



Helena Citizens Council
FY24 Budget Recommendation

Approved May 24th, 2023

This document represents the Helena Citizens Council fiscal year 2024 budget recommendation for the City Commission's consideration and entry into the public record. Budget requests that are either supported or opposed herein are not an exhaustive expression of the Helena Citizens Council's opinions, but rather a call-out of the proposed expenditures, cuts, and goals discussed during the City Commission's budget process that were identified to be of the utmost importance.

Table of Contents

Summary of Review and Recommendations.....4

Acknowledged Presented Budgets.....5

General Fund.....5

Police Department – Fund 012.....6

Fire Department – Fund 013.....6

Transportation – Fund 201.....7

Community Facilities – Fund 212 & 213.....8

Public Works Department – Fund 521, 531, & 541.....9

TO: Helena City Commission
FROM: Helena Citizens' Council

RE: Helena Citizens' Council Review and Recommendations Regarding the Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary City Budget

===

Summary of Review and Recommendations

Per our mandated responsibility outlined in Article IV of the Helena City Charter, the Helena Citizens' Council (HCC) is providing the Helena City Commission our review and recommendations regarding the fiscal year 2024 preliminary budget for the City of Helena. The Charter reads:

There shall be seven (7) Neighborhood Councils, collectively comprising a Helena Citizens' Council. Operating independently from the city commission or city officials, the Helena Citizens' Council shall review and recommend actions relating to the annual budget, and make recommendations relating to future development of the city.

The review and recommendations that follow were approved by a vote of the HCC on May 24th, 2023.

The HCC commends the City Manager's efforts to present a balanced budget and leading the charge on a six percent budget reduction across all departments by cutting their own budget.

The HCC's recommendations for funding specific department requests and capital fund projects reflect the philosophical priorities for the Council. One budget philosophy that the HCC would recommend the City Commission continue to consider is to ensure funding for emergency services and city infrastructure are prioritized in a budget limited by constraints. Overall, funding requests and capital improvement requests from City departments are supported by the Helena Citizens Council.

The HCC appreciates the City's support for the following community proposals with ARPA funding and would support additional funding for these projects with any remaining ARPA funds:

1. Helena Food Share request for construction of a Community Food Resource Center.
2. Helena Regional Sports Association's request for a feasibility study for its long envisioned multi-sport complex.
3. Rocky Mountain Development Council's request to build affordable housing
4. Family Promise's request for funding to expand its facilities

5. United Way of Lewis and Clark County's request for hygiene supplies and meal preparation units
6. Tri-County Fire Safe Working Group's request for fire safety awareness in Helena

Acknowledged Presented Budgets

The HCC acknowledges the time and effort of the following departments and programs to present well-drafted budget requests to the City Commission, but does not have a position on the following budgets:

- 9-1-1 Emergency Program & Supports Services Division
- City/County Building Fund
- Community Development
- Facilities
- Public Arts Project
- Park & Recreation
- Police & Court: Municipal Court

General Fund

General Fund Overview

- The HCC recognizes the need to recruit and retain quality city employees in order to best serve and support the citizens of Helena. As such, the following actions are supported:
 - Implementation of a permissive levy to fund the increase in the cost of employee health insurance
 - Bringing all employees up to 88% of the market rate for their positions as identified in the market study
 - A 4% cost of living adjustment to the wages of all city employees
- The HCC supports the establishment of an Investment Policy approved by the City Commission in conjunction with the Finance Director and the City Manager.
- The HCC supports funding the Solar Energy Program and the Sidewalk Improvement Program through General Fund cash reserves.

Police & Court – Fund 012

The HCC supports the Police & Court budget request as presented.

Notable line-item expenditures presented in the Police & Court budget:

- Fifty (50) sworn officers employed (\$6.5M in personnel services)
- Staff requests:
 - 1.0 FTE Court Officer
 - 1.0 FTE Evidence Technician (.5 FTE request)
- \$5K for LEADS Online Service to help recover stolen property being pawned.

The HCC praises the efforts of the Helena Police Department to expand services through grant funding and cooperative partnerships with other local offices:

- Missouri River Drug Task Force – officer position partially grant funded (\$133K).
- Violence Against Women Act-funded Detective Expenses (\$115K)

Fire Department – Fund 013

The Helena Citizens Council supports the Fire Department budget request as presented. Helena FD presented a purposeful, needs-based budget that incorporates diversified revenue sources and mission driven expenditures to meet the needs of the Helena community.

Tri-County Fire Safe Working Group/Fire Safe Helena is supported by the HCC.

