



CITY OF HELENA
Helena Citizens' Council Regular Meeting
February 25, 2026 at 7:00-9:00 pm
Zoom Online Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85702982474>
Room 326, 316 N. Park Avenue, Helena, MT, 59623

Call to Order and Roll Call

Public Comment

Minutes

HCC Member Appointments

Officer Reports

- A. Chair, Ben Kuiper – District 4
- B. Vice Chair, Anne Hausrath – District 2
- C. Treasurer, Lori FitzGerald – District 1
 - 1. Budget Timeline Discussion
 - 2. Appointments to Budget Committee
- D. Secretary, Diana Hammer – District 1
 - 1. Commission Sign Up

Coordinator Report

Outreach Committee Report

Commission/Board Meeting Attendee Reports

- A. February 4th, 2026 - Administrative Meeting
- B. February 9th,, 2026 - Commission Meeting
- C. February 18, 2026 – Administrative Meeting
- D. February 23, 2026 – Commission Meeting

Unfinished Business –

- A. Consider HCC Regular Meeting time change to 4th Weds at 5:30 pm (from 7 pm)
 - a. Public Comment
 - b. Member Communications
 - c. Motion
- B. Consider Updating HCC Bylaws
 - a. Public Comment
 - b. Review DRAFT Bylaw Revisions
 - c. Member Communications
 - d. Motion
 - e. Public Comment



- f. Review Survey Results
- g. Member Communications
- h. Motion

New Business –

- A. Consider HCC Priorities in preparation for City FY27 Budget Development
 - a. Public Comment
 - b. Review Survey Results
 - c. Member Communications
 - d. Motion

- B. Consider Commending the Commission on the Public Process Regarding the January 26th Commission Meeting
 - a. Public Comment
 - b. Review Draft Recommendation
 - c. Member Communications
 - d. Motion

City Board Meeting Attendees' Reports

1. Metropolitan Planning Organization
2. City-County Planning Board
3. Helena Public Arts Committee
4. Citizen Conservation Board
5. City-County Library Board
6. Golf Advisory Board
7. City-County Parks Board
8. Affordable Housing Trust Fund
9. Water Quality Protection District

Member Communication

Topics for Next Meeting?

Public Comment

Next meeting: March 25, 2026 – 7:00pm

Adjournment

The City of Helena is committed to providing access to persons with disabilities for its meetings, in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Montana Human Rights Act. The City will not exclude persons with disabilities from participation at its meetings or otherwise deny them the City's services, programs, or activities.

Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in the City's meetings, services, programs, or activities should contact the City's ADA Coordinator, Anne Pichette, as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to arrange for the requested accommodation, at any of the following:

Phone: (406) 447- 8490



TTY Relay Service 1-800-253-4091 or 711 Email: citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov

Mailing Address & Physical Location: 316 North Park Avenue, Room 445, Helena, MT 59623.

Helena Citizens' Council Bylaws
November 30, 2022 [bob edits 10-9-25](#) [Diana edits 10-14-25](#)

ARTICLE I – PURPOSE

Section 1. The purpose of the Helena Citizens’ Council (HCC or Council) is established by the City Charter, Article IV, Section 4.01.

Section 2. All actions of HCC are outlined in its Purpose Statement and Guiding Principles document.

ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. HCC composition, election, terms, and qualifications of members are governed by the City Charter: Article IV Section 4.02 and Article V., as well as Montana Code Annotated Title 7.

Section 2. A member's position is deemed vacant before the expiration of their term on the occurrence of any one of the following:

- A. Ineligibility according to applicable state law(s);
- B. The death of a member;
- C. The voluntary resignation of a member;
- D. The voluntary resignation of a member at the prompting by the Chair for cause; or
- E. The member no longer resides in the District that they were elected or appointed to represent.

Section 3. District member vacancy protocol is governed by the City Charter, Article IV, Section 4.02(4).

Section 4. HCC shall give public notification of all District vacancies.

