



**Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)  
MINUTES  
August 28, 2019 7:00pm  
City/County Building - Room 326**

**Members Present:** A quorum was present (7 members from 4 different districts = quorum)

District 1: John Andrew, Patricia Christian

District 2: Meg Bishop, Nancy Perry, Susan Lenard, Nick Sovner

District 3: Sumner Sharpe, Gary Dalton, Margaret Strachan

District 4: Tom Woodgerd, Douglas Hunsaker, Dylan Klapmeier

District 5: Shannon Stevens, TJ Lehman

District 6: Whitney Bausch, Ben Kennedy

District 7: Dick Sloan, Denise Roth Barber, Bob Habeck, Doris Davis

**Other Attendees:** City Commissioner Ed Noonan, Amanda Opitz – Assistant to City Manager, Kristi Ponozzo – Open Lands, Parks & Recreation Director, Chris Daly – City of Helena Arborist, Shannon Stevens, Tyler “TJ” Lehman

**Members Excused/Absent:** Flannery Herbert (resigned) Eric Seidle

**Call To Order:** Chairman Sumner Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Sumner announced that per the Bylaws of the HCC, because there are no representatives currently in District 5, the HCC may appoint members. Two interested persons from district 5 attended the meeting expressing interest in serving. Shannon Stevens – New to Helena since 2013, recently opened her own psychotherapy clinic, has worked as a Zoologist with large cats. Tyler Lehman – attended Carroll College, played football, still coaches. He is manager at Power Townsend.

**Motion**

A motion was made by Denise Roth Barber to accept both Shannon Stevens and Tyler Lehman as HCC Members. The motion was seconded by Margaret Strachan. None opposed. Motion passes.

**Coordinator's Report:**

Peggy Benkelman reported she has been updating website regularly.

New roster was compiled and emailed to everyone.

New recommendations to the Commission have been added to the website as well.

Cost estimates were prepared for mailing labels and Peggy researched where to best acquire names and addresses for the HCC Districts. It will either be via the City of Helena GIS department, or the Voter registration files.

The new HCC brochures have been placed at the Lewis & Clark Library.

Peggy will inquire about having a table in the L&C Public Library closer to election day.

## **Minutes:**

Sumner Sharpe asked if there are any changes or additions to the July Minutes. Patricia Christian name will appear as officially excused, Minutes stand with one correction re: Patricia Christian. – approved.

## **Kristi Ponozzo: Power Point Presentation**

Newly approved **Playground at Cherry Park**. Funding for the park came from Kiwanis Club and a Land Water and Conservation Fund Grant. It is located in HCC District 5. It will have a fall protective surface and playground pad.

**Hill Park Fountain** – Installation this Fall. The city is removing the upright pieces. The Sphere is being shipped and the millstone is being prepared in Pennsylvania. The city of Helena is drilling a well in Hill Park and the well will provide water for Women’s Park as well. More information about the art installation can be found on the homepage of the Helena Public Art Committee - [https://www.helenapublicarts.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Equity\\_Fountain - Sphere of Interconnectedness.pdf](https://www.helenapublicarts.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Equity_Fountain_-_Sphere_of_Interconnectedness.pdf)

**Wayfinding signs** – the city is continuing to place signs to promote its active living trails/lifestyle system.

**Weeds** – the city is addressing the weeds issue. It was a banner year for weeds around Helena. The city is responding to pressing phone calls and utilizing various treatment recommendations. The Weeds Coordinator position was not funded and other City staff are taking up some of that position’s responsibility.

**Graffiti** – It is being removed slowly and properly. Areas damaged are Performance Park, Memorial Park, Barney Park and the Tunnels.

**Beattie Street Improvements** – An open house was held and neighbors were encouraged to attend and speak their mind. The session helped to gather public information. Kristi Ponozzo said the comments will be considered and possibly incorporated into the design. There is a definitive purpose and need for a Trailhead. The trailhead will be ADA compliant, and it is the most used trailhead for MT. Ascension. The city has addressed multiple alternatives for design.

Nick Sovner stated that some items mentioned do not really fit the definition of “ purpose and need”, such as ADA compliance and additional parking. Nick also stated that multiple alternative designs were never truly addressed and considered in the manner that many of the neighbors would like to see at Beattie Street.

**Open Lands Plan Rewrite – Phase I is complete.** There will be a re-write of Chapter 7. Phase II will include Public Works comments. Public comments will be gathered and compiled by November 2019 and plan could be finalized late in 2019.

