

**SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING**  
**April 17, 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, Haque-Hausrath and Thweatt were present. Staff present was: City Manager Ron Alles; Executive Assistant Sarah Elkins, City Attorney Jeff Hindoi; Public Works Director John Rundquist; Assistant Public Works Director Phil Hauck; HATS Supervisor Steve Larson; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Fire Chief Sean Logan; Assistant Chief of Police Steve Hagen, Administrative Services Director Tim Magee; HCC Coordinator Kelli McLane and City Clerk Debbie Havens.

Others in attendance included: HCC Representative Janet Hess-Herbert, IR Reporter Al Knauber, Consultant Lisa Ballard, Mike Hruska with Capital Taxi, Bob Allen, Mathew Cramer, HATS Advisory Council member Cindy Barril, County Administrator Eric Bryson and County Commissioner Andy Hunthausen.

2. **April 3, 2013 Administrative Meeting Summary** – The April 3, 2013 Administrative Meeting summary was approved as submitted.

3. **Commission comments, questions –**

**A. Upcoming Appointments** – There are no appointment on the April 22, 2013 city commission meeting agenda.

Commissioner Elsaesser noted the state bonding bill looks bleak; however, he hopes it is revisited.

Commissioner Ellison reported the HCC representative on NMTAC is still vacant and the chair of the committee would like to see it filled as soon as possible. HCC Coordinator Kelli McLane stated the HCC is ready to fill it at their April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mayor Smith stated he would need to leave the meeting today at 4:30 p.m.

4. **City Manager's Report**

**M RTP Budget Amendment for Valve Replacement** – City Manager Alles informed the commission that he would be using reserves to cover the costs of the valve replacement at the Missouri River Treatment Plant in the amount of \$110,000. Public Works Director Rundquist explained the problem with the valve that was replaced.

**Helena Citizens Council Districts (HCC)** – City Manager Alles reported with the state redistricting, Lewis and Clark County Commission adopted the new precincts in March, which impacts the city commission and HCC elections. The HCC district boundaries are normally reviewed during the 10-year local government review process; however, they need to be updated prior to citizens filing for the HCC.

Staff will prepare an ordinance and will ask the commission to adopt it as an “emergency ordinance” that will take effect upon passage. This way the HCC districts will be adopted for citizens to file for the HCC districts. The filing opens April 29<sup>th</sup> and if the commission concurs, staff will give the Elections Office the draft map so they are aware of the proposed districts. Immediately following the adoption of the “emergency” ordinance, staff will bring forward the same ordinance for first and final passage.

Manager Alles asked the HCC to review the proposed districts and offer any input they may have.

5. **Department Discussions**

**Public Works**

**Transit Development Plan Update** – City Manager Alles introduced and recognized Consultant Lisa Ballard and HATS Supervisor Steve Larson. Commissioner Thweatt asked how this plan would affect the city budget and the CCIP. Manager Alles stated it would not affect the FY14 budget; there are options in the capital budget that would make the system more efficient.

HATS Supervisor Steve Larson gave the history on how the plan was developed and noted the draft is on the city's web page. Interested parties can review the draft plan and email their comments

directly to him. He then acknowledged and thanked Consultant Lisa Ballard for the work her team did in putting together the draft plan.

Consultant Lisa Ballard also acknowledged the team that worked on the draft plan. She then gave a PowerPoint presentation on the draft Transit Development Plan Update and noted the focus will be on the one-million dollar budget for the check point system. Ms. Ballard ended the presentation and noted HATS Supervisor Steve Larson's goal is to provide the riders of HATS a clean, safe and on-time service.

Commissioner Haque-Hausrath asked how the HATS drivers would distinguish between an ADA eligible rider and a regular rider. Consultant Ballard explained anyone who qualifies as an ADA rider would provide documentation and the information would be entered into a data base where the driver would have access to confirm the status. Commissioner Haque-Hausrath then referred to the two maps shown for the west-side service and asked which one most resembled the state funded commuter route. Consultant Ballard showed the commission the map of the route that was previously used for the west-side commuter route.

Commissioner Thweatt asked when the survey was done was the cost of the bus service discussed. Consultant Ballard stated most of the respondents did not know the cost of the service.

