



**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SUMMARY  
January 8, 2019**



City of Helena

**GENERAL MEMBERS:**

- Betsy Ross
- Eric Sivers
- Jeff Shirley
- Karen Reese

**CITY OF HELENA STAFF REPRESENTATIVES:**

- Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager
- Greta Dige, Code Enforcement
- Jennifer Schade, Recorder

**CITY-COUNTY PARKS BOARD REPRESENTATIVE:**

- Ross Johnson

**HELENA CITIZENS COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE:**

- Denise Roth Barber

**ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS:**

**Helena Tourism Alliance Representative**

- Andrea Opitz

**PPLT Representative**

- Evan Kulesa

**LOCATION:** City-County Building, Room 326

**TIME:** 5:30 Pm – 7:00 pm

**Call to Order**

**Welcome/Introductions/Visitors**

**Christian Dietrich, Helena Disc Golf, Nick Sovner, Helena Resident, Steven Engebrecht, President, Helena Ultra Runners League (HURL), Denise Pangeroth, Helena Resident, Cheryl Sosa, Helena Resident, DD Dowden, Helena Hikes, Tony Zammit, Helena Resident, Lois Olson, Helena Resident**

**Minutes Approval – December 11, 2018**

- After some discussion, HOLMAC decided it would be best for Jennifer to continue to prepare the minutes.
- Denise noted a couple edits.
  - ✚ On page 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet, the sentence should read, *“While the opens lands department is **not** struggling financially, we are getting to the point where that could potentially happen.*
  - ✚ Under the last bullet on page 4, the word lesson should read **lessen**.
  - ✚ With no further corrections, Eric moved to approve the minutes. Karen seconded. Motion carried.

**HOLMAC Action Items**

- None.

**New Business**

Disc Golf Helena's request for additional usage area at the South Hills Disc Golf Course

- Christian Dietrich presented.

- The existing South Hills Disc Golf Course on the Donaldson property is the result of an informal partnership between the City and those involved in the disc golf ("Folf") community in Helena. Over the years, disc golfers-acting through the local club, the Sleeping Giant Disc Golf Alliance (since 2005), and the local nonprofit Disc Golf Helena involving many of the same people (since about 2015) have designed, paid for, installed, and maintained this community asset, which sees hundreds of people per day in nice weather. The City has provided critical support as well, including help with course work (i.e. use of auger), installing the parking lot, etc. The local club/nonprofit has continued to add on to the course as they have raised the funds to do so.
- Christian is at today's HOLMAC meeting as there is some entirely unused land in the southwest corner, above the road leading to the barn near the back end of the parcel that is accessed off Early Bird Drive (maps are attached to the end of the minutes). The map shows the slim yellow legal parcel lines in the picture, and the city open space lands which are lightly shaded. The legal parcel lines are slightly off with respect to the Google Earth imagery, but Folf volunteers have gone to the course with good GPS equipment to check out the actual lay of the land. There is definitely enough space for a few (2-4) good holes in that little area which is otherwise completely unused.
- While the Sleeping Giant Disc Golf Alliance consider themselves to still be informally "in charge" of paying for and installing course improvements, this seemed a bit outside that normal scope, and felt they should get some sort of approval before proceeding.
- Brad stated the course is located off Saddle Drive and Cabernet. The Sleeping Giant Disc Golf Alliance put together plan and did all the fundraising for this project and it has been a tremendous success. The city installed the parking area and put in the ADA trail as well with the assistance of the golf alliance. They maintain all the tee boxes and the baskets. The group also does trash pick-ups, etc.
- Brad – we are not using the property that is being referenced. We did do our second maintenance thinning on this property last summer. If we allow this expansion, Brad recommends we do a post and rail fence around the boundary. If we add this to our 2019 work plan, we need to fence that boundary. Brad added that all the survey pins are in place. We have not fenced the west boundary against the neighborhood between Early Bird and Saddle because there is a lot of rock walls along that property line so that hasn't been necessitated. However, when you go down the east corner we have existing fences along the eastern side but we are having vehicular trespassing issues along the sidewalk. It is mainly homeowners doing things in their back yard such as installing a hot tub, putting up a trampoline, etc. So on this year's work plan, Brad wants to fence along this sidewalk and end the access coming off Cabernet. We could perhaps do both of these fencing projects at the same time.
- Since the course was installed, the only other issue besides fencing was an issue of smoking cigarettes on or near the property. Unfortunately, open space could not be included in the no tobacco policy so we were unable to honor that request.
- We will also be installing a kiosk by the parking area for the Folf group in an effort to keep updates on fire safety/danger, etc.
- Brad stated he is in favor of this project. Christian added the Sleeping Giant Disc Golf Alliance is committed to paying for the course improvements. He hopes the city will be responsible for the additional fencing.
- Christian stated that hundreds of people utilize the course on a daily basis during the summer. There is even use in winter months. Brad added that the trail around the area is getting more and more popular.

