



**Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)  
Minutes  
September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 7:00pm  
Via Zoom**

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

**Attendance:** Pat Marron, John Andrew, Diana Hammer, Meg Bishop, Nancy Perry, Sumner Sharpe, Gary Dalton, Margaret Strachan, Tom Woodgerd, Samson Boyd, Dylan Klapmeier, Ryan Schwochert, TJ Lehman, Tim Dwyer, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth-Barber, Chelly Hasquet, Doris Davis

**Excused:** Timothy Chisman, Nick Sovner, David Beach, Joseph Lehman, Ben Kennedy, Steve Allen.

**Guests:** Commissioner Andres Halladay

**A quorum was established.**

**Approval of August Minutes**

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

No Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

**Guest Presenter:** Commissioner Andres Halladay

Commissioner mentions major projects:

1. **Establishment of Affordable Housing Trust** – these are funds within local governments that have revolving loan and grant opportunities. They will help have a long-term sustainable fund within the city. The funds can be aligned to facilitate to help with low-income housing. The Trust may make grants available, promote city projects, help acquire land, and assist Habitat for Humanity. Utah as an example, has an Affordable Housing Trust where private land owners partnered with their community to upgrade/update affordable housing while keeping the rental prices affordable.
2. **Cruse Ave Redevelopment Project**- this idea came out of the 2014 Downtown Master Plan. There is a lot of interest from developers and private interests to start engineering this project. The project will include businesses, apartments, and walking areas to connect downtown to eastern part of the city. Take a look at the 2013 Joe Mankoci analysis which studies per acre value of lands owned by a city and how they can help increase a city's General Fund. Helena could create a

land portfolio. In Helena, for example everything within the BID area has a great return on investment. Cruse Ave. can be a great generator of funds for the city.

3. 5 point Traffic Study – This study was done by local firm Robert Peccia & Associates. It will be an expensive project and likely in the hands of Commissioners in the future. It will examine: mini malfunction junction, traffic patterns on Last Chance Gulch, traffic patterns on Helena Ave., and Highway 12 as it moves through Helena.

Margaret Strachan asks about the future of Advisory Boards especially HPAC and asked why and how a movement was made to move the HPAC under a new department within the city and promote HPAC becoming a nonprofit. Most concerning was that the HPAC committee was not informed of these ideas, nor did it have time for discussion before the Interim City manager was presenting the moves to the Commission. Commissioner Haladay thinks there was discussion with the entire HPAC board, but there was not. He says the transitions to a new department would have no significant impact on HPAC and may work better for internal processes and RFP releases. Chelly Hasquet would like to know who she could talk to or voice her opinion to on budgets relating to HPAC. She feels there are better ways to address/build the HPAC budget. Commissioner Halady says the budget is set by the Commission (he thinks). Comments can be sent to [helenamt.gov](mailto:helenamt.gov) Margaret Strachan still feels the fact that the city is moving on with its' pseudo-decision implies that HPAC knows what is going on and it does not. Peggy Benkelman explains that the budget details are still up in the air. A yearly input of \$15K was once stated, but now, this year it is down to \$12K with no explanation. HPAC also received notice that the city would support a new project for Ghost Sign restoration yet HPAC has never received the funds. Peggy Benkelman also states that she has never released an RFP or contract without a department head approval and/or the legal department approval. HPAC's two projects this year: Traffic Signal Boxes and Boundy Sculpture were well received by the public and very successful. Chelly Hasquet again asks why is HPAC the only advisory board being targeted – Commissioner Halady states he "doesn't know". Dylan Klapmeier says he is in communication with Melinda Reed (interim city manager) to find out more detail.

Update on Custer Ave. Project: The Commission has approved to move forward on the project and to use what money is necessary to do so. The estimate for the project has ballooned from \$13m to \$28m. A motion to limit expenditures was voted down. It may take up to 7 years for the project to actually start. A discussion of having a Design and Review Committee was had, and the city needs to determine what authority they will have. The project is funded by Urban Funds which come from Federal Funds which are jointly overseen by the city, the county and the state. General Fund monies from the City of Helena are not used for this project. The Urban Funds can only be used on "Urban Routes" - a specific road determination. Recently two city employees have obtained certification to manage such street projects.

Chelly Hasquet asks on behalf of someone in her District about portions of Billings Ave. being paved, then unpaved and paved again. It seems the problem is that the property was both City owned and County owned. If in fact it was annexed into the city, the

owner could apply for SID (Special Improvement District) funds for an upgrade and to get the road paved. Commissioner Haladay and Sumner Sharpe suggest having the property owner contact Sharon Haugan or David Knoepke within the city for more detail and how to proceed.

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

HCC Outreach Committee report by Diana Hammer: The Committee is developing a contact list and will be calling HCC members to place door hangers and asking members to share contacts on 10 people (preferably in their district, but any ten extra will be great)

Additional communications will be easier with this larger list. Please tell us what your District interests and priorities are.

Meg Bishop comments on going door to door. She likes door hangers and it should be an annual effort. Even though visiting with neighbors is positive, often we don't get a response later. Keep trying to engage neighbors will be helpful – not just a one-shot deal. HCC really needs neighborhood district lists with emails.

HCC should try to put link on our webpage to collect emails or receive emails.

Coordinator Report: Peggy Benkelman continues to compile minutes and agendas and post them to the HCC webpage. She has been attending Executive Committee and Outreach Committee meetings. She has been building outreach district lists. Ryan Schwochert wonders if you would like input and comments on the Door hanger. Bob would like to give comment as well. Yes, please give comments. Probably because of political season, it may be better to place door hangers after election says Tom Woodgerd.

