



**Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes
February 26th, 2020 7:00pm
City/County Building - Room 326**

Members Present: A quorum was present (7 members from 4 different districts = quorum)

District 1: John Andrew, Patricia Christian, Timothy Chisman, Diana Hammer

District 2: Meg Bishop, Nancy Perry, Susan Lenard, Nick Sovner

District 3: Sumner Sharpe, Margaret Strachan, Gary Dalton

District 4: Dylan Klapmeier, David Beach,

District 5: TJ Lehman, Ryan Schwochert, Joseph Lehman,

District 6: Steve Allen, Tim Dwyer, Tim Uhl, Ben Kennedy

District 7: Bob Habeck, Denise Roth Barber, Doris Davis,

Other Attendees: Brian Coplin

Excused: John Perkins (District 3)

Call to order:

Approval of January 2020 Minutes – Doris Davis made a motion to approve the January minutes, Patricia Christian seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items – Brian Coplin sat in as a visitor. He is on the ADA advisory board. He said we should use the City of Helena app on our cell phones.

Guest Presenters:

Commissioner Emily Dean

Commissioner Dean is impressed with HCC and thinks it is a good model for the rest of the State. She stated her goals for the next four years:

1. Find an interim and permanent City Manager. There are six current applications with the HR department. Make certain that during the absences of key employees, the city knows how to continue operations.
2. Revision of the current budget. The budget approved for 2020/2021 needs to be repealed and revised.
3. Approve clean renewable sources of energy for the City of Helena.
4. To promote Zero waste within the city. Continue the robust Solar Loan program.
5. Improve public policy issues. Solicit public input in a uniform way across all departments.
6. Conduct walking tours of all seven HCC Districts
7. Housing Affordability – have a policy of housing first – thereby helping people to move from homelessness to self-sufficiency.

8. How to better address Suicide in the State of Montana
9. Add NW Energy Lighting to the MYHelena app.
10. She ran on Transparency

HCC members brought up that they would like to be included in the choosing/recommendation of the new City Manager.

HCC member Margaret Strachan mentioned the need for coordination of Mental Health groups. She said 30% of incarcerated persons have mental health issues.

Dylan Klapmeier would like to see a more formal process for the hiring of a city manager. He would like to have a sub-committee of HCC be a part of the interview process.

Christopher Couey, City Budget Analyst.

His discussion will focus on both budget and fees. Currently the Finance Department is reviewing, revising and updating the 2020-2021 budget. Most revisions are in the areas of personnel and capital plans. IT updates and fees have been completed. There will be other fee increases especially in the Open Lands, Parks & Rec Department. Water and sewer rates will remain the same. By March these numbers will be more formalized. HCC should have a meeting with the Finance department before the June 22nd Commission Meeting where the budget will be approved. The new conservation efforts will save money. The bids for Beattie St. will be addressed at a March 9th Commission Meeting.

Concerns about Beattie Street were mentioned by HCC members: prior notification of the project to neighbors was not properly performed, safety should be of the utmost concern, traffic calming should not be taken lightly. The need for such a large space is not clear. It seems the location was designed for tourism and events, not neighborhoods.

Reports of Officers, Boards and Standing Committees

Officer Reports- Nancy Perry (Treasurer) discussed the amount HCC has spent to date. HCC has spent 42% of its budget. The annual budget for 2019-2020 is \$27,911. We will have a more detailed breakout for next meeting. Most probably, each district will have \$300 available for outreach into their districts.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman has updated the Webpage and included District#2 events. She has compiled a more detailed sheet of all City Committees and performed outreach to possible guest speakers for HCC. She also attended Budget meetings with Finance Staff and Nancy Perry.

Neighborhood District Reports – remember that each District is its own entity. More detailed district reports will be provided at the March meeting. District #2 is having regular monthly meetings at Plymouth Congregational Church for a nominal fee. District #2 meetings are the first Monday of every month from 7-8PM.

District #7 had a neighborhood meeting. Topics of interest were: weeds, litter, snow, orphan city right-of-ways and fire interface.

Standing Committee Reports – It was discussed how to represent yourself at a meeting. State Name, that you are an HCC member representing District #. Always report something – don't just say "nothing to report".

Old Business:

Review City Commission/Administrative meetings from the past month

John Andrew – serves on the Civic Center Board . The board had its first meeting 4th Wednesday of the month from 4:00-6:00pm. It was mostly about roles and responsibilities. They are releasing an RFP for selection of vendors for the Civic Center.

Denise Roth Barber – serves on the Helena Conservation Board. Denise attended a City Waste Forum and also is on an Earth Day Expo Planning Committee. It will celebrate Earth Day April 22nd the entire month of April.

Margaret Strachan – Helena Public Art Committee.) She mentioned HPAC has three large projects: Covering Traffic Signal Boxes, Boundy Sculpture and Ghost Sign restorations.

Growing Friends Recommendation – No motion was made to take a vote on Emerald Ash Borer. The HCC commends Growing Friends efforts. Possible future motion: The HCC encourages Growing Friends to work with the City of Helena on EAB. Bob Habeck suggests to treat for EAB appropriately and that HCC supports Growing Friends.

New Business:

1. Upcoming Meetings – Members should feel free to give input on topics. Sumner Sharpe's questionnaire has yielded 9 topic. Please reach out to members about their interests.

2. Topics of Interest

Engaging Neighborhoods – Bob Habeck mentions that it is part of a District's expectations to endeavor to do outreach. As an HCC member you should be actively soliciting opinions from your District. Some District outreach strategies are: webpage, Facebook, Co-join with other established groups, churches. District #7 has done a good job of reaching out to speak at other established groups.

HCC Member Input – Please respond to Sumner Sharpe's survey so the HCC can build future goals.

A new budget Committee was established: Nancy Perry, Sumner Sharpe and Denise Roth Barber.

3. Appointments to Committees/Boards

Membership and Attendance is Important to continue to serve. Appointments will be revisited on an annual basis.

John Andrew is serving on the new Civic Center Board

Nick Sovner wants to continue serving on HOLMAC

OPENing to serve on the Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council

Joseph Lehman would like to serve on the Transportation Coordinating Committee

Both Diana Hammer and Ryan Schwochert would like to serve on Water Quality Protection

Denise Roth Barber would like to continue on the Citizen Conservation Board

Margaret Strachan serves on the HPAC (Helena Public Art Committee)

Chair Dylan Klapmeier would like to further discuss the committee appointments and make sure it is the right fit for everyone. He would like to see the appointments done with transparency at an HCC meeting.

Meeting Adjourned 9:00PM

Next Meeting is March 25th, at 7:00PM room 326