



HCC Full Board Meeting

Minutes

Weds. August 28th, 7-9PM

In person room 326 or via Zoom

7:02 (21:37) Meeting Called to order by Chair Ben Kuiper

In Attendance –Lori FitzGerald, John Andrew, Diana Hammer, Patricia Bik, Joe Lehman, Ben Kuiper, Sonda Gaub, Emily Mowers, Chase Eaton, Bob Schlack, Sidney Ausen, Janet Zimmerman, Ryan Schwochert, Katie Ryan, Anna Kratz, Denise Roth Barber, Susan Steffens, Bob Habeck, Peggy Benkelman (coordinator)

HCC Members Excused: Nancy Perry, Paige Myers, Sean Morrison, Brenda Valerio, Dylan Klapmeier, Rick Boleware.

Members of the public: Ellie Ray – Helena Planning Department

Quorum established - yes

Approval of June 2023 Full HCC Board Minutes –

22:21 All members were in favor, no changes or additions. By acclamation minutes approved.

22:58 Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items: None

23:28 Swearing in of new District #5 member, Katie Ryan. Oath of Office read by Chair Kuiper.

New Business

24:42 Ellie Ray from the City of Helena Planning Department speaks.

- I am from City Community Development Department's Planning Division and I'm here tonight to talk to you a little bit about *Helena Forward*, which is the Tagline - the name that we've given to our 2025 Land use plan project that we are currently in the midst of.
- A lot of you are probably wondering what the heck even is a land use plan. I am here to explain that to you, and then I'm also going to talk about how we're trying to conduct some public outreach presently for this project. A land use plan really is just a comprehensive plan. And what I mean by that is, it is a guiding document that sort of instructs how we envision growth to be occurring in our community over a 20 year period.

- State statute dictates what constitutes a land use, plan, and the different elements, the different sections that you must write about within that plan. We currently have a comprehensive plan on the books called a growth policy.
- But then, in 2023, the State Legislature, working with the League of Cities and Towns, and the Montana Association of Planners adopted what is now called the Montana Land Use and Planning Act. So, this is going to be fairly similar to what we have on the books. If you guys at all are familiar with that growth policy, it's not a huge departure. But there are some distinctions that I want to point out as I go through this presentation.
- This document will have a 20-year shelf life, as it were, and we have only just started the process of crafting this land use plan. We're still in the fact finding, public engagement phases of it. We contracted with a group called *Housey Levine*. They are based out of Chicago, and they've got their primary person who is focusing on this project with us here in Helena. Some of you might know him, his name is Cody Ferguson. Some of you may have met him if you attended our planning commission meeting in June. He actually joined their team, leaving Montana Department of Commerce. He's taught at Carroll. He's a Carroll grad. He's got a long history in the community.
- We will be completing this process after approximately 18 months. We don't actually expect to get this plan to the Commission for them to adopt until sometime late in 2025. I just want to note that part of the reason why public outreach is so important for this document is, not only does it sort of set up the framework with goals and objectives we have for future growth in our community, but it's also a document that we're going to use as the basis for redoing some of our subdivision regulations. Once we've adopted this plan and then eventually, hopefully doing a wholesale update to our zoning code. We want to make it easier for people to get the development that our community needs and wants and be able to do so without a lot of red tape and hoops to jump through such as having to go to tons of boards and the City Commission just to get approvals for their projects.
- That is a high-level picture of the land use plan. It contains a range of elements that are statutorily required for us to talk about the plan. The Housing element of this plan is that we've got to look 20 years into the future with population projections.
- And then related to that, we need to actually talk about how we're going to meet the housing demand for those populations. Where are people going to be housed? What kind of housing are we going to have? What levels of density are we going to have it in different places, not just within our existing city limits?
- The urban standards boundary, which is an area the city and the county jointly agreed upon years ago, is where we expect to see urban levels of density in the future. These are areas that likely at some stage over a 20-year period, we expect could be reasonably annexed in - so that is the housing portion of it. This plan is also going to look at our public services and facilities. We're going to look at our infrastructure that is used to support development. We're going to look at emergency service provision. It talks about schools and kind of childcare related to that. There are a lot of long range plans that are happening kind of concurrently with this effort. County is working on a growth policy update. We're working with the county jointly on an infrastructure study to look at the extension of services into that urban standards boundary. There's going to be an update to the long-range transportation plan with the new Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). And

the biggest part of this is the future land use map. If you've ever looked at our growth policy and looked at this particular chapter of it, we have a land use map, and a future land use map. That kind of shows what we think are the appropriate designations for the types of uses and the densities that you would see in areas within our community and areas out in into the valley. There are updates to the master plans for our infrastructure. The biggest part of this is the future land use map. We have a land use, map, a future land use map. Of course we need to figure out how are we going to make this plan actionable. People always complain that a lot of people put a lot of time, good intentions, and money into crafting and planning documents, and then they have no teeth, and they just sit on the shelf and collect dust. We don't want that to happen. This plan has to have a robust implementation plan to guide how we're actually going to follow through on what we talk about into the future. Right now, we are in the full throws of the community engagement process and the consultants have been doing a lot of fact finding.

