

Helena Citizen's Council
Regular Meeting – May 24, 2006

Members Present: Ellen Bell, Lynne Boone, Jim Christnacht, Matthew Cohn, Marshall Gingery, Amy Glasscock, George Hoff, Teresa Klotz, Jan Lombardi, Jerry McGee, Larry Mitchell, Rebecca Ridenour, Bill Roberts, Justin Trafton, and Thom Warsinski.

Members Absent: Becky Bird, Mary Ann Dunwell, Laura Erickson, Bob Habeck, Tripp Hammer, Mark McDonnell, Patty Rambo, Ken Saunders, Jay Synness, Allen Tompkins, Loyd Tracy, Jim Tucker Jr.

Visitors Present: George McCauley

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The April 26, 2006 minutes were approved as submitted.

HELENA POLICE DEPT REPORT: Officers Brian Dellwo, Torey Keltner, Sergeant Foskett.

An armed robbery at the Subway on Cedar took place on 5/13 and is still under investigation. Apx. \$1500 in cash and checks was stolen.

There are still 2 missing persons cases open; John Reamer and Shannon LeBeaux.

Crimestopper tips can be turned in to the hotline or at the HPD's website which can be reached from the City's site. The Independent Record also has a link to Crimestoppers.

In the past 2 months, there has been an increase in counterfeit postal money orders and travelers checks. Officer Dellwo passed around examples of good and bad documents. The valid ones have an easily visible watermark on the left-hand side.

There has also been an increase in internet scams. Ebay is another method scammers are using. All of these are typically national scams that the FBI doesn't investigate due to the number of filters used to perpetrate these crimes.

Officer Dellwo asked that we warn our constituents not to fall for these scams, and to report anything to the HPD's Criminal Investigation Division (CID). If you don't know who the email is from, just don't open it.

Detective Russ Whitcomb is the main investigating officer for these types of crimes. He can be reached at the CID's main number, 447-8486.

Last month, we talked about noise ordinances – how to make them more effective. Officer Jeseritz sent copies of information he found about strategies police departments in other towns are using. The problem is not unique to Helena. The County says that if we can hear the music outside of your car, it's a violation. If we can hear your car stereo 20 feet away, it's so loud that you won't be able to hear emergency vehicles.

Officer Keltner is currently the Graveyard Shift Commander, which is completely different than the day shifts. He has been on the force for apx. 7 years.

4 officers typically work a shift. Graveyard has a lesser call load, but calls are more dangerous. DUI stops require at least 2 officers on the scene, and they are the primary focus of the graveyard shift. There were 2 rollovers in town last month. So far in May there have been 11 DUI arrests, not sure how many alcohol related wrecks.

There has been a rash of criminal mischief/burglaries in the mansion district. Officers are walking and riding bikes in alleys so they can listen – it's sometimes difficult to hear from their cars. They are also working with the canine program to practice scenarios to help them catch criminals who are trying to escape.

Officer Keltner asked us to warn people to lock their cars and doors, and to move items of value so they're not visible.

With the weather getting nicer, they're also running in to younger and younger kids being out later and later. The curfew in Helena applies to kids 14 and younger. It is 11pm on weekdays and midnight on weekends. They can't do anything about kids 15 and older if they're just out and about.

If we have any concerns about the graveyard shift, please get them to Officer Keltner and he'll take them to his shift.

Questions/Discussion:

How common/prevalent are these scams in Helena? Very, but there are no statistics available. There is some need for alarm because the elderly are most often the targets of these types of scams. And the HPD isn't notified of every instance.

Does HPD do any type of publicity when these scams increase? Detective Whitcomb does do programs and will talk to groups if he's invited. PSA's are also a good idea.

Spring Meadow Resources teaches people to live independently. It would be helpful to alert organizations that provide services to vulnerable groups of people. (Officer Dellwo asked us to compose a list of agencies/organizations that HPD should notify.)

What is the status of Miss Nolan (the 18 year old killed in the wreck last week)? They believe the investigation will be concluded this evening by issuing a citation to the young man who provided the alcohol.

What's up with multiple DUI offenders? Why are they still driving? Can they be denied their license for life? If you lose your license, you follow the rules to get it back. Some DUI offenders aren't licensed – just because I don't have a license, doesn't mean I'm not going to drive. Right now, if you get 4 or more DUI's, it's a felony. There is no law in the State of Montana allowing permanent revocation of driver's licenses.

We want to commend the City and the HPD for the work they're doing to educate and train people regarding serving and consumption of alcohol, and working to reduce the amount of diversion that takes place at local events.

HCC TREASURER'S REPORT: As of 5/24, we have \$804.86 remaining until 6/30/2006. Justin has apx. \$100 of expenses to submit. There may also be some printing expenses for the Meth Town Hall meeting coming – not sure how much.

