



**Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes
November 18th ,2020 7:00pm
Via Zoom**

Meeting was called to order by Dylan Klapmier at 7:00pm

Attendance: Pat Marron, John Andrew, Timothy Chisman, Diana Hammer, Meg Bishop, Nancy Perry, Sumner Sharpe, Margaret Strachan, Tom Woodgerd, Dylan Klapmeier, Ryan Schwochert, TJ Lehman, Joseph Lehman, Ben Kennedy, Steve Allen, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth-Barber, Chelly Hasquet,

Excused: Doris Davis, Samson Boyd, Tim Dwyer, Gary Dalton, David Beach, Jason Welnel

Guests: City Manager Rachel Harlow-Schalk, Mayor Wilmot Collins, Dannai Clayborn (City Clerk) Ben Kuiper, Shannon Health, Dr. G

A quorum was established.

Approval of October Minutes

No amendments, comments or changes to minutes. Stand approved.

Guest Presenter: City Manager Rachel Harlow- Schalk

Our new city manager mentions how glad she is to be here. She also says Sumner Sharpe (HCC Co-Chair) was a part of her interview. Rachel says that fact that HCC is a part of the City Charter is impressive. She believes in the communities' right to know. Rachel H-S has an undergraduate degree in Hazardous Waste Management and has worked within the Super Fund Reauthorization Act providing advice to Commissions as well as budget recommendation. During her interview, the Commission identified what they expected from the city manager within the first 30 days of hire – 1. Relationship building 2. Financial security 3. Strategic planning. Rachel, during her first 30 days, worked on these expectations, but the couple of serious snowstorms provided a few delays.

Rachel Harlow-Schalk (Rachel H-S) comes to Helena from Colorado but she had often visited Montana over the years because of a family connection. Rachel H-S spent 20 years in local government. In 2013, Lyons Colorado was decimated by a flood, and Rachel was sent there to help provide stability through the State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs. This is a system that helps local governments in Colorado solve local issues by providing strategic training, research, technical assistance, and funding.

Rachel H-S looks forward to filling department head positions within the city. Sheila Danielson from Washington State has been hired as the new Finance Director. New Public Works Director is Ryan Leland, and a new HR Director still needs to be hired. A Public Information Officer for the City of Helena still needs to be hired as well.

Rachel H-S believes in relationship-based work. She mentions Social Capital, and a book entitled *Bowling Alone* founded on this philosophy. She talks about the 3 branches of local government: Legislative (Commission along with the HCC) Judicial and Executive. The city manager falls under the executive branch staffed with liasons from other city departments. Peggy Benkelman (HCC Coordinator) works for the HCC and the city, under the supervision of Dannai Clayborn (Clerk of Commission) within the Legislative branch of local government.

Regarding City of Helena Budget Stabilization – Rachel H-S is reviewing 1. How the City of Helena spends money 2. Practices to implement thru Administration 3. Policies the City enacts. She feels this will make the City have a more stable budget. Other questions are: the city's debt burden and how and when to borrow from the general fund. Questions were raised by both Mayor Collins and other HCC members about having a biannual budget. Rachel H-S feels that Helena is not ready for that type of budgeting yet, its budget is not yet mature enough, so Helena will return to having annual budgets. Structure problems within the budget have been noticed – especially when questions are asked. The finance team can get to the answer, but they need to be able to do so more quickly for better/faster decision making. The Finance department along with the city manager are working on a strategic plan now through February. They will keep the HCC informed and will welcome public input. Sumner Sharpe reminds the HCC and the city manager that part of the HCC's job is to review and make recommendations to the city budget.

HCC member Meg Bishop asks what are the Commission's priorities. Rachel H-S mentions they are big broad priorities with smaller goals within each one. E.g. Safe and Secure communities and within: street lighting...etc.

City Manager H-S wants to create a volunteer program within the city – something similar to what was in place in Colorado. For example on the latest heavy snow days, there were many volunteers helping neighbors shovel snow – city employees and Mayor Collins included. Rachel H-S will be working with David Knoepke (Transportation Director) on the volunteer program.