- Brad stated this is **not** part of the Section 7, Recreation update to the plan. The items not included in the update include, 1. The Disc Folf Course, 2. The Archery Range and 3. Mountain Climbing. The update is completely trails and trailhead focused. We just renewed the Archery Range lease, and we aren't making changes to the Folf course (other than this) and we just went through installing the mountain climbing course. Brad's thought is that we should add this to the work plan. We will create a work plan that does not have trails items. Brad explained that we did some work at the archery range (fence, etc.) and they in turn are paying us back over a period of time.
- This will be included on the work plan and we will then go through the public comment process. Brad added that he is happy to take anyone to the Folf course if they want to see how it is set up.

#### RFP Update

- Included with the RFP document are comments from Helena Hikes. Brad added his comments in red. Brad and Jennifer met with representatives from Helena Hikes in December regarding their suggestions. They sent additional recommendations via email. Brad did take some of the suggestions and incorporated them into the RFP. Many of the changes were minor. One thing that Brad added to the RFP is that the facilitator will organize and facilitate on community meeting to ascertain the public's recreation related topics of interest or concern as they relate to the management of the City's open lands system. The facilitator will then use this input as a framework as they get ready for the process.
- The process hasn't changed as we will still go through the trail system trail by trail and trailhead by trailhead. Brad is anticipating approximately 52 trails that will be analyzed. Brad believes we will have many trails where there is no pressing issue or need to do anything different. We can then move those trails in the "done" bin and move on. Also, if there is an idea for a new trail, that will be presented in the same fashion.
- Helena resident DD Dowden again expressed concern that this is a work plan approach to the trails as opposed to a review of the overall trail system. She asked if we will be looking at the 2004 plan for additional updates. Brad said that we will not be looking at the entire plan. DD then asked where we will address new acquisitions to the trail system. Brad stated that city staff will be responsible for all appendices and maps. Brad also reminded the committee that we are not talking about vegetation management. We will ask, "How does recreation affect the concern that a HOLTAC member may have on a given trail"? There is a lot of the current plan that is still effective; however, section 7 seems to be the contentious portion of the plan. The original ask was to update that portion of the work plan.
- Denise added this process will only deal with section 7, but it doesn't necessarily mean we wouldn't at some other time look at other sections of the plan and perhaps update some of those components. Brad stated if there is a point in time when we want to enter another chapter, then that would be the time to do that. The reason we opted for this route was due to the fact that we adopted a 10-year forestry management plan. We have already accepted grant monies so by dealing with the issue at hand (Section 7), it didn't affect the legality of the grants we have acquired. Right now it would be very difficult to go into the vegetation chapter as we are already committed with different entities to complete different projects.
- Brad stated the 2004 plan was very well written. Brad was able to take the information in that plan and implement the large scale forestry plan that we did.
- Helena resident Lois Olson stated she served on HOLMAC years ago and they did quite an inventory of signage and social trails and at that time, they tried to make recommendations for what trails should stay and be on the system. She asked Brad if the city has yet defined the system. Brad stated

quite a few social trails were brought in to the trail network at that time so HOLMAC put a lot of effort into mapping the social trails. HOLMAC members put effort into going to each trail and determine what would be done with that specific trail. As Brad recalls, we added 6 or 8 trails to the system. We then started putting up carsonite signage on some of the other social trails and actually physically closed some of the other trails. We will probably want to look at social trails in Section 7 as this is still an issue. If another trail is brought into the system, it will have to be introduced to the HOLMAC committee. If a HOLTAC member has concern about a specific trail, we will address it when reviewing Section 7.

- The RFP is now at the point where staff will submit it to the commission for comments. If the commission is comfortable with the RFP, we will send out to the list of consultants that has been assembled. We will then begin the process of selection. The goal is to kick off the project (HOLTAC) in early April. Brad would like to have a meet and greet in February for the stakeholder group. Brad will provide HOLTAC maps and allow each member time to familiarize themselves with the system.
- Brad has also updated the stakeholder list. Brad added the following additional groups:
  - Bike Walk Montana
  - Friends of Mount Helena
  - Helena Business Improvement District
  - Helena Area Trail Users
  - Last Chance Backcountry Horsemen
  - Native Plant Society
- Helena Hikes specifically asked Brad to reach out to Last Chance Backcountry Horsemen.
- There are 10 groups committed to this process.

#### Update on when the City Commissioners will fill the vacancy on HOLMAC

- The Mayor has made his selection for the HOLMAC vacancy and the recommendation will go to commission on Monday, January 19.

#### Decide who will be HOLMAC's Rep on HOLTAC

- Eric recused himself from serving on HOLTAC as he has interest in one of the groups already serving. Karen was thinking the same thing.
- Brad asked that we make a decision about our HOLMAC representative by our meeting in February.

