



**HELENA OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY
March 9, 2021**



GENERAL MEMBERS

- Eric Sivers
- Karen Reese
- Brian Barnes
- Claudia Clifford
- Eric Feaver

CITY OF HELENA STAFF

- Brad Langsather, Open Lands Manager
- Kristi Ponozzo, Director, P & R, Open Lands
- Jennifer Schade, Recorder

CITY-COUNTY PARKS BOARD

- David McGuire

HELENA CITIZENS COUNCIL

- T.J. Lehmann

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Helena Tourism Alliance Representative

- Andrea Opitz

PPLT Representative

- Nate Kopp

VIA ZOOM MEETING

Topic: HOLMAC Meeting

Time: Mar 9, 2021, 05:30 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/92360344431?pwd=NU1ocWJiQkRCmVJbDlpaENudWp1QT09>

Meeting ID: 923 6034 4431

Passcode: 806006

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,92360344431# US (Tacoma)

+13462487799,,92360344431# US (Houston)

Dial by your location

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 923 6034 4431

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/aewFkuzxEs>

Call to Order

Welcome/Introductions/Visitors: Michele Webster, Raymond Brown, Steve Platt, George Schunk, Tony Jewett, Joan Miles, Norene Friestadt, Lisa Bay, Gloria Tachell, John Gatchell, Jerry Wells, Eric Grove

Minutes Approval

Approval of February 2021 Minutes

- Jennifer will correct the following errors to the February 2021 Minutes:
 - Last name – Angie **LaFronge**
 - Last name – **Feaver (no “s”)**
 - Last name – **Jewett (no “i”)**
- With all corrections noted, Brian moved to approve the February 2021 minutes. Karen seconded. Motion carried.

HOLMAC Action Items

None.

Reports from City / Subcommittees

1. Update from City Staff on the following: *(TS 00:13:13)*
 - Weed control activities
 - Upcoming forestry activities
 - Other
2. Report from PPLT
 - None.

New Business

1. E-Bike Survey Discussion – Kristi Ponozzo *(TS 00:16:04)* – *Zoom Chatroom Transcript Attached*
ATTACHMENT A: e-Bike Survey
 - Eric S provided history on the request of city staff to solicit public input via survey on the use of eBikes.

Introduction to the Survey *(TS 00:25:58)*

 - After discussion about the introduction to the survey, it was recommended that city staff add an executive summary of why we are looking at this issue and what we hope to gain from the results. *(TS 00:30:07)*

Review of Bulleted Survey *(TS 00:36:25):*

 - HOLMAC members had a lengthy discussion and provided feedback and suggestions on the survey bullets.

Public Comment Period *(TS:01:30:45)*
2. Update: Davis/DeFord Working Group
 - None.

3. Discussion: Trail Attributes for Assessment Project

- None.

4. Discussion: Bicycle and pedestrian bridges over Benton and Henderson – Eric Feaver

- None.

Future Agenda Items

Adjournment

ADA NOTICE

The City of Helena is committed to providing access to persons with disabilities for its meetings, in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Montana Human Rights Act. The City will not exclude persons with disabilities from participation at its meetings or otherwise deny them the City's services, programs, or activities.

Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in the city's meetings, services, programs, or activities should contact Sharon Haugen, Community Development Director, as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to arrange for the requested accommodation, at any of the following: Phone: (406) 447- 8490; TTY Relay Service 1-800-253-4091 or 711 Email: citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov, Mailing address & physical location: 316 North Park, Avenue, Room 445, Helena, MT 59623.

HOLMAC - MARCH 9, 2021 MEETING / ZOOM CHATROOM TRANSCRIPT

00:23:58 michele webster: Sorry I did not introduce myself. Temporary screen malfunction.

00:39:55 John Gatchell: This would require a change in (1996) rules governing Mount Helena and Mount Ascension Natural Parks. Those rules today prohibit motor vehicles. That needs to be stated upfront in the survey.

00:48:01 John Gatchell: Yes, it

00:49:22 John Gatchell: It's a major change.

00:56:54 michele webster: While a survey can provide useful information, this survey will not add to the discussion. Many of the questions are leading questions. Plus, prior to considering a survey, the City staff must do a much better job of informing the public. Please hold off on considering a survey until city staff has done their job. The City has not done a press release. They did not contact the Independent Record. They did not provide information about the 1996 Ordinance or the 2004 Helena Open Lands Management Plan. Time to stop and step back.

01:02:54 Freistadt: So, once again, the term "mobility device" needs clarification.

01:08:57 John Gatchell: ALL open lands?

01:09:02 Steve: Who wrote these questions?

01:10:37 gloriatatchell: I agree with the deletion of question #5.

01:14:30 michele webster: How about taking more time to educate the public prior to releasing a survey? Fact sheets, open houses, mailing, social media, etc.

01:14:31 John Gatchell: The survey needs to offer the clear choice of NO CHANGE to the existing rules governing Mount Helena and Mount Ascension Natural Parks.

01:16:29 John Gatchell: NO change means what the rule is now- no motors in these two parks. Mount Helena has been non motorized since 1971-50 years. and Mount Ascension 25 years.

01:17:47 Eric Grove: There is no disagreement that the trail system on Helena Open Lands is non-motorized. EBikes have a motor and therefore, by definition, are currently not allowed. Trailheads and access points should clearly state that fact. EBike advocates have the opportunity to submit a proposal for a change of use under the recently adopted public process. It would be considered a major project and would be subject to a robust public process this fall and, ultimately, commission approval. Seems pretty straightforward...

01:21:15 Freistadt: Eric has brought up the key point, it would be a huge oversight to not specifically talk about Mt. Ascension and Mt. Helena. Those are the signature Helena Open Lands that

are beloved,, as is evidenced in the local efforts over the past 25 years to designate these as Open Lands.

01:23:07 John Gatchell: enforcement on adjoining USFS lands

01:23:13 Freistadt: Negative impact on wildlife

01:23:33 John Gatchell: impossible to enforce

01:25:41 John Gatchell: both

01:27:35 John Gatchell: so biased!

01:29:14 Steve: The survey as written seems to be geared toward allowing e-bikes on Helena Open Lands. Should e-bike access be allowed on Mount Ascension and Mount Helena it will be VERY difficult to restrict once inevitable conflicts increase.

01:44:23 John Gatchell: Motor bikes will never stay within city parks.

01:44:58 michele webster: Ultimately the survey should not be the primary source of information provided to the public. There needs to be a concerted effort to educate the public prior to the survey.

01:45:27 Eric Grove: I like Claudia's question but agree with Eric that it needs to be less leading.

01:55:17 John Gatchell: One survey question must offer a clear choice of keeping the long-standing ban on vehicles with motors in Mount Helena and Mount Ascension Natural Parks.

01:58:59 John Gatchell: The Big Belts have miles and miles of forest trails open to electric and other motor vehicles.

02:03:24 John Gatchell: Mount Helena and Mount Ascension Natural Parks

City Ordinance 2762 – Enacted January 8, 1996

C. It is unlawful to ...use motor vehicles in any natural park

This rule is clear, easily understood, effective, enforceable and completely consistent with USFS travel law in the South Hills.

Mount Helena and Mount Ascension Natural Parks

City Ordinance 2762 – Enacted January 8, 1996

7-12-3: RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR NATURAL PARKS:

The following rules and regulations shall apply to all "natural parks" as defined above: ... C. It is unlawful to ...use motor vehicles in any natural park

Mount Helena and Mount Ascension Natural Parks

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Thanks, Eric and all.