The HCC commends the fire department's efforts developing partnerships that serve the Greater Helena area and collecting additional revenue providing valuable services for protection, inspection, and effective grant administration.

- Westside Fire Service Area Agreement/Fire Building Code Inspections
- Fire Levy Transfer to assist with staffing costs
- Helena Fire Regional Hazmat Sustainment Grant

The HCC supports the budget priorities outlined during the April 19th City Commission Administrative Hearing for both general fund and grant-funded expenditures:

- Wage Adjustment
- RMS Platform
- Equipment replacement
- Readiness training

Fire Levy Expenditures

- Contribution to the general fund to support six firefighters.
- Type 3 Wildland apparatus to enhance ability to support WUI and possibly deployments.

Transportation – Fund 201

We appreciate the Department of Transportation System's (DoT) plans for doing an inventory of needed sidewalks, as well as slip/trip/fall hazards around all the schools in Helena.

Members of HCC living near Jefferson School appreciate that the DoT installed a flashing light/crosswalk at Jefferson School crossing Broadway. The light has made a noticeable difference in traffic speeds approaching and leaving the school. We are grateful for the security cameras the DoT installed in parking lots and appreciate any additional cameras planned. They allow the public to feel much more secure in using the public parking lots.

The HCC supports the Transportation budget request as presented with the following recommendations:

1. Reallocate the \$650,000 that is proposed for the Benton Turn Lanes Project (near the Transfer Station and the Sunhaven subdivision/Bill Roberts Golf Course) towards non-motorized projects, such as:
 - Crosswalk improvements and bulb outs at Benton on Hauser and Stuart;
 - Cruse Avenue crosswalk improvements and bulb outs at 6th Ave, Cruse/Broadway, and Cruse/Lawrence;
 - Knight Street Safe Routes to School project;
 - Broadwater Safe Routes to School project;
 - Into the general Safe Routes to School Budget (ST2917).
2. HCC supports the \$100,000 for RRFB's for crosswalks, but specifically requests a line item for installation at Benton and Hauser and Benton and Stuart.
3. Finish the Downtown Multimodal Plan and implement the Plan.

Community Facilities – Fund 212 & 213

The HCC supports the Facilities budget request as presented.

HCC supports the on-going efforts of the Facilities Department, in collaboration with the County, regarding its Xeriscape Demonstration Garden at the Law and Justice Center. This is a highly visible area and a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness among members of the public with this demonstration site and signage about waterwise and beautiful landscaping.

Recommendation:

1. The HCC supports the Facilities Department Capital Fund budget requests listed below:

Sustainability:

- LED lighting retrofit of 2nd floor of City-County Building
- Fire Station #2 LED lighting retrofit
- Fire Station #1 boiler replacement with high efficiency boilers
- City Shop boiler replacement with high efficiency boilers
- Law & Justice xeriscape garden

Safety:

- Fire #2 emergency generator replacement
- Update facility emergency actions plans

Construction & Maintenance Projects:

- City shop roof replacement
- Fire station #2 restroom/locker room remodel
- Law & Justice east elevator upgrade
- Law & Justice 1972 roof replacement

Administration:

- New staffing structure implementation
- Develop 30-year CCIP with funding plan
- Full implementation of computerized maintenance software

Public Works Department

HCC supports the PWD goals and priorities:

- Capital Improvement Projects
- Completion of Master Plans for Solid Waste, Water, Wastewater, and Sustainability
- Outreach and Education Programs
- Perfecting Groundwater Rights
- City Sustainability Considered for All Projects
- Environmental Compliance

HCC is encouraged to see the City Budget contain \$100,000 to hire a consultant to conduct a Sustainability Audit of all City Departments and operations. HCC encourages the PWD to continue to work with other City Departments to identify on-going sustainability issues and opportunities for efficiencies and to use the results of the Sustainability Audit to develop a Sustainability and Updated Climate Action Plan for the City.

The HCC body would like to see additional sustainability items included in the PWD FY24 and future Budget proposals.

Public Works Department, Fund #521 (Water)

We support the ongoing efforts of the Water Division to optimize its operations through energy, chemical, and other efficiencies and the realization of significant cost and energy savings. We also support the ongoing development of the Water Master Plan for Helena's future water supplies, sources, and needs as well as the investigation into groundwater supply wells to build increased resilience into Helena's water systems.

Recognizing the critical importance of water in this arid climate, outreach and education is essential to achieving the City's stated goal of reducing per capita water consumption to less than 100 gallons/person/day.