Commissioner Ellison asked if anyone can call the HATS office and ask for curb to curb service. Consultant Ballard stated yes. Commissioner Ellison then asked why the policy was adopted. Manager Alles explained the curb to curb service was the original service of the Dial-A-Ride bus. Director Rundquist concurred with City Manager and noted the curb to curb service began sometime in the 1970's.

Commissioner Ellison referred to the survey with a low number of responses that showed support to greatly expanding the HATS service; however, a couple of years ago the community at large did not support a petition drive to even put a transit district on the ballot. He asked how you would reconcile the differences between the small survey and the larger community response. Consultant Ballard stated the survey sample size was approximately 400 responses and then explained how the survey was conducted. Ms. Ballard noted the last effort to expand the district could have been better organized and may have had a better outcome.

Commissioner Ellison asked when additional outreach is conducted; the total costs of providing the service should be explained; this would allow people to make a fair and balanced decision.

County Commissioner Hunthausen asked how HATS is funded versus Butte and Bozeman. Consultant Ballard explained the Federal Transportation Administration pays a large percentage of transit systems. The city of Helena uses general funds to match the federal grants; Butte is a city-county operation and Bozeman uses a variety of funding including a portion being paid by MSU.

Commissioner Hunthausen asked if there are significant private partnerships in other communities. The city of Bozeman partners with MSU, Bridger Bowl, United Way, the hospital and a couple of other smaller businesses.

Commissioner Hunthausen asked if a branding and naming of the bus service has been discussed and suggested a good marketing plan would be an asset.

Commissioner Thweatt asked who pays for the east valley route. Consultant Ballard explained it is funded through federal grants with the matching funds being paid by the city of East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, fares and advertising. She commented, essentially the city of Helena pays for the east valley route. Commissioner Ellison asked for clarification on the statement that the city of Helena pays for the route. Ms. Ballard stated the east valley route costs are approximately \$100,000; 50% federal funds; \$32,000 is paid by Lewis and Clark County, \$2,500 is paid by the city of East Helena and approximately \$20,000 is paid by the city of Helena, minus the 7% fares.

HCC representative Janet Hess-Herbert offered HCC's assistance if needed and will be co-sponsoring the Transit Plan meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Haque-Hausrath asked how many curb to curb rides are provided to non ADA riders. Ms. Ballard stated it is hard to determine who is ADA qualified and at this time could not provide the data.

Commissioner Thweatt commented he does not understand the ADA regulations and why someone with a disability would be required to travel a certain distance to get on the bus. Commissioner Thweatt stated the west-side commuter route was a success; however, the state funding was cut.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser asked for public comments.

Bob Allen stated he worked at the Seattle Transit and is a good resource to staff and the commission if needed. Mr. Allen commented it is his opinion the time has come for the city to step up and provide transit service to the citizens of Helena. The problem is funding; short term would be to improve the current service by reducing the curb to curb service.

Mike Hruska, Capital City Taxi, stated the HATS system provides a good service; however, his business has suffered due to having to compete with HATS. He cannot compete with the city on curb to curb system. He has thought about going to the Public Service Commission and asking to reduce their operating hours.

Commissioner Thweatt asked what aspect of the HATS service cuts most into his business. Mr. Hruska stated it is the curb to curb service; the economy has hurt the taxi service. Commissioner Thweatt then asked Mr. Hruska if Capital Taxi has the capability to transport people in wheelchairs. Mr. Hruska stated no because he cannot get the insurance as he needs two years of experience.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser referenced the data management software being recommended and asked how difficult is to use and what the cost is. HATS Supervisor Larson stated the software is included in the FY14 budget that is being submitted to the state of Montana; the software cost is \$50,000, which the city would have to pay approximately \$11,000.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser asked what the \$.46-million in the operating budget goes to. HATS Supervisor Larson explained funds flow through to the county, senior transportation plan, and the new freedoms grant for Rocky Mountain Development Council. The actual operating budget is one-million dollars.

