



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)

Minutes

January 25th, 2023, 7:00pm

Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89968666691>

or in person room 326

Meeting was called to order by HCC Chair Cole Rosling at 7:04pm

Attendance: John R Andrew, John E Andrew, Patricia Bik, Diana Hammer, Nancy Perry, Joe Lehman, Ben Kuiper, Nolan Harris, Lowell Chandler, Paige Myers, Margaret Strachan, Emily Mowers, Michael Monaco, Rachel Okapal, Dylan Klapmeier, Cole Rosling, Ryan Schwochert, Heidi Friendlander, Elizabeth Maida-Gerhart, Steve Allen, Chelly Hasquet, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth-Barber, Susan Steffens, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

Excused: Erinn Donnell

Absent: Susan Smith

Guests: Commissioner Logan, Mayor Wilmot Collins, Nigel Antony, Dr. Thomas G, Jim Kerins (CMS)

A Quorum was established - yes

Approval of November 2022 Minutes – Minutes are approved with no changes.

Public Comment – John E. Andrew speaks to the role of the HCC Executive Committee. At the beginning of 2022. Some members of the HCC mentioned the word autocratic in relation to the HCC Executive Committee. Some members felt like they were completely cut off from the decision-making process. John asks if there should be, in writing, the ability for the HCC to have a vote of no confidence? He also asks if there should be a better avenue for members to bring grievances forward? John E Andrew feels there may need to be further updates to the Bylaws.

Denise R. Barber says she appreciates the newcomers to HCC who have stepped up and become officers and members of advisory boards. The elections we are having today are a way for all HCC members to choose the person and persons they want to govern them. She also mentions there is a mechanism in place to remove HCC members if the need does arise.

Dylan Klapmeier responds to John E. Andrews' Comments: While he is leaving the HCC Executive Committee, he feels confident that the other Ex. Committee members will do a fine job. Procedurally, the HCC follows Roberts Rules of Order. Dylan K. disagrees with John E, Andrews' comments. Dylan K. reiterates that a person can be removed from office with a majority vote as per the HCC's bylaws.

Steve Allen agrees with both Dylan and Denise. Steve A. thinks the one-year term of officers gives the HCC a way to change out officers should the need arise. The time to bring up changes to the Bylaws would have been during the last meeting or before, when the committee was working on Bylaw updates. The time to ask for changes to bylaws is not during officer elections.

Guest Speakers – CMS (Communication and Management Services – involved with City Manager Hire) Jim Kerins

Jim K states that there were just under 40 applicants for the City Manager position. Some were from in-state, and some were from out-of-state. The City Manager relations committee is composed of Mayor Collins and Commissioner Logan. After the upcoming interviews on 1/31 and 2/2, the applicant pool will be narrowed down to 8 finalists. The top 3 candidates will then come to Helena for in-person interviews on 2/22,2/23 2/28. These interviews will be with the Commission, City Department Heads and the HCC. The HCC will have about 30 minutes to interview candidates. CMS will perform more in depth background checks on the final three candidates. Interviews before the final three candidates are reached will not be public. Jim K. asks that the HCC has 2-3 questions readied for the candidates to answer. Jim K says don't make the questions too particular to Helena, so as not to leave out of stater(city) candidates from the running. There will be a reception at Muni's Restaurant after the 3 finalists have been chosen and interviewed. The same HCC members that interviewed should come to the reception as well. Potential Interviewers should be prepared to participate for a couple of days.

Cole Rosling asks Commissioner Logan and Mayor Collins as well as CMS if they have had experience in the hiring of a city manager. Commissioner Logan answers yes. The Commission has had to deal with a variety of issues that have come up. They have assessed the previous process of recruitment with CMS before the outreach process was started.

Jim Kerins mentions that 20% of the applicants for City Manager were from In-State and 80% were from throughout the US. The first round of choosing candidates is not public due to the candidates' right to privacy.

Nominating Committee for Officer Vote - Nominating Committee Chair, Denise Roth Barber says that all HCC members have been contacted, and the committee has put together a slate of candidates. For in person voters, there will be ballots. For zoom participants there will be an online anonymous poll. If no positions are contested and there are no floor nominations, the slate of candidates is automatically approved. HCC members that have an interest please state their interest in serving as an HCC Officer:

Cole Rosling – Chair – He says he has enjoyed being chair for the last year and appreciates all the help he has been given. He looks forward to an even better year should he be re-elected.

Ben Kuiper – Vice-Chair – Ben mentions he has chaired several other boards in the past. He is interested in being an official parliamentarian.

Diana Hammer – Secretary – Diana also serves on the Outreach Committee as mandated by the HCC. She enjoys working with the HCC Executive Committee as well, and looks forward to continuing as secretary.

Nolan Harris – Treasurer -This past year he appreciates all the help and input from the other Budget Committee members. He is interested in another term and now that he is familiar with the process, he feels he can be even more beneficial to the HCC. Nolan hopes to use most of the HCC allotted budget for outreach this year.

