



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Monthly Meeting
October 24, 2018- 7:00 PM
City/County Building - Room 326
Helena, Montana

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Members Present:

District 1 John Andrew, Pat Christian, Mary Ann George, Flannery Herbert
District 2 Susan Lenard, Meg Bishop
District 3 Sumner Sharpe, Gary Dalton
District 4 Tom Woodgerd
District 5 Carolan Bunegar
District 6 Whitney Bausch, Alyssa Townsend, Maureen Kiely, Terry Ray
District 7 Doris Davis, Bob Habeck, Dick Sloan, Denise Roth Barber

Other Attendees Tom Stoops, Brad and Sandy Nelson, citizens; Mary Vandenbosch, HCC Coordinator

Call to Order

Chairman Sumner Sharpe called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m.

Public Comment

An opportunity for public comment was solicited and no comments were provided.

Public Meet and Greet with City Manager Finalists

Chairman Sharpe announced that the Open House with candidates for City Manager would be held November 9 from 6 pm to 8 pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chairman Sharpe called for corrections to the draft minutes for the September 26, 2018 meeting. Hearing no corrections, Sharpe declared the minutes approved.

HCC Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Maureen Kiely discussed the expense approval process and referred to the handouts listed below:

- HCC Expense Approval Process Overview

- HCC Expense Reimbursement Request Form

Coordinator Mary Vandebosch explained that the form is fillable and will be posted on the HCC website under “Member Information.” She emphasized that expenses must be approved in advance. Members may not ask a vendor to bill the HCC; the Coordinator will make these arrangements.

The Treasurer’s Report (Fiscal Year 2019, as of 8/31/2018) was distributed. Kiely explained that she will ask the HCC to approve the HCC’s FY 2020 budget request in November. Members who have suggestions for changes were asked to contact Kiely. Noting that she was speaking as an individual member, rather than as HCC Treasurer, Kiely stated that funds for more staff time are needed.

HCC Coordinator’s Report

HCC Coordinator Mary Vandebosch noted that members who haven’t done so may pick up name tags to wear in situations where they are representing the HCC. She distributed a flyer announcing the Board Leadership Training on November 7.

Vandebosch requested that members planning events provide the Coordinator with the event details before publishing her phone number with event advertising. She offered to proofread publicity materials. She urged those who are interested in setting up the publicity display to contact her in advance rather than dropping in to the office.

Declare Vacant Positions

Chairman Sharpe announced that District 2 representative Tyrel Suzor-Hoy had resigned. District 4 representative Jerrod Bevan has missed three consecutive meetings without communicating the reason for his absence. Maureen Kiely stated that she learned from a family member that Mr. Bevan had moved to Florida.

Motion by Maureen Kiely, seconded by Alyssa Townsend, to declare Jerrod Bevan’s position to be vacant. Motion approved unanimously.

Survey Coordinator’s Report

Survey Coordinator Bob Habeck discussed the HCC’s standing survey, which is a simple 5 question survey. The link to the online survey has been distributed through the HCC website, a water bill insert, flyers distributed at community events, and email. Highlights of the responses to date include:

- 90% of respondents had heard of the HCC
- 48% learned about the HCC from the newspaper; 38% heard of the HCC via word of mouth.

Priority topics for survey respondents include:

1. Street maintenance
2. Open space
3. Land use planning
4. Recycling
5. Downtown Walking Mall
6. Affordable housing
7. Vandalism and theft
8. Nonmotorized transportation

Meg Bishop asked if there is a better way to do the survey. Habeck explained that he developed a survey strategy with HCC input.

Habeck stated that there are already more survey responses than allowed with a free plan. HCC members spoke in favor of spending money for a paid plan. Motion by Dick Sloan, seconded by Pat Christian to pursue adding capacity to receive and analyze survey responses. Motion approved unanimously.

Bylaws Discussion

Maureen Kiely and Alyssa Townsend stated that the Economic Development Fact Finding Team met and all four members were opposed to the proposed revision to the bylaws to create a Committee on Economic Development. Primary concerns expressed by the members were:

1. It is not necessary or desirable to create a permanent committee.
2. The proposed duties of the committee are labor-intensive and duplicative of efforts of other entities.
3. The proposed duties of the committee do not fit with the HCC's purpose. The purpose of the HCC is to advise the City Commission rather than to represent the City in dealings with other entities.

Dick Sloan explained the objective of his proposal was to emphasize economic development. If there is a significant economic opportunity, he feels it is appropriate for the HCC to make recommendations to the City Commission about that opportunity.

Bob Habeck stated that ad hoc committees are preferable to standing committees. The HCC's ad hoc teams can be responsive to the needs of the community by investigating priority issues and reporting back. Habeck offered to draft language to revise the section of the bylaws that addresses standing committees.

Reports from Fact Finding Teams

The Economic Development team reported that they continue to focus in the following areas: downtown, railroad urban renewal district, Capital Hill Mall. They are interested in learning more about why properties are not being developed. They have been looking into whether or not there is an existing inventory of unused residential lots and learned that there isn't one central inventory. They think it would be valuable to create an inventory and survey owners about barriers to development of the lots. There is a question about who would pay for and maintain the inventory.

Carolan Bunegar will prepare a written report before the next HCC meeting with her recommendation regarding recruitment of volunteers.

Terry Ray presented the HCC's resolution regarding vehicles stored or illegally parked on Helena's neighborhood streets and boulevards to the City Commission. Helena Police Chief Troy McGee presented a memo requesting direction from the Commission on the following: whether or not to direct more Helena Police Department resources to abandoned vehicle enforcement; and ordinance changes. The City plans to focus on using current ordinances to enforce violations in order to facilitate snow removal and travel this winter. Sumner Sharpe reported that the City Commission reduced the number of snow routes. Meg Bishop recommended providing an incentive for residents to move their cars to a better location (e.g., a brownfields site). Ray noted that residents will become educated about parking ordinances when they receive notices or have their vehicles towed.

John Andrew will work with the Civic Center team to develop a survey.

Alyssa Townsend reviewed the preliminary findings of the Citizen Notice and Involvement team. The team will present a report and recommendations at the next HCC meeting. Denise Roth Barber raised the question of when the City Commission's decision on a topic should "stick" after public comment has been heard.

Reports from Members

Dick Sloan reminded the members that the Lewis & Clark Water Quality Protection District petitioned the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to establish a controlled ground water area. The County has agreed to fund collection of data necessary for this effort.

Chairman Sharpe urged members to attend meetings of the City Commission and other boards and committees.

Terry Ray said the City plans to conduct a traffic study on Helena Avenue.

Chairman Sharpe reported that the City is in the process of hiring a consultant to update the City Growth Policy. The Community Development Department is interested in holding neighborhood meetings.

Doris Davis reported on a community fire education event to be held in District 7 on November 8. She distributed a draft flyer.

Maureen Kiely has been investigating efforts to address homelessness. Mayor Collins hosted a community conversation to address several concerns last summer. A subcommittee of three people was formed to address homelessness. The City backed off from addressing the issue because other organizations are doing so. Maureen discussed the "Helena Job" concept that was endorsed by the HCC with a representative of the United Way. The representative explained that it would be important to be careful about the program is set up.

Nominating Committee

Chairman Sharpe announced that a Nominating Committee would be appointed to nominate candidates for HCC officers during the November meeting.

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