



Helena Citizens' Council
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Date: June 28, 2017
To: Helena City Commission
From: Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Subject: Civic Center

Introduction

A Helena Citizens' Council fact finding team was tasked with finding out more about the Civic Center and its funding sources. The Civic Center on an annual basis is subsidized by nearly \$500,000 from the city's general fund. At the same time the city had hired a consultant group (The Cultural Planning Group) to help guide the future of the Civic Center.

Findings and Conclusions

The team met with city commissioners, civic center staff, as well as members of the Cultural Planning Group. It was apparent the consultants would have significantly more resources than the HCC to investigate this issue. The results from the study showed significant interest in more/different events at the Civic Center. The biggest number of respondents stated they were uninterested in the current programming. Also, through the survey, the biggest request for programming was more concerts.

It is our conclusion that the citizens of Helena want more out of their Civic Center. In meeting with Civic Center staff, they are currently working on meeting with like sized facilities across the state to see what can be done to attract more events/programs. They are also in the process of streamlining the booking process to make it easier on performers.

Recommendations

The fact-finding team recommended that the HCC continue to have a presence at the Civic Center monthly board meetings. This will allow the HCC to be aware of what's going on and to keep the staff moving in the right direction.

At this time the Civic Center staff does not have a short or long-range plan in place to track their progress. In our opinion defining clear goals would help to gauge whether or not the Civic Center is meeting the needs of the community in the future. We recommend suggesting these goals to the Civic Center staff as a way to measure progress in the future.

- **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.)

Positive Outcomes

It is very refreshing to see that the Civic Center staff is on board with moving the facility in the right direction! We believe great things are around the corner for the Civic Center. The HCC wants to stay involved to ensure that these great community-driven ideas can result in a better facility for the community.

Additional Information

The HCC reviewed Helena Civic Center – Analysis, Report and Recommendations (The Cultural Planning Group, March 10, 2017 Update).

C: City Manager
Civic Center Board