



Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
Minutes

February 22nd, 2023, 7:00pm

Zoom: or in person room 326

Meeting was called to order by HCC Chair Cole Rosling at 7:02pm

Attendance: John E Andrew, Patricia Bik, Diana Hammer, Nancy Perry, Joe Lehman, Ben Kuiper, Nolan Harris, Lowell Chandler, Paige Myers, Emily Mowers, Michael Monaco, Rachel Okpal, Dylan Klapmeier, Cole Rosling, Erinn Donnell, Heidi Friendlander, Elizabeth Maida-Gerhart, Steve Allen, Susan Smith, Chelly Hasquet, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth-Barber, Susan Steffens, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

Excused: John R Andrew, Ryan Schwochert, Margaret Strachan

Guests: Dannai Clayborn (Clerk of Commission), Alyx Monteil (Deputy Clerk of Commission) Dr. Thomas G.

A Quorum was established - yes

Approval of January 2023 Minutes – Minutes are approved with no changes.

Public Comment – None

Update on City Advisory Boards – Dannai Clayborn (Clerk of Commission)

Dannai Clayborn said there were no huge updates to report on regarding the Advisory Board process. The city staff and city attorney are now reviewing the HPAC's resolution. They are looking at the addition of youth members, policy points and term limits. There may be more discussion/decisions made about HPAC at the March 8th Admin Commission meeting. Dannai will keep Peggy Benkelman informed. HOLMAC has also been in review. Recently, an opportunity presented itself via staff, the community and the Commission regarding the updating of HOLMAC's scope and purpose to a more modern feel. The hope is to partner with L&C County on the board in the future.

HCC Chair Cole R. – asks if the purpose is to make all boards “the same” why is the Commission taking such a compartmentalized approach, i.e., on term limits and jumping from board to board? Dannai C. replies: not every board is equal, or has the same history, or even the same resolution. It is better to review each individual board, including its members and overall interest. Creating a universal approach to all advisory boards may create a missed opportunity, such as in HOLMAC and the opportunity to partner with L&C County.

HCC Member Pat Bik asks – Who within the city raised the issue about boards, their rule and composition? What or who is the origin of this effort to examine the advisory boards? Dannai C. replies that the look at advisory boards started years ago with different staff and city managers at that time. What has been viewed and been discussed about the boards is: how appointments are made, how the mayor approves board members, how recommendations are made to the Commission and having better future recruitment standards. Also discussed has been how much work this adds to city staff members. During a meeting on February 21st of 2020 – six guiding principles were established so there is a better understanding of what a staff members must do for a board.

Pat Bik asks if these 6 guiding principles are available. Dannai says yes, Lowell C. puts the link in the chat: it was from a meeting on 2/3/2021 p.17 -

<https://helena.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/DisplayAgendaPDF.ashx?MeetingID=381>

Denise Roth Barber says this issue is confusing because when the CCB was being reviewed, they were told the term limits would be consistent, yet the CCB has a 10 members board with 4 different term limits. The HCC member on the CCB has a one year term and they cannot serve consecutively. This proposal is very difficult because HCC reps who serve on boards need to “get their feet under themselves” and one year is not enough time. Denise asks if HCC members on all boards where they serve, will only have one year term limits?

Dannai C. – yes, originally this was the thought going forward as the idea was to align the terms with how the Commissioners serve on boards. Recently though, the Commission has put a hold on this idea until they meet at their spring work session. The Commission may agree to two - year terms and an HCC member can serve consecutively. The confusion within the term limits of the CCB are because when it was re-established, we tried to stagger the terms so that all members weren't suddenly gone. We tried to give members 3 year terms, limiting their participation to 6 years total. So, someone like Diana Hammer, who has served for 5 years, now has a term of one year.

Denise Roth Barber – replies it is still confusing because Commissioners CAN serve consecutive terms on boards, whereas now you are limiting HCC members to one-year terms and they cannot serve consecutively. Denise reiterates that a one-year term is often too short for an HCC member to really understand all the issues involved.