The publicity committee is working on some advertising for HCC, in both the Queen City News and the Independent Record. The IR asked if the HCC has an account with the City. When Bill Roberts did advertising in the past, he asked them to use the "City Commission/Debbie Havens" account which gave us access to the contract rate. Be sure to give Debbie a heads up.

DISTRICT DISCUSSIONS: HCC members are encouraged to request items for this part of the agenda in advance of our monthly meeting.

Urban Wildlife Task Force: Matthew Cohn, Co-Chair

The committee of 9 volunteers has had 2 meetings to date. They are meeting bi-weekly, and their next meeting is on 5/31. There was an article in the IR today and a QCN article is coming.

Their charge is to define the problem and make a report to the City Commission by March 2007. Their responsibility is to the City Commission although the animals are coming from outside the City. They plan to have a draft idea in the December-January timeframe, to allow time for comment before the March deadline.

It is assumed the HCC will have a role in coordinating public meetings. Public input is critical. They are considering a survey, and have received an estimate from the UofM that it would cost apx. \$10k to do a statistically accurate survey. FWP has a "Living with Wildlife" grant fund available. 6/15 is the application cutoff.

The task force sees 4 possible courses of action; do nothing, physical removal, birth control and culling. These are all things other communities have tried.

The task force will make periodic updates at the HCC and City Commission meetings.

They would like a spot on the June agenda for FWP to make a power point presentation.

They would like a letter of support from the HCC with respect to the grant application.

They would like help with District meetings in the fall, as part of the public forums.

Discussion:

Are the grant funds for a specific purpose? The grant title is “Living with Wildlife”, but there’s no requirement that money be spent a certain way. FWP will make the final decision about grant recipients, and they’re ultimately responsible for the wildlife.

I am uncomfortable supporting a request for \$10k, when there really isn’t a plan, beyond doing a survey. The task force has only met twice so more details aren’t available. The grant deadline is 6/15 and the HCC doesn’t meet again until 6/28. The task force believes a statistically accurate survey is critical to the public comment process and that this grant will help with that effort and other activities of the task force.

Has City geography been considered? The problem/solution will be different based on the part of town. Yes – but it’s too preliminary to tell. A survey will reveal some of this.

Motion: That the HCC issue a letter of support for the Urban Wildlife Task Force to apply for the FWP “Living with Wildlife” grant to study Helena’s urban wildlife issue. Motion passes; Justin Trafton (HCC Chair) will draft the letter.

Helena Trolley Restoration Committee: George Hoff, Chair

The trolley was deeded to the City of Helena by someone in Big Sandy.

A trucking company from Dillon brought the trolley from Big Sandy to Helena as a community service project (apx. \$2k donation).

They have a building to store the trolley and use for the restoration work, but it needs to be cleaned out. Court ordered community service “volunteers” will help with this.

A gentleman in Big Sandy has agreed to do the restoration work for a total of \$120k. They currently have \$5k in their fund and are receiving donations. Laura Erikson is also helping to seek funding.

George would like to give a full report at the August HCC meeting, and then continue to provide periodic updates. If you have any ideas, please get them to George.

Questions:

What is the ultimate plan for the trolley? Presentation of the restored trolley is planned for 2010, which is the centennial of when Helena originally bought the trolley. It will be displayed in an open barn or similar structure with other antique vehicles/machinery. The final site is still under consideration; Women’s Park or the Great Northern area are being considered. The canopy is a separate project, but it falls under this committee’s purview.

Public Relations Committee: Lynne Boone

They are coming up with ideas about how to get the word out to the public about what the HCC is, how to contact us.

They are considering paid advertising in the IR and QCN, which would include individual district maps and HCC member's contact info. A full page ad in the QCN is \$484.84, ½ page is \$265. They don't have a price for the IR yet, based on whether we can use the City's contract rate for our advertising.

They're also considering a brochure and an insert to the water bill.

The committee thought they had \$500-\$800 to work with, but it doesn't sound like it given the other HCC expenses that are currently outstanding.

Their committee needs to meet to get consensus about direction.

Questions:

Print advertising is expensive and won't reach everyone – is it the best use of the money? There is no perfect medium that will reach everyone, but we have to start somewhere and then build on that. It won't be the only thing they pursue.

How soon does the committee want to do this? Before fiscal year end, 6/30/06.

Motion: Authorize the HCC Executive Board to approve up to \$500 for use in the Public Relations sub-committee, at the Board's discretion as soon as the PR committee develops a recommendation. Motion passes.