Section 5. HCC members serve a two-year term beginning the first Monday in January immediately following the municipal election.

ARTICLE III - OFFICERS, NOMINATING COMMITTEE, AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers of HCC shall be Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

Section 2. After the second Tuesday of each November, but no later than its final regular meeting of the year, HCC shall appoint a Nominating Committee charged with nominating members and/or members-elect of HCC as candidates for election of officers.

The Nominating Committee shall be composed of a minimum of three members appointed by the Chair and approved by the membership. The Nominating Committee shall receive

suggested nominees from members and members-elect and develop a slate of candidates for consideration. Members of the Nominating Committee cannot nominate themselves to the slate of candidates.

The slate of candidates will be provided to members and members-elect no later than seven days prior to the January meeting. Election of officers shall take place in January of each year at the regular monthly meeting. In addition to the slate of nominees, nominations for candidates may be made from the floor prior to the election.

Section 3. Officers shall be members of HCC and serve a one-year term as an officer until their successors have been elected. HCC shall fill any unexpired officer positions at the next regular monthly meeting following the vacancy. Vacant officer positions shall be advertised to the Council and interested members must notify the Executive Committee. Prior to member voting, the Chair will solicit floor nominations.

ARTICLE IV - DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1. The Executive Committee is composed of all four officers of HCC. The Executive Committee is responsible for setting the agenda of any/all Council meetings. Any member of the Council may attend Executive Committee meetings.

Section 2. The Chair will preside over monthly meetings and its Executive Committee. The Chair is eligible to vote. The Chair shall:

- A. Appoint chairs to the standing committees;
- B. Appoint special ad hoc committees as necessary;
- C. Be responsible for the preparation of the agenda, along with the Executive Committee;
- D. Conduct all meetings in an orderly manner;
- E. Ensure periodic reports are made to the City Commission regarding the progress and recommendations of the Council; and
- F. With the approval of the Council, appoint or remove representatives to serve as voting members on Council-allotted city advisory boards.

Section 3. The Vice Chair shall:

- A. Perform all duties as mutually agreed upon with the Chair;
- B. Assume all responsibilities of the Chair should the person be absent or unable to serve; and,
- C. Succeed to the position of Chair in the event of a vacancy. The Vice Chair position shall then be declared vacant and must be replaced following Article III, Section 3.

Section 4. The Secretary shall supervise the keeping of accurate records on all Council proceedings, supervise the issuance of all necessary notices and reports, and keep attendance records. In the absence of both the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Secretary shall conduct the regular meetings. The Secretary is responsible for leading the Council's publicity efforts, working with

members and HCC Coordinator (a city employee) to publicize Council activities and actions. The Secretary shall be a member of the Outreach Committee.

Commented [1]: Honestly, Bob, as Secretary, I don't know how I am supposed to do much of this with how unfriendly the Clerk's Office has been to the HCC recently. I don't really 'supervise' anything. Not suggesting this be changed but noticing how unrealistic this sounds, given the current HCC and the Clerk of Commission's relationship.

Section 5. The Treasurer shall account for funds entrusted to HCC and shall report on the status of the budget and expenditures at the monthly meetings. The Treasurer will chair the Budget Committee and attend all city budget work sessions and other related meetings. The Treasurer shall meet on a regular basis with other members of the Budget Committee to formulate Council budget recommendations and present them to the Council for a final vote of approval.

The Treasurer shall present HCC's budget recommendations to the City Commission during the public hearing for the City of Helena annual budget. The Treasurer, as chair of the Budget Committee, will present committee goals as needed at the monthly meetings. In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary, the Treasurer shall facilitate Council meetings.

ARTICLE V - MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular meetings shall be held each month, excluding December, unless canceled by a majority vote of the membership. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the Chair or by a majority vote of the membership made up of the current HCC District Representatives.

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Commented [2]: I'm not 100% sure now how we were told to run votes - (1) majority of members present; (2) majority of members out of a total of 28; or (3) majority of members from occupied seats (<28).