- They had a public meeting with the planning commission, and some of you who have been appointed as representatives of your respective district. To help do some outreach for the city and they're compiling all that data, looking at all the existing plans that are under books and getting a sense for what's happening on the ground here. And they're going to use that information to craft something called an existing conditions memo, which we should get sometime mid next week. And it won't be until a little later this fall that they really get into the process of crafting updates.
- Through the QR code posted on the *Helena Forward* webpage you can see the questionnaire and another interactive tool called the map social tool. Please feel free to go to the webpage and interact.
- Please provide the answers on the questionnaire to the Planning Dept. by the end of October do not put a person's name on the questionnaire – the Department wants anonymity.

45:35 PM Officer Reports

Chair – Ben Kuiper – Chair Kuiper mentions the new ordinance the City passed regarding electronic meeting procedures. It was stated that members have to attend at least 50% of the meetings in person. There are exceptions to this rule however, illness, childcare, work etc. It is up to the discretion of the Chair to excuse members. There is also a new requirement to have your zoom camera turned on.

Vice Chair- Sonda Gaub – nothing new to report.

Secretary – Diana Hammer – move to Outreach Committee

Treasurer – Lori FitzGerald – Lori is looking into getting a more usable phone for Peggy – one that a person can more easily text on and take pictures. It must have the same phone number 594-0010 because all the new print materials have that number on it.

PM Unfinished Business - none

8:00 PM Commission Attendees' Reports –

8/7 Susan Steffens - Dust abatement proposal was presented and discussed. Commission taking it under advisement Big Sky Railway is still asking for support, but Sean Logan (commissioner) was not ready to voice support- feels it was a county issue. The passenger rail committee is asking for a 4000 dollar stake from the city in the project- no decision yet. Federal government wants city partnership and if not, the route could bypass Helena as the route has been approved by the Federal Government.

Stop signs addressed at the downtown intersection. This is technically an MDT route, and they are unable to fix the light electrical boxes. The city has said that in a survey people liked the stop signs, but pedestrians were concerned about crossing the street there. Some alternative ways to help pedestrians cross such as blinking/flashing lights are being looked at.

There has been no new update on the restroom facility downtown, yet.

ARC - regional sports facility has done a feasibility study and it looks like there would be major economic benefits to Helena if the sports facility came here. They are moving forward and looking for funding.

Nonprofits presented that had received grants from the city. Tri- county fire is working on outreach to inform the public. Exploration works is enclosing the deck on top of their building into an additional classroom. Good Samaritan is collaborating with other facilities to help enlarge facilities to provide shelter for more women.

Transportation systems presented their capital plan - still getting feedback from the public.

CMS feasibility study was presented on how to retain workers in the city. Continue with accelerating wage growth in order to retain workers.

54:58 8/12 Sydney Ausen –

Arborist Outstanding Service Award: Missoula had a storm on July 24th with winds up to 100mph. Two City of Helena staff volunteered to go to Missoula and assist in cleaning up the damage: Jerry Parker and Gabe King. Both employees went to Missoula on Friday, July 26th through Tuesday July 30th, working every day to help the city of Missoula rebound, Gabe and Jerry were presented with outstanding service awards.

FY24 Budget Carry Overs to FY25: Most of the carry overs are capital projects related. Most of the capital projects are run over a span of 1-5 years, so it's typical to see these long range capital projects come before the City for carry over. Proposed carry over for this year is approximately \$44million and most of it is related to water and wastewater funds. This figure is in line with what they had last year, but this is an unusually big number.

HCC Appointment: Katie Ryan's appointment for District 5 passed.

Consent Agenda: Commission granted a non-exclusive 10 ft wide utility easement across City owned property known as the Centennial Trail to Montana Internet Corporation to install underground fiber optic infrastructure.

No report from the City Attorney or City Manager.

Regular Items: There were a series of resolutions that the Commission approved regarding the intention to levy assessments. Many of these assessment rates are standard and aren't a change from previous years (assessments for snow removal on public rights of way, assessment for water and wastewater, assessments for street lighting, etc.). However, there is one assessment increase: the Solid Waste Collection assessment. There will be a Public Hearing on August 24th regarding this assessment increase.

Zoning change item postponed because notice didn't include zoning map.

Item on Capitol complex traffic plan postponed until more outreach can be done. Open house Aug. 14th 4-6pm.

