



HCC Full Board Meeting

**Minutes**

January 24th, 2024, 7:00PM PM  
**In Person Only**

Commission Chambers  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor City/County Bldg.

**7:00PM** Chair Ben Kuiper calls the meeting to order

**HCC Members In Attendance** – Lori FitzGerald, John Andrew, Diana Hammer, Patricia Bik, Nancy Perry, Joe Lehman, Ben Kuiper, Sonda Gaub, Lowell Chandler, Paige Regan Myers, Sean Morrison, Emily Mowers, Chase Eaton, Sydney Ausen, Bob Schlack, Janet Zimmerman, Rick Boleware, Ryan Schwochert, Samuel A. Brown, Anna Kratz, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth Barber, Dylan Klapmeier, Susan Steffens, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator).

**Guests:** Mayor Wilmot Collins, City Manager Tim Burton, Commissioners: Logan, Dean, Reed and Shirliff, Wyatt LaPayne, Leslie Sole, Sam Offerdahl, Kyle Holland (City Planning), Susan Schlack.

**A Quorum is established.**

**3:16 Approval of November 2023 Full HCC Board Minutes** – Motion made to approve the minutes by Patricia Bik and seconded by Joe Lehman. All members were in favor. Motion passes.

**3:39 Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items - none**

**3:47 City Commissioners Speak** – Each Commissioner addressed the gallery of HCC members.

Andy Shirliff – Says he is excited for HCC to participate in the process. He thanks members for giving their time and talents to the city of Helena.

Melinda Reed – Offers congratulations to both the newly elected and re-elected HCC members. She looks forward to working with all of you regarding the city budget.

Emily Dean – Emily states she is grateful to all of the HCC members for stepping up to serve. She appreciates your input on the city budget. HCC member Nancy Perry set the bar pretty high when she chaired the budget committee and wrote the HCC budget recommendation.

Sean Logan – Sean thanks members for their service. He says don't hesitate to contact members of the Commission; we are happy to accommodate you.

**7:34 Swearing in of HCC Members** - Mayor Collins reads the oath of office, all HCC members raise their right hand and repeat. (there are no mics in the gallery, so you cannot hear them saying their oath).The mayor then congratulates all that are sworn in.

**Mayor Speaks** – On behalf of the entire city we congratulate you on your successful election. Your dedication to serve the Helena Community and your willingness to engage in the democratic process are truly commendable. Remember the trust that has been placed in you by your fellow citizens. Your decisions will shape the future of our community. Your position entails

collaboration, integrity and commitment to the betterment of the Helena community. I look forward to witnessing the positive effect you will have on Helena. Again, congratulations.

**10:11 City Manager Tim Burton Speaks** – Please review the Helena City Charter (in your packet and also online at the City of Helena website). The charter spells out very specifically how we at the city interact with the Commission and the public. The Commission is the policymaker, while the City Manager is the Chief Administrative Officer, and implements what the Commission has voted upon. HCC needs good information in a timely manner to make decisions and recommendations. It is best to start this year with a meeting with the HCC Chair and/or the HCC Executive Committee. There, we can begin to coordinate the information flow so that the HCC has the ability to digest information, collaborate about it, and have time to put forth recommendations. Again, congratulations. I look forward to working with you on behalf of the citizens of Helena.

**14:22 Election of Officers** – Chair Ben Kuiper hands over the mic to Paige Myers (she is chair of the nominating committee). Paige thanks all the members of the nominating committee for their help, she then reads the list of nominees and asks if there are any floor nominations. The list reads: Chair – Ben Kuiper, Vice-Chair – Lowell Chandler, Secretary – Diana Hammer & **15:17** Anna Kratz. Anna Kratz asks that her name be removed from the list. Treasurer – Lori FitzGerald.

**15:22** – Paige Myers states ballot is accepted by acclamation.

**15:56** – Paige Myers calls for a motion to accept. HCC member Sean Morrison makes that motion. All candidates are asked to stand.

**16:59** – Paige Myers calls all in favor. No nays. The vote is unanimous. Motion passes.

2024 Executive Committee Members are: Chair – Ben Kuiper, Vice-Chair – Lowell Chandler, Secretary – Diana Hammer, Treasurer – Lori FitzGerald.

**17:30 – HCC District Breakouts.** Chair Ben Kuiper explains this is a time to introduce yourself and talk about issues within your districts.

### **39:28 Unfinished Business** -

**Strategic Planning Priority Discussion** - Chair Kuiper turns the discussion over to Secretary Diana Hammer. She has been involved with the Strategic Planning Priorities.

Diana Hammer says every year the HCC comes up with a list of priorities. This list is a colorful page in your packet. For instance, one priority was safe routes to schools. These priorities are inline with the Commission's goals which are Improve Neighborhood Livability, Promote Healthy and Sustainable Growth and Promote a Safe Community. The Xs in the various columns show how important the issues were to HCC members at the time the survey was taken. These are ideas we can put on future agendas. Chair Ben Kuiper states this strategic planning was started at a 3-hour long HCC meeting later last year. We may have such a meeting again.