Regular meetings, except for the January meeting immediately following a municipal election, shall occur monthly on a regular basis (standing day, time, location) and publicly noticed ~~the~~ fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm with both in-person and virtual participation options, unless either platform is waived with cause by the Chair. In accordance with MCA 7-4-4107 and City Charter 4.02 (6), the January meeting immediately following the municipal election shall be on the first Tuesday in January where members-elect will be sworn in and officers elected. Meetings of HCC Committees will be held in accessible locations and publicly noticed.

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Commented [3]: Good work, Bob!

Section 2. A quorum consists of a majority of the HCC membership. Membership is defined as current, filled HCC District seats (vacant seats are not included). A quorum is necessary for the transaction of any official business of the Council.

Commented [4]: I'm suggesting this because the Outreach Committee has been meeting at the Library (with a remote option) and Alyx is now telling us we have to meet in the City-County Building. I don't see any reason why she can dictate when/where Committees meet. Thoughts?

Section 3. Parliamentary conduct of the meetings shall be in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, newly revised, unless otherwise specifically stated herein. Strict observance of Robert's Rules of Order may be waived at the discretion of the Chair.

Section 4. Members from each District may host meetings in their neighborhood to address issues as they arise; to seek opinions relating to questions before the City Commission or for other neighborhood business as appropriate.

Section 5. All Council, committee and District meetings shall be open to the public. Public notice of meetings shall be provided no later than 48 hours prior to a meeting and is the

responsibility of the Coordinator, committee chairs and District members, respectively. HCC will follow all the city's public notice legal requirements.

ARTICLE VI - COMMITTEES

Section 1. HCC will have both standing and ad hoc committees with members appointed by the Chair. Committees will have clear purpose, reporting requirements, and duration. Committees will be established and abolished by majority vote. Participation by members on committees is at the discretion of the Chair. Representative participation is encouraged.

Section 2. Standing Committees:

- A. **Budget Committee.** The Treasurer will be chair of this committee. The purpose is to review and make recommendations on the annual city budget. Recommendations by this committee will be voted on by the membership and, if approved, proposed to the City Commission. Committee members are encouraged to attend city budget work sessions, may work closely with appropriate city staff to understand budgetary methodology and issues, and to facilitate the flow of information and ideas between the citizenry and city government entities.
- B. **Executive Committee.** The purpose is to organize HCC activities. Members include the four elected positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Coordinator staffs this committee.
- C. **Nomination Committee.** The purpose is to establish an annual slate of candidates from members / members-elect for the four elected positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Article III, Section 2 of these bylaws outline committee requirements.
- D. **Outreach Committee.** The purpose is to improve HCC communications with the public to better represent their concerns [and increase public awareness of HCC and the Neighborhood Districts and Representatives](#). The priority of this committee is to represent HCC as a neighborhood voice providing input on city-wide issues, programs, and policies.

Section 3. Ad hoc Committees: The purpose, reporting requirements, and duration of ad hoc committees will be specified by the Chair upon formation.

ARTICLE VII - EXPENDITURES

Section 1. All discretionary expenditures by HCC, its committees, or Districts shall be made only in accordance with the budget line items and be approved by the Treasurer in consultation with the Executive Committee. [Once the HCC Budget has been approved by the HCC and adopted as part of the City's annual budget, the Executive Committee, Outreach Committee, and individual](#)

HCC Districts are authorized to spend funds in accordance with the budget and full HCC approval is not required. Deviations from the approved budget require HCC approval.

Commented [5]: I would like to add this so we don't repeat the situation where D1 had to get permission from the full HCC to spend the \$50 allocated to D1 for outreach. Waste of time.

