



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)

## Minutes

June 28th, 2023, 7-9PM  
Room 326 or via Zoom

### **Meeting was called to order by Chair Cole Rosling at 7:08PM**

**Attendance:** John E Andrew, Patricia Bik, Diana Hammer, Nancy Perry, Joe Lehman, Ben Kuiper, Nolan Harris, Paige Myers, Lowell Chandler, Emily Mowers, Ryan Schwochert, Cole Rosling, Steve Allen, Bob Habeck, Susan Steffens, Chelly Hasquet, Denise Roth Barber, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

**Excused:** John R. Andrew, Margaret Strachan, Michael Monaco, Rick Boleware, Erinn Donnell, Heidi Friedlander, Bob Schlack,

**Guests** – Dr. G

### **A Quorum was established – yes**

**Approval of May 2023 Minutes –** Chair Rosling opens the floor to comments/discussion/changes to the May Minutes. None was had. Chair Rosling moves to approve the minutes. All were in favor.

**Public Comment** – HCC member Paige Myers mentions her friends' car, a Kia got stolen. She mentions the Kia/Hundai trend that is going on <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/taking-action/consumer-alert-kia-and-hyundai-cars-at-risk-of-being-stolen-due-to-tiktok-trend/> Lowell Chandler mentions someone stole the license plates off of his truck, while parked at his home.

### **Officer Reports**

**Chair – Cole Rosling** – We will continue to gather information about Advisory Boards

**Vice-Chair – Ben Kuiper** – Turn out for people getting their names on the ballots was less than expected. A municipal election may be cancelled if there are not enough write-in candidates. You must complete a write-in form by September 5<sup>th</sup> due to new law created in the 2023 Legislature.

**Treasurer – Nolan Harris** – no new updates. Nolan thanks everyone for helping with the budget this year.

**Secretary – Diana Hammer** – nothing new to report. She will refer to the Outreach Committee update.

### **Unfinished Business**

**Update about the meeting with the City Manager discussion –** Cole Rosling, Ben Kuiper and Peggy Benkelman attending this meeting. Ben K. felt the discussion was productive, we were then notified of an upcoming meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup> to further discuss HCC's role on advisory boards. It was noticed to restructure HCC's agenda to include a placemark for the Mayor, Commission, City Manager to give input when needed. It may be a good move on HCC's part to meet with the Mayor regarding appointment applicants.

**June 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting regarding HCC's place on advisory boards:** Lowell Chandler, Ben Kuiper, Pat Bik, Denise R. Barber, and Cole Rosling attended this special meeting of the Commission. They attended in person in the Commission Chambers. The Commission had removed itself from being a member of an advisory committee, and sought to remove all HCC members from serving on advisory boards as well. The Commission removed themselves because it was a bit

of double dipping – getting to vote on the advisory board, and again getting to vote as Commissioners. The HCC felt this reasoning did not apply to them as they don't get to vote as Commissioners, nor do they have the power that Commissioners have. Having HCC members serve on boards helps the entire HCC stay better informed on issues. All four members of HCC explained their reasoning and the Commission agreed that HCC members should continue to serve on advisory boards and have voting rights on them. The process of appointing who serves on these advisory boards needs further clarification.

Neighborhood Block Parties – Exempt Insurance – John R. Andrew will have more updates for the HCC at the July Meeting. Pat Bik thinks an ordinance change may be warranted. For example, in Great Falls, they actually encourage block parties. If there are 75 people or less, the City Manager can waive the insurance. Denise R. Barber – suggests if there is no street blockage, that is a way to bypass the permit issue. Diana Hammer – Alcohol is the major part of the insurance issue. Susan Steffens mentions that last summer District #7 had a block party. They had to have a permit and insurance and the police came to check on the event. Pat Bik says that MMIA (Montana Municipal Insurance Association) may be the key to cutting costs at block parties – they may provide lower rates.

Strategic Planning Priority Discussion – Follow up Please complete this link to a poll for you to fill out regarding HCC priorities for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024): <https://forms.gle/NrJ7qgAVBzQULfeQ7>

Diana will compile the data and report back to HCC.

### **New Business**

Discussion to create a policy with HCC members regarding having guidelines as to what organizations/nonprofits we support. The organizations should not involve religion, they should be non-partisan, and add to the benefit of Helena and all its citizens. Members of the HCC Outreach Committee feel there should be some sort of guidelines document regarding how the HCC will work with non-profit organizations. All on the Outreach Committee feel it should be non-partisan, non-religious and for the benefit of the community of Helena. Emily Mowers says she may put a document together for the July meeting. Cole R. suggests we ask the City Attorney if there is any document regarding how the City works with non-profits.

Diana Hammer would like to have someone from the Department of Revenue come to speak to HCC regarding taxation and assessments on properties. Bob Habeck states he has been in contact with the Dept. of Revenue and they are sending him better explanations. John E. Andrew says there will be meetings at HMS (Helena Middle School) on July 11<sup>th</sup> and July 18<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-8:30PM.

### **Commission Attendees' Reports**

6/7 Emily Mowers – Discussion at the meeting was largely about the budget. Emily presented the HCC budget on behalf of the HCC.

6/12 Erinn Donnell – Absent – will send notes to the coordinator

6/21 Susan Steffens – More budget discussions. Commission did not want to raise the price of parking rates to those who had a passport. They did however discuss raising monthly parking rates. Expressed interest in having food trucks be one per block. The cost of Parklets was costing businesses about \$5000 per summer. The Commission was considering cutting that cost in half. The transit fee may be raised from 85 cents to \$3. There are no pre-determined bus routes currently, but ridership numbers are up utilizing the “dial a ride” concept.