Public Hearings: The Commission had 2 public hearings at their meeting. The first was on a Resolution to set fees to be charged for various land use and subdivision review applications within the Planning Division of the Department of Community Development. There was little discussion or public comment and the resolution passed.

The second hearing was regarding the revision of the ordinance regulating signage in Helena. The board of adjustments was there to present why the changes were needed to standardize the process and regulating for approving/ disapproving signage because as currently written the regulations are both cumbersome and open to speculation. There was robust opposition to some of the revisions from single companies (YESCO, Lamar, etc.) around the fee structure for signage. Ultimately the resolution was tabled for final consideration at the next Commission meeting to allow for the business community to work with the City to find a solution to the fee structure.

57:26 8/21 John Andrew - Still, on the docket, is our Redeemers housing project, and that was a bit over 1.5 million dollars wildlife risk assessment for Tri County fire.

Sports Association sustainability studies - that's still in the process pending

One of the things that they've been involved with was Family Promise for construction. They're working with Good Samaritan to maybe form a partnership to move a new location for Our Place and Ruth's Place.

Public works increase loan limits from 15,000 to 30,000 for water and wastewater service lines. That's part of the loan program.

They also discussed the West Side phase one and two update for water and sewer cost reimbursement. Phase one is about \$3.8 million and Phase two is \$3.4 million. The city has purchased the new ERP software for management of employees and use for the public. The public should more easily be able to pay online now.

1:00:17 8/26 Ryan Schwochert – There was a board appointment to the Lewis and Clark Heritage Tourism Council and going over property tax overview. There is a pretty big bid award that went out too I believe, to Tri County for a new boiler that needs to be replaced at the city shop. I gave a brief communication, obviously from the Citizens Council. Thank you for some of those details, Peggy. On agenda. Item 12

a. There's a traffic plan proposal which includes a 1 way, street and angle parking along 5th 6th and Lockheed avenues. A lot of other resolutions that were approved were pretty straightforward. 5 to 0 votes- with the exception of regular item 12 E, which was the resolution adopting electronic public meetings policy for the city of Helena and designating the recording of the meeting as the official record. There was not a lot of discussion until that last 13 M - Which was, consider a resolution adopting final budgets and budget authorities. District #5 members are working on appointing the 2 new members. Will let us know so we can invite them to the Sept. Meeting.

1:06:42 **Coordinator Report** – Peggy Benkelman – asks for HCC members to sign up to attend Commission meetings. Peggy then shows the poster for the Sept. 25th Open House and explains that immediately following the Open House we will have the HCC meeting at the Civic Center.

1:16:06 **Outreach Committee Report** – Emily Mowers – Working on getting new swag such as Yard signs and tote bags. Currently focusing on the Open House in September.

City-County Planning Board – John Andrew – no meeting this month

Helena Public Arts Committee – Paige R. Myers – excused from this meeting

Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council – Open – not official board anymore

Citizen Conservation Board – Sydney Ausen – not able to attend

Solid Waste Master Plan Meetings – Denise R. Barber – no finalized draft yet

City-County Library Board – Anna Kratz – not able to attend

Golf Advisory Board – Bob Schlack – Discussion on 2024 financials. Weed control discussion. Golf and Muni Grill operations discussed. Presentation of the sprinkler system. Crows are picking up golf balls on the driving range, (up to thirty!). There has been some public abuse of golf carts. There are new nets on the west end. Golf Leagues are finished for the season. 7-9 Tournaments are still slated for September. Getting the golf simulators up to snuff. The Season is closing November 1st, 2024.

City-County Consolidated Parks Board – Pat Bik – unable to attend

Affordable Housing Trust Fund- Pat Bik – will meet in September

MPO – meetings are being held only on Zoom. Would like an HCC member to start to attend

Water Quality Protection – Diana Hammer – Glass drive area will be collecting climate data, measuring soil moisture etc. Also tracking the best times of day to water i.e. 6:00AM vs 2:00PM. The Lake Helena Watershed Festival at Women's Park was well attended.

HCC member wondered how the dust abatement was progressing on Davis. Chair Kuiper mentioned that Commissioner Reed asked about the \$70,000 still in the budget, and if some of that could be used on Davis. That money may already be earmarked for other projects.

Denise Roth Barber asks about the quality of sound on the Zoom. Persons in room 326 can hear the people on Zoom just fine, but when persons in room 326 speak the persons on Zoom hear a lot of echoing and garbled sound. Emily Mowers agrees. Susan Steffens mentions how awful the sound was at the 9/7 Commission Meeting.

1:31:25 **Motion to Adjourn by Diana Hammer – seconded by Sonda Gaub**

1:31:30 **Meeting Adjourned**