



**Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes
July 22, 2020 7:00pm
Via Zoom**

Meeting was called to order by Dylan Kalpmeier at 7:00pm

Attendance: John Andrew, Diana Hammer, Meg Bishop, Nancy Perry, Sumner Sharpe, Gary Dalton, Margaret Strachan, Tom Woodgerd, Dylan Klapmeier, Ryan Schwochert, TJ Lehman, Joseph Lehman, Steve Allen, Doris Davis, Peggy Benkelman

Excused: Ben Kennedy, Denise Roth-Barber, Chelly Hasquet, Bob Habeck, Tim Dwyer, Jason Welnel, David Beach, Sampson Boyd, Nick Sovner, Susan Lenard, Tim Chisman

Guests: Commissioner Sean Logan, Dr. G.

There was a quorum.

Approval of May and June Minutes

No amendments, comments or changes to minutes. Stand approved.

No Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Guest Presenters:

Commissioner Sean Logan:

The Commission has had a rough year. Leaving of City Manager Cortez was difficult as well as finding an interim manager. Covid and dealing with the budget have been a tremendous effort. The Helena Police Department used to have a continual presence on the HCC. The HCC is very well represented now as most of the districts are now filled. His priority as commissioner is for it to become a more transparent body and better shape its government. Sean Logan likes the idea of citizen engagement in process of government. HCC along with the Commission can get more interactive with the media.

Sean Logan – grew up in Helena. He sees newcomers who come to Helena that just love it here. He was going to be a teacher, but became a Fire Chief, where he served for 20 years. He ran as Commissioner unsuccessfully in 2017. He felt the public had lost their connection with city government, so he ran again. Selection of new city manager is now most important thing our community can now do.

Police Department Discussion: SRO relationships within schools has been an important dynamic. The budget will be decided on Monday by a vote by the Commission on \$292K for SROs in schools.

Black Lives Matter protests did come to Helena. June 2nd, Commissioner O'Loughlin made recommendation to review Police policy and procedure. This idea was supported by everyone on the Commission. Later, the Commission starting getting emails about defunding the police. This lead to defund the SRO program. Which in turn led to a possible freezing of funds. Gary Dalton, HCC member (former teacher) spoke up about breaking up fights at local High School, he appreciated having a School Resource Officer around. He felt the SRO builds good relationships with the students. Commissioner Logan felt the process about freezing the SRO funds is flawed, without enough public input and input from all stakeholders. Meg Bishop would like to see data about how SROs have benefited the schools and students. Both Police department and ACLU presented some data, but they were not given enough time to present both views. Commissioner Logan suggests a 9 month discussion before the funds are pulled or frozen. Steve Allen wonders if Commissioner Logan feels that the decision is coming from only two of the Commissioners? Commissioner Logan says, he hopes not – more public opinion is needed and warranted. We need SROs AND Mental Health workers. Not an OR issue, it is an AND issue. Margaret Strachan prefers to utilize money for suicide prevention.

Margaret Strachan - Hill Park cement pad had no public discussion, no assessment and there are plenty of other facilities to use, instead of Hill Park. Also, it was not a correct use of TIF funds. Commissioner Logan said the idea came up as downtown work plan. Vote came up again because the previous process was flawed. 5 of 7 HCC Districts abutt Hill Park and HCC district members were not approached as to their decision. Ryan Schwochert has promoted events downtown and feels there are more and better venues to utilize instead of Hill Park, where the acoustics are not that great.

Sumner Sharpe: Bad policy or lack thereof on how TIF dollars should be used. TIF dollars should be used for:

1. Provide improvements for downtown neighborhoods
2. Promote downtown business and bring more people downtown
3. Promote development and redevelopment downtown to help generate more of a tax base.

City Manager:

Novak consulting firm again used because the former contract did not result in a 2 - year contract, so their services were free. Gathered info from public with online surveys, spoke with public and community. Novak then narrowed down to 13 interviewees and then via zoom, Commission interviewed 4 people. HCTV archives Commission meetings, so public can watch the interviews. HCC will put together questions for the finalists.

Commissioner Logan thanks the board of HCC.

HCC member Nancy Perry thanks the work of HCC and the leadership that helped filled all openings.

Commissioner Logan said the work on the FY21 budget was a lot of work because the Finance Department needed more staffing.

Commissioner Logan responds to Zoom Chat Room question: “how do citizens more easily participate in Commission Meetings” Helenamt.gov (email) or leave phone messages, participate by zoom – meetings always public.

Reports of Officers, Boards, & Standing Committees

Officer Reports:

Dylan Klapmeier – HCC should get questions to Commission for City Manager

Interviews quickly

Sumner Sharpe – Increase in Peggy Benkelman’s time will help set up small committee to increase community outreach.

Nancy Perry – budget discussion may be delayed with more detail provided at the next meeting.

Peggy Benkelman/Coordinator – Thank you for allowing me to work more hours. Please sign up for commission meetings attendance. I am even busier since utilizing Zoom.

Arts Committee is meeting officially and working on many projects: Traffic Signal Boxes, Boundy Sculpture and Ghost Sign restoration.

Neighborhood District Reports

Citizens conservation District invites members to listen via Zoom – Denise Roth Barber supplied the information. HCC members received it in an email.

Diana Hammer – does have a replacement for Patricia Christian for HCC District 1.

TJ Lehman, Joe Lehman and Ryan Schwochert – is there an opening for a new candidate for District 5. Jason Welnel has been absent. HCC may wait because of Covid. Peggy could provide a Zoom meeting for this district.

Old Business:

Reconvening of city advisory committees and appointment of HCC voting members

The form was brought up on the Zoom screen.

Either Ryan S. or Diana H. to attend Water Quality. Dylan will appoint Diana as voting member (Ryan is expecting first child).

Civic center steering Committee will again start meeting. John Andrew is the HCC voting member.

Non-Motorized Committee – Ben Kennedy may serve. Peggy will reach out to Ben to confirm.

Golf Advisory Board – not HCC voting rights, but may be of interest. Ryan Schwochert will attend and report back to HCC.

New Business:

Urban Deer management project. City funding is tight. Perhaps a recommendation to Chief Hagan for a new deer count should be made which includes new data. Bob and John will work on language for new recommendation for July meeting.

Meg Bishop – should HCC make a recommendation to delay regarding SRO funding? Margaret Strachan and Diana Hammer agreed. A discussion ensued and a recommendation was made.

Recommendation:

At the HCC's July 22nd, 2020 meeting, a motion was made, discussed, and unanimously approved which reads:

The HCC recommends that the City Commission release the freeze on funding for School Resource Officers for this coming year with the condition that community wide discussions will occur regarding school needs to include social and mental health support, services, and financing.

There needs to be detailed, community discussions with all stakeholders involved in regards to the funding for SROs.

Interest areas of HCC reps

Doris Davis, Diana Hammer and Sumner Sharpe, along with Peggy Benkelman, will work on a sub-committee for district interests and outreach.

Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 9:35PM

Next HCC Meeting: August 26th