



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes
October 26th 7:00pm
Zoom and in person Room 326

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

Attendance: John R Andrew, Patricia Bik, Diana Hammer, Nancy Perry, Joe Lehman, Nolan Harris, Lowell Chandler, Paige Myers, Margaret Strachan, Emily Mowers, Michael Monaco, Rachel Okapal, Dylan Klapmeier, Cole Rosling, Ryan Schwochert, TJ Lehman, Heidi Friendlander, Elizabeth Maida-Gerhart, Steve Allen, Susan Smith, Chelly Hasquet, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth-Barber, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

Excused: John E Andrew, Ben Kuiper, Erinn Donnell, Susan Steffens

Guests: City Commissioner Andy Shirliff, Tom Flowers, Rob Friestadt, Anne McCauley, Nigel Antony & Dr. Gregory Thomas

A Quorum was established - yes

Approval of September 2022 Minutes – With slight change noted by Diana Hammer – change “wear a vet” to “wear a vest”.

Public Comment – Dr. Gregory Thomas has 3 questions/points for consideration:

1. How was public comment solicited before the document of District Priorities/Concerns was forwarded to the Commissioners?
2. Dr. G feels that both the Commission and the City Manager are not paying enough attention to issues and growth in E. Helena. He suggests that we have someone go to the E. Helena Commission meetings as well as invite a representative from E. Helena to attend and give input to our City of Helena Commission Meetings.
3. Dr. G will be speaking on 10/27 at the board of County Commissioners Meeting regarding the Big Sky Passenger Rail Services. He reminds us that no Federal, State, or Local taxes will be levied for this new Passenger Rail Service.

Guest Speakers – Commissioner Andy Shirliff

Commissioner Andy Shirliff speaks: Commissioner Shirliff agrees that the Commission should take a bigger interest in E. Helena as we are “joined at the hip”. Many of the homes being built in E. Helena are for City of Helena employees. Issues of concern to Commissioner Shirliff are: housing, clean water, sewers that function and broadband connectivity. Commissioner Shirliff mentions how he appreciates the HCC’s recommendations and wants to see the Commission have a bigger discussion about them, not just hear them read at meetings.

Diana Hammer – HCC District #1 Rep.- Diana says she appreciates the idea of having more of a back and forth dialogue with the Commission. She asks how the HCC could be more effective? Commissioner Shirliff says maybe feasibility studies if the recommendation involves money. He would also like to talk more with City Manager Burton about having discussions at Administrative meetings specifically regarding the HCC’s recommendations. The Commissioner reiterates that he appreciates the effort and thought the HCC puts into its recommendations.

Growing Friends of Helena: Tom Flowers, Rob Freistadt & Anne McCauley

Growing Friends Speak - Growing Friends plants trees – website is: <https://growingfriends.org/>

They are not a garden club and do not plant flowers. They are soliciting HCC's support for bigger projects throughout the city such as the one just completed along Benton Ave. Growing Friends has been shifting its focus to larger projects, they are interested in planting in Public Spaces such as a boulevard. They are asking the HCC to help identify these large projects. Growing Friends is moving away from Ash trees (because of the Emerald Ash Borer) and would like to see more variety of trees in Helena.

Diana Hammer – HCC Member District #1 – Diana mentions that she can share a Tree Canopy Cover report she did for areas around Helena. Peggy Benkelman will email copies to HCC members.

Nancy Perry – HCC Member District #2 – Do citizens interested in having trees planted get a choice of trees? Cost?

Growing Friends says yes there is a cost (at least \$50 per tree). They prefer that the HCC concentrate on larger possibly boulevard projects and run their requests through the City. Growing Friends is guiding people to about 5 species of trees that the City purchases in bulk. More emphasis has been placed on elms and maples.

John R. Andrew – HCC Member District #1 - How does water availability play into the plantings?

Yes, water is a big factor especially for the first year or two of growth. Try to encourage roots to grow down and deep. Boulevard watering is more efficient vs. lawn watering.

Growing Friends is trying to stay away from planting on private property and would rather do larger scale planting in public areas within the city.

