CITY OF HELENA
Helena Citizens' Council Regular Meeting
November 19, 2026 from 5:30-7:30 pm
Zoom Online Meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88026063350?pwd=RDiEjnpK3KIFjaT6Fsr7oIgWFD7VRu.1
Room 326, 316 N. Park Avenue, Helena, MT, 59623

Call to Order and Roll Call

Public Comment

Minutes for review and approval

September 2026 Regular Meeting, October 2026 Regular Meeting, November 2026 Outreach Committee Meeting

HCC Member Appointments

Officer Reports

A. Interim Chair, Anne Hausrath - District 2

B. Vice Chair, Dick Sloan - District 7

C. Treasurer, Lori FitzGerald – District 1, Written Report

D. Secretary, Diana Hammer – District 1, Written Report

Staff Liaison Report

Outreach Committee Report

1. Art Walk

Unfinished Business

Budget Recommendations: discuss and approve

Establish Nominating Committee for January Executive Officer Elections

Responsibilities of Executive Officers

New Business

Let's Think about HCC in 2027! Begin Discussion of who we are as a chartered entity, what really motivates us and where do we want to go from here?

City of Helena
Helena Citizens' Council

Commission/Board Meeting Attendee Reports

- **A.** October 28, 2026 - Administrative Meeting
- **B.** November 4, 2026 - Administrative Meeting
- **C.** November 9, 2026 – Regular Commission Meeting

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. Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District
10. Zoning Policy Advisory Committee

District Reports

Member Communications: Future Recommendations

Commission Agenda: suggestions for making the agenda more user friendly

City's Website: Suggestions for making the website more user friendly

Topics for Next Meeting?

Public Comment

Next meeting: Election of HCC Officers Thursday, January 28, 2027 – 5:30pm

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.

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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 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 24, 2026 from 5:30-7:30 pm
Zoom Archive: https://zoom.helenamt.gov/c/92260493/HCCArchives
Room 326, 316 N. Park Avenue, Helena, MT, 59623

CALL TO ORDER (00:02:14)
Chair Ben Kuiper called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

ROLL CALL (00:02:27)
Present: Rob Freistadt, Diana Hammer, Joe Lehman (online), Anne Hausrath, Jakob Miles (online), Ben Kuiper, Ryan Schwochert (online), Dylan Klapmeier (online), Kent Stevenson, and Richard Sloan. Janet Zimmerman arrived during roll call. Excused: Lori FitzGerald and Katie Ryan. Quorum established.

PUBLIC COMMENT (00:04:35)
No public comment was received for items not appearing on the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (00:05:05)
Motion by Richard Sloan, second by Kent Stevenson, to approve the July 23, 2026 meeting minutes. Approved by acclamation.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS PRESENTATION (00:06:19)
Celeste Jaswinski, President of the League of Women Voters of Helena, presented information regarding voter registration, voter education, civic engagement activities, legislative advocacy, and upcoming events including a September 30 ballot initiative forum, an October 6 candidate event, and a November 19 media-literacy documentary discussion. Members discussed citizen participation opportunities and HCC vacancies.

NEW BUSINESS A – OPEN HOUSE EXPENSES (00:15:00)
Secretary Diana Hammer presented a proposal for a transportation-focused community open house following outreach conducted through the Love Letters to Helena effort.
Motion: Approve up to $40 for refreshments and event expenses. Moved by Diana Hammer. Seconded by Bob Habeck. Roll-call result: 10 yes votes; no response recorded from Dylan Klapmeier. Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS B – FY25 HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT RECOMMENDATION (00:18:49)
Vice Chair Anne Hausrath presented a draft recommendation concerning the FY25 Homeland Security Grant. Discussion included grant requirements, public testimony received by the City Commission, immigration-related provisions, public safety considerations, and references to a proposed ICE Resolution.

Amendment #1: Jakob Miles moved, Janet Zimmerman seconded, to remove language recommending future Commission consideration of the amended ICE Resolution. Failed 5-6.

Motion to Table: Jakob Miles moved, Richard Sloan seconded, to table the item until the next meeting. Failed 7-5.