Commissioner Ellison stated there is also a capital fund in the amount approximately \$200,000 that is not included in the operating budget. He suggested the commission needs to take a hard look at the capital outlay and those numbers should be included in the total budget amount. Consultant Ballard clarified the operating budget is what she used to compare the annual cost for services. Commissioner Ellison pointed out the 2010 numbers were used for comparison and noted that was the highest year for HATS ridership, when the state commuter route was running. There are more current data available that would change the outcome of the cost per ride. Commissioner Ellison suggested further discussion needs to occur regarding the data that was used to determine the cost per ride.

Director Rundquist stated the goal of the city staff is to provide good service to the disadvantage; there is a lot of interest in expanding the service. The consultant took the time to research the possibility of expanding the service.

Manager Alles spoke on the original service and concurred it is time to re-evaluate the entire system including curb to curb and the check point system.

Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser asked if the next step is to do public outreach and ultimately adopt the plan. Manager Alles concurred.

Commissioner Thweatt asked if it has been considered to provide vouchers to use taxi service for those who need curb to curb service. Ms. Ballard noted there are communities that do it; however the costs are about the same.

Commissioner Thweatt noted the creation of an urban transportation improvement district was mentioned in the Transit Development Plan; which would be used to fund transit and non-motorized improvements. He asked City Manager Alles for his thoughts on the creation of a transportation improvement district. Manager Alles stated that is an option; currently many of the non-motorized improvements are funded through the street assessment fund. One of the main issues is maintaining the current trail systems and creation of a transportation improvement district may be able to be used as a funding source. Staff will continue to research this issue and bring it forward to the commission for consideration. Manager Alles noted he is talking about non-motorized improvements.

Commissioner Thweatt asked if an urban transportation improvement district could subsidize a transit system and non-motorized improvements. City Manager Alles noted a transit district would have to be created county-wide. Commissioner Thweatt clarified the report referred to an urban transportation improvement district to provide funds to support public transit and non-motorized improvements. Manager Alles stated a transportation improvement district could be created as long as the city is very clear on the purpose of the district.

HCC Representative Janet Hess-Herbert asked if there are any other types of districts the city has already created that would align up with the proposed HCC Districts. Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser

clarified the commission is talking about assessment districts and the HCC districts are dictated by voting precincts.

Consultant Ballard stated the rules for the creation of an urban transportation district is written in state law. Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser asked if a transit district could be created just in the east valley. Consultant Ballard stated yes. Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser spoke on the street assessment funding that currently assists with non-motorized improvements.

**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 – Commissioner Ellison stated he continues to attend the weekly pre-release committee meetings.
- c) Audit Committee, City-County Weed Board, Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC), TCC – Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser reported MBAC Executive Director Joe McClure is moving out of state; the Executive Committee will begin the process of filling the position.  
Commissioner Thweatt asked when the TCC will begin work on the Transportation Plan Update. Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser reported the TCC will begin to have monthly meetings in the next couple of months. Once the dates have been determined, City Clerk Havens will work with the county to advertise those meetings.
- d) BID/HPC, City-County Parks Board, TCC, L&C County Mental Health Advisory Committee – Commissioner Thweatt reported the items on the Parks Board agenda were mainly county issues.
- e) Audit Committee, City-County Administration Building (CCAB), Public Art Committee, Intergovernmental Transit Committee – Commissioner Haque-Hausrath reported the Intergovernmental Transit Committee is looking at the resolution setting the committee up.
- f) Helena Citizens Council –HCC representative Janet Hess-Herbert reported the HCC will meet on April 25<sup>th</sup>; the marketing committee has been busy and the HCC will be co-hosting the HATS public meeting.

**7. Review of agenda for April 22, 2013 City Commission meeting** – Mayor Pro Tem Elsaesser asked for comments on the April 22<sup>nd</sup> city commission agenda. No comments received.

**8. Public Comment** – No comments received.

**9. Commission discussion and direction to City Manager** – City Manager Alles reported he gave a presentation at the Helena Parking Commission meeting; the board members are considering the information that he gave them regarding bringing parking back under the city. The employees would become city employees and the Helena Parking Commission would continue to operate as an advisory board.

Manager Alles stated the Engineering Standards will be on the May 15<sup>th</sup> administrative meeting.

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