ARTICLE VIII - RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 1. Recommendations to the City Commission shall be approved by a simple majority vote of the membership at regular or special meetings. Members must be in attendance in order to vote. Proxy votes are not allowed. HCC may act on any actionable item listed on the agenda. However, proposed recommendations must be publicly noticed at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Recommendations must be related to the city budget or future development of the city. Only the Council may make official recommendations to the City Commission. Individual members or Districts may make recommendations, but must clearly state that the recommendation is not on behalf of the entire Council.

ARTICLE IX - AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Proposed amendments to the Bylaws shall be presented at a regular monthly meeting, with two-thirds of the members voting in favor of the amendments in order for it to be adopted. Proposed amendments must be provided to every member in written form at least ten days prior to the meeting at which a vote is taken.

Originally adopted - August 18, 1977

Amended Article III, Section 2 - November 17, 1977

Amended Article III, Section 5 and Article IV, Section 5 - February 25, 1982

Amended Article II, Section 4 - January 24, 1984

Amended Article III, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 - March 25, 1998

Amended Article III, Sections 4, 5 and Article IV, Section 4 and

Article V, Sections 4, 5 and Article VI, Sections 1, 2, 3, 6 and

Article VIII, Sections 1, 2 - May 26, 1999

Amended Article II, Sections 4, 5, 6 & 7 - March 28, 2001

Amended for general clarity - November 28, 2018

Amended Article IV, Section 4 and Article VI - February 23, 2022

Amended for general clarity - November 30, 2022

~~Amended -Article V, Sections 1, 2; Article VI, Section 2, Article VII, Section 1-?~~ for purpose of ? -
ADD DATE

Commented [6]: Or maybe just give the date and skip this?



Helena Citizens' Council Purpose Statement and Guiding Principles

September 28, 2022 [bob edits 10-9-25](#) [Diana edits 10-14-25](#)

1.0 Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Helena Citizens' Council (HCC or Council) is to: (1) review and recommend actions relating to the annual budget; and (2) make recommendations relating to the future development of the city. The Council only makes recommendations to the City Commission and may include appropriate notification [\(s\) to other entities.](#)

Commented [1]: Great!

2.0 Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles are based on Article IV of the City Charter (Charter) and HCC Bylaws (Bylaws). The Charter and Bylaws guide HCC activities that support the Purpose Statement.

2.1 Upholding the Charter and Bylaws

HCC will uphold, in a consistent manner, the Charter, Bylaws, and all statutes, regulations, and legal policies applicable to elected officials. Within the bounds of these laws and regulations, HCC will strive to make recommendations that balance with a commitment to community benefit.

2.2 Working for the Future Development of the City

HCC recognizes its actions are intended to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of Helena residents, including a sense of well-being and community satisfaction. HCC recognizes Helena residents value a quality environment and community and encourages all members to share responsibility for protecting and sustaining our community. HCC encourages innovative thinking and seeks practical, long-term solutions that serve the public interest.

2.3 Disclosing Conflicts of Interest

HCC members understand that avoiding conflicts of interest is paramount to conducting our duties in an ethical and professional manner. Members who have an actual or perceived conflict of interest shall disclose and abstain from voting on issues or official recommendations. Specifically, the standard of conduct is to avoid any conflicts of interest between the business of the council and members for personal, professional, and/or business gain.

2.4 Member Issue Resolution

The Chair, in coordination with the Executive Committee, may investigate member behavior or activities that are found to be inconsistent with member expectations in 2.5 (IX) and take the appropriate action. Investigations with findings will involve the city attorney to ensure appropriate legal procedures; [i.e. right to privacy.](#)