Amendment #2: Rob Freistadt moved, Anne Hausrath seconded, to remove the first whereas clause concerning cooperation with federal immigration authorities. Passed with one no vote and one abstention.

Amendment #3: Anne Hausrath moved, Rob Freistadt seconded, to remove the paragraph recommending future consideration of the amended ICE Resolution. Passed with one dissenting vote.

Final Motion: Approve and forward the recommendation as amended to the City Commission. Roll-call vote: Rob Price, Diana Hammer, Joe Lehman, Anne Hausrath, Jakob Miles, Janet Zimmerman, Ben Kuiper, Ryan Schwochert, Bob Habeck, Kent Stevenson, and Richard Sloan voted yes. Dylan Klapmeier voted no. Motion passed 11-1.

CHAIR REPORT (01:16:41)
Chair Ben Kuiper announced acceptance of employment that would prevent regular Thursday attendance and indicated this would likely be his final meeting as Chair. Members thanked him for his years of service and leadership.

VICE CHAIR REPORT (01:18:03)
Members discussed succession procedures. A nominating committee consisting of Richard Sloan, Rob Freistadt, and Bob Habeck was established to recommend candidates for Chair.

SECRETARY REPORT (01:25:13)
Diana Hammer thanked staff for improvements to meeting-minute formatting; requested Zoom links accompany future minutes; requested meeting packets be distributed at least 48 hours in advance whenever possible; and raised concerns regarding Council communications, Facebook access, and social-media policies. Members discussed obtaining written legal guidance before future discussion.

STAFF LIAISON REPORT (01:32:46)
Alexander Kosiewicz provided updates regarding the Thanksgiving scheduling conflict, City communication policies, social-media guidance, and implementation of FlashVote. Discussion included future survey topics, participation rates, outreach opportunities, and communications guidance for board members.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT (01:51:45)
Anne Hausrath reported on transportation open-house planning, Love Letters to Helena follow-up efforts, outreach materials, and future community engagement opportunities.

COMMISSION REPORTS (01:53:10)
Updates were provided regarding budget adoption, affordable housing initiatives, Homeland Security Grant deliberations, the public-safety levy, strategic planning, and transportation recommendations.

BOARD & COMMITTEE REPORTS (01:56:29)
Reports were received from the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Water Quality Protection District, and Zoning Policy Advisory Committee regarding transportation programming, harmful algal blooms, water-quality initiatives, EV infrastructure, solar standards, dark-sky regulations, landscaping standards, and open-space requirements.

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS (02:02:01)
Members announced upcoming public engagement and city budget listening opportunities.

PUBLIC COMMENT (02:02:42)
Commissioner Julia Gustafson thanked Council members for their public service and participation in local government processes.

ADJOURNMENT (02:03:09)
The next regular meeting was announced for October 22, 2026. The meeting adjourned.

Approved by Helena Citizens' Council

_____
Chair

HELENA CITIZENS' COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

October 22, 2026 from 5:30-7:30 pm
Zoom Archive: https://zoom.helenamt.gov/c/92260493/HCCArchives
Room 326, 316 N. Park Avenue, Helena, MT, 59623

CALL TO ORDER (00:07:42)
Acting Chair Diana Hammer called the meeting to order. A quorum was established with members attending in person and online.

PUBLIC COMMENT (00:08:00)
No public comment was offered.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (00:08:11)
The Council reviewed June and August 2026 meeting minutes. Members complimented the updated format and discussed adding future Zoom recording links. Minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

MEMBER APPOINTMENTS (00:09:45)
The Council received an update regarding a pending District 5 application. Reference checks were still underway. The matter was deferred to the November meeting.

NEW BUSINESS – VICE CHAIR ELECTION (00:11:07)
Members discussed filling the Vice Chair vacancy through the remainder of the year. Motion to appoint Richard (Dick) Sloan as Vice Chair through the November meeting and until annual elections in January. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

RECOMMENDATION RE: LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (00:14:31)
Secretary Diana Hammer presented the draft recommendation regarding the Greater Helena Long Range Transportation Plan. Discussion focused on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, sidewalk connectivity, transit access, active transportation priorities, downtown sidewalks, school routes, community engagement, and project prioritization. Members referenced feedback gathered during the October 14 HCC transportation open house and public comments received during prior outreach efforts.