Denise R. Barber feels that the Commission should not restrict the HCC and HCC members should be able to serve consecutive terms. The HCC has mechanisms in place to remove HCC reps on advisory boards should the need arise.

Diana Hammer asks that the Commission be reminded that the HCC is an independent elected body, and it has procedures in place (due to its new bylaws) to review HCC members' performance on advisory boards. Please take this into consideration at the spring meeting.

Ben Kuiper asks when the plan for advisory board restructuring will be rolled out.

Dannai C. – replies that it is a work in progress, and it is ongoing. It seems that it takes about 6 weeks per each board to review its details and resolution. At the spring meeting workshop, maybe there will be more time for discussion and decisions to be made.

Reports of Officers

1. Officer Reports

Chair- Cole Rosling – no new updates

Vice-Chair- Ben Kuiper– no new updates

Treasurer-Nolan Harris – There have been a few recent budget requests. The HCC needs to purchase an external hard drive (\$70.00) to capture and save all the information from the old website – Typo 3. Also, per the IT department and Dannai Clayborn (Clerk of Commission), the HCC was instructed to include the purchase of a new laptop for Peggy B. (coordinator) in the 2024 budget. This cost could be upwards of \$1400.00.

Nolan H. states that several members of the HCC have stepped up and are willing to help with putting the budget together. They are:

Pat Bik – Parks Department

Margaret Strachan – General

Denise Barber & Diana Hammer – Public Works

Lowell Chandler – Transportation

Both the Clerk of Commission and Sheila Danielson (Finance Director) have said that the budget meetings will start in April.

Secretary – Diana Hammer – Diana H. defers to Emily Mowers chair of the Outreach Committee.

Unfinished Business

1. Update City Manager Hire Information

Pat Bik speaks on behalf of the Interview Committee (Lowell Chandler, Diana Hammer & Pat Bik) Ben Kuiper (HCC Vice Chair was also present at the interviews). Pat thanks the HCC members for putting together excellent questions for the committee to ask the applicants. The committee asked each candidate the same questions. All candidates brought significant strengths and interest in the position. Tim Burton has been a steady hand serving as the interim City Manager. Tim B. has the extra benefit of extensive experience in both State and Local City governments. Michael Thomas brought energy and fresh ideas to the leadership role while advancing ideas regarding sustainability and the city. Michael Thomas has 20 yrs. experience with the Air Force. He showed strong leadership and communication skills. He emerged as the HCC's Interview Team's first choice, they felt he would effectively move the city forward. The Committee will submit their comments by Friday to CMS. It was a good process. All the interviews are on the city's YouTube channel. Peggy B. will send out the link to the channel.

Bob Habeck – Bob H. wants to make sure that the HCC is not putting forth an official recommendation here, that falls short of the HCC's purpose. The HCC is just putting forth its observations. Bob feels it is a great privilege that HCC was allowed to take part in the interview process.

Lowell Chandler – Lowell says he was impressed by all 3 candidates and the city would be well-served by any of them. Burton and Thomas were the best at specifically answering the HCC's questions.

Nolan Harris – asks if the Committee knows what weight the HCC's observations on the candidates will have on the actual hiring? Diana Hammer says the Committee does not know, only that their observations/ideas will be forwarded to CMS and the Commission.

2. ARPA Funds designation – review survey – vote on recommendation.

Thanks to all HCC members who participated in the survey. Cole thanks Diana H. for putting together this professional recommendation.

55:25 Ben Kuiper - makes a motion and asks that for clarity's sake, new information be added on the last page stating that: *These member comments were submitted as personal comments, not a part of the HCC recommendation as stated above.* Nolan Harris seconds the motion.

56:04 Chair Cole R. asks if all are in favor of the Recommendation with the modification of the language on the last page. All members verbally responded yea – none opposed, no abstentions.

57:32 A vote is taken on approving the ARPA Recommendation with modifications on the last page. All members present responded with yea, none opposed, no abstentions. The Recommendation is approved.