Our city manager mentioned she was recently educated on the Montana State Law regarding Quasi-Judicial procedure by city attorney Thomas Jodoin. She explains that projects have to move through certain phases and input and opinions have to wait until nearer the end of the project when all public input can be presented. Rachel H-S suggests that city employees as well as the HCC be given a presentation/training on Quasi- Judicial and how it applies in different circumstances. Rachel H-S also wants us to know that she is not restricting city staff in voicing their opinions. Sumner Sharpe states that staff is not subject to Ex Parte rules. It is imperative that Commissioners recuse themselves from a vote should there appear to be a conflict of interest. Also, if

someone from the public approaches a Commissioner to discuss a project – it is up to the Commissioner to say that he/she cannot discuss the matter.

Rachel H-S mentions that the City's most important role is to build community and relationships by listening and hearing what citizens' needs are. For example, as she (Rachel) has been reaching out to citizens, one of the foremost complaints/issues is about parking. Rachel H-S is not interested in making any more big changes about parking right away.

Our City Manager says she will continue for the next 30 days to build relationships, establish fiscal/financial stability and develop strategic plan.

Meg Bishop asks about lack of availability of Commission minutes and difficulty in getting and utilizing the audio from Zoom. Sumner Sharpe also states he has difficulty in accessing committee minutes – such as BID and TIF meeting minutes – they are nowhere to be found on the City of Helena webpage. Mayor Collins explains that Dannai Clayborn (now City Clerk) has been overwhelmed with work as she has been doing the job of two people for the last 16 months. Compiling meeting minutes and posting on the webpage has not been possible. HR is in the process of hiring a new Deputy City Clerk. This person should be helpful in updating the minutes. Dannai Clayborn (City Clerk) responds about Commission minutes. The minutes are updated to June of 2020. Zoom meetings have made the Commission meetings much longer because more citizens are participating. Dr. Thomas sends chatroom note about transcription services at \$200/hr. Dannai responds that this software often doesn't work effectively – the office would prefer more detail and substance in the meeting minutes. Dannai asks that the public have patience and hopefully the new Deputy Clerk will be hired soon. A zoom license was purchased in early March 2020 and the Commission intends to continue with Zoom meetings. The Clerk of Commission is currently digitizing all the documents in the office so that staff can more efficiently communicate with each other and the public.

Steve Allen asks the city manager – “What other projects fit into the Quasi-Judicial arena”. Rachel H-S was not sure but she will soon be more educated on this topic. She is starting a Development Review Committee, which will address projects and process.

Meg Bishop wonders about implications of Quasi -Judicial and how the HCC as a body communicates with the Commission. Meg says Helena citizens often feel that decisions have already been made about projects and their opinion or input has not been considered. Meg feels there should be a robust scoping period before planning decisions are made and this period should take into account neighborhood citizens' issues, questions and concerns.

Rachel H-S is not concerned about how HCC makes recommendations to the Commission- they are following correct protocol. The city does owe the public information about planning projects.

Officer Reports:

Treasurer Report - Nancy Perry states the budget is the same from last month. She did give approval as Treasurer for Peggy Benkelman to make 1050 copies for door hangers. Cost is absorbed within the yearly copy fee assessed our program.

Coordinator Report: Peggy Benkelman continues to update the webpage, compile minutes and agendas and attend committees meetings. She is still expanding the District Email list.

HPAC Report – Peggy Benkelman and Margaret Strachan report that all hard files have been moved to the Facilities Department. Bridget Johnston (Civic Center Administrator) will take over the HPAC coordinator duties. The Boundy Memorial Sculpture is still waiting for final approval of location.

Neighborhood District Reports – no specific neighborhood reports.

Committee Updates

Civic Center Board – John Andrew – The RFP to reach out for a new business to take over the running of the Civic Center is still on the table. The Steering Committee doesn't feel that the timing is right for the RFP outreach because of COVID. Most likely the Steering Committee will continue to advise the Commission as the City discusses what type of board should be installed to oversee the Civic Center.

HCC Outreach Committee – Sumner Sharpe – The door hangers are out and being placed within District Neighborhoods. Hopefully they will help build the much needed email lists of citizens in each District. The Outreach Committee still wants to have a monthly info bulletin on their webpage – design is in discussion.

Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council – Tom Woodgerd –Members at the last meeting were largely in favor of having the DeFord trail ADA accessible. Greg Wirth mentioned the trail is in his back yard. Greg also says the upper part of the trail is very steep and probably could not become ADA compliant, however the HCC recommendation is only for the lower part of the trail (the first mile to 1.5 total miles) where it is already flat. Tom Woodgerd mentions the Centennial Trail and the safety regarding crossing Henderson Rd. near the Railroad tracks. It is very steep there. Discussion about putting in a walking/biking bridge has been brought up, but conflicting information about Railroad survey has slowed the process. There are 2 vacancies on the Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council.

