



Helena Citizens' Council
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Date: November 29, 2017
To: Helena City Commission
From: Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Subject: Civic Center Recommendations

Introduction

The Helena Citizens' Council (HCC) recognizes that the City of Helena's Civic Center is less subsidized than in previous years and may eventually be self-sustaining. However, the HCC is interested in reducing the current \$500,000 loss to the City of Helena's annual budget.

In 2017, the City of Helena engaged a contractor who completed a report on the Civic Center. In 2016- 17, HCC members attended Civic Center Advisory Board meetings, hosted the contractor, contributed to the community needs assessment and reviewed the report. Understanding that the report makes many recommendations, the HCC adds the following no-cost recommendations for the Helena Civic Center.

Recommendations

The HCC advises the following fundamental modifications to procedures affecting the City's Civic Center. The 2017 consultant's report makes some practical changes that will be more achievable after the recommended changes are implemented.

- Require the Helena Civic Center Advisory Board, a Mayor-appointed City advisory board, to post meeting agendas, minutes, cancellations and other relevant information, such as reports, on the City of Helena website and calendar. This is in alignment with Montana's open meeting and public participation laws, and City of Helena procedures.
- Reinstate term limits for Civic Center Advisory Board members. In 1988 the Civic Center Advisory Board was exempted from term limits, it is now the City's only exempt Advisory Board. The HCC recognizes the significant contributions of the long serving Board members. The HCC recommends implementing best practice and bringing this Advisory Board into alignment with other City Boards by implementing three-year terms, limited to three full terms.
- Research and prepare a concise report of Advisory Board-led fundraising activities, including numbers of attendees, resources invested, fundraising results and other relevant data. The report should account for facility rental costs for fundraising events held at the Civic Center. This information would be helpful in outreach, postings and future fundraising efforts.

- Consolidate all Helena Civic Center social media outlets. For example, there are currently two different Facebook pages that often duplicate postings. The HCC recommends that only one Facebook page be maintained, and that all social media clearly identify the Civic Center Board as a City of Helena Advisory Board. To find the two Facebook pages, search for Helena Civic Center and Helena Civic Center Board.
- Consolidate and link the two websites listed below:
 - <http://www.helenaciviccenter.com/home.html> The HCC recommends that this website be linked to the City of Helena website. The City website links to the Civic Center website, but not vice versa.
 - <http://www.helenaciviccenterboard.org> The HCC recommends that this website be made into a page on what would be the main Civic Center site, and should be connected to the City of Helena.
- The HCC recommends that the City Commission require the Helena Civic Center Advisory Board to adopt a reasonable amount of practical goals and recommendations from the 2017 Cultural Planning Group report (Helena Civic Center – Analysis, Report and Recommendations, March 10, 2017 Update). The HCC previously presented recommendations based on that report (see attached). Helena Citizens’ Council members are willing to work with the Civic Center Advisory Board to identify and achieve goals.

Combined, these recommendations will bring the City of Helena’s Civic Center Advisory Board into alignment with other City Advisory Boards, will better position the community to provide input and volunteer service to the Civic Center, and will prepare the Civic Center to best implement the selected report recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.

C: City Manager
Civic Center Board

Attachment: Memo from Helena Citizens’ Council to Helena City Commission re: Civic Center (June 28, 2017)



Helena Citizens' Council
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Date: June 28, 2017
To: Helena City Commission
From: Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Subject: Civic Center

Introduction

A Helena Citizens' Council fact finding team was tasked with finding out more about the Civic Center and its funding sources. The Civic Center on an annual basis is subsidized by nearly \$500,000 from the city's general fund. At the same time the city had hired a consultant group (The Cultural Planning Group) to help guide the future of the Civic Center.

Findings and Conclusions

The team met with city commissioners, civic center staff, as well as members of the Cultural Planning Group. It was apparent the consultants would have significantly more resources than the HCC to investigate this issue. The results from the study showed significant interest in more/different events at the Civic Center. The biggest number of respondents stated they were uninterested in the current programming. Also, through the survey, the biggest request for programming was more concerts.

It is our conclusion that the citizens of Helena want more out of their Civic Center. In meeting with Civic Center staff, they are currently working on meeting with like sized facilities across the state to see what can be done to attract more events/programs. They are also in the process of streamlining the booking process to make it easier on performers.

Recommendations

The fact-finding team recommended that the HCC continue to have a presence at the Civic Center monthly board meetings. This will allow the HCC to be aware of what's going on and to keep the staff moving in the right direction.

At this time the Civic Center staff does not have a short or long-range plan in place to track their progress. In our opinion defining clear goals would help to gauge whether or not the Civic Center is meeting the needs of the community in the future. We recommend suggesting these goals to the Civic Center staff as a way to measure progress in the future.

- **Develop a relationship with promoters locally, in neighboring cities, as well as regionally.** (Making sure that our venue is known, and actively advertising it as often as possible.)
- **Develop a goal for numbers of events/concerts.** (Example: By year two, set a goal of having a minimum of two concerts/performances per month. This gives the citizens a greater chance attending a performance they would enjoy.)
- **Develop a goal/strategy for selling concessions and alcohol during events.** (Determining the ability to do this could result in an entirely new revenue stream for the civic center.)
- **Develop a goal for decreasing the amount of general fund money used to subsidize the civic center.** (While we don't believe it should be expected to get rid of a general fund transfer all together, this should be a long term goal and an ongoing project by tracking new revenues. Example goal: By year five, decrease the amount of general fund money transferred to \$350,000 and \$250,000 by year ten.)

Positive Outcomes

It is very refreshing to see that the Civic Center staff is on board with moving the facility in the right direction! We believe great things are around the corner for the Civic Center. The HCC wants to stay involved to ensure that these great community-driven ideas can result in a better facility for the community.

Additional Information

The HCC reviewed Helena Civic Center – Analysis, Report and Recommendations (The Cultural Planning Group, March 10, 2017 Update).

C: City Manager
Civic Center Board