- ### **3. Set date for Strategic Plan for 2023** – Chair Cole R. moves to Bob Habeck who shared a template from the past strategic planning sessions of the HCC. The template includes: Five core behaviors such as: Recruit for vacant positions, Market the HCC, Attend City Meetings, Membership on Boards & Committees, Other. Bob H. said maybe the "other" could include big bucket goals/discussions such as: Open Space, Transportation, Housing etc. This information from the planning session would be used as an outline for upcoming agendas. The final product from the strategic planning session would be a one-page document that includes the core duties and the buckets of goals. Usually this

planning is done the February after the November election, so we are a bit behind.

Diana Hammer asks if there are any old strategic plans available to see? Nolan Harris asks Peggy B. (coordinator) if she knows of any old plans that are held digitally. Peggy responds she will look for them.

Cole R. will reach out to Sumner Sharpe and see if he has any paper copies.

Bob H. – thinks its better to have informal strategic planning and after it is completed, share it with Mayor, Commission and City Manager. It is nice to have the planning session off site. That is how it was done in the past.

Rachel Opakal asks if the HCC should ask the Commission, Mayor, and City Manager if there is anything they would like us to do.

Cole R. – will move strategic planning session to HCC Ex. Committee meeting for dates.

New Business

1. Additional topics for discussion

Ben Kuiper would like to have someone from the Parks Department (Craig Marr) speak about the Tennis Courts.

Paige Myers - Paige did some of her own research focusing on AirBnBs and VRBO listings. Paige personally viewed 175, and found that 68 of them were in Helena. Two entities really stood out, they seemed to be a larger corporate bunch. One had 20 listings in Helena, and the other had 11 listings. The real problem isn't with the owner of one or two listings, it is with these bigger entities/corporations etc. buying up whole areas to be utilized as AirBnBs. Paige had a meeting with others and two suggestions were made:

1. To help create a statute that allows property owners to have long-term rentals but only one can be an AirBnB type.
2. Designate Zooning so that whole neighborhoods aren't filled with AirBnBs.

Bob Habeck reminds the HCC, this is a time for data gathering. He suggests the Frontier Institute – Kendall Cotton <https://frontierinstitute.org/category/housing/> Department of Commerce – Cheryl Cowan.

Lowell Chandler said that Greg Hertz, a legislator from Polson, brought forth Senate Bill 467 that would have prohibited counties, cities, and towns from enacting restrictions on rental periods for Airbnb-style lodgings, or from banning them outright. We will have to see what passes within the legislature this year.

Rachel Opakal did mention there is a need for AirBnB rental types especially during legislative years. The large issues that are here regarding VRBOs and AirBnBs probably are not due to landlords with fewer rentals.

Cole R.- agrees that data gathering will help the HCC to put forth a possible recommendation in the future. He will move this topic to the Executive Committee meeting for further discussion.

Commission Attendees' Reports – two minutes

2/1 Patricia Bik - The mayor wants the Commission to look closely at the city's sustainability resolutions and "step it up", they have been lagging as far as staying with it. The sustainability coordinator really should be in a more visible spot. Commissioner Reed would like the coordinator to comb through the budget to find helpful ways for sustainability to be improved. City Manager Burton wants

to review the sustainability resolution. He wants to know how it came about. Another renewed discussion about how to spend ARPA funds was had.
2/6 Chelly Hasquet – there were further discussions about the City Manager interviews. A new “Handle with Care” program is being initiated with the police department to help children within schools cope with trauma. The new business *Old Salt* (now in the *Bert & Ernie's* location), will have to remove trees on their patio as it does not comply with ADA standards.
2/15 John R. Andrew – Diana Hammer reports on John’s behalf – There was a Capital Transit update, more ARPA funding discussion, and an MBAC workforce and employment report. The report focused on the two major issues within Helena. They were affordable housing and lack of childcare.

Coordinator Report – Peggy Benkelman – Peggy mentions the new City of Helena website <https://www.helenamt.gov/Home> is up and running. Please take a look at our page, it can be found under the government tab or scroll down to the photo of a tree-lined street with HCC on it. The HCC has also retained www.helenacitizenscouncil.com A new laptop for the coordinator may cost as much as \$1400.00. Peggy also needs to purchase an external hard drive to download all the old information from the former webpage which dates back to 2004. Peggy will also speak to Dannai Clayborn (City Clerk) about having HCC members continue to attend advisory board meetings they have been assigned to.