District #1 – Pat Marron –Sites concerns about 175 new resident area being developed on the west side of Helena. The new area being developed is accessed by two roads; Knight and Hauser, they then dead end into Granite where Kessler school kid drop offs occur creating a danger and traffic back up area. He feels the street and access issues have not been appropriately addressed. There needs to be a traffic light installed on Euclid so cars can more easily exit Granite St. during peak traffic times.

Vice- Chair Sumner Sharpe attended a TIF (Tax Increment Finance) meeting. He felt there was still a lack of criteria as to where/how the funding will be utilized. The City is working towards creating a list of criteria however. He will keep in touch with Sharon Haugan.

Civic Center Board Rep: John Andrew stated that an RFP will soon be released to the public. The RFP is to elicit a person or company to manage the Civic Center.

Ryan Schwochert (Golf Course Advisory Board Member) said that Muni's restaurant performed better this year, its profits are up by 33% and the golf course showed a \$9k increase in revenues FY 2020 budget.

Denise Roth-Barber (Citizens Conservation Board) said there was a public meeting on how to reduce Helena's waste stream.

Diana Hammer – serves on the Water Quality Protection District Board. She attended at tour near Rossiter School that looked at a ground water and surface water monitoring in the Lake Helena watershed. It was very informative. She also serves on the Citizens Conservation Board and attended its recent meeting during which they discussed waste reduction, a water conservation workshop series, and energy savings. For example, the City is now saving \$5,000 per month after switching to new LED lighting in the parking garages. Transportation was also discussed.

Tom Woodgerd on Non-Motorized Transportation Committee: There has been concern expressed about how the hiking and biking trails will be impacted by the large proposed Westside development.

Meg Bishop attended an Open Lands listening session where new projects were being proposed FY 2021 city budget. Projects discussed included connector trails for bicycle hiking trails. Meg hiked the DeFord trail and would like to propose that 3 miles of it be used for those with disability/mobility issues.

### **Old Business:**

NorthWestern Energy Street Light Replacement - Ryan Schwochert said the installation of pole heads has been poorly done, but NW Energy is doing the best they can. If a citizen is having a problem with the lighting, they can call local NW Energy number 443-8934 or email [Howard.Skjervem@northwestern.com](mailto:Howard.Skjervem@northwestern.com) Diana Hammer mentions that citizens in her district are complaining about the lights. There is no map to see what replacements have been completed. Rebates on the lighting are available to the city, but not for NW Energy.

Advisory Boards – Dylan Klapmeier did email both Melinda Reed (interim City Manager) and Dannai Clayborn (interim City Clerk) about changes to advisory boards. They assured him there were no firm plans for future changes. Dylan will continue to listen in on Commission meetings to see if such issues are brought to the forefront. Margaret Strahan comments that it doesn't seem that the Commission appreciates the value that these volunteers bring to the city. Sumner Sharpe's concern is the lack of transparency when making decisions involving these boards.

### **New Business:**

Meg makes recommendation for HOLMAC to have ADA voting representation. Peggy Benkelman brings recommendation onto Zoom screen.

Meg Bishop, Secretary  
September 23, 2020

HOLMAC ADA Position on the Board:

The Helena Parks and Recreation, Open Lands Advisory Board (HOLMAC) currently has a membership vacancy for a three-year term. The Committee performs various functions for the City related to the management of open space properties.

The HCC recommends that the City either designate one voting seat, or add an additional voting seat on the HOLMAC, to be a representative of persons with disabilities and/or mobility issues.

~~I am proposing that the HCC support a recommendation to the City that one voting seat on the HOLMAC be designated to a representative of persons with disabilities and/or mobility issues.~~

It has long been recognized that Helena's open lands are a remarkable asset to our community, as well as to visitors. Since Helena's trail system is such a valuable resource to our community and add significantly to our quality of life, we should ensure that access and project priorities are balanced and function in the best interest of all members of our community.

Considerations for persons with disabilities should be integrated fully into the overall planning process of our open lands, ~~and not relegated to token projects.~~

A motion was made for the recommendation as discussed with changes. Unanimously accepted, none opposed.

ADA additions and changes to the DeFord trail will be discussed as an added recommendation to the Commission at the next HCC meeting.

HCC Proposed Bylaw Amendment: There will be more discussion about this at the next HCC meeting. Bob Habeck thinks there is a higher-bar for those appointed vs those members elected, although both have full rights and privileges. The change was brought up to ensure impartiality, but HCC members need to know their subject knowledge is valued and will not be excluded. They would just need to recuse themselves in a voting situation should a conflict of interest appear.

Continuation of Virtual Meetings: Continued virtual participation in Commission meetings allows for easier access and more participation. Motion to approve was made..Discussion opened for changes. No changes recommended. Unanimously approved with vote.

**Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 9:06PM

Next HCC Meeting is October 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm via Zoom

Cruse Ave Re-visioning Project <https://www.helenamt.gov/government/departments/community-development/current-projects>

5 Point Traffic Study: <https://www.helenamt.gov/public-works-projects>

Water Monitoring Projects <https://arcg.is/1rnHSr>

Proposed Open Space Projects <https://www.helenamt.gov/government/departments/parks/open-lands-trails>

RE: **Deer Management within the City of Helena:** at the Commission meeting on 9/23, Chief of Police, Steve Hagan, mentioned there is no money in the budget regarding Deer management ( for gathering data & culling) within Helena.