2.5 HCC Meetings

- I. HCC conducts its meetings using Parliamentary Procedure to accomplish its business discussions and recommendations. The Chair is responsible for running the monthly meetings.
- II. The Executive Committee will consider and approve monthly agenda items for which there is potential for action. An “Action” is defined as a recommendation to the City Commission. Time may also be provided for informational presentations when approved by the Executive Committee in advance of the meeting.
- III. The Executive Committee will encourage the Council's attention to items of concern from its membership by including “New Business” on each meeting agenda. Each unscheduled “New Business” item will be granted five minutes for presentation and discussion. Unscheduled “New Business” items that have used the allotted five minutes and need further discussion, must be scheduled at a future meeting under “Unfinished Business.”
- IV. To address more complex issues, the Chair may create an ad hoc committee to gather information for presentation to the Council.
- V. The scope of HCC will focus only on issues allowed by the Charter and Bylaws.
- VI. HCC members are expected to attend all monthly meetings, in addition to attending other administrative meetings, to the greatest extent possible. Members must notify the Coordinator and Chair of any anticipated absence.
- VII. Each HCC member is asked to attend at least one City Commission meeting each year.
- VIII. HCC members should advance topics of interest from their respective Districts. This may include, but is not limited to, reporting citizen complaints to the Council and/or facilitating discussions to address neighborhood issues.
- IX. HCC members are expected to actively engage in discussion, debate and voting in meetings; contributing dialog in a mindful and constructive way; listening carefully; challenging others sensitively; and avoiding negative behaviors.
- X. HCC members are expected to acknowledge final HCC majority or consensus positions or recommendations. HCC members are also expected to participate in the collective decision making and accept the majority decision of the Council.

2.6 Working with the Public and other Entities

- I. HCC respects and encourages public input in all aspects of its work. HCC will provide the public with information on its positions, recommendations, and any other necessary information.

- II. HCC members are expected to be fully informed of community issues and should actively solicit public opinion by hosting or attending neighborhood meetings, returning phone calls, etc.
- III. HCC members are expected to become knowledgeable of city government processes, organization, and staff structure.
- IV. HCC members are expected to provide phone numbers, street addresses, email addresses, and other contact information so the residents of Helena can contact members regarding public concerns.
- V. HCC members are expected to act professionally and to represent themselves and the council appropriately at all meetings and other public forums.

Commented [2]: I think we should remove this specific reference to physical addresses.

2.7 HCC Member Expectations

- I. Voting memberships on boards, committees, or other organizations require representation by designated HCC members. Those members are expected to present a monthly report summarizing the meetings or activities, either during the monthly meeting if action needs to be taken by the Council, or by email to keep members informed.
- II. Non-voting memberships on any board or committee are encouraged, but entirely voluntary and dependent upon member interest.
- III. The Secretary and Coordinator will work together to encourage members to volunteer to represent the Council on all boards and/or committees where HCC has a voting membership. The Secretary and Coordinator will assist, as necessary, members to report to the Council on their actions.
- IV. In addition to monthly HCC meetings, members are encouraged to attend any city and administration meetings that are necessary or relevant to an ongoing committee, issue, or interest of HCC.
- V. HCC members are encouraged to participate in one external Board or Committee of interest and are expected to attend the meetings of their chosen boards. All external Board and Committee meetings require a brief (2-3 minute) written or oral report that can be presented at the following HCC monthly meeting.

Commented [3]: Do we have voting membership on any boards / committees anymore?

2.8 Reaching Potential with our Members

HCC members are our most important asset. The Executive Committee empowers members to exercise professional judgment in carrying out their duties. HCC encourages the use of member expertise to find solutions to any challenges facing the city.

HCC Input re: its FY24 Strategic Plan Priorities

At the April 2023 Helena Citizens' Council (HCC) meeting, HCC Representatives discussed several potential priorities for the upcoming fiscal year (7/1/23-6/30/24) and polled Representatives re: HCC priorities (high, medium, low) for FY24. The following responses (11 total) were collected between the June and July HCC meetings for discussion at the July 26, 2023 HCC monthly meeting.

Established (in City Charter or HCC Bylaws) HCC Responsibilities: 1) Advise the City Commission re: its Budget; 2) Advise the City Commission re: future development of the City; 3) Elect Officers; and 4) Appoint HCC Representatives to certain City Advisory Boards.

Any comments? (7 responses)

All four are important.