Boards, & Standing Committees

City of Helena and L&C County Consolidated Planning Board – John E. Andrew
The Mountain View Meadows and Craftsman Village development had no public comments. Westside Woods development garnered 86 against and 14 for the Development. The discussion went on from 8:00PM until 11:40PM with input from *Save Our Westside, Sussex and HCC District #1* (commenting on a western route egress) Diana Hammer mentions that District #1 is not opposed to the development, there just needs to be a formalized plan for a western evacuation route. With that, it could be a win, win both for the city and for the Save Our Westside group. Nolan Harris says it seems that the western exit is what is holding the development up. Is there some viable option as to a western egress? Diana Hammer answers yes: there is an existing city right-of-way and a private landowner who is willing to sell/create an easement.

Bob Habeck mentions that Reeder’s Village was finally approved because it has an intermittent escape route.

Outreach – Emily Mowers says the doorhangers will be available in March and should be passed out by HCC members by mid-June. The Outreach Committee continues to have displays at both the Goodkind Building and in the City/County Building. The display in the C/C building has a suggestion box, and we have received over 20 suggestions. Emily Mowers and Diana Hammer will speak tomorrow on the radio station during “Cup of Joe” program.

HOLMAC – new HCC rep will be Patricia Bik – she will attend when meetings resume. Denise Barber’s friend applied to be on HOLMAC, but they encouraged her to join the CCB instead because they don’t know when or how HOLMAC will continue: it may become a partnership with the county.

Civic Center – tabled until future notice

HPAC – Paige Myers - There is an RFP released – a call for artists.

<https://www.helenamt.gov/Business/Bids-RFP-RFQ/Call-for-Artists>

it is along the Centennial Trail in the tunnel between the swimming pool and Centennial Park. Payment to the artist will be \$15000.00 and the deadline is March 22nd. Half the money came from the HPAC budget and the other half

came from a grant from TIF Railroad funds. Heidi Freidlander would like for kids to do the painting. She remembers when children within the Helena Schools would paint murals on the outside of School District Buildings.

Transp. Coord. – Joe Lehman. Joe reminds the Council that this committee only meets quarterly. His term is coming to an end so it is time for another HCC member to step up and serve on this board. It is a voting position.

Water Quality – Diana Hammer – no meeting until next week.

Citizen Consersation Board – Denise Roth Barber - The Commission is reviewing CCB at the upcoming meeting next week. Denise RB would like confirmation as to whether she is on the board or not, if Chair Cole could confirm, that would be great.

Library Board – Paige Myers – There will be a new renter at the library kiosk/coffee shop, it is *Grateful Bread*

Golf – Ryan Schwochert - Ryan is excused from the meeting.

Fire Department – Elizabeth Gerhart last meeting will be next week on 3/3

Non-Motorize Travel – Lowell Chandler – there was a motion proposed for new City Engineering standards to increase the width of roads and make larger corner radius(s). Lowell C. states this sometimes creates more problems for pedestrians. A walk audit was conducted around Westside Woods area and one of the NMTAC members stated it is among the most unsafe walks he has ever conducted. Complete street standards need to be improved in the Westside Woods area. Curb bulb outs need to be installed on corners. There needs to be a feasibility study on a western access/egress route.

Denis Roth Barber brings up the train derailment in Ohio and asks how Helena would take care of such a disaster in our community. Cole R. says that the hazardous equipment is stored in MT City, hence the need for a new fire station closer to Helena. Bob Habeck – says absolutely there is a plan in place. The County Disaster and Emergency services takes care of that. Nancy Perry would like for someone to speak to HCC on this topic.

9:00PM **Adjourn-**

Paige Myers motions to adjourn the meeting and Cole Rosling seconds.
Meeting adjourned at 9:00PM

Next Full HCC Board Meeting March 22nd, 7:00 PM in person or via zoom