

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING

**April 17, 2019– 4:00 p.m.
Room 326, 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: City Manager Ana Cortez; City Attorney Thomas Jodoin; Deputy City Attorney Iryna O’Connor; Police Captain Curt Stinson; Interim Fire Chief Ken Wood; Community Development Director Sharon Haugen; Public Works Director Randall Camp; City Engineer Ryan Leland; Street Superintendent David Knoepke; Interim Parks & Recreation Director Craig Marr; Open Lands Manager Brad Langsather; Finance Director Glenn Jorgenson; Parking Director Dave Hewitt; Community Facilities Superintendent Troy Sampson; Human Resource Director James Fehr and City Clerk Debbie Havens.

Others in attendance was Courtenay Sprunger, Principal of Big Sky Public Relations; and MDT Representatives Doug Wilmot, Carol Strizich and RJ Snyder; HCC Representative Nancy Perry; BID Director Micky Zurcher; BID Board member Lee Shubert; Kevin Hamm; IR Reporter Thomas Plank and Jeff Hindoien.

2. April 3, 2019 Summary – The April 3, 2019 administrative meeting summary was approved as submitted.

3. Commission comments, questions – No commission comments.

4. City Manager’s Report

Manager Cortez reported that she, Dennis Taylor and Public Works Director Camp met with MDT Director Mike Tooley and his leadership team to discuss the following items:

- Introductions and general discussion of the partnership between the city and MDT.
- Five-Point Intersection Study and Financial Partnerships – At this time MDT considers this area to be functional for auto and pedestrian traffic and does not offer financial support for these studies. However, the BUILD Grants Program, which replaces the TIGER Grant Program, offers funding for economic development projects. Kalispell just secured a BUILD Grant.

Manager Cortez spoke of the advantages the BUILD Grants offer rural communities. Director Tooley advised that securing a BUILD Grant would be more likely if the communications were between the city and Washington DC. Therefore, at some point, a delegation of the commission may travel to Washington DC to ask for financial support on an economic project that has some transportation implications. Director Tooley reaffirmed MDT uses the TCC as the space for conversations between MDT, the county and the city. City staff recommends we elevate those communications so there is direct interaction between the City Commission and the Governor’s office.

- Kessler School Pedestrian Crossing – City representatives noted this is a safety issue. The project is in the 2020 timeline. The city expressed our desire to either fund or install the safety improvements on Highway 12. Director Tooley indicated only certified staff can work on federal funded projects and project management is difficult.

- 14th Street Traffic Light - MDT indicated this project is budgeted for 2020. Given where these two projects are it was determined it would be best for MDT to continue to do the work.
- Assess the feasibility of a policy space and the creation of a policy space to be shared between the city and MDT Executive Leadership teams.

Manager Cortez referred the commission to the “yellow card” in their packet that listed all the public communication opportunities there will be to discuss the new parking equipment that will be installed downtown.

Commissioner O’Loughlin commented it would be beneficial to have further conversations with MDT. Staff and the commission can have a follow-up conversation on what structure makes the most sense. She also suggested including the Montana League of Cities and Towns and others in the conversation.

Commissioner O’Loughlin commented in light of the conversation staff had with Director Tooley, should we consider scaling back the scope of the project; do we need to include the expanded scope recommended by MDT. Does the city need to rethink about the substantive scope of the study as it relates to economic development piece of this or do we feel the scope of the study we have in place will give us what we need to obtain federal funding. Manager Cortez stated staff would provide answers to Commissioner O’Loughlin’s questions at the April 22 commission meeting.

Commissioner Wicks stated she attended the MBAC meeting and there was discussion on the five-point study and it sounds like there may be a few economic development projects that are being discussed that may utilize the five-point study. She then asked when the study would be complete and that we know what is going to happen with the traffic flow.

Commissioner O’Loughlin noted Mayor Collins had the opportunity to meet with Director Tooley to tour the area near Kessler School and asked him for his feedback regarding the safety issue on Euclid Avenue. Mayor Collins stated he met with Director Tooley who saw first-hand the safety issues and indicated the project would be looked at for the summer of 2019. He is surprised that the project is being put back to 2020 and asked MDT Representative Wilmot how the city commission could request this project be put on an accelerated timeline. Mr. Wilmot gave an overview on how the beacon crosswalk project is moving forward and he will carry the message back to Director Tooley.

Mayor Collins commented this should not be a reactionary project; it is a safety issue. Commissioner Haladay noted NMTAC has a video of students trying to cross the street and teachers having to assist them to get safely across Euclid Avenue. It is a terrifying situation for school children. Commissioner Noonan stated thinking that someone has to get hurt before this project can move forward is a scary thought.

