



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)  
Monthly Meeting  
May 24, 2017- 7:00 PM  
City/County Building - Room 326  
Helena, Montana

## Meeting Minutes

### Attendance

#### **Members Present:**

District 1      Mary Ann George

District 2      Gary Spaeth, Tyrel Suzor-Hoy

District 3      Sumner Sharpe, Flannery Herbert, Gary Dalton

District 4      Tom Woodgerd

District 5

District 6      Terry Ray

District 7      Dick Sloan, Denise Roth Barber

**Guests Present:** Brian Coplin, HELP; Jayson Zander, Helena Police Department; Helena Mayor Jim Smith, Frank Preskar, Lewis & Clark Public Health;

### Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions

Chair Gary Spaeth called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and all present were introduced.

## **Helena Mayor Jim Smith**

Mayor Smith discussed highlights of the legislative session and reviewed a handout entitled “Final Session Report, 65<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session (2017).” Significant outcomes of the legislative session include:

- HB 473 increased the cities’ allocation of the gas tax, almost doubling the previous allocation. In response to a question, Mayor Smith explained that the City Commission has the final say on how these funds are spent.
- The bonding bill for infrastructure did not pass.
- Concerns about tax increment financing were reflected in proposed legislation.

HCC member Tyrel Suzor-Hoy asked what the HCC can do to assist the Mayor. Mayor Smith encouraged hosting neighborhood meetings and inviting the Mayor and city personnel.

Mayor Smith also discussed rates for City services. Last year fees were raised an average \$54/year. There are proposals to increase fees by approximately an average \$80/year this year, primarily to comply with regulatory demands. The HCC did not take a position on fee increases. In discussion, several members stressed the importance of informing citizens of the benefits associated with these increases, specifically how their complaints will be addressed. Suggestions from HCC members included: tying the dollar amount to specific projects, and distributing a very simple fact sheet.

## **Junk and Abandoned Vehicle Enforcement**

Frank Preskar, Environmental Programs Manager for Lewis & Clark Public Health reviewed the County’s junk vehicle enforcement program. Junk vehicles are regulated under the Montana Motor Vehicle Recycling and Disposal Act, enacted in 1973. He noted that junk vehicles are on private property; vehicles on public property are considered abandoned vehicles and are addressed by the appropriate law enforcement agency. All junk vehicles must be shielded from public view. A motor vehicle wrecking facility license is required for facilities with four or more

junk vehicles and those that are engaged in motor vehicle parts trade. There is no cost to remove junk vehicles; a fee collected at the time of vehicle licensing funds program costs.

Lieutenant Jayson Zander explained that enforcement actions regarding abandoned vehicles are complaint driven. Vehicles must be moved every 72 hours. Abandoned vehicles are one of the biggest complaints from citizens.

### **City Budget**

Treasurer Dick Sloan reminded members of the June 7 special meeting to discuss budget recommendations. He encouraged members to focus on major issues.

### **Neighborhood Organizing**

HCC members shared their experiences with engaging citizens in their district. Key points include:

- Partnering with other organizations in getting information out and carrying out projects is a successful strategy. Partners can be businesses, nonprofits, coalitions, religious organizations, ad hoc groups, etc.
- Don't rely on a single communication method. Use several different methods.
- Nextdoor is a social networking tool for neighborhoods that can reach a lot of people. It is easy to sign people up.
- Surveys, knocking on doors, and talking to people when handing out flyers are good ways to hear about residents' interests and concerns.
- Funds are available to support HCC members' neighborhood organizing efforts. All expenses must be approved by Treasurer Dick Sloan.
- The Coordinator has materials including door hangar bags, postcards, and magnets. The Coordinator can make small amounts of copies of flyers, surveys, etc. with advance notice. Other jobs can be taken to a commercial printer.

Denise Roth Barber suggested that the Treasurer identify an amount that would not require additional approval from the Treasurer. Vice Chair Sumner Sharpe encouraged all members to commit to taking an action in their District.

### **Reports from Fact Finding Teams**

No recommendations were made. Flannery Herbert reported that the Sapphire Team will present recommendations regarding Civic Center Operations at the next regular meeting. Tyrel Suzor-Hoy reported that he will make recommendations regarding development of the Caird property at the next regular meeting.

In response to a question, members provided the following advice on how HCC members should interact with other individuals and organizations when the HCC has not taken a position on a matter:

- When a member is presenting their own comments or recommendations, clarify that the member is speaking as an individual and not representing the HCC.
- When investigating issues and potential recommendations for consideration by the HCC, members should explain that they are researching and fact-finding. Members should gather information but not endorse or push an agenda or speak on behalf of the HCC.

### **April 26, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of the April 26, 2017 HCC meeting were approved as written.

### **Coordinator's Report**

HCC Coordinator Mary Vandenbosch reminded members that those who wish to serve on the HCC in 2018-2019 must file for election by June 19. In addition, there are vacancies for the current term in all districts except 1 and 7. John Rundquist has resigned.

**Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.