During discussion members considered sidewalk repair strategies, downtown connectivity, pedestrian safety improvements, and transportation priorities within the MPO planning process.

Amendment: Move the community engagement recommendation to the top of the list of priorities. Moved by Kent Stevenson and seconded by Nancy Perry. Adopted unanimously by voice vote (00:35:14).

Final Recommendation Vote (00:37:31)
Motion to approve the Long Range Transportation Plan recommendation as amended. Seconded by Joe Lehman. Approved unanimously by voice vote and directed to be forwarded to the Helena City Commission.

TREASURER REPORT (00:39:26)
Treasurer Lori FitzGerald reported a FY27 budget of $2,360. Expenditures included outreach and transportation open-house expenses. Remaining balance reported at approximately $2,280. Discussion included a future water-bill insert and development of earlier HCC budget recommendations for FY28 consideration.

Members discussed creation of a Budget Work Group to identify 3–5 priority recommendations for presentation to the City Commission ahead of the budget cycle. Richard Sloan volunteered to participate.

SECRETARY REPORT (00:51:35)
No formal report was presented. Discussion transitioned to upcoming outreach activities and committee work.

STAFF LIAISON REPORT (00:52:03)
Alexander Kosiewicz reminded members of the upcoming boards and commissions training featuring Mayor Emily Dean and City Manager Alana Lake. He presented results from the City's first FlashVote survey, discussing participation rates, demographic filtering capabilities, community priorities, transportation concerns, housing affordability, public safety, sidewalks, parks, infrastructure, and future survey opportunities. Members discussed how FlashVote data could assist future HCC recommendations, particularly regarding sidewalks and transportation planning.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT (01:04:47)
Members reviewed the October 14 community discussion regarding the Long Range Transportation Plan. Approximately 17 people attended. Discussion highlighted active transportation, wayfinding, public-health data, transportation connectivity, and future outreach opportunities. Plans were discussed for participation in the November Art Walk at Birds & Beasley's, including volunteer recruitment and public-engagement questions.

COMMISSION REPORTS (01:12:08)
Members reported on recent City Commission meetings. Topics included Chair Ben Kuiper's formal resignation, presentation of the Homeland Security Grant recommendation, police officer swearing-in ceremonies, subdivision reviews, and development proposals. Members discussed improving HCC attendance at Commission and administrative meetings and explored creation of a sign-up system for future meeting coverage.

BOARD REPORTS (01:17:17)
Reports were provided from the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Water Quality Protection District. Discussion focused on the Long Range Transportation Plan, non-motorized transportation priorities, pedestrian planning, MPO outreach efforts, future pedestrian planning work, and zoning policy updates.

DISTRICT REPORTS (01:22:03)
District 1 reported on issues related to the Westside Woods subdivision and prior HCC recommendations concerning the Grand Canopy Trail. Members discussed variance requests, subdivision standards, parkland concerns, and Commission review of development proposals.

TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING (01:25:02)
Topics identified included budget recommendations, executive officer job descriptions, the District 5 appointment, sidewalk-related recommendations, and a community recognition video highlighting Helena.

PUBLIC COMMENT (01:27:11)
No public comment was received.

ADJOURNMENT (01:27:24)
The next regular meeting was scheduled for November 19, 2026. The meeting was adjourned.

Approved by Helena Citizens' Council

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Chair

Helena Citizen's Council Outreach Meeting
November 2, 2026 at 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
Lewis and Clark Public Library
120 South Last Chance Gulch, Helena MT 59601

1. **Call to Order**
    A. Attendees: Katie Ryan, Diana Hammer, Anne Hausrath (via phone)
2. **New Business**
    A. Window Display
        - Diana removed the LRTP display from the GoodKind Building
    B. 11/13 Fall Art Walk
        - volunteers: Katie and Dick 4-6 pm; Anne 4-8 pm; Janet + ____ 6-8 pm. Diana will drop off materials (table, chairs, HCC banner, and handouts) at Anne's house. Need to finalize wording for the sandwich board and coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce (Anne)
    C. Recruiting New Members
    D. Partnerships
    E. Outreach Materials
        - Agreed to request that the Clerk's Office place our order for outreach materials (approved by full HCC at the regular June 2026 meeting)
3. **Communications from Committee Members**
4. **Public Comment**
5. **Adjournment**
    A. Next Meeting
        - Monday, December 7, 2026 at 12:30 pm in the Library.