Recommendation(s):

1. The HCC recommends the continued promotion of water conservation at residential and commercial facilities.
2. The HCC recommends the establishment of 'water wise' best practice policies for City-owned properties and operations.
3. The HCC encourages collaboration with the Lewis & Clark County Water Quality Protection District on its plans to promote 'water wise' practices and water conservation.
4. The HCC repeats its 2022 recommendation to allocate funding for a Water Conservation Specialist.

Public Works Department – Wastewater Fund #531

HCC supports the PWD's efforts to optimize its operations and continue to look for energy efficiencies, especially when looking at equipment upgrades and replacement. The PWD will be requesting a 4% rate increase, reflecting expanded service and increased costs of providing wastewater collection and treatment.

Recommendation:

1. HCC recommends that the PWD follow Commissioner Dean's suggestion and provide an explanation of what services the PWD provides and the need for the rate increase.

Public Works Department - Solid Waste-Residential – Fund #541

HCC supports the City's efforts to divert waste and offer recycling services and applauds its efforts to expand its composting program beyond green waste and biosolids to possibly include food waste as well.

Recommendation:

1. HCC recommends the City continue to implement its Strategic Plan for Waste Reduction and look for opportunities from the Integrated Solid Waste Master Plan to identify specific actions to achieve Helena's waste reduction goals of 35% by 2030 and 50% by 2040.



Helena Citizens' Council
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623
Phone: 406.447.8493
hcc@helenamt.gov
www.helenacitizenscouncil.com

Date: February 22nd, 2023
To: Helena City Commission
From: Helena Citizens Council

Subject: Recommendation re: ARPA Funding Allocation

Dear Mayor Collins and Commissioners Dean, Logan, Reed, and Shirliff,

Thank you for making a portion of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding available to local organizations for projects to benefit our community.

At the January 25, 2023, Helena Citizens Council (HCC) monthly meeting, the HCC reviewed the seven finalists the City has selected from among the many proposals submitted and wishes to make recommendations about how the nearly \$2.8M in remaining ARPA funding should be allocated.

HCC Representatives were surveyed from January 26-February 1, 2023, with 22 of the current 26 HCC Representatives responding. The poll results are attached and were briefly presented to the Commission by HCC Representative Pat Bik during the City Administrative meeting on February 1, 2023. (The HCC understands that the proposals were modified since the original Letters of Intent were submitted; however, the poll was conducted based on the original funding requests.)

There were two project proposals that all respondents agreed upon: 1) Helena Food Share should be fully or at least partially funded; and 2) No funding should go towards the proposal for Carroll College stadium upgrades. Specifically:

Rocky Mountain Development Council housing proposal (\$2.4M)

Fully or partially fund: 90.9%

Do not fund: 9.1%

Family Promise facility expansion proposal (\$750,000)

Fully or partially fund: 90.5%

Do not fund: 9.5%

Helena Food Share Community Food Resource Center proposal (\$250,000)

Fully or partially fund: 100%

Carroll College football stadium upgrade proposal (\$1M)

Do not fund: 100%

Helena Regional Sports Association feasibility study (\$70,000)

Fully or partially fund: 68.2%

Do not fund: 31.8%

United Way of Lewis and Clark County for mobile hygiene and meal kit proposal request for \$500,000

Fully or partially fund: 90.5%

Do not fund: 9.5%

Tri-County Fire Safe Working Group wildfire assessment and education proposal request for \$120,000

Fully or partially fund: 77.3%

Do not fund: 22.7%

The City laid out evaluation criteria for reviewing the community project proposals, namely:

- 1) Contingency, if no funds awarded; 2) Proper management and financial controls are in place;
- 3) Project readiness, feasibility, and plan; 4) Programs/projects that benefitting vulnerable populations;
- 5) Public health and safety; 6) Programs/projects that improve quality of life; 7) Economic Development;
- 8) Long-term project sustainability; 9) Committed matching funds ratio; and 10) Potential for transformational community impact.

In conclusion, based on the evaluation criteria and the HCC survey results, the HCC recommends that the Commission:

- 1. Prioritize funding for the Helena Food Share;**
- 2. Fully or partially fund proposals from the RMDC, Family Promise, Helena Regional Sports Association, United Way, and the Tri-County Fire Safe Working Group; and**
- 3. Not fund the Carroll College proposal.**

The projects recommended for funding would benefit our community in the near and long term, helping make Helena a better community for all.

Thank you for considering HCC's funding recommendations and the HCC looks forward to learning of your ARPA funding decisions.

Sincerely,

K.C. Cole Rosling, Chair
Helena Citizens Council

Attachment: HCC ARPA Funding Survey Results

cc: Dannai Clayborn, Clerk of Commission
Tim Burton, Interim City Manager
Peggy Benkelman, HCC Coordinator
HCC Representatives