**Van Hook – Wetlands – District 4** – The wetlands cover 3 acres adjacent to the Fairgrounds. The city is constructing a viewing Platform.

Kristi mentioned that there are emerging issues with Open Lands: management, landscape, trail systems. In conjunction with the Growth Policy, the trails should be interconnected providing ease of hiking, walking, biking etc.

**Comments:** HCC member Meg Bishop requested time for further discussion about the Beattie St. project at the HCC September meeting.

### **Chris Daly – Urban Forestry**

The City is currently working on Maintenance of Boulevard Park Trees. The goal is to reduce the percentage of Ash trees from 53% to 10% to get more diversity with replacement trees. The City will prune, remove trees and stumps and plant new trees. DNRC provided the city with a one-year Program Development Grant to remove trees on Monroe and Madison where there were about 90% Green Ash trees. Most trees used for replacement are oak, maple, elms. No fruit trees: they don't provide enough shade.

September 26<sup>th</sup>, Room 326, City County Bldg. at 5:00 pm, Dr. Laurie Kerzicnik of MSU will speak about the Emerald Ash Borer.

**Pruning Cycle:** Cycle is usually 7 years. The actual routes are determined by the City staff and they try to accommodate some choice for residents.

**Storm Response** – In early spring after the storms, there were over 50 sites with multiple whole tree failure. The city had 150+ yards of firewood waste. Most was given to the needy. Often the city chips the wood and utilizes it for planting and fill for City-owned spaces. Go to [www.getchipdrop.com](http://www.getchipdrop.com) – good place to get wood chips delivered – 15yd. minimum.

### **Street Lighting Update – John Andrew**

North Western Energy says that HDR Engineering will perform a study on the lights. Commissioner Noonan said that the trespass light and dark skies ordinance have to be in full compliance.

In September, HDR Engineering will report to the City Commission.

### **Growth Policy Update – Sumner Sharpe**

The new policy is more like a plan for the city. More of a vision with policy and investment support within the city limits and in the urban service areas.

The concern about water in the future will most probably limit valley expansion in the future.

There will be two public hearings regarding the growth policy.

Meg Bishop suggested that the Growth Policy integrate other city policies and it was explained that this has been part of the effort.

Commissioner Noonan – In the past, urban growth boundaries were essentially ignored. County now needs to adopt city standards to anticipate growth.

### **Citizen Conservation Board Update – Denise Roth Barber**

Denise explained the Chart and how 2009 and 2011 version ideas will move forward and be included in the 2019 version. New objectives are included on the last page of the chart. Following discussion a motion was made.

**Motion – A motion was made and seconded to endorse and support the CCB recommendations to the City Commission.**

The vote (12 yeas), supported inclusion of the CCB recommendations in the City's updated Growth Policy, so that City policies and actions support making resiliency to climate change the overarching goal of the Growth Policy. Also, HCC support was expressed for the inclusion of policies and actions from previously adopted City documents – the 2009 Climate Change Action Plan and the 2011 Helen Growth Policy. Those voting nay (6) expressed support for adding a climate change goal based on the CCB recommendations, but were concerned that there are other equally important Growth Policy goals but that it not be the overarching goal. Also, concern about language and wording was expressed by some HCC members.

**Appointment of HCC Representative to HPAC**

Flannery Herbert has resigned as an HCC representative and the HPAC representative. The HCC nominates Margaret Strachan – none opposed. Margaret Strachan is the new HPAC/HCC Representative.

**Recruitment of HCC Members:**

Current openings: 1 – District 1, 1 – District 3, 1 – District 4, 2 – District 5, 2 – District 6,2, Discussion ensued as to how to create more interest in serving on HCC. Utilize *Next Door, and Facebook* online communities were suggested. Tom Woodgerd will research Facebook Helena Classifieds.

**Reports:**

HOLMAC – Nick Sovner has been reviewing the work plan. For example, there are myths circulating about banning bikes on Mt. Helena.

Commissioner Noonan said at one point there were two different work plans posted on the city website when only one of the plans was officially approved. That may have contributed to the confusion

City Budget – Dick Sloan said there is still a lot of concern about a balanced budget. There should be more discussion about the General Fund vs. the Enterprise Fund. There are 19+ new employees in one year – this expense will show up in taxes and rate increases.

**Next Meeting: September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Meeting Adjourned: 9:03pm**