A good summary

No

I think it is important that HCC continue to have membership on advisory boards and encourage the HCC to continue to emphasize the need for that

Assist residents of your district when they have issues with the city

As I understand, the City Charter gives the mayor the appointment authority. If the Commission were to be diplomatic, the appropriate step would be to allow the HCC Chair to appoint an HCC representative and the Mayor would have the ultimate say through a simple confirmation process.

Looks good.

HCC has made a number of recommendations to the City Commission but has had little or no response from the Commission.

Suggestion: Establish a process for regular communication with the City Commission as well as a process for follow-up and tracking Commission responses to HCC recommendations.

Any comments? (7 responses)

Better communication would help tremendously.

Vital to HCC role as an advisory body.

Would like to move forward with this

I think the follow up is particularly important. Since there usually one person particularly interested in any recommendation made by HCC perhaps that person should be charged with regular follow up

and report back to the body. If something is important enough to generate a recommendation that should be a priority of the body.

We already communicate with the commission at their meetings.

Yes, please.

Absolutely! This is much needed.

The City Commission has three stated Strategic Goals: Improve Neighborhood Livability; Promote Healthy and Sustainable Growth; and Promote Safe Community.

Suggestion: When making recommendations to the City Commission, phrase the recommendation(s) to align with these Commission goals.

Any comments? (7 responses)

Good idea!

Keeping the Commission's goals in mind when crafting recommendations will help!

Noble goals. Might add Encourage Community Engagement in Local Government.

Yes

Excellent idea. Maybe they will take our recommendations more seriously if we tie them to a commission goal.

Agree.

Excellent idea. HCC should definitely do this.

Would it be helpful to have an 'Issue Brainstorming Session' as a regular Meeting Agenda item?
(9 responses)

Not necessarily. Members should be encouraged to reach out to the Exec Cmte in advance of a meeting should they have an issue they want the HCC to consider/discuss

Yes

Yes, if time-limited

I think it should be a separate meeting, brainstorming would take up a lot of agenda time.

Not sure. Suppose it's worth a try.

Maybe quarterly would be best

Let's try it and see how we feel about it.

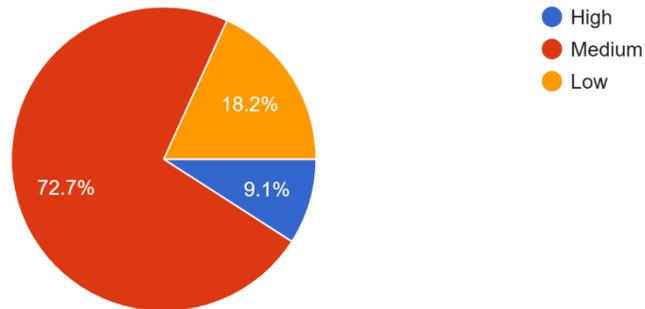
Yes, if we have time.

I think so.

Potential Priorities

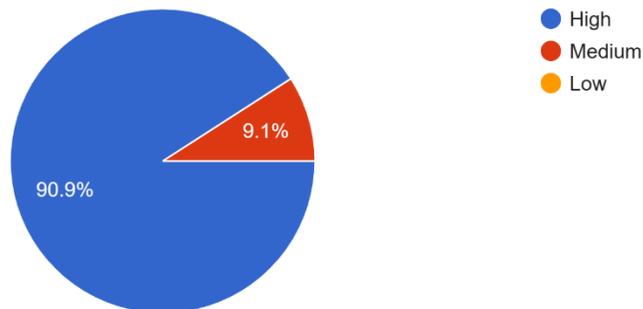
Potential Priority Area: Boulevard Trees

11 responses



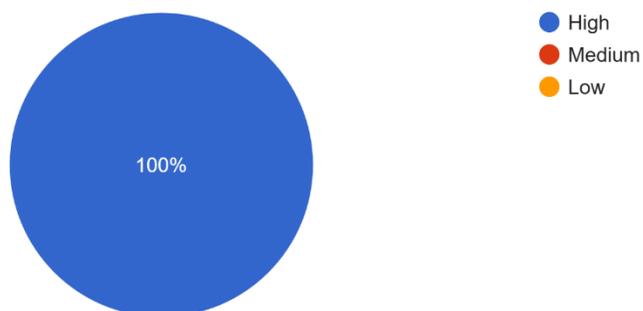
Potential Priority Area: Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Crosswalk and Signs