Bylaw Committee Updates Discussion with Bob Habeck – 39.29 thru 1:36:33

The Bylaw Committee Chair, Bob Habeck, led the discussion with HCC members regarding possible changes to the HCC Bylaws. HCC member Denise Roth Barber, brought the google doc with changes onto the zoom screen so all members could observe. Discussions and questions were had through about Article V, Section 2 - a quorum consists of...

During the November meeting the remainder of the document will be discussed and a final formal document will be emailed to all HCC members. After members have had time to look over the document with changes and again have formal discussion, the new Bylaws will be voted upon. This vote may not occur until the January meeting.

Reports of Officers, Boards, & Standing Committees

Officer Reports:

Chair- Cole Rosling – Cole asks Peggy Benkelman about Rules of Order. Peggy says the city uses the Mason's Rules of Order. If the HCC would like there is an online training for use of Robert's Rules of Order. She will send that link to everyone -

<http://msulocalgov.org/training/introparlipublicofficials.html>

Cole R. mentions that He needs to set up the Nomination Committee next month. HCC members are reminded to step up if they are interested. You cannot self-appoint yourself to an officer position, but you could be nominated by someone else, even if you are on the nominating committee.

Vice-Chair- Dylan Klapmeier – Dylan K. speaks to Dr. G's question about a "List" of District priorities that was sent to the Commissioners. The list had been emailed to all HCC members several times. Chair Cole R. mentions it was an agenda item that kept getting moved forward – you should have seen it as an attachment many times. It was compiled by HCC members within

each District – some reached out to constituents through phone calls, had neighborhood meetings, asked at the Artwalk etc.

Treasurer-Nolan Harris – Nothing new to report

Secretary – Diana Hammer – Diana H. mentions the HCC will have a presence at the Fall ArtWalk on November 11th at Birds & Beasleys. The Outreach Committee is looking for volunteers.

Commission Attendees' Reports

10/3 John E. Andrew - Mt. Department of Commerce seeking grants for Community Facilities and Community Development Block Grants. Helena Food Share is requesting a Community Development Block Grant for construction costs for a new 20,000+ ft facility. There are also Community Facilities Funds available. The Commission voted 5 to 1 to approve an AARP mini-grant for \$1000 to install a wheelchair charging station at the new Law & Justice Center.

10/12 Susan Smith – Susan says the meeting was largely budgetary. There is \$8.5 million available from the US Treasury. \$1.8 million will be spent on TenMile City of Helena water updates. Priorities submitted by interim city manager Tim Burton were: \$500K for ERP Software, \$750K for Police Dispatch (to be shared with the County) \$479,000 for HVAC (AC) at Civic Center and \$25,000 from community facilities for the Radio Bldg. Overages were approved and the budget process was reviewed.

10/17 Ben Kuiper – excused, no report

10/26 John R. Andrew – This meeting was very long. There were 43 requests for ARPA funding from outside organizations. The Commission still has lots of questions as to how they will allocate the money. NMTAC did request money for a hard surface to be placed on the Centennial Train as well as a bridge over Henderson St. and Safe Routes for Schools updates.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman – Peggy B. asks that HCC members check out the new HCC permanent display in the City County Bldg. first floor. HCC will be at the November 11th Artwalk and they need volunteers. Need to include a new laptop in our 2024 budget.

Committee Updates: 1.5 Minutes

Outreach – Emily Mowers – Emily reiterates that volunteers are needed for the ArtWalk. She also says there is money in the budget for each District to have a neighborhood gathering this Spring. Please start to think about dates & locations for your District.

HOLMAC – TJ Lehman – Holmac is applying for grant money from the Community Wildfire Defense Grant for fuel mitigation. They want to create a healthy buffer area so a Fire cannot more easily enter downtown. The city is having to do a re-route due to an error in Cadastral mapping. Some of the Mt. Ascension trail crossed private property – it is easier for the city to build and maintain and manage fencing, so they are doing so.

Civic Center – tabled until future notice

HPAC – Paige Myers – There will be a new sign for Women's Park. HPAC is looking forward to having paintings inside the Centennial Trail Tunnel – the cost will be: on the low end \$28,500 up to \$125,000 on the high end. The HPAC is looking for funding ideas and grants to fund a new Mural.