52:41 Floor Open for Officer Nominations – Denise Roth Barber asks for any nominations from the floor. There are no nominations.

52:52 Uncontested slate, so don't need to vote per Denise R. Barber. The ballot is declared accepted.

2023 HCC Officers are:

Chair – Cole Rosling

Vice – Chair – Ben Kuiper

Secretary – Diana Hammer

Treasurer – Nolan Harris

Reports of Officers, Boards, & Standing Committees

Officer Reports from 2022 Officers

Chair- Cole Rosling – Cole R. reports that he would like to have an AdHoc Budget Committee or a formal Budget Committee to get ahead of the City Manager's final budget proposal to the Commission. He asks HCC Members who may want to join a budget committee.

Rachel Opakal said last year that the budget committee members were not permitted to talk with Department Heads, which forced a time crunch to be prepared with information for a budget document.

Margaret Strachan says in past years the HCC was always allowed to speak with various employees within departments. She says to refer to the City Charter where it states: giving input on the budget is one of the HCC's primary purposes.

Lowell Chandler agrees with Margaret. Article VI of the City Charter states that the HCC operates independently, and a part of the HCC's purpose is to "**review** and make recommendations to the annual budget"

Denise R. Barber – she was hoping that last year was just an anomaly because of all the City Manager and staff changes. She feels it is important to attend Department Head meetings to hear their needs and requests.

Diana Hammer – she too is concerned about the budget process and wants HCC to be involved sooner than later.

John E. Andrew – said during Rachel H. Schalk's tenure, there were team leaders that the HCC could reach out to.

Dylan Klapmeier - states the HCC should ask interim City Manager Tim Burton about the specific timeline and his ideas about the process.

Nolan Harris – agrees with Dylan K. Nolan is hopeful that the HCC can get information from departments much sooner than April or May. Nolan hopes for more back and forth question-and-answer sessions.

Nancy Perry – who served on the Budget Committee for several years states that when Rachel H. S. was city manager, the HCC could only make requests through Rachel first.

The HCC could listen to department presentation requests regarding the budget, but the HCC members could not speak.

Bob Habeck – agrees with Dylan K. Bob feels that preplanning early is best. Early knowledge about the budget will also be helpful. Just be sure not to ask city employees to do extra work.

Denise R. Barber – the HCC should, at the very least, be able to listen in on Department Head meetings.

Diana Hammer - The HCC could bolster and help city departments make their case for the money they ask for.

Cole R. – reminds us that the HCC Outreach Committee could also solicit input from the public regarding the budget.

Denise R. Barber and Margaret Strachan mention they would like to serve on the budget committee.

Vice-Chair- Dylan Klapmeier – nothing new to report-moves to new Vice-Chair

New Vice-Chair Ben Kuiper – nothing new to report

Treasurer-Nolan Harris – Nolan states that he is ready to get the Budget Committee involved in the process as soon as possible.

Secretary – Diana Hammer – moves her time to the Outreach Committee

Unfinished Business – per Cole Rosling, will move some of these previous items to new agendas to further address, such as AirBnB effects on Helena neighborhoods.

New Business

Term Limits for HCC members on City Advisory Boards Recommendation/ Vote

Cole R. explains reasoning for the written recommendation about Advisory Boards. It was noted to the HCC that the City is trying to make all advisory boards uniform in terms of members and term limits. So far, only the Citizen Conservation Board has been affected, but it seems the term limits and the HCC's ability to appoint its members that sit on the advisory boards have been changed, hence the new Recommendation.

Denise R. Barber explains that there was a new resolution for the CCB Advisory Board and it states that the HCC representative on the board can only serve for one year and not any successive years. Denise spoke at a Commission meeting stating the HCC already has mechanisms in place to replace HCC members on boards. It will be hard for the HCC to fill seats on Advisory Boards if the terms are only for one year.

Diana Hammer – Diana comments that none of the other advisory boards have been approached about the new structure.

Dylan Klapmeier – still wants to act on the recommendation. He thinks that it will be beneficial to get ahead of the process.

Bob Habeck – agrees with Dylan. He wants to preserve the HCC's relationship with the Commission. He thinks the recommendation is well-written and it shows that the HCC is not "stacking" members to serve indefinitely.

Susan Steffens asks what if no HCC member steps up to fill a position with such short terms? Bob and Cole state with our new bylaws and the recommendation as it is written, hopefully terms will be for a minimum of two years and persons can serve consecutively.

Rachel Opakal – states it is hard to fill positions on advisory boards because of the time commitment.

Lowell Chandler – fully supports the recommendation. Lowell wants to go on the record for the frustration he feels that the Mayor did not address this issue with the HCC tonight. Lowell also feels that continuity is a vital factor and hard to attain with a one - year term. Lowell refers to the City Charter, stating again, that we are an independent body, therefore we have the authority to appoint. He also could not find any clear ordinance relating to term limits on advisory boards.

Dylan Klapmeier – feels the 2nd part of the Recommendation is important.

Bob Habeck – referring back to the City Charter, as Lowell C. stated, the Mayor has the authority to appoint. Bob thinks we should approach with a pro gratus process, asking the Mayor to accept the HCC's appointees.