A. Custer Avenue Project Update – Manager Cortez introduced Courtenay Sprunger, Principal of Big Sky Public Relations and MDT Representatives Doug Wilmot and RJ Snyder.

Project Manager Snyder gave an overview of the Custer Avenue Project, what has been completed and an estimated timeline for the project to be completed. Mr. Snyder spoke of the project being complicated due to all of the underground utilities and the possibility of having to re-locate the Yellowstone Pipeline and the wetlands in the area. The draft design of a typical section is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2019.

MDT Wilmot concurred with Mr. Snyder's remarks and noted at this time a couple of options are being looked at; expanding Custer Avenue to five-lanes with a center turn lane with signals or four-lanes with roundabouts. The city will be heavily involved with the project. There has been and will continue to be public meetings and the goal is to begin construction in five to six years.

MDT Representative Strizich spoke on the funding for the project and the action taken by the TCC to move this project forward.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked when the project would be completed. Project Manager Snyder stated once construction begins, it would be two years. However, if it is constructed in phases, it will be longer. He again stated it would be five to six years before construction begins and noted MDT has not yet acquired all of the right-of-way and not all of the funding has been secured. MDT Representative Wilmot added a five-year schedule is typical for a normal project; however, this is a complex urban project. A bigger factor is that not all of the funding has been secured and the project is currently estimated between \$21-28-million dollars, including \$6-million if the pipeline has to be moved. Construction could begin in 2023; however, may need to be completed in phases.

Commissioner Haladay stated in regards to the costs, when this was put in the Long-Term Transportation Plan, Appendix F anticipated costs of \$7.5 million. How did we miss this so atrociously; he understands the costs go up and the pipeline is an added cost; but we missed it by 100%. MDT representative Carol Strizich explained how the construction project may have been estimated; however, it did not include the design and moving of utilities. She did not recall if other phases were included in the original estimation. She would have to look at the original costs estimate, as it may not have included everything.

Commissioner Haladay referred to the traffic impact study and noted the Custer Avenue project does not include any improvements to the "choke points" adjacent to Custer, including Henderson Avenue, Green Meadow Drive, Benton Avenue. Mr. Snyder stated the traffic study did not include impacts to the "choke points".

Commissioner Haladay stated at the time, the majority of the city commission opposed this project on the points of building Custer Avenue and not addressing the other major traffic issues. The commission just talked about the pedestrian crossing at Kessler School and noted Custer Avenue has two schools on it. Traffic will drive 45-50 mph; this was a dangerous idea for non-motorized traffic. There is going to be a mega highway in the center of residential area with two schools.

Project Manager Snyder stated MDT has looked at some hypothetical scenarios and they will work with city staff on alternative design options for non-motorized transportation.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if the Custer Avenue project would come back to the city commission for any further action. Commissioner Haladay stated we were told the city can comment, but the city commission will take no further action. MDT Representative Wilmot commented the city is one of the key stakeholders and throughout the process, there will be public comment. In his opinion, the city is as an important partner as MDT.

Commissioner Noonan thanked MDT representatives for attending the meeting. He noted National Avenue is another feeder street onto Custer Avenue that has problems. Is it the assumption not only the funds that have been accumulated but also the funds across all the years up until the project is completed will go to the Custer Avenue project. MDT Representative Strizich concurred and noted the only way to move the project forward, there had to be a completed funding package and explained what was included in the package.

Manager Cortez stated for the record that the Custer Avenue Project is estimated to be a \$30-million dollar project with a completion date of 2025. MDT representatives stated they cannot state what the final cost will be until the project is designed. If the design is complete and the funding is available, construction may begin in 2025.

Commissioner Haladay asked what if there is not funding available when the project is ready to move forward. MDT representative Wilmot stated MDT would advocate doing the project in phases.

Further discussion was held on what funding is currently available and what sources are contributing to Custer Avenue, including the urban funds and borrowing forward

Manager Cortez again stated the estimated cost is \$28 to \$30-million with no completion date as it depends on the funding. Manager Cortez stated up to \$17-million might be able to be borrowed. MDT Representatives Strizich clarified with the current funding and what is accumulated by the time the construction begins, which is projected to be 2023, and five years of borrow, the total of urban funds would be approximately \$17-million. MDT Representative Wilmot stated currently the project is estimated between \$21 and \$28-million, which includes the relocation of the pipeline. At this time, there is \$6-million available. Manager Cortez stated the concern is the city cannot use any urban funds while we are putting it away for a project that is not a city priority.

Commissioner Haladay stated it is frustrating as the city was concerned at the time that we only had \$3.5-million in the bank and we were moving forward with a project estimated at \$7.5 to \$9-million.

