

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING
September 20, 2017– 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 Ellison, Farris-Olsen, Haladay and Noonan were present. Staff present was: City Manager Ron Alles; City Attorney Thomas Jodoin; Deputy City Attorney Iryna O'Connor; Police Chief McGee; Fire Chief Mark Emert; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Community Facilities Director Gery Carpenter; Human Resources Director James Fehr; Parks and Recreation Director Amy Teegarden; Public Works Director Randall Camp; Assistant Public Works Director Phil Hauck; City Engineer Ryan Leland; Administrative Services Director Glenn Jorgenson; Parks Superintendent Craig Marr; Parking Director Dave Hewitt and Deputy City Clerk Katya Grover.

Others in attendance included: IR Reporter Matt Neuman, HCC Representative Gary Spaeth; HCC Members Dave Maslowski and Tyrel Suzor-Hoy.

2. September 6, 2017, Meeting Summary – Submission of the September 6, 2017, administrative meeting summary was postponed.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen asked about Wi-Fi, as his understanding was that the relevant papers were sent to the engineering department a while ago. City Manager Alles said that he only received them several days ago. Commissioner Farris-Olsen asked to schedule a discussion regarding Wi-Fi for the next Administrative Meeting. Engineer Leland noted that what was sent to them is not what has been used in the industry and it might take a couple of more weeks before the engineering department could finalize the papers.

3. Commission comments, questions –

Upcoming Appointment – Mayor Smith is recommending the following appointments:

Citizen Conservation Board

The Citizen Conservation is hereby established and shall be comprised of the following individuals, each of whom must be citizens of the City of Helena:

One (1) representative from the Helena Citizen's Council

Denise Barber

Two (2) representatives from the Watershed or Water Conservation sector

Ken Knudson

Dianna Hammer

Two (2) representatives from environmental organizations

Brian Fadie

Greg Ross

Two (2) representatives from the business or building industries

Sarah Norcott

Two (2) citizens at large

Hanna Cail

Ann Brodsky

Two (2) student leaders

One (1) representative from the Health Care Community

Lisa Fairman

One (1) Professional Engineer

Richard Sloan

One (1) Educator from the Earth Science Field

Patrick Judge

Board positions that have not been fulfilled: one (1) representative from the business or building industries and two (2) student leaders.

Ann Brodsky – Will be out of country 9-4 through 11/7.

Mayor Smith talked about having Richard Sloan in the engineer category. Mayor Smith recommended approving the board members at the upcoming Commission Meeting.

4. City Manager's Report – Manager Alles reported on the following: the water usage was 5.1 million gallons a day and it would continue to go down with time; the plants were operating well; there was a ribbon cutting at Rimini Road that was scheduled for the following day at 1 p.m. The city would get off the Ten Mile Water Treatment Plant in about a month and convert to the Missouri Plant for about a week to have maintenance work done.

Mayor Smith said that he was not aware of the ribbon cutting and suggested that one of the commissioners would attend this event.

5. Department Discussions

Public Works

Mini-malfunction/Last Chance 2-Way Discussion – Manager Alles said that this discussion was part of the street priority discussion and referred to the written summary regarding the two alternatives for a two-way traffic on Last Chance Gulch. Engineer Leland elaborated on several traffic studies on the Helena/Last Chance/Neill/Cruse intersection and the TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant, as well as on two options for two-way traffic on Last Chance Gulch:

- Two-way Last Chance Gulch with roundabout
- Two-way Last Chance Gulch with traffic signals at both intersections (Helena Avenue closed)

Mayor Smith asked about the relationship between one-way roundabout and two-way traffic on Last Chance Gulch. Engineer Leland pointed out that without having two-way traffic on Last Chance Gulch the roundabout would only need to be 140 feet in diameter. Because of how close these intersections and entrances into them are, to get the separation needed for the roundabout, design from several years ago showed the need for 180 feet. This means that some of the buildings would be coming into conflict. Two-way traffic would complicate the whole case scenario and there could be a bigger impact.

Mayor Smith referred to an earlier discussion on a small roundabout that would have one lane, which would not interfere with small businesses, and asked Engineer Leland to elaborate on this point. Engineer Leland concurred that it would not have a negative impact on small businesses in the area.

Commissioner Ellison added that he also remembered from that discussion that if there were a roundabout there, it would generate problems for people on foot and bikes.

Commissioner Noonan said that he was surprised that with heavy traffic in that area, MVT would allow a roundabout in that location. Engineer Leland noted that MVT had not looked at that option yet; MVT wanted to see more information back in 2012. If the City could show that the roundabout would work, MVT would be open to this option.

Mayor Smith asked what the pedestrian impact would be with a roundabout. Engineer Leland said that with a roundabout in that location, there would have to be an island and thus pedestrians would have to go all the way around. It would make it safer but it would take more time for pedestrians to cross.

Mayor Smith asked whether the notion of having a crossing at Neill Avenue into the Women's Park was still part of the discussion. Engineer Leland said that there were two different plans for that area, and which one would be chosen depended on the source of funding. Engineer Leland pointed out that it could be part of the project that has been discussed or it could be a standalone project.

