



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes
April 27th, 2022 7:00pm

Meeting was called to order by HCC Chair Cole Rosling at 7:00pm

Attendance: John Andrew, Patricia Bik, Nancy Perry, Joe Lehman, Mike Rooney, Nolan Harris, Lowell Chandler, Paige Myers, Margaret Strachan, Emily Mowers, Michael Monaco, Rachel Okapal, Dylan Klapmeier, Ryan Schwochert, TJ Lehman, Karen Wilson, Cole Rosling, Susan Smith, Steve Allen, Denise Roth-Barber, Susan Steffens, Chelly Hasquet, Bob Habeck, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

Excused: Diana Hammer, Ben Webster, Ryan Schwochert, Heidi Friedlander, Liz Gerhart

Guests: Sunny Crib, Sumner Sharpe, Dr. Thomas G, Jamie Rindal, Pat Maron, Commissioner Logan, Commissioner Dean, Meghan Weir (Jefferson School Parent Council)

A Quorum was established

Approval of March 2022 Minutes – A motion to approve the minutes was made No changes, objections or abstentions. All in favor. Minutes were approved.

Public Comment - none

Guests:

Commissioner Sean Logan – Commissioner Logan states he has served on Commission for about 2 1/2 years. Sean L. was raised in Helena and worked for the city for 20 years. This is his 3rd budget cycle, all of which have been different. Sean L. researched the HCC before this meeting and sees that it became a part of the city charter in 1977. Sean L. feels the charter has remained a stable document in all these years. HCC maintains a good role in representing the citizens of Helena. This is a great way for the citizens of Helena to engage their Commissioners. Commissioner Logan is supportive of the HCC's mission. He feels municipal government really is "where the rubber meets the road".

Commissioner Emily Dean- Commissioner Dean compliments the new interim City Manager, Tim Burton. She says he played a critical role at the League of Cities and Towns. Emily D. encourages members of the HCC to listen in on the upcoming Budget meetings. The Commission looks forward to having input on how to spend ARPA funds. Emily D. looks forward to moving ahead with Capital Improvement plans.

Questions for the Commissioners:

John Andrew – HCC District #1 – John A. asks about the Civic Center debacle. How will Things move forward? Will things proceed with the Non-Profit management or a Hybrid Option? Commissioner Dean responds: The city has not given them any updates on what is happening with the Civic Center. The Commission gets agenda packets at the same time the public does. Commissioner Logan responds: He explains that in December of 2019 the Civic Center Board was dissolved and replaced by a steering Committee. That committee was to have wrapped up its recommendation(s) 12/2021. The two views of how to proceed with oversight of the Civic Center have not yet been reconciled by the Commission, so everything is still on hold. Emily Dean mentions that the Clerk of the Commission along with the City Attorney is

Re-writing bylaws to make them more consistent for advisory boards. This is for Executives of these boards to be better able to know how to work effectively with the Commission and also so the Commission knows its role and how to work with the boards.

Margaret Strachan – District #3 – Margaret mentions that during the Johnson Administration, programs had to show/prove citizen involvement before they were given Funds. Margaret S. wonders about the City's Growth Plan and utilization of funds. She thinks the citizens should be aware of where the money is going. Commissioner Dean responds that the growth development plan was constructed well.

<https://www.helenamt.gov/government/departments/community-development/planning/long-range-planning> There were neighborhood nodes established:

Downtown Neighborhood Plan, RailRoad 6th Ward, Capital Hill Mall and Cruse Ave. Revisioning. These plans can be viewed on the City of Helena webpage under the Community Development Department. Commissioner Dean also says that HCC members should view the Multi-Model Study - <https://beheardhelena.com/downtown-helena-multimodal-plan>

Dylan Klapmeier – District #4 – Dylan K. says he is interested on how ARPA funds will be spent. He would also like the HCC to be involved in the City Manager hiring process as they were in the past. Dylan also asks that the Commission utilize the HCC as a sounding board for recommendations and citizen input. Dylan would like an update on what the housing market looks like in Helena.

Emily Dean-talks about the Westside Woods development. She wants to make it clear that it was the developer (Ron Bartsch – Sussex construction) who tabled the item from the Commission Meeting on April 25th. It was not the Commissioners who pulled the Item from the Agenda. Commissioner Dean also reminds the HCC that they too serve in a part-time capacity. She feels the Commission's policy and procedures are outdated. They need a better guide on how to interact with the HCC.

Cole Rosling – HCC Chair – Cole states he along with members of HCC would like a better response from the Commission regarding the official HCC recommendations presented to them. Emily Dean responds: yes, the process needs to be institutionalized hopefully in the near future.

Commissioner Logan encourages us to invite Commissioners to meetings as often as possible for interactive discussions.

Denise Roth-Barber – has a suggestion that the HCC have a quarterly place holder at Administrative Commission meetings. **The HCC already has a placeholder at EVERY Administrative Commission Meeting- the HCC has had this option for several months.**

Nolan Harris – HCC Treasurer – Nolan H. says we just now received the schedule for the Budget presentations. What do you Commissioners see as the HCC involvement at these meetings?

Emily Dean replies: that is the call of the City Manager. Be sure to submit questions during the public comment. You may have to wait for the answer though, or send email to City Mgr. Mayor and Commissioners. Emily D. also states that the HCC's budget recommendations have been very impressive and helpful for the last two years, she keeps them in her budget binder and refers to them often.

Meghan Wirth – Chair of Jefferson School Parent Council

Meghan W. states that she is here to request that the HCC advise the Commission to set aside money for two pedestrian crosswalks with flashing signals. Earlier in the year, a Jefferson Elementary School student was hit by a car while crossing Broadway. Thankfully, the student was not severely injured. The Principal of Jefferson and Mayor Collins are also aware and support having these flashing signals installed. There has also been a request to have MDT perform a pedestrian safety study and to limit the speed on Broadway to 15MPH (it is now 25MPH).