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Here are my reports for the November 19 HCC meeting :
*Treasurer report:
FY 27 starting budget $2360
Expenditures thus far $40 for July and November Art Walk
$40 for refreshments for 10/14 open house
Current balance $2280
*Budget work group report:
Dick, Diana, Rob , Janet and I met to discuss recommendations to give to the Commission regarding the FY 28 Budget. Goal is to present these in December, so they can invoke better consideration and discussion. Document for review and approval attached at the end of this email.
*Nov 4 CC admin meeting report:
Full report will be available to attach to meeting minutes. During HCC communications, I advised that we wish to present our budget recommendations in December. CM Lake was receptive and offered to assist in obtaining more public input, perhaps through the use of FlashVote.

Thanks!
Lori

Alex,

Here are the write-ups I promised to provide:

Communications to the City Commission

October 5, 2026: Diana Hammer reported to the Commission:

1. Ben Kuiper would be stepping down as HCC Chair and Anne Hausrath will be Chair (per HCC bylaws, the Vice Chair becomes Chair when the Chair resigns);

2. HCC passed a Recommendation that the City not accept the Dept. of Homeland Security grant as it is poorly written, vague, internally contradictory; and

3. HCC would be hosting a community meeting re: the Long Range Transportation Plan at 6 pm on 10/14 at the Library

Commission meeting topics: Update from Growing Friends and the Helena Urban Forestry Program re: tree planting in Helena and Growing Friends donation of 150 trees to the City; Update re: the 'Crosstown Connector' public works project; ICMA video featuring the City; Public hearing re: fees for information requests from the public (passed 5-0); Passed a resolution to accept a Community Development Block Grant ($750,000) to renovate the first floor of the YWCA.

October 19, 2026:

Ben Kuiper addressed the Commission and formally resigned. The Commission thanked him for his service. He noted that Anne Hausrath will be Chair and that new elections will be held in January (per HCC bylaws);

Diana Hammer then reported to the Commission:

1. HCC would be considering a Recommendation to the Commission re: the Draft Long Range Transportation Plan at its upcoming meeting on 10/22/26; and

This Commission meeting topics: Two new police Officers; Declared October 21st: 'Support your Local Chamber' Day; Approved RR District TIF funds for historic facade improvements; Approved 3 new Urban Renewal District work plans; and had a long discussion about the agreement to accept cash in lieu of a parkland donation) before approving the request to annex the Crystal Springs Village subdivision into the City.

October 28, 2026: Diana Hammer reported to the Commission:

1. HCC unanimously passed a Recommendation re: the Long Range Transportation Plan, noting that the Recommendation focused primarily on non-motorized transportation because the HCC felt the Draft Plan was heavily focused on motorized transportation; HCC hopes the Commission will consider these comments before adopting the Plan;

2. HCC elected a new Vice Chair, Dick Sloan; and

3. Next HCC meeting will be on November 19 and there will be no meeting in December.

Commission meeting topics: Proclaimed Nov 1 as 'Archie Bray Day'; the City Manager introduced the new Finance Director, Kimberly Aiken; the Commissioners agreed to put the tabled DHS grant on the Nov 9 Commission agenda; Public Art Committee annual report and map of public art (brochure); and presentation re: engineering standards.

Here is my report for the October WQPD Board meeting:

Water Quality Protection District Board mtg., October 27, 2026

Excellent presentation by WQPD staff re: water monitoring in the Helena Valley, focused on water quality and potential contaminants (e.g., As, Ur, Cd, nitrates). A presentation on water quantity (well depths, availability, etc.) is planned for February 2027.

Thanks!

