committee, Intergovernmental Transit Committee – No report given
- f) Helena Citizens Council –HCC Representative Roy Henry reported Administrative Services Director Tim Magee attended the last HCC meeting.

7. Review of agenda for April 8, 2013 City Commission meeting –Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser referred to the residential side loading refuse trucks on the April 8th agenda and asked if these four trucks replace the entire residential fleet. Manager Alles concurred. Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser asked what the cost difference was between the recommended fleet and dual stream capacity trucks. Manager Alles stated the costs for a dual stream is approximately 1.5 times the cost of the trucks being recommended.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser stated it is his intent that we continue to move forward in offering recycling options. He asked if the city is linked into the study the county scratch gravel solid waste is doing on recycling. Manager Alles and Director Rundquist stated they had not heard of any study.

Director Rundquist noted these vehicles are compatible to single stream recycling. Manager Alles noted he does not believe the options are limited moving forward; the city is in a position to purchase dual stream truck.

Manager Alles noted the recommendation is not the low bid received, due to the other companies not meeting the bid specifications.

8. Public Comment – No comments received.

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

10. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.