



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)

Minutes

March 22nd, 2023, 7:00pm
Zoom: or in person room 326

Meeting was called to order by HCC Vice Chair Ben Kuiper at 7:04pm (12:59)

Attendance: John E Andrew, John R. Andrew, Patricia Bik, Diana Hammer, Nancy Perry, Joe Lehman, Ben Kuiper, Lowell Chandler, Paige Myers, Emily Mowers, Michael Monaco, Dylan Klapmeier, Ryan Schwochert, Erinn Donnell, Heidi Friendlander, Elizabeth Maida-Gerhart, Steve Allen, Susan Smith, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth-Barber, Susan Steffens, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

Excused: Cole Rosling, Nolan Harris, Rachel Okapal, Chelly Hasquet, Margaret Strachan

Guests: Craig Marr (Parks Department), Pat Marron, Karen Reese

A Quorum was established - yes

Approval of February 2023 Minutes – Motion to approve by Pat Bik, seconded by Dylan Klapmeier. Minutes are approved with no changes.

Guest Speaker – Craig Marr (Parks Department)

Craig M. speaks to the Standards and Maintenance of the Helena Tennis Courts. He mentions the dates the courts in Helena were built: Civic Center 1969, Barney Park rebuilt in 1975, Lockey Park rebuilt in 1999, Mt View Meadows 2014. The city does follow maintenance guidelines. People that ride bikes, skateboard, and use metal shovels on the courts do cause increased damage. Irrigation heads get “kicked off” and can sprinkle the courts unnecessarily, causing even more damage. The city does remove the nets in the winter to decrease playtime and in the spring, use a broom and blower to clean up the courts. Cracks are noted in the spring. All the courts are asphalt, so cracks continue to grow. Lockey Park is up for resurfacing at a cost of at least \$52K. The Civic Center courts need a total rebuild – that is being built into the 2024/2025 budget. Mountain View Meadows also needs resurfacing. The City of Helena uses the US Tennis Association Standards along with the American Sports Builders Guidelines Association. The Barney courts need resurfacing because of large cracks. These courts really needed a total re-do with a specified slope of between 1-1.83%, The cost here would be around \$150K. The Civic Center courts need to be completely re-built. This area is difficult because of slope and several retaining walls. The budget process gets approved in July, leaving very little time to get projects completed before winter. One quote came in for the courts to utilize post tension concrete (it wears better) at a cost of \$500,000. Most of this money would have to come from the General Fund (ARPA fund dollars were not allocated to these projects).

Nancy Perry asks: What is post-tension concrete? Wouldn't that hurt the players' knees? Craig Marr replies: the cement is blocks of cement with cables running through it – the cables can be tightened over time which helps prevent cracks from developing. There is a specific footing placed on top of the concrete. It is more expensive than just asphalt, but there are fewer repairs over time and ultimately less cost.

Patricia Bik – What was the cost to have Barney Park Courts rebuilt? Craig Marr says: \$150K. Pat Bik asks: does the Parks Department perform its own specs when it rebuilds courts? Craig

M. replies no, the Parks department would probably utilize a company that the City of Bozeman used.

Lowell Chandler asks: Has there been any consideration of putting up outdoor basketball courts around the city? Could there be a mixed use of Basketball and Tennis courts? Craig Marr states probably difficult to have a mixed use. The list of Basketball Courts that were just redone is: Barney Park, Lockey Park, Cherry Park, Lincoln Park. There are also basketball courts at various school locations.

Erinn Donnell asks if the School District gives financial support to update the Tennis Courts since many are used by the School Tennis Teams. Craig M. answers yes, the School District does financially support the courts.

Ben Kuiper asks if these project monies are listed in a lump fund? Craig M. says they are listed under specific projects.

Craig Marr talks about some upcoming projects: new picnic shelters at Memorial Park, Leo Pocha playground replacement, new *fall zone* at Jaycees Park, the Fire Tower replacement bid has been released. New solid agreement with Railroad plus grant money to pave Centennial Trail.

Public Comment – HCC member Ryan Schwochert reminds members that *Growing Friends* <https://growingfriends.org/> is still on the lookout for areas within City Districts that you may notice need trees planted. If you know of a public location, please contact Ryan – 406-438-1041

Reports of Officers

1. Officer Reports

Chair- Cole Rosling – no new updates- excused from meeting – defers to Vice Chair

Vice-Chair- Ben Kuiper– no new updates but does want the HCC to know that District #2 was reached out to because of the Rodney St. tree removal. Nancy Perry and Ben Kuiper did meet with District #2 residents to make sure the city can prevent this from happening in the future.

Treasurer-Nolan Harris – no new updates. Nolan H. is still encouraging HCC members to help with the budget report.

Secretary – Diana Hammer – Diana H. defers to Emily Mowers chair of the Outreach Committee.

