

Helena Citizen Conservation Board
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

April 29, 2019

Mayor Collins and City Commissioners
City County Building, Room 323 City
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

Dear Mayor Collins and Commissioners:

The Helena Citizens Conservation Board (CCB) would like to take this opportunity to convey our support for (1) the City's continuance of its plastics recycling program in FY 2020 (and beyond), and (2) efforts to educate the public about how to recycle as well as how to reduce the use of plastic.

At our April 11, 2019 meeting, the Helena Public Works Director presented his March 27, 2019 memo regarding plastics recycling (attached), which had two options: continue the program "as is" (Option 1) or discontinue the program (Option 2). Unfortunately, only one benefit was provided with Option 1, "meets the public's expectations for plastics recycling." Our view is that the City's memo does not adequately convey the primary benefits of continuing the plastics recycling program in Helena, which we provide below:

- Reduced energy consumption. Plastics recycling saves a substantial amount of energy and water relative to virgin plastics in manufacturing, as documented in a [recent study commissioned by the Association of Plastic Recyclers](#). "Total energy savings were 79 percent for PET and 88 percent for both high density polyethylene and polypropylene, APR reports. Emissions reductions were 67 percent for PET and 71 percent for both HDPE and PP."
- Decreased pollution. "Plastic buried deep in landfills can leach harmful chemicals that spread into groundwater."¹
- Decreased landfill waste. For every 1 ton of plastic that's recycled, reports estimate that 7 yards of landfill space is saved.²
- Plastic waste is long-lived. "Plastic items can take up to 1000 years to decompose in landfills."³
- Recycling plastic in the Helena community is affordable. The proposed FY2020 budget for the program is \$36,240, which is only a slight increase of \$6,000 from FY2019's budget. Furthermore, since the funds to pay for this program comes from a solid waste

¹ <https://www.ehn.org/plastic-environmental-impact-2501923191.html>

² <https://www.completrecycling.com/resources/plastic-recycling>

³ <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/how-long-does-it-take-garbage-to-decompose-2878033>

assessment, those funds could be increased, if need be, at the approximate cost of 15-16 cents/household.

- Helena residents expect the City to provide recycling services. The City provides other, more costly services such as trash collection and snow removal without an expectation that the service be revenue-positive.

Given the environmental benefits of plastics recycling, combined with the low costs and the residents' expectations that the service be continued, the CCB voted unanimously in favor of Option 1 to continue the plastics recycling program.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this with CCB further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H.Cail', written in a cursive style.

Hannah Cail, Chair