Ben Kuiper combines items 2 and 3 under **Unfinished Business – Communication with City Manager and Departments and Responses from the Commission.** He mentions the meeting with the City Manager and the Local Gov't Center (from Bozeman) at a December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting where better communication and interaction for the HCC, the City Mgr. and the Commission. This discussion is on the City of Helena YouTube station. The HCC part is 1:00 PM on Friday.

Ben Kuiper also discusses the process of interaction with the Commission. He mentions getting our recommendations on agendas. There is a distinct process. After the HCC approves and votes on a recommendation, it is then forwarded to the Clerk of Commission where it is placed

on an Administrative Commission meeting, it is then forwarded to (with the permission of the City Manager) a regular Commission meeting where the Commissioners then receive the information in their agenda packets (it is now public) The Recommendation will then be discussed publicly at a Monday Commission meeting.

Member of HCC gallery (can't hear who it is) Samuel A. Brown(?) Were there delays in hearing about recommendations because it needed to be brought forward in a public forum? Chair Ben Kuiper says that may be the case.

Denise R. Barber – Denise feels the Commission should follow a determined process such as:

1. Acknowledgement of an emailed recommendation from the HCC.
2. Timing of review needed by the Commission, along with a response time.
3. Set a standard time for a response e.g. 3 months.

47:34 Ben Kuiper clarifies timeline. Peggy B. (HCC coordinator) reminds HCC members that for an item to be placed on an agenda, and appear in a Commissioner's packet, it must be entered into the NOVUS meeting software. There are specific dates when items can be received. There often is a two-week delay, otherwise agendas would be too full to conduct a Commission meeting in a timely fashion. The City Manager runs/reviews the agendas the Wednesday before the Monday Commission meetings.

Denise R. Barber – still recommends HCC send an email to the Commission regarding our interactions on Recommendations. The HCC would prefer interactions be in writing vs. verbal.

53:53 Vice-Chair Lowell Chandler – Lowell states he is still unhappy with the interactions HCC has had with both the City Manager and the Commission. Lowell reminds us that the HCC's position and duties are stated in the City Charter.

55:28 – Secretary Diana Hammer reminds HCC members that an important role of the HCC is to make recommendations on the City Budget, yet for the past 3 to 4 years the process has changed every year, making it difficult for the HCC to gather information especially in a timely manner. The HCC needs to be involved in the budget process much earlier instead of one month before the document is due.

Lowell Chandler feels the HCC roles need to be better defined including its two distinct roles: the Budget Recommendation and the Future Growth of the City. It is bothersome how the Commission like the Pesticide Recommendation but has failed as of yet to act on it. The Commission doesn't want or have the ability to tell Department Heads how to do their job, however Lowell doesn't want the Commission to narrow its window of duties on governing the city.

HCC member Ryan Schwochert reminds HCC members that the pesticide issue was brought up by a concerned citizen and the HCC acted upon it. Denise R. Barber agrees and says all of HCC is composed of citizens.

HCC member Joe Lehman wants to make sure the Commission doesn't ignore the HCC's input in an attempt to silence us (the HCC).

Ben Kuiper reminds us that the Commission cannot direct the activities of City Employees, that is the job of the City Manager.

HCC member Sean Morrison asks a question on policy. (no mic in gallery – so can't hear) Ben Kuiper responds: technically the Commission votes on policy but the City Departments don't vote on policy.

Lowell Chandler responds the elected body of the City needs the ability to direct policy. During the Local Government Review will be a good time to address this issue.

Ben Kuiper – believes the Commission can direct the City Manager to implement policy.

HCC Member Patricia Bik – says the Pesticide Recommendation was deferred to experts in the field and to department heads. It involved a lot of technical information. The HCC is still waiting for a response.

### **New Business:**

**1:08 Motion to elect Brenda Valerio HCC District #6** – motion made by HCC member Sonda Gaub and seconded by Paige Myers. Ben Kuiper opens the floor for more discussion.

**1:10:44 Vote** -all were in favor of approving Brenda Valerio. None opposed. Motion passes.

### **Future Meeting Topics**

League of Women Voters – **Local Government Review** – this review comes up every 10 years and is guaranteed to be on the ballot. **Pat Bik (HCC District #1 Member)** gives overview: the questions that will be on the ballot is whether or not the citizens of Helena, East Helena and Lewis & Clark County would like to have a study conducted by a special commission/committee elected to research the type of local government we have. This research process will take approximately two years and begin in June 2024.

Bob Schlack asks if this is in conjunction with the State Senate. The answer is no – Sean Morrison explains in greater detail the relationship or non-relationship (with no mic – can't hear all the detail). Pat Bik says the State Constitution drafters set up a "cafeteria style" of local governments from which there can be a choice. HCC will have a representative come to speak from the League of Women Voters.