Citizen Conservation Board – Denise Roth-Barber – nothing new to report

Water Quality Protection District – Diana Hammer – She will give an update next month after the November meeting.

HOLMAC – TJ Lehman – TJ mentions that there is a listening session tomorrow November 19th at 5:30. Open Lands projects will be discussed.

Old Business

Bylaw Amendment vs. Conflict of Interest Form

A motion was made to include the document in the Purpose and Guiding Principles – however after discussion, Margaret Strachan withdrew her motion because of a change in language. After more discussion, Tom Woodgerd made a motion to include a change in the last sentence to read: *Specifically, the standard of conduct is to avoid any conflicts of interest between the council and members' personal, professional, and/or business gain.* A vote was taken: none-opposed, Sumner abstains. Amendment to the language is approved. Sumner moved to include the Conflicts of Interest form in the Purpose and Guiding Principles. Margaret Strachan seconds the motion. Open for discussion – no comments were had. A vote was taken – all were in favor, none opposed. The Conflict of Interest Form will be included in Purpose and Guiding Principles.

Meg Bishop suggests that some HCC members don't fully understand what constitutes a conflict of interest. She thinks a yearly discussion and review would be helpful to members.

Westside Development

Sumner Sharpe discusses the City of Helena's pre-app process. After the city signs off on the pre-application and it is complete, only then can they hear public input/concerns. The HCC regularly receives subdivision and variance information which is forwarded to the HCC members within the district that is mentioned and they can comment. Margaret Strachan would like to hear more about the State law on Quasi-Judicial – maybe HCC can have a speaker at one of their meetings. After the completeness of the application is approved, then the 80 days start for public input etc. Pat Marron discussed with Mike McConnell (Planning Department) and there were problems with road grades, so the company had to re-submit the application on the Westside development project. This delays the time that the 80 day public review process can begin. The HCC will receive notice about an upcoming neighborhood meeting on the development. Pat Marron and Mike McConnell have combined email lists to better contact persons in the nearby neighborhoods.

Pre-Application meetings for new business developments recommendation

The pre-application is a completeness decision on the submitted paperwork, then the public discussions follow after the application completeness is reviewed and approved. Both Meg Bishop and Margaret Strachan feel this process is a bit backwards as it would be much better to hear about neighborhood concerns, issues and ideas while the developer is still in the design process. Better to address any "red flags" beforehand. These ideas will become an ongoing discussion for HCC. Maybe HCC can promote this process change within the city.

Promote having HCC recommendations be acknowledged and considered at Commission Meetings.

Mayor Collins will research about how to get a better response/recognition from the Commissioners regarding the HCC's recommendations. Should they become an agenda item at the meetings?

New Business

Nominating Committee: For Officer Elections next month

Chair Denise Roth-Barber, Bob Habeck, Ben Kuiper

District #2 Appointee – Ben Kuiper

District #2 HCC members have appointed Ben Kuiper to serve. Ben says he wanted to get involved with his community and joining HCC would be a good way to do so. He was on the ASUM student government as a business manager. He likes dealing with organizational budgets. The HCC welcomes him aboard.

Shannon Health – was also appointed to serve as a District #2 representative, however hours after the meeting, she resigned saying it seemed to be too time consuming for her.

Public Comment

Dannai Clayborn (City Clerk) is attending the meeting to observe and be available to answer any questions.

Mayor Collins is attending and visiting all the advisory boards, stating please contact him if he can be of any assistance.

Ryan Schwochert – mentioned he is establishing a new Curling Club in Helena which will include Learn to Curl events. You can find more information on their Facebook page *Last Chance Curling Club*.

Tim Chisman – Mentioned that Downtown Helena Incorporated (DHI) now has Helena Nuggets gift cards. They have no expiration dates and no monthly user fees. They are equivalent to cash. The Helena Nugget gift cards can be purchased at the office at 330 N Jackson from 10am to 2pm.

Dr. G. – mentioned that the City of Helena could purchase transcribing services to help bring the Commission minutes up to date.

Meeting was Adjourned at 9:02PM

Next Meeting is condensed and optional on December 16th at 7:00pm via Zoom

Upcoming Meeting Ideas and Guest Presenters:

Paul Pacini – Transportation
Helena Tourism Board
Open Lands Panel
Budget