Diana Hammer

TO: Helena City Commission
FROM: Helena Citizens' Council
RE: Helena Citizens' Council Review and Recommendations Regarding the Fiscal Year 2028 Preliminary City Budget

Summary of Review and Recommendations

Per our mandated responsibility outlined in Article IV of the Helena City Charter, the Helena Citizens' Council (HCC) is providing the Helena City Commission our review and recommendations regarding the fiscal year 2028 preliminary budget, and we look forward to working with the City to create/develop the upcoming budget.

The Charter reads:

There shall be seven (7) Elected Neighborhood Councils, collectively comprising a Helena Citizens' Council. Operating independently from the city commission or city officials, the Helena Citizens' Council shall review and recommend actions relating to the annual budget, and make recommendations relating to future development of the city.

The review and recommendations that follow were approved by a vote of the HCC on November 19, 2026.

City Indebtedness Concern

The HCC's recommendations for funding specific department requests and capital fund projects reflect the voted upon priorities of the Council, with the goals of supporting the future development of the city and the city's core functions.

It is noted with concern that city cash reserves on hand continue to decrease, while city indebtedness continue to rise (14% over last year). In addition, the high carry-over from year to year of 50 million dollars is not sustainable as Enterprise funds continue to drop. HCC recommends considering any unused reserves or any other funds to pay down the debt and create a more sustainable and balanced budget.

In light of this, HCC recommendations will propose ideas that attempt to be more revenue- based.

General Fund **(City strategic goal of maintaining/improving city services to residents)**

The HCC recommends the funding and annually budgeting of continued Sustainability Projects through General Fund cash reserves (solar and sidewalk improvement) of at least $50,000 per program. We also recommend that the sidewalk program become both a replace and repair if possible zero interest loan program, to improve sidewalks where owners cannot afford a large replacement project. In addition, those on the waiting list the past year will be moved to top of the list for the following year.

Transportation **(City strategic goal of maintaining and improving city infrastructure)**

- The HCC recommends applying for grant funding to complete a needed roundabout at Henderson and Custer. This junction sees high traffic throughout the year, due to Fairground activities, baseball park traffic, and two schools in the neighborhood.

- The HCC fully supports using previously-approved funding to improve pedestrian safety at the currently functioning Mini-Malfunction Junction, to include flashing crossing beacons, and maintenance of ADA ramps.

- HCC continues to advocate its previous recommendation to improve the pedestrian tunnel at Anchor Park between the South neighborhoods and downtown, to make it a welcoming and safe route to downtown. This would involve expanding the interior to allow both a walk and bike lane, install better lighting and clear signage.

- HCC recommends completing the Centennial Trail now, and consider partnering with neighboring businesses to create a safe passage from National Avenue to Bozeman Avenue. Recommend working cooperatively with the Railroad to improve the pedestrian crossing at Henderson.

- Support the Transit system and suggest re-examining the riders' requested fixed routes (otherwise all we have is another taxi service). We suggest examining creative partnerships with large employers in the city (such as St. Peters, Benefis, and the State) to subsidize small busses that can get citizens to work and medical appointments.

Parks and Recreation **(City priority focus area of core service Parks and Rec)**

HCC recommends assessing ways to reduce the amount of drinking water used to irrigate Centennial Park as well as other city parks, through alternative well options and/or planting more water-wise vegetation.

Police **(City priority focus area of public safety)**

HCC recommends maintaining the Animal Control budget to adequately staff (2-3 FTE) and fully fund operations to control the urban wildlife challenges of deer, feral raccoons, skunks, rabbits and cats.

Fire **(City priority focus area of public safety)**

HCC recommends to install a water-wise and 'FireSafe' demonstration garden at Fire Station #3 (similar to the one created by the Tri-County Fire Safe Working Group and the Montana City Fire Station). Consider installing one at the Civic Center as well.

Solid Waste and Recycling **(City strategic goal to improve city services to residents)**

HCC applauds the City's efforts to improve its recycling services location, addressing the bottleneck at the transfer station.

HCC recommends that the City reduce the maximum amount of waste residents can dispose of at the Transfer Station from 2000 pounds to 1000 pounds and use the revenue from those additional tipping fees to offset the increased operational costs.

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.

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.