

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

January 11, 2019

City Commission Office
City County Building, Room 323
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

Re: Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator

Dear Mayor Collins and City Commissioners:

We, the Citizen Conservation Board, formally recommend the City hire a Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator in the fiscal year 2020. The purpose of our Board is to advise the Helena City Commission regarding actions to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and to accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy that will benefit Helena's security, prosperity, and health. Since our first meeting in January 2018, we have spent our monthly meetings gathering information from various City departments (e.g., facilities, recycling, waste-water) about their programs with a focus on energy usage and conservation measures taken or being considered by the City.

Apparent after the informative presentation is the City's need for a more cohesive and strategic approach to energy conservation, which can best be achieved with a full-time, dedicated staff position. Nearly 10 years ago, the Helena Climate Change Task Force, our predecessor advisory body, published its 2009 Action Plan. At that time, the Action Plan recommended the City hire a Sustainability Coordinator to conduct education and outreach for businesses and residents on greenhouse gas reduction, water conservation, and other resource conservation measures. A detailed description of the Sustainability Coordinator is outlined on Page 16 of the 2009 Action Plan. In 2009, the City committed to hiring a 0.5 FTE position pending grant funding. However, we now request the City renew its commitment and fully fund a 1.0 FTE position as a FY20 budget line item not tied to unpredictable grant funding. We strongly believe that substantial energy savings will more than offset the cost of a Sustainability Coordinator.

The U.S. Global Change Research Program, created by Congress in 1990, recently published its Fourth National Climate Assessment. The government report details findings that are not surprising but are nonetheless alarming. Climate change is irrefutable, and the risks to human and global health are severe. We took special note of the report's Summary Findings:

Communities, governments, and businesses are working to reduce risks from and costs associated with climate change by taking action to lower greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation strategies. While mitigation and adaptation efforts have expanded substantially in the last four years, they do not yet approach the scale considered necessary to avoid substantial damages to the economy, environment, and human health over the coming decades.

Given the gravity of climate change to our city, state, nation, and world, in order to effectuate change at the local level, the City of Helena must prioritize hiring a full-time Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator to effectively explore, recommend, and implement conservation measures and to coordinate a comprehensive conservation strategy for the Helena community.

Many of Montana's cities already invest in Conservation & Sustainability Coordinators, such as Missoula, Bozeman, and Butte-Silver Bow. We ask the City of Helena to invest in the future of our community and fully fund a full-time Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator position charged with educating the public, monitoring the City's energy consumption, and recommending conservation and sustainability measures to help the City reach sustainability goals that prompted the creation of our Citizen Conservation Board in light of the Paris Climate Accord.

We cannot emphasize the importance of this recommendation enough. While we are working to make recommendations to the City on conservation measures, we are only a volunteer Board that meets only monthly and many of us have full-time jobs. The 2009 Helena Climate Change Task Force Action Plan recommended, and the City committed to lead Helena towards energy security, water conservation, and greenhouse gas emission reductions across every department of municipal operations. With a full-time Conservation & Sustainability Coordinator, the City can better accomplish the goals of the 2009 Action Plan and the Paris Climate Accord; therefore, we urge the City of Helena to renew its commitment toward our shared goals in conserving energy and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to the City's response.

Sincerely,

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

Hannah Cail
Chair