

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING
January 9, 2019– 4:00 p.m.
Room 330, City-County Building
316 N. Park Avenue

1. Call to order, introductions, opening comments – Mayor Collins called the meeting to order. Commissioners Haladay, Noonan, O’Loughlin and Wicks were present. Staff present was: Acting City Manager Troy McGee; City Attorney Thomas Jodoin; Deputy City Attorney Iryna O’Connor; Fire Chief Mark Emert; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Public Works Director Randall Camp; Assistant Public Works Director Libbi Lovshin; Street Superintendent David Knoepke; Capital Transit Supervisor Elroy Goleman; Interim Parks and Recreation Director Craig Marr; Administrative Services Director Glenn Jorgenson; Budget Manager Nikki Davidson; Community Facilities Superintendent Troy Sampson; and City Clerk Debbie Havens.

Others in attendance were Kathy Marks and the Center for Mental Health Executive Director.

2. November 28, 2018 Summary – The November 28, 2018 administrative meeting summary was approved as submitted.

3. Commission comments, questions –

Upcoming Appointments – Mayor Collins is recommending the following appointments:

Board of Adjustment

Appointment of Camie Zufelt to the Board of Adjustment. The unexpired term will begin upon appointment and expire September 30, 2021.

Helena Open Lands Management Advisory Committee (HOLMAC)

Appointment of Brian Barnes to HOLMAC. The unexpired term will begin upon appointment and expire on June 30, 2021.

Lewis & Clark County Heritage Preservation Tourism Council

Appointment of Renee Kelley to the Heritage Preservation Commission. The unexpired term will begin upon appointment and expire June 30, 2021.

Public Art Committee

Reappointment of Anatasia Burton and Abigail St. Lawrence. Terms will begin upon appointment and expire December 31, 2021.

Appointment of Lou Archambault and Kristin Drees to the Public Art Committee. Unexpired terms will begin upon appointment and expire December 31, 2019 and December 31, 2020.

Zoning Commission

Appointment of David (Kim) Wilson to the Zoning Commission. Unexpired term will begin upon appointment and expire September 30, 2021.

Commissioner O’Loughlin referred to the Zoning Commission recommendation of Mr. Kim Wilson and noted he has been involved with a legal case with the city. She asked if members of various boards recuse themselves when there is a conflict of interest. Attorney Jodoin noted if there is a conflict, members of the various boards do not participate in the meeting.

Commissioner O’Loughlin also asked if Brian Barnes, who is being recommended to be appointed to HOLMAC, has been notified of HOLMAC meetings being held on-site to review various proposals. City Clerk Havens reviewed the criteria Mayor Collins used when making the recommendation to appoint Mr. Barnes. She also stated that Mr. Barnes had not been contacted regarding HOLMAC meetings being held at various sites.

Commissioner Noonan referred to the water and wastewater service line program and asked if there is a date certain that the assessment would sunset. Commissioner Haladay responded with the rates the commission adopted it was estimated the assessment would sunset within 6-8 years. Administrative Services Director Jorgenson noted it was originally 10-12 years for a self-funded program; however, it may take longer with the language that was included in the final resolution.

Mayor Collins noted he is looking at doing an outreach effort to educate the citizens on why the commission adopted the water and wastewater service line programs. Acting Manager McGee stated the citizens understand the process; however, the commission may want to reach out and explain the reasoning for adopting the two programs.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked how many people have reached out to access the program. Director Jorgenson stated at this time, there are two persons who is interested in using the program.

4. City Manager's Report – Acting Manager McGee referred the commission to handout on the Update on Snow Plowing Readiness.

A. Separate the Helena Parking Commission and Helena Business Improvement District to make them two separate and distinct boards with certain overlapping members –

Acting Manager McGee introduced the agenda item and asked City Attorney to give the staff report. Staff would like the commission's guidance to move forward or not.

Attorney Jodoin reported on July 15, 1991, the Helena City Commission passed Resolution No. 10295 establishing a separate Helena Parking Commission ("HPC") pursuant to the provision of § 7-14-4603, MCA. On July 24, 2000, the Helena City Commission passed Resolution No. 11516 creating the Downtown Business Improvement District ("BID") for a ten-year term. Subsequently, on October 16, 2000, the City Commission passed Resolution No. 11577 appointing the Downtown Business Improvement District Board of Trustees as the Helena Parking Commission. This action is permitted by the provisions of §7-14-4609(3), MCA, which allows the legislative body of a city to designate the board of trustees of a BID as the parking commission if the area of the BID is generally coterminous with the area designated in the resolution creating the parking commission. The City Commission passed Resolution No. 19766 on August 9, 2010, renewing the BID for another ten (10) year term.