Commissioner Wicks stated she appreciates the update; however, the city commission did not prioritize this project, there is not adequate funding and as of today, we do not know what the project will look like. Why are we moving forward and who is moving the project forward. MDT is moving forward and will re-engage the city and county and present the information that is available. The comments received today from the commission, will go through the design process. The whole purpose of design is to get information.

Mayor Collins asked is this the same information the commission received on the original project. Commissioner Haladay asked if the city looked around today and decided we are not being good stewards of urban funds, could the city shut the project down. Manager Cortez stated the commission could direct her to look into the matter to see what options may be available.

Commissioner O'Loughlin stated she would like to have a follow-up conversation with staff on this project and possibly pull in the TCC and county.

B. Business Improvement District 2020 Strategy – Manager Cortez referred the commission to the handout that included the following items:

- **BID Goals**
- **City Goals – Downtown Master Plan**
- **BID Policy Direction**
- **City and BID Pilot: Project Renaissance**

Manager Cortez reviewed the information in the handout and spoke on the individual bullet points. BID Director Zurcher spoke on the following goals of the BID:

- Improve downtown property values
- T do so through events, streetscape, maintenance, programs
- Principles: Walkable, connected, desirable, alive, convenient.

Commissioner Noonan asked BID Director Zurcher if she and the BID Board are comfortable with the proposal. Director Zurcher stated the financial situation has yet to be presented to the BID Board. The next BID meeting is May 9 and she will present it to the board. Director Zurcher also stated she believes the proposed project will work and will be a good partnership between the city and the BID.

Mayor Collins called for public comment, none received.

Commissioner O'Loughlin stated this is a good idea and asked Manager Cortez to keep the commission posted on the conversation with the BID Board. We need to make sure it works for both parties.

5. Department Requests – No items to discuss

6. Department Presentations

Finance Department – Fiscal Year 2020 Budget - Finance Director Jorgenson referred the commission to the handout and asked for commission comments/questions on the following:

External Organization Budgets

IT&S Security/Upgrades/Capacity Building - \$93,000 – no questions

Community Service Program – no change being requested – no questions

Humane Society – 5% increase – commission consensus with 5% increase

Historic Preservation Program - no increase – County is okay with the City's \$20, 000 – no questions

HCTV – extension of contract for one-year and will align with county contract – 2% increase –

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked how much does the city contributes versus the county. Finance Director Jorgenson stated the city contributes approximately \$20,000 more than the county.

MBAC –no change – no questions

General Fund External Organization Donations

Benton Avenue – not requesting support

Helena Friends of Pets – requesting \$10,000

Wild About Cats – requesting \$5,000

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if FY19 was the first year the city contributed to Wild About Cats. Director Jorgenson stated yes and explained originally it was Helena Friends of Pets; however, Wild About Cats split from the organization to create their own. Commissioner Haladay stated with the recommended change of funding for FY21; he would support leaving both requests status quo for FY20. Commissioner O'Loughlin stated she would support giving each organization what they received last year, \$3,500.

Commissioner Noonan stated he would support a small increase for each organization.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if there was additional information on the services provided by these two organizations. Manager Cortez responded Helena Friends of Pets brought in veterinarians that comes to the facility to spay/neuter and donates a portion of their services. Finance Director Jorgenson noted Wild About Cats provide vouchers for services.

Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if either organization submitted a budget on where the revenue comes from and the expenses. Director Jorgenson stated both indicate that both organizations show they spend what they receive.

Commissioner O'Loughlin stated she would not support increasing the FY20 budget; especially since the process is going to go to an RFP process for FY21.

Mayor Collins stated he would support increasing each budget by \$1,500. Commissioner Noonan suggested giving Helena Friends of Pets \$5,000 and Wild About Cats \$4,500.

Commissioner Haladay stated he would leave funding status quo at this time. He asked that this be brought back for further discussion. Manager Cortez concurred and noted staff is not asking for a decision at this time.

General Fund External Organization Contributions

Sun Run – no change, commission consensus with \$1,000

Symphony Under the Stars – no change, commission consensus with \$5,000.

Manager Cortez noted staff is proposing a competitive process to secure city funds; “Notice of Funding Availability” (NOFA). The proposed process has clearer transparency and any non-profit can apply. A letter would be mailed to all entities explaining the new process. There was commission concurrence to proceed. Commissioner O'Loughlin asked, as an example, would HCTV and Lewis & Clark Library have to submit a letter for their funding and who would receive the letter. Manager Cortez stated smaller non-profits would receive the NOFA funding letter. She then noted HCTV has a contract with the city and stated a contract would be signed with any organization receiving funding. She then commented recently there was a conversation with the Ambulance Board in which the city and county indicated that particular contract was awarded 20-years ago; it is time to reconsider the contract. She noted the outcome might be the same; however, that is not the point. The point is we are stewards of public funds and have to be transparent and show evidence we are monitoring the work. With HCTV, we will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) specifically requesting services pertaining to the broadcasting of our public meetings. Again, the outcome may be the same.