6/26 Denise R. Barber – Denise sent her HCC report to the chatroom for the meeting, because of an agenda scheduling change, it fouled up her time to speak and she had to be at a District

#7 meeting regarding the Maverick gas station installation. She will watch the meeting on YouTube. There were discussions about the budget and passing the Preliminary Budget.

**Coordinator Report** – Peggy Benkelman – Peggy calls out dates where HCC volunteers need to attend Commission meetings. A discussion about becoming a write-in candidate ensued. Please complete form by September 5<sup>th</sup> in the elections office. Peggy B will continue to better research the topic of elections; if they will even have one, and how persons will be appointed if there is no one already serving in a district.

**Outreach Committee Report** – Emily Mowers – Emily M. talks about the HCC's first Meet & Greet. There was low attendance both by HCC members and the public. Nancy Perry helped by being outside the Library and encouraging the public to come inside. There may be another Meet & Greet in the fall. Emily M. asks that HCC members like our Facebook page and interact with our posts. Please make sure you have handed out all your doorhangers. Denise R. Barber suggests we have more of a presence at the Farmer's Market. Emily responds that the HCC isn't necessarily considered a non-profit and would have to go before the board to plead their case, even if they want to be on the grass in Women's Park. Denise R. B. mentions Alive at Five – the cost is still \$50. Ryan Schwochert offers to help us secure a spot.

### **Boards, & Standing Committees**

**City County Consolidated Planning Board** – John E. Andrew – John A. says most of the meeting was about County Subdivision regulations. He will attend the June meeting and report back to the HCC at the July meeting.

**HOLMAC** – Pat Bik – will attend when meetings resume

**HPAC** – Paige Myers – Paige mentions that the HPAC coordinator still thinks that the HCC does not have a voting position on the board. The mural at the Tunnel as been started. Paige M. mentions that there should be a *Welcome to Helena* sign. She also suggests having a mural at the Henderson St. Tunnel.

**Non-Motorized Travel** – Lowell Chandler – Continuing representation by HCC on NMTAC is concerning. There is a long-range Transportation plan coming up. This is a 10 yr. plan, so important to get HCC member input.

**Transportation Coordinating Committee - Dissolved due to new MPO** – Joe Lehman – Lowell Chandler re-iterates that the TCC is dissolved. The new MPO does open up better options for funding however. Joe L. along with other HCC members, feels it is important that HCC has representation on the MPO.

**Water Quality** – Diana Hammer – Diana was not able to attend the meeting.

**Citizen Conservation Board** – Denise Roth Barber. The CCB elected new officers. Denise R. Barber is Chair, Mark Judeman is Vice-Chair and Lori Fitzgerald is Secretary. Seems that the staff of the Public Works department is still a bit leary about HCC having a voting position on the CCB.

**Library Board** – Paige Myers – The Library has updated its employee handbook. It is nice that they included a new floating holiday. The new concession is open in the lobby from 8-2PM. In August there will be 3 movie showings in the park.

**Golf** – Ryan Schwochert – The course is busier than ever. There will be 13 tournaments this year. The finances took a hit this year with a holding pond leak and well as a motor burning out in the pond. There was also bad winterkill this year. There is positive hiring going on at both Muni's and the Golf Shop. Signs point to profits this year. Denise R. Barber reports that even though there has been an increase in fees, there are a less services available, for example: no water and no functioning ball washers.

**Parks** – Ben Kuiper – not able to attend the meeting. Will report next month.

Diana Hammer wants to report the there is a new electric car charger at the Golf Course and also one at the Jackson St. Parking Garage.

**Meeting Adjourned – 8:30 PM**

**Next HCC Full Board Meeting is scheduled for July 26th. In Room 326 or via Zoom.**

**Chat Box from Zoom Meeting June 28<sup>th</sup>**

<p>Emily Mowers 08:09 <b>EM</b> OUCh</p>	<p>Susan Steffens District 7 18:06 <b>SS</b> Good Job advisory board representatives! Plus, if people are not driving at block parties but walking it would seem there could be some exception made.</p>
<p>Dr. G 08:40 <b>DG</b> Community Development has a direct contact relationship with the office at Northwestern responsible for replacement of street light bulbs.</p>	<p>Nolan Harris 40:20 <b>NH</b> Thank you Emily! 👍 1</p>
<p>Denise Barber 11:05 <b>DB</b> People can also write in on the ballot</p>	<p>Emily Mowers 43:45 <b>EM</b> Re: Property Taxes - Montana Free Press has also written an article on this topic that I have seen being noted in several forums. Full disclosure, I have not had a chance to read the full article, but wanted to share as a possible resource. <a href="https://montanafreepress.org/2023/06/22/property-taxes-explained-with-pictures/">https://montanafreepress.org/2023/06/22/property-taxes-explained-with-pictures/</a></p>
<p>Susan Steffens District 7 11:22 <b>SS</b> I have Sept. 5, also. This is from the commission meeting.</p>	<p>Susan Steffens District 7 01:06:24 <b>SS</b> The tunnel at Centennial Park is looking really nice!</p>
<p>Steve Allen- District 6 12:26 <b>SA</b> I wanted to file in District 6 but working a full time job and driving as a substitute bus driver part time as well as building a new church building for my church makes me way too busy do it justice. So sorry.</p>	
<p>Ryan Schwochert 14:14 <b>RS</b> Good Luck Steve, keep up the great work.</p>	
<p>Susan Steffens District 7 14:56 <b>SS</b> Thanks for all you have done Steve.</p>	