

Helena Citizen's Council
Regular Meeting - April 26, 2006

Members Present: Ellen Bell, Lynne Boone, Jim Christnacht, Matthew Cohn, Mary Ann Dunwell, Marshall Gingery, Amy Glasscock, Bob Habeck, Teresa Klotz, Mark McDonnell, Larry Mitchell, Patty Rambo, Rebecca Ridenour, Ken Saunders, Allen Tompkins, Justin Trafton, Jim Tucker Jr. and Thom Warsinski.

Members Absent: Becky Bird, Laura Erickson, Tripp Hammer, George Hoff, Jan Lombardi, Jerry McGee, Bill Roberts, Jay Synness, Loyd Tracy,

Visitors Present: Ken Eden, Commissioner Peura and George McCauley.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The March 22, 2006 minutes were approved as submitted.

HELENA POLICE DEPT (HPD) REPORT: Officers Jeseritz and Coleman.

No red flags since last month. There has been a decline in joyriding in stolen cars and BB gun vandalism – though they're no closer to determining who's doing this.

Officer Jeseritz gave a presentation on call loads and officer assignments.

“Calls for service” are generated by complaints filed with the Dispatch Center to which an officer must respond and traffic stops.

In 2003, there were 26,739 calls for service.

In 2004, 25,311 calls for service.

In 2005, 26,373 calls for service.

Average calls per day is 72 (in a 24 hour period), which result in 20-30 reports needing to be filed.

HPD has 49 officers at full capacity.

Criminal Investigation Division has 3 investigators and 1 supervisor.

1 officer is assigned each quarter to teach DARE.

There are 4 School Resource Officers.

Missouri River Drug Task Force has 1 officer and 1 supervisor from the HPD, partnered with other law enforcement from other agencies.

Helena Housing (HUD) has 1 officer plus a ½ time position to work these areas (via federal grant).

4 officers are assigned to Administration, the Chief, Assistant Chief, Officer Jeseritz fall into this

category.

Violence against Women has 1 officer assigned (also via a grant).

Support Services Division has 1 supervisor and support staff.

31 officers are assigned to Patrol, of which 27 are actually staffed. 1 officer is on a full-time military assignment that could last up to 3 years. The remaining 3 vacancies are in the hiring process. Once hired, training can take up to 6 months to get officers ready to work independently.

Officer Tim Coleman has been with HPD for 15 years and assigned as a School Resource Officer (SRO) for 7 years. An SRO is stationed at each middle school and high school, although they cover every Helena school. They are treated as part of the school's administrative staff. Although the SRO program pulls 4 officers from the overall pool, their presence in our schools cuts down on the number of law enforcement that would be required to respond to all the schools in the district.

SRO's do classroom teaching, crisis management and counsel kids.

Classroom teaching is varied. General law enforcement (how to sit in a car during a traffic stop, how to interact with officers), report writing, 1st and 4th Amendment, obscenity, health, science, safety, date rape, photography are examples. The officers learn as much as they teach

Questions for the Police Officers:

Would you be willing to do an educational program on HCTV? Absolutely!

What are the peak hours for criminal activity? Afternoons and evenings from 5pm until bar closing.

What happened to the "Community Policing" program? It lost funding, but they're still trying to implement what they can. They just can't do it at the same levels when the call loads are increasing but the number of officers available has stayed the same.

Thanks from all of us to the HPD for the excellent report. It's obvious to us that the HPD are good people, treating Helena citizens with respect.

HCC TREASURER'S REPORT: We have \$805 remaining of our total annual budget of \$1565. Jim brought a spreadsheet showing our itemized expenses for fiscal years 2004, 2005, 2006 and the preliminary budget for 2007. We discussed the \$644 proposed expense for internet access accounts (email addresses) for the HCC on the City's domain. Remote access to the City server can be sluggish,

and there are file size limitations (though Commissioner Peura hasn't hit them). Some of us will continue to use our personal email accounts, so this expense may be less.

OLD BUSINESS:

City Admin and Commission Meeting Proposal: Lynne Boone brought a sign up sheet for the next several months. We will rely on this paper system for now, working toward adding this list to the HCC website. Marshall Gingery suggested the HCC would benefit from continuity at both the City Manager and City Admin meetings. There's a lot of information shared that carries over from one meeting to the next, and it's helpful/important to have the history.

Based on the nature of the City Commission meeting, continuity isn't as important. The duration is unknown, and we don't want to burn anyone out. HCC attends in a reporting capacity, and we're doing a good job of sending our reps with a prepared report. It will be good for all of us to get the exposure by taking a turn representing the HCC at a Commission meeting. Any HCC member can attend any of these meetings at any time. The following motion addresses who is the designated HCC representative at each meeting.

Motion: The HCC Chairperson will be responsible for attending the City Manager's meeting for the duration of their term. Marshall Gingery will cover the Admin meetings through September. City Commission meetings will be covered on a volunteer basis.

Motion carries.

Discussion: Be sure to see Lynne Boone to sign up for one of the City Commission meetings. In August, we should select the person who will take over for Marshall, so they can overlap during the September Admin meetings.

Quality of Life Issues:

The following people volunteered to serve on an ad-hoc committee to develop strategies to address the issues George McCauley talked to us about at our March meeting: Lynne Boone, Mary Ann Dunwell, George McCauley, Teresa Klotz, Mark McDonnell and Rebecca Ridenour.

Discussion:

The committee should convene as soon as possible to elect a chairperson.

Any others who are interested are welcome, and there is no need to limit the scope of public involvement.

The committee should notify (via email) the entire HCC of scheduled meetings.