11 responses



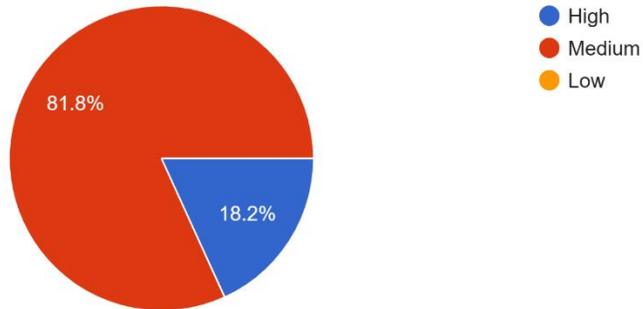
Potential Priority Area: Safe Routes to School

11 responses



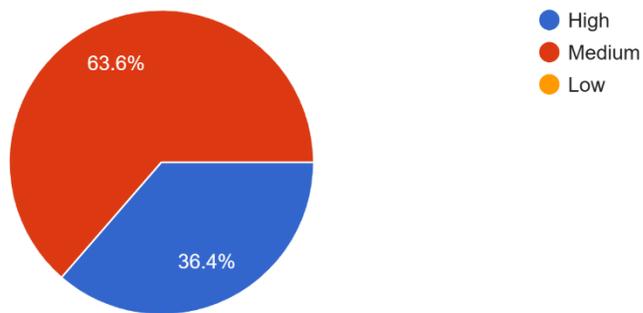
Potential Priority Area: Roads - Repairs, Maintenance, Winter Maintenance

11 responses



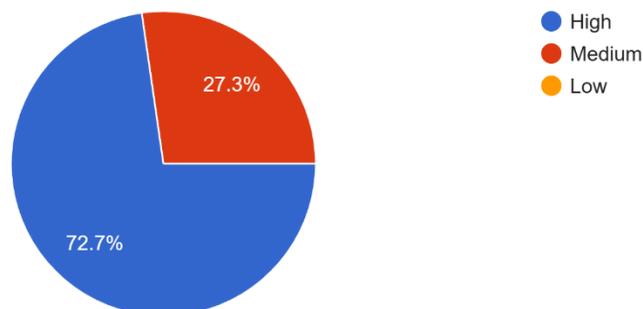
Potential Priority Area: Fire Safety Awareness

11 responses



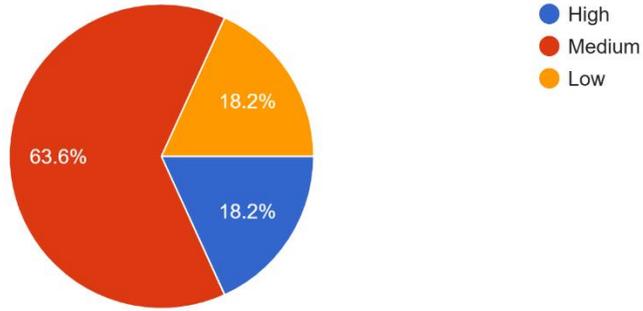
Potential Priority Area: Housing - affordability/availability/short-term rentals/etc.