Unfinished Business 47:49

1. **Set date for Strategic Plan for 2023** – Confirm it will be On April 26th in person only at the Civic Center from 6-9PM. Coordinator Peggy B. will send out planning ideas/forms before the meeting.
2. **Strategies/new committee for AirBnBs** – Paige Myers, Nancy Perry and Margaret Strachan have already done some preliminary research and expressed an interest in being on this AdHoc Committee. Bob Habeck restates that this is a hot topic and still in the info gathering stage. There are bills in this current MT Legislature addressing some of the issues, so maybe it will be better to wait until after the session to proceed further. Ben Kuiper, Chair ProTem, suggests we move this item to next month's agenda. Nancy Perry asks Bob Habeck if he has information regarding BnBs within the State, could he please send it out to HCC members.
3. **Additions to HCC Budget Committee** – HCC members are reminded to sign up to listen to Admin. Commission meetings especially in April and May – when department budget presentations will be given. Treasurer Nolan

Harris asks members if they are interested in writing the HCC's budget recommendation, to please contact him.

New Business – Paige Myers hands out new HPAC resolution. Members on Zoom do not have a copy as Paige M. just brought in the document before the meeting. Peggy B. (coordinator) will send out copies to all HCC members asap. The new HPAC resolution says there will be 9 members (down from 11) now excluding an HCC member and a Commission member. The idea of having a “youth” member is in the resolution – Paige M. wonders what the age limit is for youth? Paige M. wonders if there will be a seat on HPAC for HCC members in the future.

Denise R. Barber – there seems to be a trend, leaving out positions for HCC members on advisory boards.

Dylan Klapmeier – suggests that we resend our recommendation about HCC's Role on City of Helena Advisory Boards 1/2023 and request a meeting/discussion about this topic with our Ex. Committee.

Patricia Bik – would like more clarification/criteria that is required regarding placement/duties on advisory boards. Appointments to boards - by HCC only, or does Commission/Mayor have to approve. Pat B. feels since the HCC is an independent entity the decision to appoint should solely be theirs. Clarification is also needed as to what boards the HCC has voting rights on.

Susan Steffens – asks for clarification that the HPAC board is reducing its membership from 11 to 9? Paige M. says yes. Susan S. asks that includes no more representation from an HCC member or a commissioner? Paige M. says yes. Susan S. is concerned, that the Commission will not know what the HPAC is doing...

Ryan Schwochert District #5 – says a resident in his District reached out regarding their successful stance on the removal of “resident only” parking on Billings Ave. Residents here are also concerned about increased traffic speeds. They would prefer some sort of traffic calming. Who would they contact? Peggy B. (coordinator) suggests David Knoepke with the Transportation Department.

Bob Habeck - states he got involved years ago to do this on Winne Ave. Often it ends up that the City states they just don't have the money to proceed, or a SID will be initiated and citizens of the area will pay for it through taxes.

Lowell Chandler - says the citizen could voice his opinion at an NMTAC meeting, and possibly they could help. Lowell C. says he has viewed the traffic calming application and it has extremely high standards for a road to qualify.

Erinn Donnell – attended the 6th Ward Neighborhood Planning Session. There was confusion about naming of zones – where the zone boundaries actually were, and how the public defines these areas. Three notable areas of concern were addressed: Public, Prosperity and Pedestrian. The areas included walking, businesses, public lands etc. Erinn D. hopes we hear more from the City Planning Department when the study is completed.

John R. Andrew – John has recently heard that public events can be registered online. Now the city may require that events have liability insurance (approx.. cost is \$200) this amount may be more if alcohol is involved at the event. A permit is also required. A block party event could now cost upwards of \$500. John has asked the city for the approximate number of block parties/events held each year in Helena, but he has received no reply.

Ryan Schwochert mentions he has conducted several events in parks and on city streets and has to apply for a permit. In the past, you could have up to three events per year at a cost of \$30. Having the application online will be much less cumbersome. Ryan S. is concerned about the increased cost if liability insurance is now required.

Denise Roth Barber mentions SB 420 which proposes that all municipal elections will be held in even years only. If it passes, it will take effect immediately. That would move our elections ahead one year.

Diana Hammer – reminds HCC members if they want to run for office again, they must sign up between April 20th and June 15th. Peggy will send out forms to members and check on dates.

Commission Attendees' Reports – two minutes

2/27 Nancy Perry- The Commission approved development of 3 lots, approved the Parks department to re-do the Fire Tower, approved TIF funds to improve the façade of the Livery Square Building, and approved having a multi-living unit within a single residence area.

3/8 Nancy Perry – Approved and voted to fund 7 main ARPA proposals.

3/13 John E. Andrew – approval of new City Manager Employment Agreement, approved ARPA funding for Rocky Mountain Development Council housing, \$250K to Helena Food Share and \$143K to the Tri-County Fire Safety.