¼ or ½ Time City Staff for HCC Support:

Bob Habeck has pulled our comments together into draft position descriptions. We will not pursue a ½ time support staff at this time, but we will begin using the 8 hours that is currently allotted to the HCC. Justin and Bob will meet with Debbie Havens to discuss communication needs for HCC. We will work toward a ½ time staffer if there is a need. Bob will continue to be our point of contact for suggestions for the ½ time position description.

Motion: Authorize the HCC officers to complete the position descriptions and finalize the other details of City support staff for the HCC.

Motion carries.

Discussion: Feedback from the HCC membership will be welcome at anytime.

NEW BUSINESS:

Rails to Trails / “Corridor of Discovery”: Ken Eden

Burlington Northern Railroad owns the rail line between Helena and Great Falls. The rail line hasn’t supported economic traffic in 10 years, and hasn’t been used at all for the past 5 years. If BNRR “abandons” the rail line, it becomes available for sale. There are interested groups in both Helena and Great Falls who are in the preliminary fundraising stage right now. There are many hurdles to the project, landowner concerns being one of them. The federal government must also be involved whenever a railroad turns over property.

Discussion:

What is the right of way on either side of the railbed? 200 feet wide in some places, 100 feet in others. It will be wide enough to allow for equestrian use.

Assuming a government entity will be responsible for the trail/property, who will be responsible for maintenance, law enforcement, etc? A State agency is the preferred repository, but we’ll need some type of endowment to spin off in perpetuity to cover the costs associated with the trail.

We can’t give the public the idea the trail is free. It’s true the trail will cost money to maintain, but it won’t be a dollar for dollar project either. We fully expect the trail to generate additional economic activity to our area.

The rail bed is a transportation line - what if the government wants it back? If it’s sold to individuals, it will be lost forever. If it’s sold intact, it allows for the possibility of converting it back if a need is found and it’s economically feasible.

Is there an “eminent domain” loophole? No, we can’t use that. The interested group(s) must purchase the property with a few exceptions.

HCC members should think about this project so we can decide whether we want to support it as a body at our May meeting.

City-Wide Cleanup Day: We all agree this is a good service project for the HCC to coordinate on an annual basis. Ideally each district would select a project, and the City would cooperate by making trucks available to haul trash. When talking about a date, it was rapidly apparent that spring may not be the best time of year to organize such an effort.

Motion: To form an ad-hoc committee to plan an annual service event that the HCC will be responsible for planning and participating in.

Motion carries.

Discussion:

The ad-hoc committee will be Teresa Klotz, George McCauley, Larry Mitchell, Alan Peura, Ken Saunders and Thom Warsinski.

Let Teresa know about any projects other groups are planning, but HCC members can participate in, and she'll pass them on to the rest of us.

DISTRICT DISCUSSIONS:

Meth Town Hall meeting on Tuesday May 9th. Please take some posters with you tonight. Kiwanis donated \$250 to help with various printing costs. HCC should consider sending a "thank you" letter to all of the entities that have helped to put this together. HCC is hosting this event. Beyond that, our participation will be to attend it; plan to arrive by 6:30 to help with any last minute needs. Justin is working on nametags for us.

Urban Wildlife Interface Task Force will have their first meeting next week. Matthew Cohn and Bob Habeck are HCC's representatives to that group.

The Montana Shakespeare Company does a 3-month season at Performance Park every summer. The company is considering not returning to this venue due to lack of public restroom facilities downtown. Ken Saunders canvassed 42 businesses regarding interest in permanent public restroom facilities for the downtown. 40 of the 42 businesses are interested and think the Livestock Building (where the mural resides) is a good location for it. The owner of the Livestock Building is supportive of this use, as well as providing a dressing room area for the actors. The City's stance is that this is a BID issue, and Ken will be passing his information on to the Downtown Visioning group for consideration. We have a portable near the mural during summertime, but all discussion of using portables on a permanent basis was negative. They make sense for events but aren't very welcoming for something "permanent".

There will be a neighborhood meeting at the Pattern House at 9am on April 29th to garner support for a neighborhood planning process.

Helena College of Technology (HCT) will host another public meeting on May 18th at 7pm at Bryant School, to review and discuss the 2nd draft for neighborhood plans.

There will be an ice cream social and presentation about the Midtown revitalization process at 7pm on May 30th at HCT.

District 4 has scheduled neighborhood meetings for the 2nd Friday of every month. Attendance at the first one was thin at best, and the second was on Good Friday. Their next neighborhood meeting will be held May 12th at 5:30pm at Fireside Coffee.

The playground equipment and gravel at Waukesha Park need attention. An HCC member from that district will contact Randy Lilje for more info.

Someone put a lot of work into the Euclid beautification project, but it doesn't look like the trees are getting enough water. We believe there's an underground sprinkler was part of that project. An HCC member from District 5 will contact Randy Lilje.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

The HCC board is making an effort to provide at least 30 minutes in our agenda for District discussions, but we always run out of time. HPD typically leaves before we get to that part of our agenda, and the information shared may be useful to them. We will move that item to the front of the agenda

CITY MEETING ASSIGNMENTS:

City Admin Meetings: 4-6pm

May 3; Marshall Gingery

May 17; Marshall Gingery

City Commission Meetings: 6pm –

May 8; determined by signup sheet with Lynne Boone

May 22; determined by signup sheet with Lynne Boone

City Manager's Meeting: 10am -

May 2; Justin Trafton

June 13th; Justin Trafton

Next HCC Meeting: 7 -9pm

May 24 – agenda to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted by Teresa Klotz, HCC Secretary, District 3