

Helena Citizen's Council

Regular Meeting – October 27, 2006

Members Present: Lynne Boone, Mary Ann Dunwell, Laura Erikson, Marshall Gingery, Amy Glasscock, Bob Habeck, George Hoff, Teresa Klotz, George McCauley, Larry Mitchell, Rebecca Ridenour, Bill Roberts, Ken Saunders, Allen Tompkins, Loyd Tracy, Justin Trafton and Thom Warsinski

Members Absent: Jim Christnacht, Matthew Cohn, Mark McDonnell, Jerry McGee and Jim Tucker Jr.

Visitors Present: Lt Dave Jeseritz

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes from our September 27, 2006 were approved as written.

HELENA POLICE DEPT REPORT: Lt. Jeseritz

Prior to the meeting, Lt. Jeseritz took HCC members on a very informative tour of the Law Enforcement Center at 221 Breckenridge.

Things are relatively quiet at the moment; HPD doesn't have any big investigations going on. They are preparing for a homicide trial in January. They're still discussing the idea of community policing. Lt. Jeseritz just returned from 10 weeks of training at Quantico Marine Base, where 250 officers from 20+ countries gathered for college level, law enforcement classes. It was a good experience. Networking with other officers revealed HPD is facing similar issues as police departments in other, larger cities. With the exception of his wages and some other incidental expenses, the federal government covered the costs of the training.

With the help of an arbitrator, the HPD Union and the City settled on a 3 year contract, retroactive to apx. 18 months ago. They're happy with the outcome, which allows for shift differentials for night shifts.

HCC TREASURER'S REPORT: To date, we have committed apx. \$568 of our FY07 budget, leaving a balance of \$3250 still available for FY07.

NEW BUSINESS:

Admin Meeting Coverage through December: During the summer, Marshall Gingery volunteered to represent the HCC at City Admin meetings through October, giving us some continuity in coverage. His stint is up, but we didn't have time to determine who can make a similar commitment to represent the HCC at that meeting through the end of the year. As a result, a different member will cover each meeting.

Discussion of "Lynn's List" (and quite a lot more...)

To free up time during monthly HCC meetings, last spring we agreed to have Lynne Boone maintain the list of volunteers to attend the City Admin and City Commission meetings. An even distribution of that load among all HCC members was implied, but not formalized. While we recognize that some of us can't get to them based on other life obligations, Lynn's noticed that some people have gone above and beyond while others haven't attended any. Which launched a discussion of HCC member expectations.

Position Descriptions

There's currently no standard, list of expectations for HCC members. It's a worthwhile discussion to take up – what level of service is expected of us?

We agreed it would be helpful to see position descriptions. Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary are somewhat defined in our Bylaws, but there's no position description for individual HCC members. It would be great to know what's expected of me.

Consider including a summary sheet of expectations in our orientation binder, along the lines of "shall include, but isn't limited to..."

I want to see everyone contribute, have a commitment to do something.

Every member should commit to being at our monthly meetings.

If we had a position description, we could publicize it during the election cycle.

Each person should participate according to their need and ability. I'm here as an elected official. I need to ask myself if I'm giving enough.

Our role is political – to represent people. It should be outlined by our bylaws.

Our real role is advisory. If we want to change that, we need to look at that.

Neighborhoods:

HCC should be about neighborhood projects. Neighborhood issues are what's important and that's where I want to serve. The most important thing to me is to meet with my district, with my neighbors.

But none of us have a neighborhood council.

Is part of our budget to communicate within our Districts? Publicize what HCC reps do for our community – if citizens have questions or issues, they can bring them to us.

Our budget doubled for FY07. A big part of that was advertising to let neighborhoods know we're here and we're active.

District meetings – we should be given tasks to get public opinion from those meetings and bring it back to the City. Submit hard copy reports for the City record.

I want our HCC reps to have a presence in our district. How do we get to those people, what's the process? And the bigger picture is the city as a whole.

How do we get our neighbors to want to come to us, to participate?

Our monthly HCC meeting is a clearing house. The real action is in our neighborhoods.

Meet people, show our faces so people get to know us.

Our power as a body comes from the collective voice of our neighborhoods. Without that, we have no voice in City matters.

District 6 is a very diverse district. It's a problem to get people interested in an issue. It's a huge district, but it's tough to get people to participate.

Don't get discouraged. Help Helena Shine was a good jumping off place – it helped us get the word out and get to know some people.

There have been several cases where one District had something going on but they didn't get the support of the full body. If you see something happening in another district, let that district's HCC reps know about it.

Organizing:

We all have different interests, experience and abilities. Our Board should ask members what their areas of expertise are. We should let our Chair know what our strengths are.

We're struggling to organize ourselves, but we don't have experience with grass roots organizing. It's a great idea, but it's critical that some of us get trained in these skills.

We all love HCC and want to see it succeed. In addition to our Bylaws, we need an "operations guide". We have a lack of institutional memory.

We should focus on doing fewer, smaller projects and doing them better.

Not trained vs. not having any process in place. How do I introduce myself to the Superintendent of schools?

