

Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2016
Room 326, City-County Building

Attendance

Members Present:

District 1 Mary Ann George, Paul Pacini, Sarah Sadowski, Pat Christian
District 2 Gary Spaeth, Bob Funk
District 3 Flannery Harpole, Sumner Sharpe
District 4 Dave Maslowski, Tom Woodgerd
District 5 Carol Frisch, Terry Frisch
District 7 Dick Sloan, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth Barber

Guests: Brian Coplin, Help!; Doris Davis, District 7 resident; six adults and 13 scouts from Boy Scout Troop 214; Martin Cohen, The Cultural Planning Group; Officer Corey Bailey, Helena Police Department; Eric Bryson, Lewis & Clark County; Curt Chisholm; Sergeant Clair Swain, Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office

Call to Order, General Business and Announcements

Chairman Gary Spaeth called the meeting to order and all present were introduced. The HCC unanimously approved a motion by Paul Pacini, seconded by Dave Maslowski to approve the minutes for the August 24, 2016 meeting, with the following corrections:

- On page 2, paragraph with the heading "Passenger Rail Service Resolution-Action Item," insert an explanation that the motion was tabled until two "whereas statements" – concerning rail systems in Europe and Asia, and roadway congestion – could be deleted.
- On p. 3, 2nd full paragraph. Insert "to allow the Mourning Cloak team to further discuss possible solutions" after "Denise made a substitute motion seconded by John Rundquist, to table the original motion until next month."

Council Treasurer Dick Sloan reported that the fiscal year began July 1. The HCC is well within its budget. The HCC will start spending more now that a coordinator has been hired.

Gary announced that he attended a reception for the Fire District and suggested that the HCC consider hosting a similar event.

Officer Corey Bailey reported that new officers had been hired. There are now 48. The Helena Police Department is in the process of hiring more officers.

Lewis & Clark County Public Safety Facility Bond

The HCC heard presentations by Lewis & Clark County Chief Administrative Officer Eric Bryson; Lewis & Clark County Detention Sergeant Clair Swain; and Curt Chisholm, former chairman of a citizens' advisory council previously convened to advise Lewis & Clark County on the criminal justice system. A question and answer session followed. A \$5.6 million construction bond is proposed. The operating levy has a 15-year term. Funds (\$700,000/year) will be invested in pretrial diversion programs. Topics discussed include: the County's responsibility to operate a detention center to house detainees, most of whom are unconvicted; number of detainees; confinement conditions; workload of judges; and the possibility of a lawsuit due to confinement conditions. In response to a question, Sergeant Swain stated that unconvicted people are held in jail for an average of 120 days. Bryson explained that the County needed help from the Legislature to fund more judges.

A fact sheet entitled "2016 Jail Bond and Levy Fact Sheet" was distributed and facility floor plans were circulated.

Civic Center Business Plan

Martin Cohen, The Cultural Planning Group, described his firm and the work that they have been contracted to do. Their charge is to identify ways to enhance Civic Center revenue and reduce the city's subsidy of the Civic Center. They have been meeting with those who use the ballroom and the theater sides of the Civic Center; the Fire Department side is not part of the study. They will conduct focus groups and use the insights gained to develop a customer service survey. They are investigating whether or not other groups in town could fill the void left when the Helena Performing Arts Organization stopped operating. They asked the HCC to publicize the survey and encourage citizens to respond. Cohen expressed interest in meeting with the appropriate fact finding team later in the week. Bridget Johnston (447-8481) is the contact person for the planning process.

Gas Tax Update

Vice Chair Sumner Sharpe presented the gas tax recommendation at the Joint City/County Administrative Meeting. The Executive Committee wrote an opinion piece that was published in the Helena Independent Record. Sharpe also wrote a response to an article as an individual.

Fact Finding Teams

Paul Pacini passed around a list of fact finding teams, members, and topics and asked that team members make corrections and appoint a contact person for each team. Pacini will coordinate the teams. Pacini, Sharpe, and Spaeth will each be assigned to work with specific teams. Mary Ann George suggested reorganizing the teams in January.

Sharpe noted the topics assigned to committees may no longer be current issues of interest. Members should not be hesitant to bring forth new ideas. Patricia Christian and Sumner Sharpe

attended a meeting of the Lewis & Clark Mental Health Advisory Committee where the topic of discussion was affordable housing and transitional housing to address mental health issues in Lewis & Clark County. Patricia Christian was appointed to lead an ad hoc committee to look into these issues. Sumner Sharpe will serve on the committee. Brian Coplin expressed interest in being included.

Terry Frisch reported that he will prepare a recommendation for the HCC's consideration that recommends that the city come up with \$1000 to put in a drinking fountain at the ballpark to comply with the state health code. Sharpe requested that the information be presented using the fact finding team report template.

Tom Woodgerd noted that he prepared a report on the Montana Avenue Railroad Grade Separation that was emailed to HCC members. Woodgerd will present the information at the October HCC meeting.

Denise Roth Barber asked about assignments to boards and committees and how these assignments fit with fact finding team assignments. Barber asked to participate in the Blue Bunch Team efforts regarding transportation.

Passenger Rail Service Resolution

Motion by Funk, seconded by Christian to approve "A Resolution of the Helena Citizens Council to support passenger rail service through Helena, Montana." The motion was approved with one member opposed.

Publicizing HCC Vacancies

Chairman Gary Spaeth advocated publicizing HCC vacancies. There are vacancies in districts 2, 4, 5, and 6.

Next Meeting

Chairman Spaeth stated that the HCC will talk about the budget next month.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.