

## **SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING**

**September 4, 2019– 4:00 p.m.  
Room 326, City-County Building  
316 N. Park Avenue**

**1. Call to order, introductions, opening comments** – Mayor Collins called the meeting to order. Commissioners Haladay, Noonan, O’Loughlin and Wicks were present.

Staff present: City Manager Ana Cortez; Assistant to the City Manager Amanda Opitz; City Attorney Thomas Jodoin; Deputy City Attorney Iryna O’Conner; Interim Police Chief Steve Hagen; Interim Fire Chief Ken Wood; Transportation Systems Director David Knoepke; Parks, Recreation and Open Lands Director Kristi Ponzozzo; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Planner Ellie Rae; Amy Hall and Crystal Nance, Utility Customer Service; Community Facilities Superintendent Troy Sampson; Public Information Officer Rebecca Connors; Utility GIS Analyst Scott Raznoff and City Clerk Debbie Havens.

Others in attendance included HCC Representative Pat Christian; Joe Cohenour and Angie Grove, Tenmile South Collaborative Committee; Andrew Chanania of AC Solutions, Jacob Kuntz, Habitat for Humanity; Ken Demmons, KDR Engineering and Maria Ramirez, United Way.

**2. August 28, 2019 Summary** – The August 28, 2019 administrative summary was approved as submitted.

**3. Commission comments, questions** - No comments/questions.

### **4. City Manager’s Report**

**A. Serendipity Apartments** – Attorney Jodoin gave an update on the transfer of the Serendipity Apartments property; the purchaser will be asking to vacate Edwards Street right-of-way. The purchaser wants to abandon the property and prior to bringing it forward to a formal meeting; Attorney Jodoin asked if there are any concerns moving this item forward.

Commissioner Noonan asked if there is heavy traffic on Edwards Street. Attorney Jodoin stated Edwards Street is closed; however, there is pedestrian traffic. The timeline for the vacation of the right of way is 4 to 5 months.

**B. Tenmile-South Helena Forest Collaborative Presentation – Joe Cohenour** – Manager Cortez introduced Joe Cohenour, Chair of the Tenmile-South Helena Forest Collaborative Committee, who gave a PowerPoint presentation on the work of the committee. Mr. Cohenour referred to the Forest Service Tenmile-South Helena Project Record of Decision and spoke on the future plans of the Collaborative Committee and noted the life of the project is 15-20 years; they will monitor fuel and fire mitigation treatments; monitor CDT reclamation and comment and monitor the Helena Lewis-Clark Forest Plan.

Mr. Cohenour stated the Tenmile-South Helena Forest Collaborative Committee is asking for the following:

- Appoint a member to the committee that represents a conservation organization;
- Permanently appoint Brad Langsather to the committee;
- Assign an administrative support staff; and
- Support the USFS Tier 2 CFLRP Application.

Mr. Cohenour thanked the volunteers and recognized Sarah Elkins and Brad Langsather for their work.

Mayor Collins noted the previous City Manager was the city's representative and asked why Manager Cortez is not and why they are asking that a staff person be appointed. Mr. Cohenour stated City Manager Cortez is the city representative; however, he recognized how busy she is and that Mr. Langsather has attended the meetings on behalf of the City Manager and is very knowledgeable.

**5. Department Requests – No items on the agenda.**

**6. Department Presentations --  
Community Development**

**A. City of Missoula Development Services Presentation – Community**  
Development Director Haugen reported on June 28, 2019, representatives for the City Planning, Building and Public Works met with the director and staff of the Missoula Development Services Department in Missoula. The purpose of the meeting was to gain insight into how the City's Development Services Dept. functions and how it interacts with the community. The other purpose was to learn the advantages and disadvantages resulting from the creation of this Department and what to do differently. In 2011, the City of Missoula hired a consulting firm to evaluate the effectiveness of the various City departments reviewing residential and commercial development with the City of Missoula. Some of the issues driving this review included: a) timeliness of application review; b) both internal and external communication issues from and between staff; and c) the perception that the development review and licensing processes were not customer focused. The goal was to identify the steps necessary to provide a "one-stop" customer service mode for permitting and licensing. Out of the study, the City's Development Services Offices was created. The Development Services Department is the central agency for planning and development functions in the City.

The Department consists of six divisions responsible for: • Planning: Growth policy, long-range planning initiatives and historic preservation • Permitting and Land Use: Planning approvals, development review, plan review, permitting, site and engineering inspections, business licensing and code compliance • Building: Building, plumbing, electrical and mechanical inspections and building plan review • Engineering: Curb & sidewalk program, review, approval and acceptance of public infrastructure, utility inspections, project & plan review, transportation operations • Transportation: Regional transportation planning (MPO), project review and TDM (Transportation Demand Management) programs • Administrative Services: Customer assistance and administrative support to the Department.