There is a federal program that connects graduate students with communities to help community groups organize. The VISTA program may also be an option.

I think there's a lot that a part-time staffer could do for us.

Let's talk to someone who has experience with this, someone outside of the HCC.

We have big potential, but what obstacles do we face, short term and long term?

City staff and administration perception is that HCC will go dormant again. We have one helluva job selling ourselves.

These are all good ideas. Training would be helpful. The Quality of Life survey will also give us some information, and we owe a response to the public on that deal.

In a "Candidate Corner" Alan Peura talked about his vision for the HCC. The boulevard issue was an example of a decision that should have input from all citizens. Get information out to the public.

We're elected officials but our power falls below an administrative position.

Our numbers are dwindling and we have a hard time filling vacancies. We only meet once a month as a consolidated group, with an expectation that we follow District and personal interests in between.

We can only do so much, and we've made a lot of progress. We need to keep going.

Lt. Jeseritz offered that other communities are having similar experiences.

Committees and Boards:

We should be involved in the zoning and annexation process. We have a problem when a developer wants to do something. If the project meets the law, it moves forward.

We've got to get more of us to sit on boards so we know what's going on out there.

The City Admin meeting is where we find out what the City's doing. HPD and HFD have incorporated us into their reports. We have to look like we're going to be part of it.

When Marshall started attending the Airport Authority meetings 7 months ago, they didn't know him, but now they do and they include him in their discussions.

Publicity and Public Relations:

HCC is unknown. How to let people know we're here?

What happened to our public relations committee?

Lynne volunteered to work on publicity but hasn't pursued anything yet.

Think we need to be willing to pay for press/ad space so we get to say what we want to say – not edited by newspaper editorial staff. When we take the freebies, we don't often get what we want.

Paid space is expensive in the IR, less so in the QCN. Have we met with the editorial board of the IR?

Is it possible for us to get in on the City Commission's weekly report in the paper?

My preference is to use the pool of talent we have available to us in the HCC. Issue press releases when we have news. There's something newsworthy in all of our meetings.

Can we take the weekly reports we give at the City Admin and City Commission meetings and use that

content for press releases? Copy Larry Kline at the IR and ask him to put it in the Sunday paper? We might have to jazz it up a bit.

Budget:

Budget meetings will start meeting probably in December, for FY08.

If we do start working on projects and need more money, can we ask for more?

Separate Meeting:

Sounds like we'd benefit from a separate meeting. The first meeting will be a friendly discussion of where we want to be. Short term and long term strategy.

We should consider using a professional facilitator. Does anyone within the HCC have facilitator skills?

As a reference point, the Downtown Visioning Group is on apx. their 7th meeting and they're not anywhere yet. Organizing is a slow process.

While passing out QofL survey forms, we met Margaret Strachan who was active in neighborhood councils in Portland OR. She offered to come and talk to us. George and Rebecca will find her contact info and invite her to attend on November 9th.

Someone talk to Dave Shores at the IR.

Someone get information about the VISTA volunteer status/process.

Amy Glasscock will contact someone in Missoula, about its neighborhood councils.

Lynne Boone will contact someone in Great Falls about its neighborhood councils.

We need to meet in a public meeting place vs. commercial location.

Meet on Thursday November 9th, 5:30-7:30.

Justin will see if we can use the Chamber of Commerce conference room.

Motion: To set aside up to \$1000 to pay for a facilitator for the November 9th meeting. (which was withdrawn after the following discussion):

We need to slow down. \$1000 is 1/3 of our remaining budget. I don't feel good about spending that much money for 1 meeting that we all agree won't be enough to get us through this issue.

If the facilitator is good, we'll still have to get them up to speed and we're not going to accomplish that before November 9th.

I'd rather spend money to bring someone with community experience, from Great Falls or Missoula, to come and talk to us. Maybe ask them to act as facilitator.

There are lots of boards that use good facilitators for less than \$1000.

Clarification that the motion was to spend up to \$1000 to get us through the entire process – not just that one meeting.

If we do nothing, the money will still be sitting there. I'm afraid we're going to work real hard doing nothing.

DISTRICT DISCUSSIONS: There was no time for this portion of the agenda.

OLD BUSINESS:

HCC Expenditures Policy Recommendation is tabled to the November agenda.

Quality of Life Survey report is tabled to the November agenda.

Help Helena Shine report: is tabled to the November agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Again, there was no time for this portion of the agenda.

CITY MEETING ASSIGNMENTS:

City Admin Meetings: 4-6pm

November 1; Lynne Boone

November 15; Larry Mitchell

November 29; Bill Roberts

December 13; Rebecca Ridenour

City Commission Meetings: 6pm –

November 6; Ken Saunders

November 20; George McCauley

December 4; Ken Saunders

December 18; George McCauley

City Manager's Meeting: 10am -

November 14; Justin Trafton

Next HCC Meeting: 7 -9pm

November 15 – Community Gardens (AERO and WEEL)

December 20

Respectfully Submitted by Teresa Klotz, HCC Secretary, District 3