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|  | **Helena Citizens’ Council (HCC)**  **Minutes**  **26 August 2020 7:00pm**  **Via Zoom** |

**Meeting was called to order by Chair Dylan Klapmeier at 7:00pm**

Attendance: John Andrew, Diana Hammer, Meg Bishop, Nancy Perry, Sumner Sharpe, Tom Woodgerd, Dylan Klapmeier, Ryan Schwochert, TJ Lehman, Joseph Lehman, Ben Kennedy, Steve Allen, Pat Marron, Peggy Benkelman

Excused: Timothy Chisman, Gary Dalton, Denise Roth-Barber, Chelly Hasquet, Bob Habeck,Tim Dwyer, David Beach, Chelly Hasquet, Margaret Strachan, Doris Davis,

Absent: Jason Welnel, Samson Boyd, Nick Sovner. Susan Lenard, John Perkins

Guests: Lucy Morell-Gengler, Mike McConnell, Commissioner O’Loughlin

There was a quorum present.

**Approval of July Minutes**

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

**Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

Diana Hammer asked about street lighting and suggested perhaps an assessment should be done by the city. It was explained to her that this topic had been discussed at several HCC meetings. Presentations were given on the subject, and the HCC has already made

Its recommendation to the Commission. It is stated here on our webpage:

<https://www.helenacitizenscouncil.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/HCC_Streetlighting_Recommendations_Final.pdf>

More information can be provided to Diana from HCC’s old documents.

**Commissioner Heather O’Loughlin**

Commissioner O’Loughlin is happy to speak to the HCC and appreciates all the work the HCC does, especially on the recent budget. She is originally from Great Falls and just returned to Helena from Washington D.C. where she worked on policy. She enjoys policy work, but her real love is budgets and numbers. She looks forward to continue serving as a Commissioner and improving the town of Helena.

Heather is happy to help design ways to support smart growth in Helena. Helena now has 3 urban renewal districts, the old Mall area is the 3rd.

There is a plan in place to have a new Redevelopment Agency. This program could have great long lasting effects on the city. Most projects currently are short term, but it may be better to develop projects that span a longer period of time, say 10 -20 years.

In regards to the meeting the City had today about Policing: Commissioner O’Loughlin does feel there are definite growing needs for mental health in our community.

City is working on having a Crisis Intervention Response Team that will work in conjunction with the County.

Sumner Sharpe - asked about freezing money in School districts and the impact and planning for the long term. The Commission is discussing boundary lines of School Districts in consideration of new district (Stuart Homes area) and its impact. The rehab of lower income areas within the City has positive social and economic impacts there as well as outside the District.

Another question was asked about the new Urban Renewal site at Capitol Hill Mall. Commissioner O’Loughlin said the first step was to determine if this site was deemed as blight - which it was at their last meeting. Secondly, the Commission will consider what the district looks like and can then re-invest money in the future. The Site will be positive development that extends to the Freeway and will not increase residents’ taxes.

Mike McConnell (shares screen) shows the area. TIF requirements include building evaluations, crime etc. Sumner Sharpe states the importance of having Open Space in these site plans. Nancy Perry wonders how the area will be accessible with two highways running through it. Mike McConnell says there will be plans for pedestrian accessibility and walkability with an overpass. Commissioner O’Loughlin replies that connectivity and walkability will be paramount in the design. Narrower streets to “slow things down” will play a part. This is hard to envision but long-term goals will be stressed.

Diana Hammer asked about envisioning sessions for Cruze Avenue. Commissioner O’Loughlin said they recently got an update from staff and also set aside funding for utilities along the site. A positive is that the City owns much of the land along Cruze Avenue. They are in the process of talking to developers and having listening sessions to determine needs. During the new City Manager’s interviews, she was very interested in the project and brought good experience and ideas to the table.

**Growth Policy – Lucy Morell-Gengler & Mike McConnell**

Mike McConnell (Planning Dept.) shared his screen showing the Land Use Map. He described what a Growth Policy was: a long range planning document that is non-regulatory. It evaluates subdivisions for example. The newest Growth Policy document was approved on 6/29/20 it includes 1. Its draft 2. Implementation/Tentative Action Goals: which include how to select areas (around neighborhood centers), smart growth & development 3. Accessory Dwellings – (all of Helena is allowed 2 dwellings per property) 4. Identification of City Surplus Property and its disposal. 5. City Wide Communication Plan.

Sumner Sharpe: Neighborhood planning is part of the charge of the HCC. We want to be included in the decision making process. It is important to note the Communication for the growth policy should not just be internal, it should be open and with the public’s input.