Mayor Smith said that he believed that the Commission's opinion would be that closing Helena Avenue would not be a feasible option.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen agreed with Mayor Smith and asked whether there were ways to divert traffic from Helena Avenue. Engineer Leland said that there were ways to do that and that the next step would be to do a traffic study.

Mayor Smith asked Engineer Leland to show on the projector screen how it would be done and Engineer Leland did so.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen asked about the traffic impact study and what the actual impacts would be. Engineer Leland said that the city had multiple studies done, and that the project needs to be taken to the next level, get a design and start building.

Commissioner Haladay asked whether the study looked at such alternative as to go right off Neill Avenue, using the extension at 11th Avenue that crosses at Cruse Avenue and Last Chance Gulch. Engineer Leland said that he looked at this option but because of the volume of traffic, it would cause some significant issues.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen asked whether there were ways to change 11th Avenue. Engineer Leland said that the engineering department looked at it but that the issue that they came up against was how to incorporate Last Chance Gulch and Cruse traffic, as it becomes very complicate trying to merge those two streets.

Fire Chief Emert asked whether the Commission and the engineering department considered that thousands trips of emergency vehicles go through there. Engineer Leland replied that they took that into consideration in making their plans.

Manager Alles asked that if the Commission wanted to go to the next level for a further study, what the next step would be and how the city could pin that down for a more in-depth study. Engineer Leland said that the engineering department had several questions regarding this project:

- whether it would be one-way or two-way traffic on Lust Chance Gulch;
- what the issues with that could be;
- whether it would be a traffic signal or a roundabout.

Once they answered these questions, they could proceed with the design.

Manager Alles asked whether the engineering department has to have an answer to the following question: whether two-way traffic is allowed in that area. Engineer Leland concurred and said that before this project is taken any further, a small study has to be conducted.

Mayor Smith asked whether the next step could be taken based on today's discussion. Engineer Leland concurred and said that he needed to know whether this project will be funded out of Gas Tax or by the TIGER grant or a bigger grant.

Mayor Smith noted that the TIGER grant was very ambitious, that the City would have to provide a bigger match than the government would provide and that the TIGER grants were geared towards projects that had more national significance that the project under consideration.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen noted that his preference would be to pay out of Gas Tax and not by the TIGER grant.

Commissioner Ellison noted that businesses in that area were sharply divided regarding the prospect of having two-way traffic on Last Chance Gulch. Commissioner Ellison suggested that the decision on whether to have one-way or two-way traffic had to be made before the Commission would make any other decisions.

Mayor Smith suggested that the Commission would ask MVT and Engineer Leland to show what a roundabout with one-lane/way and two-way traffic would look like. Mayor Smith added that a roundabout seemed to be more appropriate there and that there seemed to be interest in two-way traffic. Engineer Leland pointed out that there were other issues with two-way traffic on Last Chance Gulch that were not discussed today but that the engineering department could look at it and report on how it could work.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen asked Director Haugen whether converting Last Chance Gulch to two-way traffic was an implementation strategy in the Downtown Master Plan. Director Haugen said that she would look into it.

Commissioner Haladay noted that he thought that it was an implementation part. Commissioner Haladay also said that, according to downtown businesses, a roundabout may not be the best thing but it also might be the only option. Commissioner Haladay said that he believed that it would be better for the Commission to go forward with it.

Mayor Smith noted that he would be fine with signalization vs. roundabout. Engineer Leland said that later he could report to the Commission on the wait times at specific times of the day and on what the roundabout would look like, and design it with the visual traffic and show it to the Commission.

Manager Alles asked to clarify whether the Commission wanted to take the two-way design to the next level or whether there was an option to leave Last Chance Gulch as one-way street.

Mayor Smith said that the City would have to have its best try at two-way traffic on Last Chance Gulch and directed to take this project to the next level and conduct a small traffic study.

Streets Projects Priority Discussion – Engineer Leland reported staff performed a complete street analysis in the fall of 2014 and came up with a list of streets recommended for normal maintenance

(chip/seal), heavy maintenance (mill/overlay) and failed streets (reconstruction). Normal and heavy maintenance projects are funded within the Street Maintenance budget. Failed Street Reconstruction has historically been funded with Gas Tax and for the first time in FY18, Street Maintenance Capital. Staff is seeking Commission direction regarding the method of setting street reconstruction priorities. Possible methods are:

- Develop a rating matrix
- Base priorities on worst condition replaced first
- Commission priorities
- Based upon maintenance demands
- Budget based prioritization
- Other infrastructure considerations
- Some combination of above.

Staff would recommend reevaluating all the streets, by either staff or a consultant, to see if any additional streets are beyond maintenance. Staff will be in attendance to discuss and seek direction for establishing failed streets priorities. Maps of the failed streets will be provided as well as staff's top priorities and costs estimates.

