



**CITY OF HELENA
Zoning Commission
January 14, 2025 – 6:00 PM
Meeting Minutes**

[Recording Available Here](#)

Members Present:

Rebecca Harbage (Chair), Alyssa Sorenson, Mark Roylance, Mark Runde (Alternate)

Members Absent:

Nicole Anderson, Betsy Story

Staff Present:

Michael Alvarez, April Sparks

Call to Order and Roll Call

(0:00:45) Chair Harbage called the meeting to order, roll was taken, and a quorum was established.

Approval of Minutes

(0:01:37) Minutes from the December 10, 2024 meeting were approved unanimously.

Election of Officers

(0:01:41) The need for electing officers was announced. Chair Harbage nominated herself in the absence of any interest from other members. Ms. Sorenson seconded the nomination. The nomination was approved unanimously. Ms. Story was nominated for Vice-Chair. In her absence, and with no other nominations, the vote was tabled for that nomination.

Regular Items

Item 1

Staff Presentation and Questions for Staff

(0:05:28) Mr. Alvarez gave a presentation on the application for a proposed zone change from RU to R4 for the Peaks Phase 1 of the Crossroads at Mountain View



Meadows. No public comment had been received, although adjacent property owners called Mr. Alvarez with questions.

- (0:20:23)** Commission was given the opportunity to ask questions of staff. Mr. Alvarez was asked about the discrepancy in the request from the applicant and the staff recommended motion. Mr. Alvarez confirmed that the applicant's desire is for R4 zoning, but the staff recommendation is for R3. Mr. Alvarez was asked a question related to car trips and the B2 zoning district included in the recommendation. Mr. Alvarez clarified that there was only a small portion (less than half an acre) of the proposed area that is currently zoned B2 and the bulk of the area is zoned RU, and that the area is proposed for complete residential development. Mr. Alvarez was asked if other areas in this subdivision also zoned R4 had been built out to the extent that one would expect with the calculation of traffic at this level. Mr. Alvarez stated that the subdivision has been tracking under the city's estimates.

Applicant Presentation and Questions for Applicant

- (0:28:21)** Greg Wirth spoke on behalf of the applicant and requested the recommendation for a zone change to R4 as they had previously requested. Mr. Wirth noted that while the proposed development would fit within an R3 district, there is a building permit provision which would limit driveway width to 30 feet which would then necessitate a variance in the future, which becomes a hardship, which brought them back to the R4 request which provides for the driveway width needed for the proposed condos to be developed. Mr. Wirth also noted that the hearing was noticed as an R4 zone change, R4 provides the upzoning that has been a preference of the Zoning Commission and the growth policy, R4 is in direct alignment with the adjacent zoning, and that R4 is appropriate outside of the concerns from Transportation Systems. Mr. Wirth then noted the adjacent R4 zones, and the meetings when that zoning has gone before both the Zoning and City Commissions. Mr. Wirth also gave information on the most recent traffic counts from their own traffic studies, before repeating the applicant's request for R4 zoning.

- (0:36:04)** There were no questions for the applicant. Mr. Alvarez offered to create recommended language for a motion for R4 zoning.

Public Comment

- (0:36:54)** Public Comment was opened. There was no public comment.

Commission Discussion



(0:37:17) Commission discussion was opened. Ms. Sorenson stated that she has concerns about zone changes opening the door for development by right other than what is proposed, but did not want to see extra bureaucratic loopholes for an extra ten feet of driveway. Mr. Roylance stated that he felt R4 is consistent with the growth policy and what already exists.

Motion

(0:39:43) Ms. Sorenson moved to recommend approval of an ordinance amending the City of Helena Ordinance number 3097 and the official zoning map for the City of Helena that changes the zoning district from RU to R4 residential for the property legally described as Lot 5 of Block 26, Lot 1 of Block 21, and Lots 5 of Block 14; Changes the zoning district from B2 commercial to R4 residential for that portion of Lot 1 Block 21; And changes the zoning district from R2 to R4 residential for that portion of Lot 5 Block 36 of the Peaks Phase 1 of the Crossroads at Mountain View Meadows Subdivision, in the City of Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Montana. Mr. Roylance seconded the motion.

(0:40:43) Chair Harbage made some comments, echoing some of Ms. Sorenson's, but stating she would be in support of the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (4:0).

General Public Comment

(0:42:27) There was no public comment.

Member Communications / Proposals for next Agenda

(0:42:46) It was noted the next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, February 11, 2025, but that it would not be held. Staff noted no applications were received before the deadline for the March meeting, other than a Pre-Zone application attached to a Subdivision, which has yet to be scheduled for a meeting date. Commissioners asked about getting an update on the Land Use Plan process, and zoning code updates. Staff noted that the Director would be the person to give an update, and that any major updates to the zoning code would be completed after the Land Use Plan process was completed and this Commission would likely be dissolved at that point. Commissioners proposed holding a work session and proposed topics.

Adjournment

(0:59:08) The meeting was adjourned.