Rachel Opakal HCC District #4 - asks if there are crosswalk attendants? Meghan W. answers yes, at certain times of the day.

TJ Lehman HCC District #5 – says an existing flashing light can become white noise and no-one slows or stops. He thinks the push button light is much more effective.

Emily Dean says the League of Cities and Towns is working with MDT to allow for a model MOU that allows cities themselves to take care of projects.

Chair Cole Rosling states that the HCC Executive Committee met with the interim City Manager, Tim Burton and the idea of Neighborhood Captains reporting back to the city has been squashed, that idea is no longer being pursued.

Reports of Officers, Boards and Standing Committees:

Chair Cole Rosling – Cole R. also says there may be an extra HCC Meeting scheduled this summer to go over the HCC Bylaws and Purpose statements, they need updating.

Denise Roth Barber – maybe HCC should wait and sync up with the City when they are updating their Bylaws etc. She also wondered what the impetus was to update the Bylaws. Dylan K. states that for instance the Charter says that the HCC must convene within 60 days of an election – yet our Bylaws say we meet the 4th Weds. of the month.

Sumner Sharpe – says that Bob Habeck is the keeper of the Bylaws and would be very helpful with any updates.

Denise Roth Barber – maybe the HCC should form an Ad Hoc committee – the Bylaw review Committee and have Bob Habeck be the Chair.

Bob Habeck – Bob says he is interested in helping. The HCC could have some off-cycle meetings for such updates as well as strategic planning and goal setting.

Vice-Chair Dylan Klapmeier – nothing new to report

Treasurer Nolan Harris – Nolan asks the HCC members with interest in a specific budget topic to contact him. He wants members to step up and participate in the writing of the budget document. Peggy Benkelman will resend the Budget meeting topics with dates to all HCC members.

Secretary Mike Rooney – HCC members need to continue to sign up to attend Commission meetings.

Commission Attendees' Reports: One minute

3/28 Paige Myers – the City of Helena purchased a new electric street sweeper. The City also approved a new ADA ramp program in the amount of \$200K.

4/6 Margaret Strachan- was not able to attend

4/11 Emily Mowers – Grant funds were approved for the Police Department. There was a zone change in the Green Meadow Drive area. Money was transferred from the General Fund for the Rodney St. project to be completed. There was a Pay Matrix increase for part-time employees.

4/20 Susan Steffens – Becky Dockter was introduced as the new City Attorney. The new Community Development director was also named: Christopher Brink. There was discussion about growth patterns in Helena. Water rights and sewer patterns were also discussed. The valley is running out of water. ¼ of all homes built in Helena have been built since 2000.

4/25 Lowell Chandler – Sussex Construction tabled the Westside Woods discussion. There were Fire officials there stating the dangers of potential wildfires in the area of Westside Woods.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman – Peggy B. discusses how she continues to provide agendas and minutes and set up meetings, only now she has to do 3 times as many with open meeting laws. She will send out YouTube channel info where you can listen to Commission minutes.

Committee Updates – 2 minutes

Outreach- Mike Rooney – May 13th, the HCC will have a presence at the Art Walk in front of TenMile brewery. Please sign up, two sessions 4-6PM or 6-8PM. There will be a large HCC District map there and also a box for citizens to note their issues of concern.

HOLMAC – TJ Lehman – No field trip or meeting that day due to weather. There will be more discussion about the Whyte property and also the Upper DeFord trail, where there will be more universal access.

Civic Center Steering Committee – John Andrew – John A. thinks it is time to reach out to Byron Dike (Civic Center Manager) and discuss his 5year plan. Byron wrote a grant for air conditioning at the Civic Center.

HPAC – Eric Seidle – There was no quorum for the Public Arts meeting, so it was cancelled.

Non-Motorized Travel – Lowell Chandler – This committee had Meghan Wirth (Jefferson parent council) speak at their meeting too. The Committee made a formalized motion that was sent to the City Commission requesting the flashing crossing signal. Broadwater School also hopes to have ADA access on each corner and a complete sidewalk on Peosta to Henderson.

Transportation Coordinating Committee – Joe Lehman – no updates, the committee only meets quarterly.

Water Quality Protection District – Diana Hammer – Diana was absent from meeting, but she will update us soon.

Citizen Conservation Board – Denise Roth-Barber – The CCB is still working with *Zero Waste Associates* and developing a zero-waste plan. There will be a Waterwise Tour of the City in person and online.

Golf – Ryan Schwochert – Ryan was excused from the meeting, but notes there are open positions at Muni’s Restaurant and Groundskeeper positions.

Paige Myers – Library Board – The library is revising its Community room policies as well as patron policies. The library was the recipient of a large donation. There is an opening on the Library Board and they are working on filling the position. Library employees have lost their health insurance, the board is working on securing new insurance. There were questions about the North Jefferson County borrowing program – is it fair if they don’t pay taxes to use the program?

Michael Monaco – Parks Department Meeting – Jeremy Drake gave a great presentation on Zero Waste. Michael M. thinks he should present at an HCC meeting. The Parks Department is still looking to hire a replacement for Kristi Ponozzo (current Parks and Open Lands Manager) who leaves soon. Barney Park is getting re-paved and may have Pickle Ball courts.

Paige Myers motions to adjourn the meeting, Margaret Strahan seconds the motion.

Meeting Officially Adjourned by Chair – Cole Rosling at 8:50PM

Next Meeting May 25th 7:00PM in person and on Zoom. Room 326 City County Bldg.