



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes
June 23, 2021 7:00pm
Via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by Dylan Klapmier at 7:03pm

Attendance: Pat Marron, John Andrew, Tim Chisman, Diana Hammer, Nancy Perry, Ben Kuiper, Mike Rooney, Sumner Sharpe, Dylan Klapmeier, , Joseph Lehman, Steve Allen, Denise Roth-Barber, Heidi Freidlander
Peggy Benkelman(coordinator)

Excused: Margaret Strachan, Colleen Murphy, Gary Dalton, Tom Woodgerd, Samson Boyd, Ben Kennedy, Ryan Schwochert, TJ Lehman, Bob Habeck, Susan Steffens, Chelly Hasquet

Guests: Rachel Harlow-Schalk (City Manager), Sheila Danielson (City Finance Director) Dr. Gregory Thomas (member of the public)

A Quorum was established

Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items – None

Approval of May Minutes – no corrections or comments. Minutes for both May 13th, 2021 and May 20th,2021 stand approved.

City Manager Rachel Harlow Schalk –

Dylan asks that the City Manager give us an update on the city's strategic plans/goals

**Adopted Strategic Outcomes & Key Activities
FY2022 Budget**

 1. Promote Healthy and Sustainable Growth in Helena by:

- Supporting effective and innovative economic health initiatives.
- Supporting employment opportunities through business retention, expansion, incubation and attraction.
- Supporting workforce development.
- Fostering sustainable infill and redevelopment on private property.
- Diversifying economic activity to improve the economic vitality of the community.
- Sustaining high water quality and quantity to support the community.

 2. Promote a Safe Community by:

- Fostering public trust and creating a safer community.
- Increasing the community's wildfire preparedness.

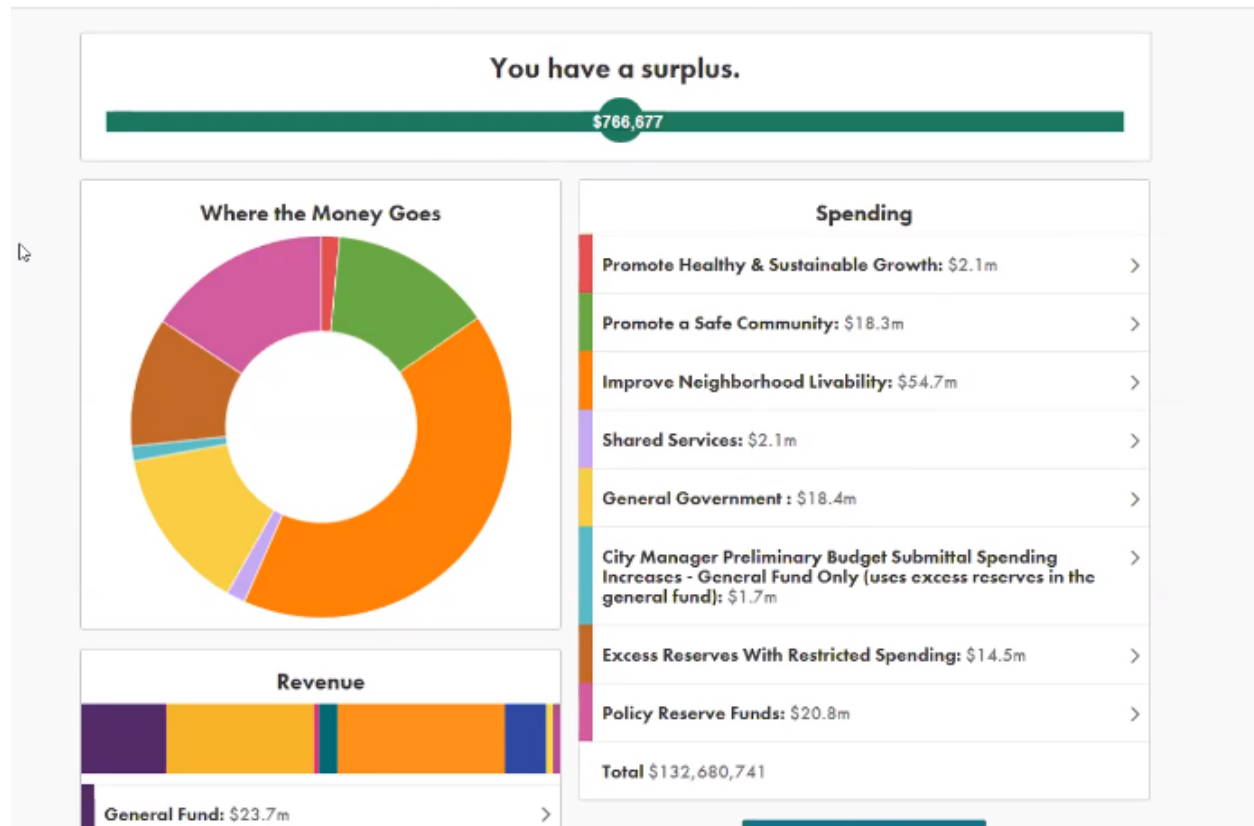
 3. Improve Neighborhood Livability by:

- Increasing the integrity of streets & sidewalks.
- Increasing access to a broad range of quality housing that is accessible and affordable.
- Protecting and preserving the City's quality of life and neighborhoods.
- Ensuring that future development is compatible with community expectations through public engagement during planning, land use, and historical preservation work.

Rachel shows her screen and states that the city has never had a strategic plan. The Commission met in January to discuss having a strategic plan, but this one was not adopted. It was adopted as Strategic Outcomes and Key Activities. The city manager and the Finance department will show how their work on the budget ties to these 3 key activities.

City Manager Rachel H-S talks about the Build Out a Budget Project – BeHeardHelena - <https://beheardhelena.com/> –webpage for public engagement and input. There you can also work with an interactive budget within this webpage https://beheardhelena.com/budget-engagement1?tool=guest_book#tool_tab and submit questions about the budget directly to the Finance Department. Rachel H-S says these tools were developed to enhance an educative process for the public and for the public to give input. The tool shows both Revenues and Spending. Rachel also states that when the new Commissioners are elected, there will be a need to revisit the strategic plan.

FY2022 City Manager's Preliminary Budget Submittal



Rachel H-S gives examples as to how the public can utilize the budget tool (above) The budget tool was implemented to help get information out into the community and the public could see what influences the budget.

Rachel H-S states there will be no increase in fees. She wants to know the reason for the possible fee increase and why - not just hear “well, the fees haven’t been raised in quite a while”. Rachel sites example of raising dog license fees.

The Commission can suggest amendments to the budget – they will discuss at the June 28th meeting. Perhaps the amendments will be loaded into the budget tool.

Rachel H-S completed a Fiscal Stability Analysis of the City of Helena budget. She had previously led a team on Fiscal Stability Programming in Colorado. This program not only speaks to how much money the city has, but other primary pieces of a budget which include:

1. Implementation of Financial Policies
2. Assurance of Compliance
3. Implementation of Management Practices/Operations over time.

These 3 pieces of budget management need improvement within the City of Helena – they have not been in place and utilized in the past.

Rachel states that it will probably be 3 years for the City of Helena to attain fiscal stability. She has also observed some findings due to Covid – one of which is the inability of businesses to hire employees. Employees are not to be found. Where did they go? Even the Fire Department is having trouble hiring and that has never happened in the history of Helena.

Rachel H-S says she is not sure if she is achieving the Commission's goals. She has her job performance review coming up. She does feel and has learned from other city managers that the 6 months before and 6 months after an election is a difficult time to achieve goals. She does feel that that city has done a lot in the time she has been here: the Housing Trust Fund was established and the Budget was compiled with more of a story of Helena (Community Profile) that includes what it is like to live here. Some parts of this would include average Helena home price, a living wage vs. a minimum wage etc. The City Manager says Helena is in a good place to have the right kind of leadership and attain fiscal stability. The Commission needs to have a strategic plan with longer term goals.

Sheila Danielson – Finance Director – Sheila re-iterates that the City staff, especially the Finance Department has been very busy putting the budget together.

Rachel H-S gives credit to all who put together the HCC Budget Recommendation. She was very impressed and appreciated the input. Kudos to Nancy Perry, Ben Kuiper, Sumner Sharpe, Dylan Klapmeier and Peggy Benkelman.

Nancy Perry says she also wants to thank all the other HCC members who gave input to the budget document. Nancy also says she is impressed with the work that Rachel, Sheila and the Finance Department are doing. While the budget process this year was new, it seemed to come together well.

Sumner says in previous years, it seems there was a failure of the city to communicate well with the public. What is the city doing to improve this process? Rachel H-S responds that the city has the new communication tool – BeHeardHelena, it now has a new PIO – Jake Garcin, and there will be a new communication plan in place and presented to the Commission in September. Sumner also praised David Knoepke (Transportation Director) for the completion of street maintenance/rebuilding of road in his neighborhood. Well done.

John Andrew – Asks Rachel if the city will be able to keep the Sustainability Coordinator position? John is sorry to see Pat Judge resign. Rachel responds yes, they are aligning the position within the Public Works team and with the new Environmental Manager position. She is hoping to see sustainability networking grow.