**City Budget Process** – Chair Kuiper would like to set up a meeting with Finance Director & input of City Manager as soon as possible to further discuss. Diana Hammer reminds the HCC that discussions were had to have members of the Budget Committee reach out to Departments within the City. Denise R. Barber asks at what point in time can the HCC present their priorities? Chair Kuiper says that timing is still up in the air. Lowell Chandler says the timing of hearing about the preliminary budget is often too late. There needs to be better communication before the budget presentations start. Emily Mowers is still hopeful there is time to stay on top of budget requests and discussions, but we need to start asap. Samuel Brown asks if the HCC can identify funds to be used for specific purposes? Chair Kuiper responds yes. Denise R. Barber reminds us that HCC needs to stay proactive and approach Department Heads first, instead of waiting for the information to trickle down to the HCC. Also, HCC should review our recommendation from last year and bring it forward again if those issues were not addressed.

### **Lighting at Carroll College by Kyle Holland from the City Planning Department**

There has been a variance request on the stadium lighting at Carroll College. Carroll wants to exceed the max height for light poles of 60 feet and install light poles between 100 -110 feet high. Pat Bik asks if all the information has been submitted for the variance request? Kyle Holland answers yes. Kyle states that possibly going higher with light poles creates less horizontal bypass because the lighting is focused down more. This is similar to Vigilante

Stadium. Many citizens are still concerned about night sky compliance. There is a February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting regarding this in the Commission Chambers as well as a meeting January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting at Carroll College. Paige Myers asks about specific concerns from the public. Kyle Holland says the biggest complaint is concern about glare, daytime physical impacts and the dark skies ordinance. Currently there is only diesel powered lighting at Carroll. Joe Lehman asks if there are any proven negative impacts. Kyle Holland has not yet heard of any. Sydney Ausen asks Kyle H. what he needs from HCC members. His department is still gathering questions/concerns if you want to submit any. Kyle H. explains that he didn't know the HCC was not receiving the same interdepartmental information.

**Future Recommendations** – Chair Kuiper touches on the recommendation process. There is a form in your new packet which explains how to write one. You can also view former recommendations on the HCC webpage - <https://www.helenamt.gov/Government/Helena-Citizens-Council/Current-Topics-and-Recommendations> Usually when an HCC members writes a recommendation, the HCC Ex. Committee tries to place it on an HCC agenda as soon as possible for discussion.

### **PM Commission Attendees' Reports – two minutes**

11/20 Bob Schlack – no report

12/4 Rick Boleware – HCC appointments were approved. Commission delays discussion on the HCC Pesticide Recommendation. Action was tabled regarding approval of water to a property.

12/13 Nancy Perry – Extension of the duration of the City Landfill. The life of one is 13 years normally. This would include an increase of \$7.23 on your bill. You can object within Public Safety Services. The City is also contracting with a company to use Lydar to view the city for ADA compliance and building a database with all the information. Public Safety Services was asked to formulate a 20 year plan. Fire Chief Campbell's Five Year Plan includes 1. A third fire station 2. An improved Fire Training Facility 3. Additional staffing. The Police Chief also discussed the need for more staffing as the population of Helena has increased and the staffing has not kept up. You can view the Master Plan online.

12/18 John E. Andrew – Ask for an enlargement of the city sewer boundary - there was a discussion about connecting city water to Head Lane area. It was approved with a 3 to 2 vote. There was continued consideration with City Engineering to have 32 feet wide streets. An emergency shelter made become available in the old bus depot – it will be called Ruth's Place.

1/8 Ben Kuiper – Consideration of revision of subdivision plans and the accessory dwelling consideration was tabled.

1/17 Emily Mowers - more discussion about increasing staffing for police and fire departments. You can view the packet online.

1/22 Ben Kuiper – grants approval, but none affected the HCC.

**Coordinator Report** – Peggy Benkelman thanks everyone for coming and joining HCC. She explains her hours are 8-1 Monday thru Thursday. She only works 20 hours per week. Please familiarize yourself with the HCC website. The HCC district map is online on the HCC's homepage. The next HCC meeting will be in room 326, you may join by zoom or in person.

**Outreach Committee Report** – Emily Mowers. Emily states the Outreach Committee (OC) is creating a new brochure and new table banner. They will also have a Water Bill insert this year. Emily M. will speak on the radio again to promote the openings for HCC members in District #5 and District #6.

### **Boards & Standing Committees – How to handle receiving Board Meeting Info.**

This portion of the meeting has been delayed due to time constraints and decisions about who will volunteer to listen in on these advisory/committee meetings. The HCC no longer has voting rights on these committees. Chair Ben Kuiper says we will gather volunteers soon to attend these meetings.

City-County Planning Board  
Helena Public Arts Committee  
Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council  
L&C County Water Quality Protection  
District Board  
Citizen Conservation Board

Solid Waste Master Plan Meetings  
City-County Library Board  
Golf Advisory Board  
City-County Consolidated Parks Board  
Affordable Housing Trust Fund  
Future MPO

**1:58:10 Meeting Adjourned** – motion by Joe Lehman to adjourn and seconded by Anna Kratz.  
Non opposed. Meeting adjourned.