Non-Motorized Travel – Lowell Chandler 2:04:6 – NMTAC's main priorities are:

1. Bridge Over Henderson St.
2. Finish Centennial Trail Paving
3. Utilize ARPA funds to complete sidewalks upgrade
4. Continue to provide Safe Routes to School around Broadwater (Peosta & Hollins Streets) and Knight street sidewalks.

Lowell C. mentions he would like to propose a recommendation for the HCC to put forth to the Commission regarding a bridge over Henderson. Diana Hammer suggests the

HCC vote on such a recommendation sooner than later as the Commission is deciding soon how to allocate ARPA funds. Lowell C. says he will write something up soon. Chair Cole Rosling suggests we call a special meeting to vote on the recommendation. S. Davis St. needs some sort of traffic calming to reduce car speed and the amount of dust.

Transp. Coord. – Joe Lehman – Quarterly Meetings only – no recent one

Water Quality – Diana Hammer – They received the annual report for FY2022. Diana H. attended Beaver Creek Restoration demonstration put on by the USFS. This creek is an important tributary to the Missouri River – fish spawning takes place there.

Citizen Conservation Board – Denise Roth Barber – City of Helena did hire a new Sustainability Coordinator Miranda Griffis. Her job duties include ½ time recycling and ½ time sustainability. By November 18, the Solid Waste Master Plan Steering Committee

wants input from citizens on what they want: for example: universal curbside recycling, expanded composting at the landfill etc. Please contact Denise to give her your input.

Library Board – Paige Myers - Paige M. reports Scenic Brew inside the library is trying sell the Kiosk coffee equipment for \$25,000. The rental fee within the library would be \$250 per month. 3-D printing/Laser cutting will soon be available at the library. The Patron Code of Conduct was passed and is available to view online. The Library webpage will be refreshed soon.

Golf – Ryan Schwochert – The committee recently met with the new City Parks Director. A new Communication Committee was formed – they will be working with the Golf Superintendent, Todd. The board had not received a financial report for nearly 4 months. After receiving a lengthy one, it seems several areas performed well, but there were still areas that underperformed. Ryan S. stated the document was so large it will take him at bit to sift through the information. The Indoor Golf League is starting soon and it will have a new format.

Fire Department – Elizabeth Gerhart - A Public Affairs Consultant was at the meeting Presenting how to better engage the public. The Fire Department may continue to use the company to help with better outreach. A discussion of staffing was held. With over 4500 responses per year, the Department is struggling to hire and keep staff. It has been difficult to be able to provide vacation time and over-time pay. At the next meeting on November 1st, further discussions on staffing and additional building will be the topics.

Revisit How Air BnB's or VRBO's affect neighborhoods – Margaret Strachan. Margaret Mentions how she has discussed the issue of AirBnb's with Michael Alvarez in the City Planning Department, but they have little to no stats and no regulations about them.

Margaret S. would like to know:

What is the density of AirBnb's within Helena?

How do they possibly deteriorate the quality of a neighborhood?

How do they impact the already lack of housing? Schools?

Should the City of Helena impose some permits or fees on them?

Margaret S. doesn't feel the HCC or its coordinator should be the one compiling the information, that should be the City's job. Perhaps we, the HCC, should write up a recommendation for the Commission to oversee such a project and make sure the information needed for our community is found.

Nancy Perry HCC Member District #2 has some information from the Denver area:

<https://denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Agencies-Departments-Offices-Directory/Business-Licensing/Business-Licenses/Short-Term-Rentals>

Kara Snyder (City of Helena Housing Coordinator) shared some information called AirDNA at last months' HCC meeting. <https://www.airdna.co/>

HCC Member Lowell Chandler agrees the AirBnB issue is a problem for the City, the Planning Department and the Housing Department.

Lowell Chandler – HCC District #3 member also had a call from a constituent saying the City may consider eliminating the 0% loan for Service Line Replacement. This is a great program for homeowners who suddenly need to pay to replace their private sewer or water line. It can be very costly. The HCC may want to proceed with a recommendation requesting the City to continue the loan program.

New Business

New Topics for Discussion

Nominating Committee for November Meeting – yearly officer elections
2023 Strategic Goals/Planning

9:10 PM **Adjourn-** Paige Myers motions to adjourn the meeting, seconded by John R. Andrew. Chair adjourns meeting.

Next Meeting November 30th In Person room 326 or via Zoom.