Ben Kuiper asks if there could be an explanation of a Structural vs. State Balanced Budget.

Sheila Danielson explains:

According to the **State, a balanced budget** is one where there is still a positive cash balance at the end of the year. The City's budget meets the State's definition of a balanced budget, but the City of Helena includes more: it includes Fiscal Stability/Health statement, policies and procedures, strong management and a strategic plan.

A **structural balanced budget** – is where the yearly ongoing expenditures don't exceed the ongoing revenues and cash reserves spending are only on 1 time costs.

Rachel H-S says the city's current year revenue does not meet current year expenditures, but the city of Helena can afford to take this risk as it has a very low debt load. The City is structurally balanced in all its funds except the General Fund. In Helena "we live on property taxes" which is far less volatile than sales tax. The final budget which is approved in September will show all revenues. The Finance department will be setting reserve policies which the city does not have now.

Dylan Klapmeier asks about the Housing Trust Fund; how it works, what it does.

Sheila Danielson says she has mixed feelings about them. She cites Port Townsend, WA where they moved an entire building and invested a lot of money for improvements, and now 4 years later there are still no residents living in it.

Rachel-H-S says a Housing Trust Fund can't always save the day for housing. There is becoming a high cost of housing imbalance in Helena. Hard to compare the low population of Helena with cities that have 100K people. The Legislature this year restricted zoning laws which will reduce low-income housing, making it harder for people to find places to live.

Dylan Klapmeier introduces Heidi Friedlander of District #6. She has lived in District #6 for about 11 years on Oak St. near Robinson Park. She is a nurse in Helena. Her husband is an army pilot, they both met in the army.

Dylan K. states the city now recognizes Juneteenth as a holiday. This year it is celebrated on June 23rd, but future years it will be celebrated on June 19th. We have a full docket of persons to be on the November elections for HCC. There also are 2 people running for Commission and 2 people running for Mayor. Dylan also mentions he considered having July be a hybrid meeting, both in person and zoom, but that probably won't happen until November when we decide on a nominating committee for the HCC officers. Zoom has been great for both HCC and Commission meetings, allowing many more people to participate. Nancy Perry feels those attending in person should be fully vaccinated to continue to protect the health of others. She would not want the HCC to be a vector for making others sick.

Denise Roth-Barber likes the hybrid approach.

Nancy Perry Treasurer - Speaks to budget: See document below – Fiscal Year is July 1st thru June 30th

Report Generated on Jun 17, 2021 4:24:58 PM

Page 1

Fund	Current Period			Year to Date			Encumbrance	Annual Budget	Available Budget	% BDGT
	Budget	Actual	% EXP	Budget	Actual	% EXP				
PERSONAL SERVICES										
411.10-10 Salaries & Wages	1,549	1,431	92%	17,039	16,797	99%	0	18,599	1,802	90%
411.10-41 F.I.C.A.	96	87	91%	1,056	917	87%	0	1,154	237	79%
411.10-42 P.E.R.S.	136	125	92%	1,496	1,473	98%	0	1,632	159	90%
411.10-43 Health & Vision Insurance	262	4	1%	2,882	2,119	74%	0	3,153	1,034	67%
411.10-44 W.C.C.	18	11	59%	198	185	93%	0	218	33	85%
411.10-45 U.C.C.	7	4	51%	77	42	55%	0	84	42	50%
411.10-49 Dental Insurance	41	24	59%	451	218	48%	0	495	277	44%
411.10-92 F.I.C.A. Medicare	5	20	407%	55	214	390%	0	67	(147)	320%
PERSONAL SERVICES	2,114	1,706	81%	23,254	21,966	94%	0	25,402	3,436	86%
M&O										
411.20-19 Office Supplies & Equip	50	0	0%	490	0	0%	0	550	550	0%
411.20-49 Furniture & Fixtures-Misc	43	0	0%	403	0	0%	0	450	450	0%
411.30-01 IT&S Computer Maint/Spport	160	978	611%	1,760	1,956	111%	0	1,926	(20)	102%
411.30-11 City-Co Bldg Postage Adm	9	0	0%	99	29	30%	0	117	88	25%
411.30-12 Postage	12	0	0%	132	0	0%	0	150	150	0%
411.30-21 Printing & Duplicating	20	0	0%	220	0	0%	0	250	250	0%
411.30-37 Advertising	108	0	0%	988	0	0%	0	1,100	1,100	0%
411.30-81 Required Training	8	0	0%	88	0	0%	0	100	100	0%
411.30-99 Other Contracted Services	61	0	0%	671	55	8%	0	740	685	7%
411.49-27 Copier Revolving Program	6	7	110%	66	72	110%	0	79	7	82%
M&O	477	985	206%	4,917	2,113	43%	0	5,462	3,349	39%
ADMIN CHARGES & TRANSFERS										
411.80-14 Liability Insurance	40	0	0%	440	370	84%	0	493	123	75%
411.80-15 Fidelity Insurance	0	0	0%	0	8	0%	0	8	0	100%
ADMIN CHARGES & TRANSFERS	40	0	0%	440	378	86%	0	501	123	75%
DIV 1701 - Total	2,631	2,691	102%	28,611	24,456	85%	0	31,365	6,909	78%