Mid-Town Revitalization Group: Justin Trafton

This group has targeted the north/south borders of "midtown" as 11th/Prospect and Cedar and the east/west borders as I15 and North Rodney (involving HCC Districts 2 and 6). They are actively trying to get people involved in a neighborhood planning process. There will be an ice cream social and presentation at the Helena College of Technology, on Tuesday 5/30 at 6:30pm. If you're in District 2 or 6, please plan to attend. Justin will add District 2 reps to the email chain.

Public Art Committee: Amy Glasscock, George McCauley

The IR put together "The Best Little Art Town" booklet, which encompasses all the arts in

Helena. They're all over town; the IR is handling distribution. Public art, art the City doesn't own but is in the public eye is also featured in the booklet; how to find it, the artist, etc.

City Government 101: Teresa Klotz

We concluded the 3 session series last Monday, and it was great – very informative. If you missed out, all 3 sessions are available on VHS (\$10 per tape) and DVD (\$20 per DVD) from HCTV. We're talking about how to make it more accessible to the School District, University and City archives. Rebecca Ridenour is our representative to the Library Board. She'll talk to them about purchasing a copy for the Library.

Thanks to all: Justin Trafton

This body has been tremendously active since last January. We are populating many groups and projects – we're out there and active. It's all good publicity for the HCC. Justin recognized and thanked all of us for our involvement in various boards, committees, task forces.

OLD BUSINESS:

Rails to Trails / "Corridor of Discovery":

Motion: That the HCC draft a letter of support for this project, in conjunction with the Helena City Commission's endorsement of the Rails to Trails/Corridor of Discovery project. Motion passes – Justin will draft the letter.

HCC Committee on Budget (COB) Status Report: The committee is Jim Christnacht, Marshall Gingery, Larry Mitchell, Bill Roberts and Thom Warsinski.

There are many public safety issues, lots of details involved in the City budget process. Lighting districts, Special Improvement Districts, different things that generate revenue beyond property taxes.

There are 221 properties on the West Side being served by City water and/or sewer services, but only 11 have filed annexation waivers.

Marshall recommends asking someone from the City come talk to us about SID's.

HCC's budget request is moving through the process quite well. It could change, but our COB doesn't anticipate that it will.

HOLMAC is working with Randy Lilje on the Parks budget because they're running out of money to manage our open space. Part of the proposed Parks budget is a dedicated staff member to manage this. They're considering setting up something similar to the "tree district" – every taxpayer pays some small dollar amount to help fund the position.

Marshall is impressed by the amount of time and interest our Mayor and Commissioners are investing in this process.

HCC Community Service Project: The ad-hoc committee is Teresa Klotz, George McCauley, Larry Mitchell, Alan Peura and Ken Saunders.

The ad-hoc committee recommends asking Tim Burton to query City department heads for 2 to 3 potential service projects in each district. City departments get complaints, so we expect they will be able to suggest a number of things that they can't get to this year. The projects must be relatively simple, not requiring special equipment, power tools, etc.

When the ad-hoc committee gets the lists of potential projects from the City, the elected HCC representatives will work within their neighborhoods to gather support and choose their district-specific project. Projects must be chosen by a certain date (to be determined) to give the City ample notice of the resources each district will need to complete its project.

The ad-hoc committee will devise a "how to" template that districts can use to help them move forward with their project, including ways to gather neighborhood support. They will also do some type of promotion after the event to quantify what was accomplished.

We recommend one of the following dates, Saturday 9/23 or Sunday 9/24, Saturday 9/30 or Sunday 10/1. We recommend using the 1 to 5pm timeframe, but those details will be left to each individual district.

Motion: To accept the ad-hoc committee's recommendation as proposed. Motion passes.

Discussion: The ad-hoc committee should choose the date and bring it back to the HCC.

NEW BUSINESS: No new business this month.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

George McCauley is on the Board of the Cooperative Health Center and would like some time on a future HCC agenda to... (I had to step out of the room at this part, so I missed this part. Help, anyone – thanks!)

On Monday June 5th at 4pm in the Commission Chambers, there will be a public meeting to review and possibly amend the Peace Resolution before the City Commission meeting that night. George McCauley will get a copy of the resolution to Teresa who will forward it to the rest of the HCC.

No one has volunteered to cover the City Commission meeting on the following dates: July 31st and August 14th. Please talk to Lynne Boone if you can cover one of these.

CITY MEETING ASSIGNMENTS:

City Admin Meetings: 4-6pm

May 31; Marshall Gingery

June 14; Marshall Gingery

City Commission Meetings: 6pm –

June 5; Mary Ann Dunwell

June 19; Lynne Boone

City Manager's Meeting: 10am -

June 13th; Justin Trafton

Next HCC Meeting: 7 -9pm

June 28 – agenda to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted by Teresa Klotz, HCC Secretary, District 3