3/22 Pat Bik – Still \$900K in ARPA funds available. May need more applicants to come forward. A Sustainability Report was given The City's Sustainability report link is below:

<https://www.helenamt.gov/files/assets/helena/government/departments/public-works/documents/2021-city-of-helena-annual-sustainability-report.pdf>

Lowell Chandler asks if NMTAC's recommendation to deny the road widening was mentioned at the meeting? Pat Bik replies no, it was not mentioned.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman –I received an external hard drive (HCC had to purchase) to load all old docs from our old Typo 3 webpage dating back to 2004 for document retention. The April HCC meeting is on 4/26 and is in person only – no Zoom. Asking that all attend. On 4/13 we are stuffing the doorhangers and ask that one person from each District attend and please help.

Boards, & Standing Committees

Outreach – Emily Mowers would like to remind members to have at least one person from their district come to room 326 on April 13th to help stuff doorhanger flyers. The Outreach Committee would also like to have two “Meet & Greet” sessions for HCC members to interact with the public. These sessions may be held at the Public Library. Please check in with Emily Mowers (Outreach Committee Chair) if you intend to have some sort of neighborhood get-together. A radio interview about HCC did air – Emily M. will get the recording and place it on social media. The Radio station asked that HCC return periodically.

City County Planning Board – John E. Andrew -Officer elections were held.

Updated information about the 6th Ward planning was given by *CSJ Alliance* who conducted the study. There was also a 5 point Intersection study. Bill Grimes was fielding public comments. CSJ is also conducting studies on Cruze Ave. and around the old mall area.

HOLMAC – on hold until new resolution is established – may partner with the county.

HPAC – HCC was surprised with the new HPAC resolution that deleted the HCC representation on the Committee. Peggy B. instructed (per the clerk of commission) to continue having HCC members attending meetings. The HCC's voting representation is on Standby until the April meeting. Peggy B. will send out copies of the HPAC resolution to all HCC members. The Centennial Tunnel painting closed on 3/22, but there were no submissions. The timeline will be extended as HPAC knows there are artists working on their proposals. There may be a new RFP out for wraps on more electric boxes at intersections. Four dumpsters may be painted as well. An

IR reporter did contact Paige Myers about the resolution eliminating an HCC representative – she answered questions as best she could.
Transp. Coord. – Joe Lehman. Joe fell and broke his hand, so was not able to attend the meeting. He will forward the agenda to Peggy, who will forward to all HCC members.

NMTAC – Lowell Chandler – Lowell states that NMTAC does not agree with the City's new engineering standards and would prefer the street width remain 18 feet. Lowell may request that HCC write a recommendation stating this and why. A Sidewalk Summit is being conducted on 3/30 via zoom. Lowell C. encourages HCC members to listen in. He will be attending as well.

Water Quality – Diana Hammer – Diana mentions that the Water Quality bureau is completing its 3-year strategic plan, which will be completed in time to submit to the 2024 budget. The City's Sustainability report link is below:
<https://www.helenamt.gov/files/assets/helena/government/departments/public-works/documents/2021-city-of-helena-annual-sustainability-report.pdf>

Citizen Conservation Board – Denise R. Barber wants to make sure members completed the survey about solid waste that was sent to each of you. Please read the sustainability link provided above. Denise questions if others have had their water meters replaced. Diana Hammer says the new meters are called *Neptune* and a small light flashes if you have a leak. Pat Bik says her meter was replaced at a cost of \$370. You can also check if you have a leak by looking at ongoing usage. Lowell Chandler purchased a Moen smart water monitor -

https://www.amazon.com/Moen-900-001-4-Inch-Smart-Shutoff/dp/B00C03D01Q/ref=asc_df_B00C03D01Q/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=241887629712&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=6321088383137556276&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9021299&hvtargid=pla-679482686799&psc=1

Library Board – Paige Myers – The library is updating its staff policies. There is a concern about HB 234 as libraries may be added back into the bill. The Coffee Kiosk inside the library is being readied to be opened soon.

Golf – Ryan Schwochert - There were already about \$200K worth of golf passes sold this year. This is up from last year. The course has been covered with ice and snow for a longer period this winter, which may result in more winterkill. Muni's has had a drop in sales. There is also a half-time position available in their restaurant. The Golf budget is complete and is ready to go before the Commission. There will be some nominal increases.

Fire Department – Liz Gerhart - This Committee decided to have one more meeting which will be on 3/24. So Liz will report next month.

Nancy Perry has more questions about Growing Friends
<https://growingfriends.org/> Ryan can send out more details and Peggy B. will forward to all members.

9:00PM Adjourn-

Paige Myers motions to adjourn the meeting and Ryan Schwochert seconds.
Meeting adjourned at 8:46PM

Next Full HCC Board Meeting April 26th 6:00-9:00PM IN PERSON ONLY
No zoom – Helena Civic Center Ballroom.