



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes
July 27th 7:00PM
Zoom Only

Meeting was called to order by HCC Chair Cole Rosling at 7:05pm

Attendance: John R (JR) Andrew, Patricia Bik, Diana Hammer, Nancy Perry, Nolan Harris, Ben Kuiper, Lowell Chandler, Paige Myers, Emily Mowers, Michael Monaco, Rachel Okapal, TJ Lehman, Cole Rosling, Heidi Freidlander, Liz Maida-Gerhart, Denise Roth-Barber, Susan Steffens, Chelly Hasquet, Burt Federman, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

Excused: John Andrew, Joe Lehman, Margaret Strachan, Dylan Klapmeier, Ryan Schwochert, Bob Habeck, Susan Smith

Absent: Steve Allen

Guests:, Dr. Thomas G, Brandi Thomas (of Childcare Connections), Candace Swan

A Quorum was established - yes

Chair Rosling again congratulates Diana Hammer on being elected as the new HCC Secretary
Chair Rosling also welcomes new HCC District #4 member: Burt Federman
Secretary Diana Hammer announces new District #1 member: JR Andrew
HCC member Paige Myers is the newly appointed representative for HPAC
Chair Rosling approves Elizabeth M. Gerhart to be on the new Fire Station Committee

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

Public Comment - none

Discuss Motion from George McCauley and the ADA Committee

“To allow our 2 city-wide code enforcement officers to issue tickets for infractions of complaint driven ordinances”

Since the HCC did not hear back from the ADA Committee with more formal language and notice that their recommendation had passed committee, the item was moved to our next month’s meeting.

Discuss Motion/Recommendation regarding City Zoning Law – to make it align with State law regarding Child Care numbers and facilities.

Lowell Chandler (author) speaks: He feels it is a pretty straight forward recommendation. The hope is for the City to align its Child Care requirements with the State of Montana’s. Document is brought up on the zoom screen and all members were given the document for review before the meeting. It is foot noted on the document that where the State speaks to an issue, the local government is pre-empted to follow the State’s law. The City of Helen needs to become compliant with this State law. This motion has the added benefit of allowing more families to

have their kids cared for. It also helps local businesses and the local economy because more people can work.

Chairman Rosling opens the floor for discussion:

TJ Lehman comments: TJ thanks the author for putting together such a great recommendation. It is easy to understand and read. TJ does feel it is important for the recommendation to be agreed upon by the Commission. Our community and its working parents need this change. It will be an improvement for our parents and the business community.

Denise R Barber supports the recommendation especially as a previous working mother. She asks if the premise for the motion is correct. Author Lowell Chandler reports yes, a local government cannot enact laws that conflict with State Laws – see footnote #6 of motion.

Ben Kuiper asks if entire document will be forwarded as recommendation. Chair Cole Rosling answers yes. Author Lowell Chandler prefers the document be presented in its entirety as the explanations within it support the motion – all the findings are located within the document.

Nolan Harris – Nolan Harris thanks HCC member Lowell Chandler for all his work, this is the most comprehensive and researched recommendation the HCC as put forward.

Brandi Thomas of ChildCare Connections – Brandi notes that this same issue arose in the Bozeman area and they very quickly approved the State Statute. If the motion is not passed within the City of Helena, there may be 50-60 Child Care placements that would have to be eliminated. This would be hard on working parents.

Burt Federman – Burt asks if this recommendation does away with the CUP for larger daycares. Author Lowell Chandler says no – it just focuses on Family and Home daycares.

Paige Myers – Paige asks if the passing of this motion will affect the safety of the children. Lowell Chandler replies that the Montana Legislature debated this issue at length and they believe the numbers of children in the daycare still reflect safety.

Chair Rosling asks if there are any other questions, issues or opposing views – none expressed

Cole Rosling makes a motion to vote on the Day Care Recommendation, Paige Myers seconds the motion.

This will be a verbal vote of those HCC members in attendance. Peggy Benkelman (coordinator) states the recommendation verbatim and calls out HCC members for their vote.

Vote: 19 HCC members present, and all 19 vote Yea. The recommendation passes unanimously. HCC member Heidi Freidlander joined the meeting after the vote was taken.

Reports of Officers, Boards, & Standing Committees

Officer Reports:

Chair- Cole Rosling – no new updates

Vice-Chair- Dylan Klapmeier – Excused from the meeting, no new updates

Treasurer-Nolan Harris – Nolan is waiting to hear more about final budget. HCC wants to re-allocate where funds will be spent while staying within the total amounts submitted. Most

expenditures will be within the Outreach Committee. Nolan will send out any revised budget items to everyone on the HCC.

Secretary – Diana Hammer – Diana states the Outreach Committee met and they will: Increase social media outreach efforts, HCC window display 9/1, encourage each district to look for outreach efforts, get to know your neighbors and raise awareness of the HCC. New doorhangers will be designed to highlight areas of interest within each specific district of HCC.

Each District should collect ideas on areas of interest or concerns within their district and forward them to Peggy B. by August 15th.

Commission Attendees' Reports – One Minute

6/27 Nancy Perry – Meeting had very emotional tributes to Eric Feaver. Commission awarded a bid for 21 fire hydrants to Mt. Underground Construction in the amount of \$387,400. The city still needs to replace 50 hydrants in the future. The City of Helena's financial audit received good reviews. The Commission swore in new Chief of Police Brett Petty.