Parks & Recreation - Urban Forestry and Open Lands Assessment – Interim Parks & Recreation Director Marr referred the commission to the Parks & Recreation Assessments handout and reviewed the following bullet points:

- Policy Framework: Assessment for Urban Forestry and Open Lands
- Urban Forestry Assessment Proposal FY2020 – Assessment increased in 2014 to \$1.75/month
- Current Revenue and Proposed Increase – Monthly increase per parcel of \$1.50; would fund 4.15 FTE for FY20 (increase of 1.75 FTE);
- How Did We Calculate the New Rate
- Open Lands Assessment Proposal for FY2020 – Assessment increased in 2015 to \$20.00 min/parcel. Recommendation of \$.75 monthly increase per parcel; would fund one FTE and four seasonal staff.
- How Did We Calculate the New Rate
- Projections
- How Do We Compare with other Cities.

Commissioner Noonan asked with the proposed increase, would there be an increase with the number of trees that would be planted. Director Marr stated the plan is to remove some of

the green ash trees and replace them with a diversity of species. Commissioner Noonan stated he would support the recommended increase of \$1.50 per month.

Commissioner O'Loughlin referred to the addition of 1.75 FTE on the ground and asked what that means for the number of trees being removed and planted. Director Marr stated it could potentially double the work capacity.

Commissioner Haladay stated the Open Lands proposal makes sense to him and noted it helps to talk about what people are getting for this assessment.

Commissioner Haladay asked in regards to the increase on the parcels, did we run the numbers of what the increase would be if we did not put it on the base rate but instead obtained it off the square footage multiplier(impervious area) and what would be required for that increase. Commissioner Haladay would like to see the numbers for both the base rate and impervious areas. The numbers make sense just how we get there is the question. Commissioner O'Loughlin concurred with Commissioner Haladay request and comments. Manager Cortez stated staff would make that part of the presentation when they bring it back before the commission.

Commissioner Noonan asked if HOLMAC going to remove the bike jumps. Manager Cortez stated any changes to open lands would be made by the commission, not staff or committees.

Director Marr clarified the jumps that were being discussed for removal are not official jumps and are along Davis Gulch. At this time, nothing will be done until further direction.

Commissioner O'Loughlin commented the current revenue funds one full time and four seasonal staff and asked if we also have contracted services. Director Marr stated yes, both the forestry and weed management is paid through contract services. Commissioner O'Loughlin noted any new project needs to be factored into the proposal. Director Marr stated those projects are factored in the proposed increase. However, new acquisitions are not factored into the budget. Commissioner O'Loughlin asked if the proposed budget include the traffic calming on Beattie Street. Director Marr stated there is no specific recommendations for traffic calming in the proposed budget. Commissioner O'Loughlin stated the commission is interested in some traffic calming measures. Engineer Leland stated the traffic calming was recommended for bulb-outs and additional signage at Clinton Park. Staff will continue to work on a recommendation and bring it back for commission discussion/decision.

Manager Cortez stated there would be different projects from year to year; the goal is to capture revenue for these types of projects.

City Attorney – Update on the USFS Tenmile Lawsuit - City Attorney Jodoin reported he is still looking for an outside attorney to work on the USFS Tenmile lawsuit. He will keep the commission updated.

7. Committee discussions

Helena Citizens Council – No report

8. Review of agenda for April 22, 2019 Commission meeting – No discussion held.

10. Public comment – Roberta appeared before the commission to request the city's support to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. Commissioner O'Loughlin stated she has had a conversation with another citizen asking the city to pass a resolution in support of the

state's efforts. There was a bill proposes this legislative session that did not pass both chambers. She asked what would be the best timing for the city to weigh in. Bozeman and Missoula have both passed resolutions in support of Indigenous Day. There was commission concurrence to have staff draft a resolution of support for the change.

Jeff Hindoien, School Board Member; however, speaking as a resident of Helena and a parent asked if the commission is going to give serious consideration to the elimination of the School Resource Offices, that the process be clear and transparent to the community.

11. Commission discussion and direction to City Manager – Manager Cortez summarized staff will contact MDT regarding moving forward with the Custer Avenue project; bring forward the Open Lands and Urban Forestry assessments and prepare a resolution of support for an Indigenous Peoples Day.

12. Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.