

## **Citizen Conservation Board (CCB)**

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2021; 4:30 PM

Meeting held virtually via Zoom

### **Board Members Present (8 out of 14 members required for a quorum):**

- 1) Diana Hammer, Chair
- 2) Mark Juedeman, Vice Chair
- 3) Valerie Stacey, Vice Chair
- 4) Rebecca Boslough
- 5) Ann Brodsky
- 6) Steven Costle
- 7) Elizabeth Grant
- 8) Patricia Heiser
- 9) Lucy Lantz
- 10) Carlin Onstad
- 11) Denise Roth Barber
- 12) Brian Solan

### **City Staff Present:**

Patrick Judge, Sustainability Coordinator

Kristi Ponozzo, Director of Parks, Recreation & Open Lands

### **Others Present:**

Dr. Gregory Thomas, Interested Citizen

### **Call to Order:**

CCB Chair Diana Hammer called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm and welcomed all participants, particularly the new members of the CCB: Dr. Elizabeth Grant (St. Pete's Urgent Care / Helena native), Lucy Lantz (HHS Junior & Green Group Treasurer), and Carlin Onstad (CHS Junior & Green Club member).

### **Minutes:**

Denise Roth Barber moved adoption of the January 14, 2021 minutes. Mark Juedeman seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Guest Speaker – Kristi Ponozzo, Director of Parks, Recreation & Open Lands:**

Director Ponozzo said she was excited to visit with the CCB, and shared the following information:

- City Parks has reduced its consumption of treated water considerably over the past 5 years. The City is fortunate to have a large groundwater reservation. Using well water instead of treated water (for irrigation or other purposes) saves energy, chemicals, and costs.
- Toward the end of the 2020 watering season, Parks completed the installation of a well to serve both Hill Park and Womens Park. While it wasn't cheap (\$120,000), the department learned a lot and plans to continue this approach (with one new well every-other year), especially targeting the larger parks. Next up is Waukesha Park (FY22), partly because of the community garden there. Centennial has challenges due to the formal landfill. The golf course already gets most of its water from wells (co-owned with the County). Occasionally, the City does have to use treated water there, but they do

so very judiciously because of the expense. Note that the department is subject to the same City rates that other consumers are, including the tiered conservation rates.

- The department continues to work on energy efficiency (e.g. the lighting upgrade at Kindrick Legion Field, and the upcoming Energy Performance Contract, etc.) and potential renewable energy projects (Parks Maintenance Building, Bill Roberts Golf Course, etc.).
- Denise Roth Barber applauded the move to well water from treated water, but wondered if the City could do more to reduce irrigated turf, using xeriscaping or other approaches. She also asked about reducing chemical use (e.g. moving away from Roundup, if the City currently uses it). Director Ponozzo agreed with the importance of using native, drought tolerant vegetation when possible, especially for new landscaping projects (e.g. Cruse Ave redevelopment). She promised to get back to the group regarding chemical use and some other questions (see below).
- Ann Brodsky asked if recycling containers could be installed next to garbage cans in the parks. Kristi confirmed that the Parks Department collects the garbage, except during events, and would be very willing to have the discussion about recycling. Event permits already require that permittees take care of their own trash. Denise suggested that Helena consider requiring recycling as part of the event permits, as Missoula does. There are businesses like 406 Recycling that already offer that type of service.
- Pat asked if there are other boards with overlapping interests. Kristi said yes, the City-County Parks Board, HOLMAC, and the Golf Advisory Board would all be good groups to touch base with.
- Diana asked about opportunities for "Lush & Lean Demonstration Gardens" (as envisioned in the 2009 Climate Action Plan, p. 69). Diana thinks the south side of the City-County building would be an excellent location, but that's probably managed by Facilities.
- Liz Grant asked about composting. Kristi said the City uses a fair amount of compost in the urban forestry program, and also in the community gardens. The City is a partner (and has an MOU) with Helena Community Gardens.

**<Director Ponozzo's follow-up email is appended at the bottom of these minutes>**

#### **Follow-up Items from the Action Planning Retreat in December:**

Denise Roth Barber moved that the phrase "as approved by the City Commission" (pertaining to the public awareness campaign) be struck from the CCB purpose statement. Following discussion, Ann Brodsky seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The purpose statement now reads:

#### **Purpose Statement of the Citizen Conservation Board**

The purpose of the Citizen Conservation Board is to advise the Helena City Commission regarding actions to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, including the goal to hold warming to well below 2°C, and to accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy that will benefit Helena's security, prosperity, and health.<sup>1</sup> The Board will support, recommend, report on, and monitor sustainability measures undertaken by the City.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in recognizing the importance of education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and cooperation and that sustainable lifestyles, conservation, and sustainable patterns of consumption and production play an important role in addressing climate change,<sup>3</sup> the Board will design, develop, and participate in a public awareness campaign to engage and empower citizens of Helena to take action and respond to the urgent threat of climate change.

<sup>1</sup> Res. No. 20347 §§ 2, 3

<sup>2</sup> Res. No. 20347, § 5, Res. No. 20375, § 3.

<sup>3</sup> Paris Agreement, preamble, page 2.

Also as a follow-up to the December 2020 retreat, Chair Hammer asked that the committees describe their progress on their two-year workplans.

**Water Conservation Committee:**

- Valerie Stacey announced that the committee will be piloting its water conservation workshops over the next three Thursdays at this time (4:30). Denise, Ann, and Brian will all be participating, but there's room for one more. Please contact Val or Diana if interested.
- Pat noted that the new Finance Director (Sheila Danielson) is investigating the possibility of improving the City's billing software. This would be a large, comprehensive project, but has particular interest for the CCB in regard to improved water billing (usage history, etc.).