The City Manager now proposes that the BID Board of Trustees and the Helena Parking Commission be separated into two (2) separate boards. If the City Commission wants to pursue the separation of the two boards, the City Manager recommends that one member from each board be appointed to sit on the other.

Pursuant to § 7-14-4609(1) the HPC must consist of not fewer than five (5) but no more than seven (7) electors of the city. Following initial appointment, Commissioners are appointed for four (4) year terms.

Pursuant to § 7-12-1121(1) the BID board of trustees must consist of not fewer than five (5) but no more than seven (7) owners of property within the district or their assignees. Board members serve four (4) year terms.

Two separate boards will reduce the instances of potential conflict when the priorities of the BID do not fully align with the priorities of the HPC. However, the views of each body will still be represented on both boards as one member from each board will be appointed to the other.

Acting Manager McGee noted the BID/HPC board took a vote and supports the recommendation to make two separate boards. Commissioner Noonan concurred the board did vote in favor of moving forward. He noted he has never noticed a conflict of issues for the board. He stated he does not fully understand the recommendation; however, there needs to be some overlap of the two boards.

Director Hewitt stated he too hasn't seen any conflict; however, the board was established when the parking commission employees were not city employees. Attorney Jodoin noted the BID is a legal entity and has to have their own legal representation and insurance; the parking commission is an advisory board to the city.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if there should be some overlapping members on both boards. Attorney Jodoin stated that Manager Taylor and he met with the BID/HPC board and discussed there would be at least one member that would overlap; however, it could be up to two.

Consensus Direction to the Manager - Move forward in making two separate and distinct boards with certain overlapping members.

5. Department Discussions

Public Works

Transit Rates – Public Works Director Camp introduced the agenda item and asked Transit Supervisor Goleman to give the staff report. Supervisor Goleman presented a PowerPoint presentation on the recommendation on transit rates.

Supervisor Goleman reported each year, the City Commission may adjust fares and charges for services of the transit system. Staff has researched the fare structures, ridership, other services such as weekend and holiday service, hours of operation and resources such as bus types, Full Time Equivalent (FTE's) and on call drivers.

The current Capital Transit formerly known as Helena Area Transit Service (HATS) began public transit service in 1979. Prior to HATS, the service was called Dial-a-ride and was a privately operated transportation service for seniors. In 1999 the current fixed route loop service called checkpoint was established. This service operated on a counter-clockwise loop circling the city every hour to hour and a quarter.

In 1979 the fare for a ride on Dial-a-Ride was \$0.85 cents one way. This fare closely mirrored the price of a gallon of gas 1979, which according to U.S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of Economic Analysis was 85.9 cents per gallon. However, according to information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates the average cost nationwide for a ride using public transportation in 1979 was \$1.86 one way.

Currently the base charge for a one way fare for fixed route or paratransit service is still \$0.85 cents for either service. Based upon the information from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis the current national average for a gallon of gas is approximately \$2.45 per gallon. In addition, information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates the average cost nationwide for a ride using fixed route public transportation costs approximately \$7.49 one way and a para transit ride on average costs \$15.00 for a one way ride.

Even though all of our fixed route bus stops meet all ADA standards giving all persons the ability to travel as they wish. The established fare for our para-transit service is .85-cents which is the same as the fare for our general ridership passengers who utilize our fixed route system. Since the fare is the same our para-transit service allows individuals with physical, mental and general aging issues to continue to be as independent as their condition allows. It must also be noted that a customer showing their para-transit card can ride the fixed route buses for .50-cents if they choose this option.

The purpose of fixed route systems is to be the preferred choice for riders of the transit system. However, fixed route services are required to comply with the federal requirement to provide the complimentary service known commonly as para transit. At present time Capital Transits Origin to Destination Para Transit Ridership numbers are out pacing the ridership of our fixed route system.

According to the comparison information Capital Transit has the highest percentage of paratransit ridership (51%) of the Montana communities contacted. The second highest was Kalispell at 26.8%. One of the common items found for the high percentage of ridership on the complimentary service was the fare cost matched that of the fixed route service. By provide the service at the same rate there is no incentive to transition to the fixed route system. Another factor that contributes to our higher para transit ridership is based upon our para transit service area. Capital Transit provides the para transit service City wide while the other Montana Communities contacted do not go beyond the Federal minimum when providing para transit service which is to provide the complimentary service within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile a fixed route.