A copy of the organizational chart is attached to this memo. Along with the reorganization, the City instituted several new practices. They moved from a sub sequential review process to a concurrent development review process. They established a division that oversees and facilitates the planning and construction process from the earliest design stages to the building's occupancy. A project manager is assigned as the one point of contact to the reviewing agencies to guide the project through the development review process. That person and stays with the application until it is approved. They purchased a web-based permit tracking system, similar to Trakkit to increase efficiencies and allow better access to information. They have established weekly standing meetings to meet with prospective applicants and their design and conceptual teams to cooperatively develop permits and projects. The Development Services

Department has fifty staff members and has a total annual operating budget in 2019 of \$5,131,152.

By reviewing Missoula's model, City staff wanted to learn how the city has benefitted from this change in the organization. We also hoped to gain some insight into possible organization changes that as a result of this review. Some of the advantages include: A. By moving from sequential review to concurrent review, Missoula has improved review times for applicants and have ensured that all reviewers are reviewing the same set of documents. The city of Helena does do concurrent review also. The difference is that in Missoula, a Project Manager is assigned the project from start to completion. This process ensures more consistent communication between the applicant and the City. B. The weekly meetings conducted by the City of Missoula provide an opportunity for creative solutions for meeting City requirements without affecting public health and safety. Other agencies and organizations who may be involved in the project are included in the collaborative process. C. One supervisor for the development review process helps ensure consistency throughout the process. D. The use of the electronic permit tracking system has increased efficiencies for both the staff and applicant. E. The development of a communications plan helped improve the understanding of the role of the City and the property owner as it affects their property F. The development of a one-stop-shop for all permitting and licenses and having a dedicated staff for those functions always available provides better customer services.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if the city tracks the number of days of when an application is received until the permit is issued. Director Haugen noted staff uses Trakkit, which does exactly that. There are goals within the building division for plan turn-around for both residential and commercial properties.

Commissioner O'Loughlin referenced the monthly meetings and asked who attends those meetings. Director Haugen clarified the meetings are for development review and representatives from HBIA, Realtors Association, engineering firms and staff attend the general meetings. She then spoke on the process where an applicant could come and discuss their plans prior to submitting any paperwork.

Manager Cortez used Shodair Hospital as an example of them scheduling a meeting prior to submitting an application. The meeting would determine and identify the appropriate staff that would work on the project; it gets everyone on the same page.

Commissioner Noonan asked if the city of Missoula has indicated what the reorganization is about. Director Haugen stated not at this time. Manager Cortez stated she believes Missoula is trying to get the engineer's to do development work and it is clearly separated from Public Works.

**Housing Stabilization CDBG Application Discussion** –Planner Ellie Rae reported the city, with assistance from Andrew Chanania of AC Solutions, and Maureen Rude of NeighborWorks Montana (NWMT), have been finalizing an application to the Montana Department of Commerce for Small-Scale Single-Family Housing Stabilization Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. This grant will allow the city to access funds for construction or rehabilitation of owner-occupied or rental units (4 units or less) that benefit low-to moderate-income households. The application is nearly complete and ready for a public hearing before the City Commission prior to submission to MDOC. However, Andrew Chanania, as our application writing consultant, has requested that a conversation occur to iron out the proposed loan terms for the single-family home and rental unit rehabilitation activities

prior to the hearing and application submission (e.g., whether the city should consider 0% or below 3% interest being charged on loans or whether loan repayments should be deferred or repayments start once work reaches substantial completion, etc.).

Planner Rae explained how the program would work for the city of Helena and the eligibility criteria for the property owners. The individual applications will be reviewed by the Department of Commerce.

Currently the cities of Great Falls, Billings and Missoula have small-scale single-family rehabilitation CDBG programs. Included in the packet was information on how each entity has their program set up.

The Housing Task Force and staff recommends the city of Helena start with single family homes, zero percent deferred loans and no rentals. The goal is to rollout the program and make it successful for the community. The commission can always consider changing the interest rate later.

Commissioner O'Loughlin referred to the three cities who currently have a program and noted Missoula has learned from Salt Lake that deferred loans is not the right route to go. Planner Rae stated one staff person from Missoula indicated the homeowners need to be able to afford the loan and the interest.