#### Draft 2019 Open Lands Work Plan (Non-Trail Related Projects)

- Brad provided a draft copy of the 2019 Open Lands Work Plan (non-trail related projects) for HOLMAC to review.
- This is a carryover of many projects we did last year.
- We are continuing doing slash pile burning on both Mt. Ascension and Mt. Helena. We have about 60 acres to complete which is going to be very difficult with the current DEQ issues. Brad would like to get through this as we are very susceptible to someone tossing a cigarette and starting a fire.
- Brad attached the maps for the large projects that we are at on our final year. He may be able to get an extension which he usually can do. We have a lot of work to do on Mt. Ascension. The only parcel that is done on Mt. Ascension is right off Arrowroot Road. All the rest of Mt. Ascension will need to be done by October. Brad also projects a very big year on Mt. Helena. The only area completed is over by the parking area above and below the 1906 Trail. Brad will need to bring in large hand pile crews to complete these projects. There will be more chipping on Mt. Ascension.

- We will have to access Mt. Helena from different points. We will attempt to limit bringing in equipment.
- Denise then asked Brad in the areas where we will be doing pile development on Mt. Helena, will this exacerbate the concern you have about them turning into giant matchsticks. It's always a concern; however if we chip, that may affect the forest floor.
- When Brad brings in the larger crews, he has more difficulty controlling tree scorching.
- Firewood distribution – we are hoping to move forward with the LEAP program this year.
- We will continue to be as aggressive with the weeds as possible.
- Facilities: At the Van Hook Wetlands, we hope to place informational signage on the viewing platform. The viewing platform is decomposed granite that will be supported by a treated wood retaining wall.
- We will install post and rail fencing on the north and south sides of Arrowroot road near the top of Mt. Ascension to prevent vehicular entrance.
- We will continue with boundary identification. Brad also reviewed Reclamation – we will do another grass seeding on the directional trail but also every area that gets burned. Crews will rake and seed all burned areas. Eric then asked if it is possible to seed some of the areas on Powerline. Brad stated he can add this to the grass seeding list.
- Brad will add the Folf course extra holes and kiosk to the work plan.
- Denise – the next step in the process is to put this plan on our website. We will also need to take the plan before the commission for final approval. Brad stated we will need to amend in what HOLTAC decides.
- Denise wants to make it clear that HOLMAC does follow the processes set forth by the commission. She added that we need to challenge people when they say that HOLMAC is not following the process.
- One of the areas in which we were criticized was the legal notice. Brad said that he and Greta looked at the cost to mail notifications to the community. We would be looking at a \$6,000 bill. We could also look at adding information (postcard) in the water bill.
- Brad added that we will be doing a full outreach with what we decide in the recreation plan. We will do a full mail out of the draft plan so all residents have a chance to comment on the rough draft of the plan.
- We will get the RFP to the commission for approval and move forward with the selection of HOLTAC members.
- Dennis Taylor, the Interim City Manager stated we can send the RFP to the commissioners for comment. Brad will then incorporate their comments into the document. The commissioners may ask Brad to present at an Admin meeting.

#### Review/update Bylaws

- Ross mentioned that in reviewing the bylaws, he understood that the chair and vice chair had to be city-appointed members. Denise stated it appeared that the city members were those listed under “General Members”. Another review of the bylaws shows that we are **all** city-appointed members (**Article 2 – Section 2: “All members shall be appointed by the Helena City Commission and are heretofore referred to as Commission-appointed members”**).
- Ross then stated that he is serving as a volunteer of the City-County Parks Board.
- Jeff then eluded to Section 1 of Article 2 which states “HOLMAC shall be composed of seven voting members: five at-large Helena citizens, one representative of the Helena Citizens Council, and one representative of the **City-County Parks Board**”.

- Based on this, Denise believes we are okay with the current HOLMAC members. She did add that at this time, we don't have a vice chair. The bylaws state that we should. **Eric volunteered to serve as the vice chair.**
- Subcommittees can be established using HOLMAC members and members of the public. However, it must be a current HOLMAC member that serves as the HOLMAC representative on HOLTAC.

### **Parks and Recreation Report – Brad**

### **Reports from Subcommittees – None**

- Weeds – Greta
- Report from PPLT
- Cultural Resources
- Wildlife
- Forestry

### **Public Comment**

- DD Dowden stated she appreciates the hard work HOLMAC does in getting the word out to the public. She liked the idea of adding an information insert in the water bill. She also said that years ago when a new trail was scheduled to be built, flags would be placed at the trail for a month prior to the work. It was another way of letting the public know that work was going to be done. We need to figure out better ways to get the public informed.

**Next Meeting Date: February 12, 2019**

### **Future Agenda Items:**

- Selection of the HOLMAC member to serve on HOLTAC.

### **Adjournment:**

With no further business, HOLMAC adjourned at 7:00 pm.

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Helena Disc Golf Course