Due to the current level of para transit service and current fare structure it may be difficult to provide or expand our public transportation beyond our current service levels such the ability to consider other services requested by developers, the riding public and as recommended by the current Transportation Development Plan (TDP). These items include:

- Not consider additional adding new fixed routes to serve commercial development locations
- Not consider additional expansions of services such as services for evenings or weekends.
- May need to consider shrinking our current para transit service to match the federally required minimum of serving an area no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the established fixed route system.

Based upon our current ridership information staff submits the following options for consideration:

1. Continue with the current fare structure with no increase.
2. Adjust our the base fare for a fixed route ride to \$1.00

3. Allow children under 6 and para transit riders with a para transit card to ride the fixed route buses for free.
4. Increase our same day para transit fare from \$0.85 to \$5.00
5. Charge the federally allowed fare charge for a para transit, which is no more than 2 times the amount charged for a fixed route ride.
6. Restructure the Bus pass system currently in place by creating a fixed route unlimited bus pass but retaining the punch pass for para transit riders:
7. Limit demand response service to the ¾ mile area only.
8. Other options that may consist of combinations fare options listed above.

Supervisor Goleman referred the commission to the proposed fixed route bus pass and the proposed para transit punch pass rates; the draft resolution setting fares and chares for all customers; the Capital Transit ridership history.

Supervisor Goleman reviewed the services and fees of the other cities in the state. The city of Helena was opened five holidays in 2018 and the para transit community used it extensively.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked what the additional revenue is with the recommendation. Assistant Public Works Director Lovshin stated around \$10,000; which would help pay for a full-time driver. Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if that projection includes the para transit rates. Assistant Director Lovshin stated the projection is just the fixed route rate increase of \$.15.

Commissioner Wicks asked if this recommendation moves forward will there be a public outreach to educate the public of the changes. Supervisor Goleman stated there would be a public outreach effort.

Commissioner Noonan stated approximately 3.5 years ago the commission considered a rate increase; however, there was a public outcry and it was not approved. Rates have not been increased since 1979 and he believes it is time to look at increasing the rates. However, he would not support the increase of the \$5.00 para-transit service. Staff has done an excellent job in promoting the fixed route and he feels the 3rd fixed route is crucial to continue the level of service.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if staff, in the past year, has reached out to possible sponsors as requested by the commission. At the same time the commission requested this, they offered to be involved in contacting businesses. Director Camp noted there was a consultant that was trying to solicit partners; however, the effort has stalled out as no businesses agreed to participate.

Commissioner Haladay asked when was the last time staff reached out to the larger businesses in Helena. Director Camp stated it was two or three years ago. Commissioner Haladay stated he asked his first year on the commission and he is now asking again when is this is going to happen. Director Camp stated he fulfilled his direction from the city manager; however, it did not move forward from there. Mayor Collins stated every one of the businesses mentioned are under new leadership; staff needs to reach out and get this done.

Commissioner Noonan stated to justify the large increase, we would have to provide additional services; i.e. extended evening hours or week-end service.

Supervisor Goleman clarified the recommendation to increase the para transit rate from \$.85 to \$5.00 is for the same day service; this would hopefully encourage people to schedule their rides prior to the day they need it.

Mayor Collins emphasized the importance of a public outreach to educate the public on all recommended rate increases.

Commissioner Wicks asked what is the amount staff would be asking for corporate sponsorship, is it \$10,000 and has a two pronged approach been considered; for example if a certain threshold was raised by corporate sponsors, the rate would only have to be increased a certain amount. Director Camp noted the original proposal was to raise enough funding through corporate sponsors to offer a rate free system. The donors would off-set the general fund contributions.

Commissioner Haladay stated we lower the fare for someone who uses the fixed routes; who qualifies for para-transit, what numbers do we see from that right now, how many individuals choose that option for the \$.35 savings; how do we track that. Supervisor Goleman stated the fares are paid manually by coin or token and there is no way for the driver to know if it is a discounted fare or not. Commissioner Haladay asked if we do not log that information into a data base. Supervisor Goleman stated there is no way to track if it is a discounted fare; the buses are not automated.

Commissioner Wicks stated is doesn't do much good to raise the fare, if we cannot track what we collect. What she is hearing is if the rate is increased, we still cannot track what we collect.

Commissioner Haladay referred to the 2019 state transit service comparison charges and noted the City of Kalispell's rate is higher than Helena; however, they have 72.5% fixed route ridership and 26.5 paratransit ridership. Commissioner Haladay stated just by the pure dollar amount; how do we change the ridership from para-transit to fixed. Supervisor Goleman state he is not sure how Kalispell administers their fares and ridership.