Mayor Smith, Commissioners, and city staff had a discussion regarding priority on street projects. At the end of the discussion, the Commission gave directions to the City Manager.

Consensus Direction to Manager – to get better estimates of the two transportation plans – malfunction junction and two-way traffic; for Engineer Leland to work on getting further estimates regarding condition of Rodney Street, whether it needs mill and overlay or total reconstruct in some areas, as well as condition of 6th and 11th Avenues.

Mayor Smith asked about what action would be taken regarding failing streets. Engineer Leland said that his understanding was that he would work to provide answers to the following questions: – where the City was going to get the Gas Tax on, what condition Rodney Street was in, and what the maintenance schedule was for the rest of the streets, so that then the Commission could evaluate the priorities for the failing streets.

6. Committee discussions

- a) Audit Committee, City-County Board of Health, L&C County Mental Health Advisory Committee, Montana League of Cities & Towns – No report given.
- b) Mayor Pro-Tem, Audit Committee, Helena Chamber of Commerce Liaison, Information Technology Committee, Transportation Coordinating Committee – No report given.
- c) ADA Compliance Committee, Audit Committee, City-County Parks Board, Civic Center Board – No report given.
- d) Board of Adjustment, City-County Administration Building (CCAB), Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Board, Transportation Coordinating Committee – No report given.
- e) Business Improvement District/Helena Parking Commission, Montana Business Assistance Connection, Public Art Committee – No report given.
- f) Helena Citizens Council – **Civic Center Recommendations** – Manager Alles opened the discussion of the recommendations HCC members prepared for the Civic Center staff.

Mr. Spaeth reminded attendees of the administrative meeting about the survey HCC was conducting and that October 1st was the deadline. Mr. Spaeth also thanked Mayor and Commissioners for passing the railroad resolution.

HCC Member Dave Maslowski reported on recommendations HCC provided to the Civic Center staff:

- **Develop a relationship with promoters locally, in neighboring cities, as well as regionally.** (Making sure that our venue is known, and actively advertising it as often as possible.)

- **Develop a goal for numbers of events/concerts.** (Example: By year two, set a goal of having a minimum of two concerts/performances per month. This gives the citizens a greater chance attending a performance they would enjoy.)
- **Develop a goal/strategy for selling concessions and alcohol during events.** (Determining the ability to do this could result in an entirely new revenue stream for the civic center.)
- **Develop a goal for decreasing the amount of general fund money used to subsidize the civic center.** (While we don't believe it should be expected to get rid of a general fund transfer all together, this should be a long term goal and an ongoing project by tracking new revenues. Example goal: By year five, decrease the amount of general fund money transferred to \$350,000 and \$250,000 by year ten.)

Mayor, Commissioners, Manager Alles, Director Carpenter, and HCC staff discussed goals of the Civic Center for the upcoming year and the recommendations offered by the HCC.

Commissioner Haladay asked Director Carpenter to elaborate on the goals he set for the Civic Center for the upcoming year. Director Carpenter discussed the goals for the Civic Center and noted that they were different from the recommendations that Mr. Maslowski had read. Director Carpenter pointed out that the problem was with the storage but it should be resolved by the time he would retire.

Director Carpenter noted that the Civic Center was working on bringing back the North-West Tour, which disappeared 6-7 years ago, to the regional level so it would not be limited only to one city.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen said that some of the ideas proposed by HCC could be incorporated by the Civic Center and that Director Carpenter could develop a strategic plan for the Civic Center before retiring.

Mr. Spaeth agreed and said that Fairgrounds was losing money but three years ago, after implementing a strategic plan, it started breaking even and then earning money. Mr. Spaeth emphasized that it was possible due to developing a strategic plan.

Director Carpenter pointed out that the auditorium at the Civic Center was booked for all but three days beginning from the fourth week in October.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen asked about the newly hired director of the Civic Center and noted that the Civic Center Board expressed a concern because they were not involved in the hiring process and had not met the candidate. Manager Alles pointed out that the Board met the candidate but he would keep in mind that the Board expressed a wish to be more involved in such matters.

Mayor Smith said that the Civic Center Board was unique and that it was beneficial that the Board was serving as the Civic Center Foundation, as they raised a lot of money.

Commissioner Farris-Olsen said that it would be good to have a vision of what the strategic plan would be by the time the Commission discusses the next budget.

Mayor Smith pointed out that he would like to see each department proposing their goals in a similar fashion by the next budget cycle.

Manager Alles said that he wanted the new hire to get used to his job first but that he would try to develop a framework for the strategic plan. Commissioner Farris-Olsen said that bullet points format would be sufficient.

Mayor Smith concluded the discussion.

Manager Alles expressed his gratitude to Director Carpenter for his work and noted that he had built a remarkable facility at the Civic Center.

7. **Review of agenda for September 25, 2017** – Mayor Smith didn't have additional discussion of agenda for upcoming Commission Meeting.
8. **Public Comment** – No public comment received.
9. **Commission discussion and direction to the City Manager** – No discussion held.
10. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.