Mr. Chanania stated part of the rationale is this is what has been done and we should keep doing it. Manager Cortez stated by not deferring the loans, the city would receive payments right away and the funds would allow a revolving loan program to fund another loan. She recognized it is more attractive to defer the loan until the home is sold. Strategy for housing and this program is the city's attempt to protect the properties we already have.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if the interest would come to the city and not the Department of Commerce. The interest would come to the city for a revolving loan program. The city will submit an application for the program and bring individual projects forward for funding through the Department of Commerce; any repayments would go back to the city to lend out again, both principle and interest. The city could use the revolving loan program and the housing stabilization program to fund two separate projects.

Habitat for Humanity Executive Director Kuntz stated the grant through the Department of Commerce requires the entire structure be looked at and not just an individual item, i.e. replacement of a roof. It is difficult to qualify projects to meet all the requirements. Habitat for Humanity has experience with maintenance projects and currently are capping their projects to five to six thousand dollars. Applying interest rates does affect those who could afford the loan. Mr. Kuntz recommended get the project moving at a zero percent interest rate and then re-evaluate. Planner Rae stated the effort is to help those in need.

Commissioner Haladay asked if someone receives a \$20,000 deferred loan, they fix the needed repairs and the property is sold in two years, the entire \$20,000 comes to the city. Mr. Chanania stated yes.

Commissioner Haladay asked what is the meaning of "to substantial completion." Director Haugen stated substantial completion means all the work has been done and inspected by the building officials. Commissioner Haladay asked what projects have been completed in other cities. Mr. Chanania stated only two project have been completed in two municipalities. Manager Cortez recognized CDBG funds are hard to use; the first step is hard but once that is complete, the program will work.

Commissioner Haladay asked what other communities are doing to line up projects. Mr. Chanania stated city of Helena staff has done an excellent job in developing partners to assure

the program is successful. Manager Cortez stated partners are important and can give referrals to qualified homeowners. Planner Rae noted staff would work with Public Information Officer Connors to develop a public relations strategy around housing.

Additional discussion was held on what barriers there may be if there is an interest rate on the loan; criteria for qualifying for a loan; whether the loan should be deferred until the property is sold; if interest could be charged on some loans and not others and acknowledging some loans will not be paid. At the conclusion of the discussion, there was commission concurrence for staff to bring the following forward to the September 23 city commission meeting:

- Zero percent loan with a possibility of a 1% interest for certain income levels
- Single-family homeowner only; not for rental properties
- Loan deferral until the property is sold
- 15-year loan term

### **Public Works**

**CitySourced App Rollout** –Public Information Office Rebecca Connors and GIS Analyst Scott Raznoff reported the City currently lacks consistent and effective citizen engagement technology. The City does not have a uniform approach for creating and monitoring work orders. The City has identified CitySourced as an effective citizen engagement tool that also improves tracking staff response and improves customer service.

PIO Connors gave a demonstration on how the app will work, described the marketing plan, shared the user-testing schedule, and informed the Commission on the launch date of October 1.

Costs of the app are:

Year 1- \$15,100 - includes app customization for the City, enhancements, hosting, and technical support.

Year 2 and on-going - \$11,600 - includes app enhancements, hosting, and technical support.

CitySourced is new technology and is a citizen engagement platform where residents can interact with their local government through a mobile phone or computer. It will help improve channels of communication between departments and residents, and it will enhance accountability. Potential uses include: reporting potholes, illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles and similar types of actions.

Commissioner Wicks asked that information on CitySourced is handed out to the public at the Farmers Market and First Friday events.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked how staff is feeling about this and referenced the number of snow removal complaints that have been received in the past during a snow event. Transportation Systems Director Knoepke recognized the number of requests for snow removal may be an issue; however, with the outreach that has been done and the snow map, hopefully there will not be many complaints received. It will be a learning process for staff and the public.

Commissioner O'Loughlin stated people knowing they are being heard is important. PIO Connors stated the response emails to the citizens is a high priority with progress on the request.

Commissioner Wicks asked during a storm event is there an opportunity to notify the citizens to check on the status of their street and the anticipated time of when the snow plow will be on their street.

Director Knoepke noted the operators would have tablets in their vehicles that will keep them updated on service requests and will not have to come back to the shop. Manager Cortez noted this information would help staff track the data.

**7. Committee discussions**

Helena Citizens Council – No report.

**8. Review of agenda for September 9, 2019 Commission meeting** – No discussion.

**9. Public comment** – United Way – update information -

**10. Commission discussion and direction to City Manager** – No discussion.

**11. Adjourn** – The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.