Meg Bishop says a Public Involvement Process (PIP) makes the most sense instead of just giving communication. Mike McConnell agrees and states that the HCC is an integral part of the neighborhood building process.

*Better City*, a firm from Utah, has been engaged in the Cruze Ave. project along with local Dowling Architecture. Three options were provided for Cruze Ave. project: 1. Connectivity and Roads for Pedestrians 2. A Linear Park Structure which also included roads with walkability. This option was strongly supported. 3. A Hybrid model ( which removed the Neighborhood Center) this model was not supported.

Several stakeholder interviews were held. Improvements would be made all along Cruze Ave. Many areas of parking would be lost to building structures. Pedestrian connections from Rodney St. areas to Downtown and the Walking Mall were important.

The second draft to the Commission will be in October.

HCC Member Tom Woodgerd asked about loss of parking Downtown. Mike McConnell responds that 52 spaces will be lost due to building, but there are also areas that will gain parking spaces.

TIF funds and parking should definitely be factored-in to the planning.

A grocery store is an important part of having a vibrant downtown says HCC member Meg Bishop. Commissioner O’Loughlin agrees and says multi-use development is imperative as well – such as having a storefront on the ground level with apartments above. Parking will also be an issue, but maybe the development can progress by providing more walkability.

Meg Bishop mentioned she liked the Cruze Ave. planning for Bike Lanes too. Diana Hammer wondered how easily one could cross from the BlueStone Building to the Library. Mike McConnell said the plan does address having an underpass.

**Reports of Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees**

**Officer Reports**

**Dylan Klapmeier** mentioned there is still an opening for an HCC members to

Serve on the Non-Motorized Trail Committee.

**Nancy Perry** – Treasurer –As the HCC has become busier and taken on more

responsibilities, they have grown more active. The Commission has approved

giving Peggy 5 more hours per week of employment. She now works 20 hours

per week which also allows for some health insurance for her. To pay for these

extra hours, the HCC gave up some of their funding that they did not use: e.g.

advertising, training, office supplies. This year the HCC is also providing a Carry

Over Budget request to the Finance Department. It will be in the amount of

$2500.

**Meg Bishop** mentions we still need HCC members to sign up to attend both

Administrative Commission Meetings and Regular Commission Meetings. The

Meetings will be conducted by Zoom and you will be asked to report on what the

HCC has been doing.

**Meg Bishop** also mentioned that the HCC application process needs to be

updated with a change in the Bylaws. Disclosing of conflict of interest and

recusing one’s self (should a conflict be apparent) during a vote is important.

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**HCC Coordinator Report**

Peggy continues daily duties: update webpage, respond to emails, compiles

minutes and agendas. Peggy regularly attends Executive Committee meetings. Her design of new door hangers is almost completed. Putting together a call list is also being done along with the new Outreach Committee.

**Neighborhood District Reports- none to report**

**Committee Updates**

**HPAC** – 7 New Traffic Signal Box Wraps to be installed in Mid-September. See

HPAC webpage for the designs. The Sculpture was chosen for the Boundy

Memorial Sculpture to be placed in Wesleyan Park.

**Conservation Board** held a Waste forum – link to minutes will be sent to HCC

Members.

**Old Business:**

**City Manager Hiring Process**

The contract for the new city manager Rachel Harlow – Schalk will be finalized next week with her start date being October 19th.

**Urban Deer Management**

The formal recommendation was brought up on the Zoom screen. Sumner Sharpe says data still needs to be gathered. Three points for the recommendation were to 1. Continue the program 2. Fund the program 3. Collect data for the program.

The Police Department has always been assigned to oversee this program.

A discussion ensued, with language updates on the recommendation. A motion was made to approve the recommendation – all members of HCC voted Aye and the recommendation reads as: <https://www.helenacitizenscouncil.com/fileadmin/user_upload/HCC_Urban_Deer_Recommendation_v2.pdf>

**New Business:**

**TIF (Tax Increment Funding) Discussion**

Downtown decisions have been made on the utilization of funds, but with no

criteria. Development of specific criteria is happening now for TIF funds.

Long-term funding is important so the funds can build in size and be available for more downtown projects.

**HCC Community Outreach Plans**

The Outreach committee is beginning to build better contact lists with district members. HCC needs its constituent’s emails and/or phone numbers. The committee has almost completed a door hanger design. HCC members will be receiving a phone call about how to best reach out in their neighborhood. HCC members will also be asked about important/pressing issues in your neighborhood.

**Meeting was adjourned at 9:04pm**

**Next HCC Meeting is September 23rd 7:00pm Via Zoom**