11 responses



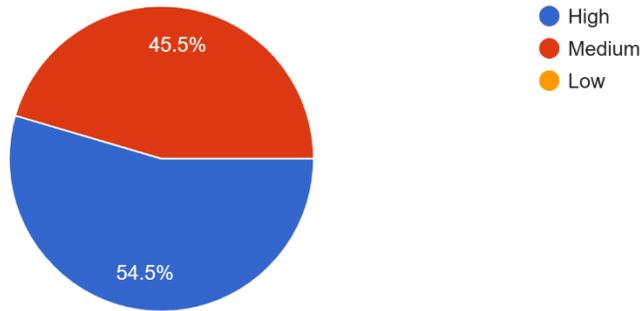
Potential Priority Area: Public Transportation (bus, train)

11 responses



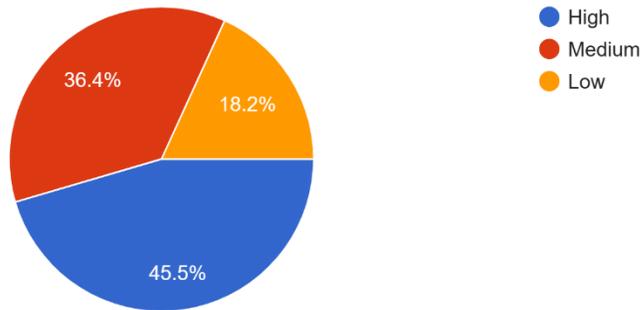
Potential Priority Area: Sustainability (Waste Reduction, Water Conservation, Clean Energy/Efficiency)

11 responses



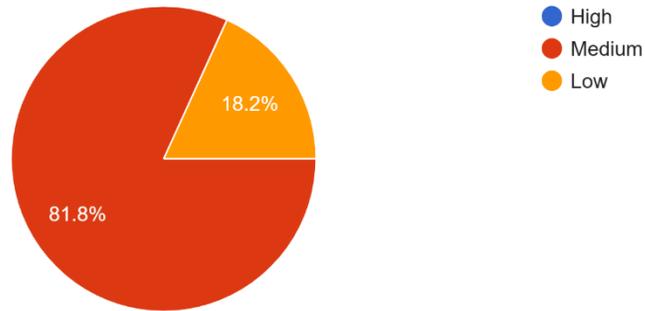
Potential Priority Area: Land Use (Zoning, Subdivisions, Growth Policy)

11 responses



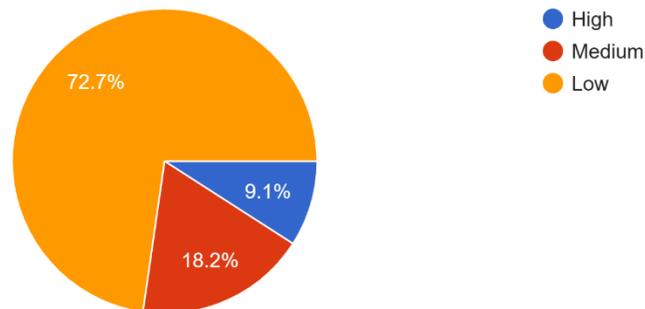
Potential Priority Area: Parks

11 responses



Potential Priority Area: Welcome to Helena Signage/Wayfinding

11 responses



Are there any other potential priorities you'd like to suggest? (3 responses)

Best use of funds

Good coverage.

I'd like to see the City undertake additional sustainability demonstration projects, such as xeriscaping, solar panels on public buildings, and green infrastructure projects.

DRAFT HCC APPRECIATION LETTER

The Helena Citizens Council (HCC) commends Mayor Dean and the City Commission for the thoughtful preparation for and respectful conduct of a very long public hearing on January 26, 2026.

We, the members of HCC, on behalf of our constituents appreciate:

The detailed attention that Police Chief Petty and City Attorney Docktor gave to the concerns raised by Helena residents in preparing the resolution

The logistical preparation ahead of time that allowed hundreds of people to gather safely in a calm and organized manner

The calm, efficient and attentive manner that Mayor Dean ran the meeting

The careful attention that the Mayor and Commissioners gave in listening to almost four hours of passionate testimony

The explanations that the Mayor and all Commissioners gave as reasons for their vote

The HCC recommends the Commission continue this public comment format for future public hearings. It has proven to be an effective community dialog process.