**Energy & Transportation Committee:**

Committee Chair Mark Juedeman & Pat Judge reported the following:

- Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority
  - the Authority officially formed with 12 member counties
  - the Lewis & Clark County Commission will be discussing the topic February 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Fleet Assessment
  - Yellowstone-Teton Clean Cities Coalition (Alicia Cox) is assisting
- EV Charging Stations
  - City is comfortable with the revised contract language, but still waiting for DEQ
- Green Tariffs
  - Bozeman, Helena, and Missoula (City & County) approved the Interlocal Agreement
  - the consultant (Utah-based Energy Strategies) will begin work soon
- Energy Performance Contract
  - working on the RFP with Facilities Superintendent Troy Sampson
- City-Owned Renewables
  - USB grant awarded for the 50-kW solar project at the Fleet Maintenance Shop
  - RFP will be issued soon
  - may be able to move forward with a second project as well (Parks Maintenance building)
- Community Renewables
  - \$100,000 currently in the Zero Interest Loan Program account
  - more marketing is needed (water bills, etc.)! hopefully the soon-to-be-hired PIO can assist
  - there is a particular interest in reaching low-income residents (Commissioner Dean, et al)

**Waste & Recycling Committee:**

Co-Chairs Ann and Denise reported the following:

- The Waste Reduction Resolution is confirmed for the February 22<sup>nd</sup> Commission Meeting (6:00 pm). Please try to attend!
- The Waste Committee sent out both an op-ed and press release.
- Ann will send the proposed resolution and supporting documents to the new CCB members.

**Outreach & Education Committee:**

- Diana announced that this Committee was on hiatus (Covid & no PIO), but is being revitalized
- the idea is to produce templates, strategies, and styles for the group to use, rather than content
- initial interest from Diana, Brian, Lucy, and perhaps some others – stay tuned for more info

**Emerging Issues / Other Business / Announcements / Public Testimony:**

- Initial "LEED for Cities" Assessment Results for Helena:

Steven Costle reported that he, Diana, and Pat had been working on an initial "top-down" analysis for Helena. LEED for Cities has five main categories, which are similar to the CCB committee areas.

The initial scores for the community of Helena were as follows:

Energy	10
Water	3
Waste	43
Transportation	0
Human Experience	82
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22 out of 100</b>

Other than Human Experience, the scores for Helena were rather disappointing. The group discussed possible reasons for that. Steven noted the challenges communities like Helena have with Transportation, due to long commutes and little public transit (low population densities). Diana and Pat emphasized that this was just a first cut at the calculations, and the underlying data needs to be revisited. Pat also emphasized that these were community-wide figures, and not City government-specific. The 2009 Climate Action Plan focused more on the latter. The group will circle back to try to improve the data and dig deeper into Helena's real strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

• **Tree Planting Project:**

- the Water Committee will be working with Growing Friends and the City Arborist
- contact Diana if interested

Diana invited anyone on the call, including the public, to share any comments or questions they might have. Valerie announced an upcoming "Climate Change and Human Health" event to be held the following week. There was no public comment.

**Next Meeting:**

Diana announced that the next regular CCB meeting will take place Thursday, March 11 at 4:30 pm (via Zoom). Please contact her with any agenda items. The budget process is beginning in earnest, so that might be a good topic.

**Adjourn:**

With no further comment from the board, staff, or public, Diana adjourned the meeting at 6:05 pm.

**Minutes prepared by Patrick Judge.**

**Addendum:**

**From:** Kristi Ponozzo

**Sent:** Friday, February 12, 2021 1:24 PM

**To:** Patrick Judge; Diana Hammer

**Subject:** Thank you Citizen Conservation Board! and follow-up

Patrick and Diana – Thank you so much for having me at the meeting last night. You all have great expertise and insight and I'd love for the Parks Department to work more closely with you on conservation issues.

I thought I'd follow-up on a few of the questions last night.

Denise asked if we specifically used Round-up? We may not use that specific brand (although we may have at some point and I'm unsure the exact brand our contractors use) but we do treat weeds with pesticides in developed Parks and on Open lands. We try to limit our chemical application and strike a balance between effectively treating noxious weeds and limiting our chemical use. We have used biological weeds treatment in the past (mostly open lands) but that has limited effectiveness at a larger scale. Parks used to have a part-time weeds position, but no longer has the position which used to employ more biological treatment of weeds. Because of the increase in noxious weeds, mostly on open lands, we have increased our weeds contract the last few years and are considering a seasonal position mostly focused on weeds (for open lands).

There was a question about zero-scaping? I think I responded that we look to native/drought resistant vegetation when planning any new park. We also recently completed a project with MDT for the Euclid islands where we converted the islands to essentially zero-scaping. We'd be very interested in a demonstration project for zero-scaping and will look into potential appropriate areas.

There was also a question about recycling in our parks? We have made recycling attempts in the past, specifically placing bins on the walking mall a few years past. We also have recycling bins at Mt. View Meadows Park. We need to revisit this effort as, we believe, have to use the City Contractor for recycling (we're going to check into this). For large events, we do charge the applicant/user for garbage pick-up and are interested in the potential of adding recycling to that. We would like to work with the zero waste committee on this, if possible.

There was discussion and questions about irrigation? Several years ago we did reduce our water consumption significantly through conservation efforts. Some of those savings have declined as we've added new parks and had some major leaks, etc. We are interested in exploring more options for water conservation and would be interested in working with the Citizen Conservation Board on this. Also, I forgot to mention that we have a report from Hydrosolutions that outlines the potential well placement and capacity for irrigating our parks across the City. If there's interest, I can provide that report to the CCB.

Thank you again for having me at your meeting and thanks for all the work you do – I look forward to working with all of you more!

Kristi Ponozzo  
City of Helena  
Parks, Recreation and Open Lands Director