7/6 Denise Roth Barber – please refer to email Denise sent outlining her notes.

7/13 Susan Steffens – Discussion was had about the \$6.68m from ARPA funds that still need to be distributed. The Commission asked City Departments to ask for specific funding needs. One discussion was brought up about the ice-skating rink at Memorial Park – could it be funded both by the City and the County? Many of the funding asks can be viewed on the City of Helena webpage.

7/18 Nolan Harris – The City Attorney introduced new staffer who seems quite qualified. A new lighting district was approved for consideration. Nolan mentions the HCC's Childcare Recommendation to the Commission.

7/25 Paige Myers – Paige mentions both the HCC's Childcare Recommendation and the possible ADA Recommendation. She says Mayor Collins did say the city intended to become compliant with State Statutory requirements regarding Day Cares.

The Commission approved for the City Manager to work with a multi-media company that will supply the city with better meeting audio and visual equipment.

The Kings Condo Development was approved as a B2 Zoning area. Of concern is that the Frontage Rd. is not up to City's standards. It is an MDT road, so hope is they will adapt to City standards. Internal roads in the development will be 36' wide.

Street maintenance, garbage pick-up and landfill maintenance had 0% increase in fees.

The City will assess fees for: special lighting districts, urban forest, storm water storage.

The City intends to recover loans from:

Water improvements infrastructures, renewable energy loans, ice and snow removal and improvements of sidewalks and gutters.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman – Peggy B. says she is still working within the VDI (Virtual Desktop), the IT Department has resolved issues with syncing of OneDrive files etc. She attended the Outreach Committee meeting and is excited to see the many goals they have. Peggy B. did mention she has received her COLA (Cost of Living) increase at the rate of 5%, as all city employees received. She also mentions her new phone 406-594-0010. The office phone is forwarded directly to this phone.

Committee Updates:

Outreach – Emily Mowers – Emily mentions the great new ideas for outreach. She re-iterates that each District needs to send specific issues/concerns/ideas for that district to Peggy B. by August 15th.

HOLMAC – TJ Lehman – The July meeting was cancelled – no quorum. There is an opening on the HOLMAC Committee. Trails were discussed. Please be careful with the taller grasses

and fire hazard. Trail maintenance and weed pulling is being performed if you would like to volunteer. Look on the MT. Bicycle Guild or PPLT (Prickly Pear Land Trust) webpage for more information.

Civic Center – John Andrew – John is excused , so no update.

HPAC – no update as Paige Myers was just now appointed

Non-Motorized Travel – Lowell Chandler – The city is putting in 15MPH signs on Broadway. MDT (Montana Department of Transportation) is installing a flasher crosswalk on S. Dakota St. Lowell C. hasn't heard anything yet about the HCC's motion to install two flasher crosswalks near Jefferson School. This committee is going to suggest the city put crosswalks at Hauser x Benton and Stewart x Benton.

TJ Lehman says a constituent from District #5 asked about pedestrian safety and increased traffic due to all the new builds around McHugh, Ptarmigan and Wolf roads. HCC should look into the Planning departments' documents to see if these considerations were met in the development plans. Of note: green/open space, sidewalks, pedestrian safety issues all met? Lowell Chandler says the nature trail near the golf course will be better connected to the Benton Ave trail. The city has secured a railroad security easement on the E. Side of Benton. The HCC should also keep updated on the Custer Ave expansion to four lanes and how safer crossings will be implemented.

Transp. Coordinating Committee – Joe Lehman – excused, so no update

Water Quality – Diana Hammer – The Committee toured both the Missouri River Treatment plant and the Ten-Mile treatment plant and discussed more water sources. The Water Wise handout in your city water bill gives many ideas on how to save water. Helenans use 5 to 6 times more water in the summer to water their lawns. The City changes to the Missouri River for water during the summer months. It is more expensive though because the water has to be pumped, whereas from Ten Mile Station a gravity feed is used. Diana H. suggest you view the new Xeriscape landscaping at the Law and Justice Center on Fuller Ave for ideas on how you could have your own low water usage landscape design.

Citizen Conservation Board – Denise Roth Barber – The Citizen Conservation Board is due to sunset in January of 2023, the board has asked for a continuance, and of couple of Commissioners agreed, but there has been no formal notice. The City is currently hiring a full time Sustainability Coordinator and a full time Recycling Coordinator.

Library Board – Paige Myers – The Director of the Library is currently not able to fulfill his role, so there is an Acting Director along with many employees stepping up to help. The Library thanks all its employee and the public for their help in the clean up after the downtown flood.

Golf – Ryan Schwochert – excused from meeting, but gave written update.

Diana Hammer asks about the process for appointment to HCC members to various boards.

Denise R. Barber (member of Bylaws Committee) says that is being addressed. Currently it is the Chair that appoints the member.

Susan Steffens reminds members of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Service initiative. Her husband has been working on the committee to make this happen and they have had a lot of feedback. Peggy B. mentions that this is a recommendation that was approved by the HCC in 2016. Please look on the HCC webpage under recommendations and scroll to the bottom of the page.

New Business – no topics brought up

Adjourn 8:30PM

Next Meeting August 24th on Zoom and in person Room 326