

Mayor and City Commissioners of Helena
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623
Sent via email to mayorandcommissioners@helenamt.gov

Re: CCB recommendations on FY23 budget

May 31, 2022

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

Thank you for your continued support of sustainability and conservation efforts in Helena. Over the next few weeks, the Commission will be considering the City's fiscal year 2023 Budget. The Helena Citizen Conservation Board (CCB) would like to take this opportunity to express its support for and recommend the following sustainability-related items in the FY23 budget:

General Fund - #100-011

In keeping with the City's stated commitment to sustainability and action on climate change, we recommend continued support for the annual Sun Run (\$1,000), ICLEI membership (\$600), and grant matching funds (\$30,000).

The CCB also strongly supports continuing the partnership with the other local governments striving to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2030 (Resolution 20592, adopted 2/24/2020). In the past, the City has supported this partnership with \$30,000 toward a jointly-funded consultant helping to develop a "Green Tariff" proposal. This work is ongoing, and the CCB requests the City allocate \$20,000 in FY2023 for this work. The CCB also supports the City's investment in education and outreach on waste, water, and energy conservation.

Parks Department Fund - #017

The CCB supports the continued conversion of irrigated City Parks to groundwater wells (non-treated, non-potable water) while at the same time supporting continued water conservation and 'water wise' practices.

Facilities Fund - #212

The CCB recommends the City lead by example and practice water conservation and 'water wise' practices at all City properties, including increased use of xeriscaping with native and drought-tolerant landscaping e.g., as will be demonstrated at the Law and Justice Building's new xeriscape garden.

Fund #238

The CCB recommends continued support for the City's Renewable Energy Revolving Loan Program by adding \$60,000 as in previous years. This fund provides zero-interest loans to citizens installing renewable energy (such as solar) on their homes, and aids in moving the community towards the 100% clean electricity by 2030 goal of Resolution 20592.

Capital Improvements Fund - #440

Energy Savings Performance Contracting (ESPC) is a construction procurement method where an Energy Service Provider (ESP) makes efficiency upgrades to facilities yielding cost savings from energy or water conservation. Ideally these cost savings are sufficient to pay for the total project cost which is typically financed over a 15 to 20-year term. The "Performance" term in "ESPC" is intended to measure and verify the savings guaranteed in the contract. Any difference between the measured savings and the guaranteed savings will be paid to the City by the ESP. The first step in the process is an Investment Grade Audit (IGA) of the facilities. Montana law requires the entity to have funding on hand to pay for the audit in the event the project does not move forward. If a project moves forward, this audit cost can be rolled into the project financing.

The CCB recommends initiating the ESPC project in FY23, and that \$200,000 be set aside to cover the cost of the IGA in case the project does not move forward. Further, we recommend the City include the City/County Building LED lighting project in the ESPC project. For ESPC projects to be impactful requires some low cost, high savings type projects (lighting) to help pay for higher cost, lower savings type projects (HVAC, solar PV). If all the high savings projects have already been realized the ESPC becomes tough to implement. We suggest the City either redirect \$50,000 in the budget for LED lighting upgrades to the ESPC project or lower the amount needed for the budget to \$150,000.

Public Works Department/Water Fund - #521

The CCB supports 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. The CCB also supports 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.

The CCB looks forward to the recommendations of the City's water rates study later this year and recommend considering raising the water rates, particularly at the higher tiers, to encourage wise use and conservation of this precious resource. The CCB also recommends directing some of the increased revenue from water rates to support water conservation education and outreach, including funding for a City Water Conservation Specialist.

The CCB supports the upgrades of the Ten Mile Water Treatment Plant and associated infrastructure, including: funding for the Pre-Treatment plant, upgrades to the Red Mountain flume, and Ten Mile diversion structures.

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.

The CCB applauds the City's plans for additional outreach and education water conservation – for example the upcoming insert in the utility bill and recommend the City also promote water conservation at residential and commercial facilities and establish 'water wise' best practice policies for City properties and operations.

The CCB also encourages collaboration with the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District on its plans to promote 'water wise' practices and water conservation.

Public Works Department/Water/Sewer Service Lines Fund - # 522, #532

Many of Helena's service lines are 50 years old. When these older pipes fail and pipes need to be replaced, the City of Helena can help homeowners who have paid (via utility bills) into the Water Service Line Fund (#522) or the Sewer Service Line Fund (#532). The CCB supports continuation of this valuable homeowner loan program.

Public Works Department/Wastewater Fund - # 531

The CCB recognizes the efforts of staff and management at the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) as they continue to look for opportunities to conserve energy and water resources. The CCB looks forward to seeing the recommendations of the Wastewater Master Plan, currently under development, about how to holistically address and best manage wastewater collection, sources, volume, and treatment to effectively plan for future scenarios.

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

The CCB recommends making the funding available to turn the current half-time Sustainability Coordinator position into a full-time position.

The CCB recognizes and applauds the PWD's commitment to increasing public communication. Since community education is critical to ensuring that Helena's waste reduction goals are met, the HCC asks the City to add a minimum of \$40,000 to the PWD's FY23 budget for community education specifically around waste reduction. Those funds could be used, for example, to develop targeted education programs to the various sectors of Helena as well as an information website, such as those funded by the City of Missoula and Flathead County. (For reference, please see [Missoula's Pathway to Zero Waste](#) and the Flathead's [WasteNot Project](#)). Other educational components we believe will be contained in the Strategic Plan include ready-to-use educational materials, campaign-specific educational materials, and technical assistance for residents and businesses.

Finally, the CCB wholeheartedly supports carrying forward from the FY22 budget to the FY23 budget the \$90,000 for the 50kW solar project on the City Transportation Shop building (matched by a \$50,000 USB grant) and \$15,000 for EV charging stations in public parking facilities (matched by a \$25,000 DEQ grant).

Thank you for considering the Helena Citizen Conservation Board's FY23 Budget recommendations. We look forward to our continued work with you and the residents of Helena as we strive to create a stronger, more climate-resilient and healthy community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diana Hammer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Diana Hammer
Chair, Citizens' Conservation Board

cc: Tim Burton, Acting City Manager
Ryan Leland, Ed Coleman, and Leea Anderson, Public Works Department