Paige Myers – agrees with and reminds members that HCC is an independent body. She points out that she sits on the Helena Public Art Committee as does the Mayor, yet he has not attended a single meeting where she has been present.

Patricia Bik – seconds what Lowell C. says – the HCC is an independent body and they should be able to appoint whomever they want. She wants to approve the recommendation.

Diana Hammer says it is important for HCC members to have longer term limits so that they may gain more institutional knowledge and continuity.

Steve Allen mentions that maybe we should add information to the recommendation stating that it may be hard to fill advisory positions on boards if the term limits are too strict.

Denise R. Barber – thinks this issue is sufficiently addressed under #2.

Nolan Harris – likes the document as is, just make sure a spell check is performed.

1:38:57 – A motion to approve the recommendation is made by Pat Bik and seconded by Rachel Opakal.

1:39:51 A verbal vote was taken. All were in favor of the Recommendation Regarding Advisory Boards as written. Non opposed. No abstentions.

Additional New Topics for Discussion

1. Cole Reminds HCC members that in 2020 we did have our Recommendation on Recommendations, yet we still hear little from the Commission when we submit one. Let's keep pushing for more respect and feedback on our HCC recommendations to the Commission.
2. Bob Habeck suggests a strategic planning session – set goals and what we stand for in 2023.
3. Diana Hammer suggests the HCC weigh in on the final 6-7 ARPA funds finalists. She will send out a survey for HCC members to give their input.
4. Allowing more time in Agenda for discussions

Commission Attendees' Reports

12/5 Erinn Donnell - excused from the meeting

12/14 John E. Andrew – Helena Area Community Foundation was awarded \$204K to distribute to area non-profits. Snow and Ice removal on cul-de-sacs was discussed. Curbside recycling will now cost city residents \$12.

12/19 Rachel Opakal - Term limits issues were briefly discussed, then tabled. The Wastewater Improvement Loan Program was discussed. It was noted it should not have been billed to customers. The program will continue as it has plenty of funds built up, but billing will no longer appear on customers' bills.

1/4 Nancy Perry - Commissioners discussed their goals for 2023. Commissioner Dean promoted having the Outdoor Skating Rink updated. Commissioner Logan spoke about having more sidewalks. An outside firm was hired to create a statement about the Golf Course and Muni's restaurant. Muni's has fully recovered from the pandemic, is now fully staffed and busy.

1/9 Diana Hammer – State of the City was given by Mayor Collins. You can listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGv1STKkGtY> Many department budget asks were given.

1/23 Steve Allen – The city confirmed 3 new police officers. There were updates on the City Manager progress. The Shopko parking lot is to be split in half, so Chase bank doesn't have to pay rent. There were 3 advisory board appointments. Golf Fees were increased. A four story apartment complex will be built south of WinCo.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman There has been a lot of confusion about the word *appoint* to both advisory boards and how new HCC members are appointed to HCC when there is a vacancy after elections. I have been training for the new City of Helena webpage. I voiced our opinion about not being “buried” within it. I stated I wanted a clearly visible button for HCC.

Committee Updates:

Outreach – Emily Mowers – HCC members will be required to go door to door with doorhangers for personalized outreach this spring. Emily requests that each HCC member touch base with 4 neighbors within their district and ask what their main concern is in regards to the city budget. She mentions she made a new HCC Survey Monkey. Emily asks all HCC members to like our Facebook page.

HOLMAC – TJ Lehman – TJ has had to step down from the HCC as he has moved to District #2. Now there also is an opening on HOLMAC for an HCC member, Civic Center—tabled until future notice

HPAC – Paige Myers – Centennial Park Tunnels project is moving forward (paintings inside the tunnels) There is now a call for artists.

Non-Motorized Travel – Lowell Chandler – Westside Woods development has been a major part of current discussions. There was a walking audit on Granite St.

Transp. Coord. – Joe Lehman – no new updates they only meet quarterly.

Water Quality – Diana Hammer – Strategic planning sessions will be held for 2023 – 2026. A water management plan is needed for both flooding and drought.

Citizen Conservation Board – Denise Roth Barber – Denise mentions she did apply for the HCC representative position on the newly re-formed CCB.

Library Board – Paige Myers – The library is working on strategic goals for 2023. Paige and others are watching House Bill 234 in the Legislature to see if it will affect books that can be available in the public library.

Golf – Ryan Schwochert – there was an increase in golf fees.

Fire Department – Elizabeth Gerhart – There was a January 3rd meeting and it was decided to have a 4th meeting as well. The Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, E Valley Fire Department, Interim City Manager Burton, Commissioner Dean and Sheila Danielson (Finance Dept Director) attended. A Summary of the Master Plan was discussed regarding the 3rd Firehouse. There may be a 5th meeting before the official presentation is given.

Paige Myers motions to adjourn the meeting. Joe Lehman seconds the motion.

Meeting Adjourned- 9:06PM

Next Meeting February 22nd via Zoom & in room 326