Most expenses are fixed so HCC cannot change the numbers. Most money is spoken for. Personnel services for year 2021 was \$25402 for the Coordinator. M&O (maintenance & operations) some listed are not fixed expenses – the HCC could move those numbers around as needed. IT, postage, copier revolving, Admin charges & transfers are fixed expenses. If the HCC doesn't spend the money it doesn't just automatically carry over – the HCC has to fill out a required "carry over" form.

John Andrew Secretary shows Commission sign-up sheet – several people volunteer. People volunteering can contact Dylan or Peggy for what they should say. Peggy B. will send out an updated sign-up sheet soon.

Joe Lehman – Transportation Coordinating Committee. They are back to having meetings quarterly. He will forward all the projects list to Peggy B., she will then forward to everyone. Of interest, is the possible Henderson road expansion to four lanes. This would be an MDT project. Commissioners are hoping they value the city input.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman – She continues to prepare agendas and minutes and also updates the webpage. Working to welcome 4 new members. Please check out the HCC webpage www.helenacitizenscouncil.com where you will see the new photo on the opening page – click on it and you can listen and view the HCTV discussion. Peggy also mentions the HCC will be putting together a small voter pamphlet with information on the candidates running for the November election.

Outreach Committee: They had decided not to meet during all the budget meetings and preparations. They will meet again within the next two weeks.

Civic Center – John Andrew – John Andrew said the committee is waiting for direction from the Commission. They are in limbo.

Water Quality Protection District – Diana Hammer – The District has had new elections recently. L&C County did a presentation on public works featuring Ten Mile Creek and Silver Creek. A discussion was also had about flood mitigation around Rossiter School and the FEMA grant.

Citizens Conservation Board – Denise Roth Barber – The CCB had a meeting June 10th with a guest from the Urban Forestry Department. The Board is watching how the Passenger Train agenda is coming along. The Waste Committee spoke about the composting businesses in Helena. There is a city code that no entity other than the city can pick up solid waste (e.g. composting materials). The city is putting together a master plan to address this issue. They may have to amend the code.

Heidi Friedlander offers to speak to members of the 6th Ward Garden Park to gather their views and needs regarding the pick-up of compost within the city.

Diana Hammer mentions a pamphlet recently released on how to conserve water. She will forward to Peggy B. who can then send out to HCC members.

Dylan Klapmeier opens the mic for public and HCC member comment:

Tim Chisman mentions he owns a business in downtown Helena and is very open to hearing people's input/ concerns etc. about the open container discussion. Peggy B. asks to confirm that the open container law change is only for one weekend – 2 days. Tim C. answers yes. Dylan K. comments that the Commission is considering changes and may amend the open container law to better support downtown businesses.

Sumner Sharpe stresses the Outreach Committee will continue to reach out to the public and consider ways the public can give their input. He says the HCC districts don't exactly correlate with distinct neighborhoods. Sumner wants to continue to open up channels of communication. HCC should implement a watchful strategy on the Growth Policy of Helena – especially how it will impact new growth in the area. Sumner wants to make sure growth and improvements still happen within the city. Streets within the city need more than "just a patch". How the city allocates money to Street Fund is important so residents can have their neighborhood streets re-built.

Heidi Friedlander mentions that District #6 (a lower income area) residents also deserve the right to be able to afford to purchase a home, not just live in low-income housing. Heidi liked what the City Manager said about Helena – that it is not a Bozeman, and we should plan ahead so people can afford to purchase their own home.

Sumner Sharpe – the HCC should carefully look at how TIF dollars are being used in District #6. What is affordable now and how to keep housing affordable even though there is pressure on the existing supply of homes.

Dylan Klapmeir – opens the mic for any public comment or any comment from HCC members.

Diana Hammer says the Outreach Committee continues to think of ways to improve how the public can give HCC representatives more input about their wants and concerns.

No more comments

Meeting Adjourned at 9:13

Next meeting will be July 28 through Zoom.