Commissioner Haladay asked if we have looked at reducing the distance of the para-transit routes and if the fixed routes are complete within the service districts. Supervisor Goleman stated all bus stops are in compliance regarding sidewalks. Commissioner Haladay commented there may be sidewalks adjacent to the bus stop and then within one block there are no longer sidewalks. There needs to be accessibility to the fixed routes to assure the para-transit ridership accessibility. It does not make sense to talk about some of the issues without addressing the issues of accessibility. Commissioner Haladay stated at this time, he cannot justify an increase as additional information needs to be provided to the commission and feels he has been lied to about reaching out to community partners. What is our end goal, the commission needs the information on the recommended increases and the services being offered. It is irresponsible to consider an increase prior to receiving all the data. We are not ready to consider the increase.

Commissioner Noonan concurred with Commissioner Haladay's comments and asked staff to develop a realistic approach. He referenced the 4J's casino not having sidewalks; how do we implement more sidewalks.

Commissioner Wicks stated she is interested in seeing any potential increase in rates tied to expanded services and lower prices for para-transit riders.

Public Comment: Executive Director for the Center for Mental Health stated their clients do use public transportation and are on limited income. This is an important service.

Consensus Direction to the Manager – Staff will reach out to businesses to ask for sponsorships, prepare a better proposal that provides the commission the data they need to make a decision. Staff needs to have a further discussion on their recommendation.

Commissioner Haladay stated he does not disagree with raising rates; however, there has been no effort to do anything but to raise rates. Staff has not followed through on the sponsorship portion; who have we reached out to and what have they said. After that, we need to see where we build from there. Commissioner Haladay stated once all the information is available, bring the entire package back before the commission.

Community Facilities/Administrative Services

LED Lights – Helena Citizen Conservation Board Recommendation – Facilities

Superintendent Troy Sampson reported on November 8, 2018 the Citizen Conservation Board voted to recommend the City pursue converting all city-owned lights to LEDs expeditiously.

The conservation board is recommending the City coordinate with Northwestern Energy in their current conversion project that is replacing approximately 3,500 Northwestern Energy owned street lights in Helena. The City of Helena owns approximately 2% of the street lights in Helena (exact number unknown). The City's lights will not be replaced under the current project.

Pros:

1. Approximately 50% energy savings
2. LED fixtures life expectancy is 2-3 times longer than current fixtures.
3. If we coordinate with Northwestern Energy, we can take advantage of their fixture pricing if purchased through them.

Cons:

1. Unknown cost at the time the memo was written; however, staff has received the costs of the fixtures.
2. No funds allocated in the current FY19 budget.

Present Situation:

Northwestern Energy is currently working with the city to determine if we can change our light fixtures for LED lights under their contract. If not, the other option is to contract with their contractor separately while they are here working. Since it will take several months to complete the Helena conversion staff feels we have adequate time to determine the most efficient and cost effective method. Staff was working on this prior to the Citizen Conservation Board's memo.

One other issue that is taking time is trying to figure out which lights we own and we just pay metered charges, and which ones Northwestern Energy owns and we pay the energy and pole charges. This can affect which ones can go under their contract and which we may have to contract for separately due to liability. This may add additional time for a decision to be made, but staff is working on this currently also.

Director Jorgenson noted Northwestern Energy will be providing costs estimates to replace the city owned lights. The city needs to know how many lights we own and will continue to work with Northwestern Energy to move the project forward. Staff hopes to have the information within the next couple of months.

Public Comment: Diana Hammer; Citizen Conservation Committee; spoke of the significant savings for the city when replacing the current bulbs with LED lights.

Denise Barber stated the main reason NW Energy is doing this is the supply of sodium lights is going away. There is not a lot of money available to complete this project. Hopefully the funding can be found and if not FY19; a line item in FY20.

Consensus Direction to the Manager – Move forward with the project and continue to work with Northwestern Energy to complete the project in FY19.

Mayor Collins reported he and Transportation Director Tooley visited a crosswalk at the corner of Euclid and Granite and noted many vehicles do not stop for pedestrians. MDT has recognized crosswalks are difficult to monitor. Attorney Jodoin stated vehicles are to yield to pedestrians at any intersection.

6. Committee discussions

A. Helena Citizens Council – No report given.

7. Review of agenda for January 14, 2019 Commission meeting –

8. Public comment – Mayor Collins asked for public comment, none was received.

9. Commission discussion and direction to City Manager – Commissioner Noonan recognized the work of the Police and Fire Departments in the last month with the large fires. Mayor Collins noted he called the displaced families and they all appreciated the police and fire departments.

10. Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.