

Helena Citizen's Council

Regular Meeting – September 27, 2006

Members Present: Jim Christnacht, Marshall Gingery, Bob Habeck, Teresa Klotz, Mark McDonnell, Larry Mitchell, Rebecca Ridenour, Bill Roberts, Allen Tompkins, Jim Tucker Jr, Justin Trafton and Thom Warsinski.

Members Absent: Lynne Boone, Matthew Cohn, Mary Ann Dunwell, Laura Erikson, Amy Glasscock, George Hoff, Jerry McGee, Ken Saunders and Loyd Tracy

Visitors Present: George McCauley, Fire Chief Larson, Fire Marshall Tripp, Asst Fire Chiefs Ross and Feucht, Kelly Tuck, Mike Gilman, Kevin Kelly and Sergeant Foskett.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The August 23, 2006 minutes were approved as amended to show that Larry Mitchell was present at the meeting.

HELENA POLICE DEPT REPORT: Sergeant Foskett

Traffic collisions on main thoroughfares are an increasing problem; North Montana, 11th Ave, Prospect, Custer. There were 25 collisions reported over the past weekend – the majority are rear end collisions. There are a lot of cars on the road, so we all need to pay attention and slow down. Sergeant Foskett doesn't know whether cell phones are the cause of these accidents. However, if someone was on their cell phone when they crashed, it is considered a "contributing factor" on the police report.

Vandalism with BB guns is also increasing, mainly in the perimeter areas of town. If people see any suspicious activity or people, they should report it to HPD right away and they'll patrol the area. This is not a victimless crime. It sets all of us back - property owners, pulling police away from other crimes and patrols.

Chief Magee has offered to let us tour the Law Enforcement Center if we are interested. Besides the fitness center, the airport station is mostly office and computer space. The downtown station has the dispatch center.

HCC TREASURER'S REPORT: Our community service project has obligated \$218 in expenses. To date, we have committed \$516 of our FY07 budget, leaving a balance of \$3303 still available for FY07. Marshall gave Justin a hard copy of the City's FY07 budget. The City will begin work on the FY08 budget earlier than they did last year. The HCC's Committee on Budget (COB) is Jim Christnacht, Marshall Gingery, Larry Mitchell and Thom Warsinski.

NEW BUSINESS:

Fire Prevention Week Activities: Fire Marshall Tripp

Fire Prevention Week commemorates the Great Chicago Fire. This year it will be 10/8-10/14, and they have related activities planned for the month of October. "Watch what you heat" is this year's theme. Nationally, cooking fires are the leading cause of fires in the home, of which Helena has about 2-3 bad ones each year. The HFD will host an Open House for the whole community, from 5pm to 8pm on Thursday 10/12, at the Civic Center station.

Starting Tuesday 10/8, approx. 800 2nd graders from Helena, East Helena, Clancy, home-schoolers and private schools will tour the Civic Centers station. They'll watch a video, watch fire experiments to demonstrate the dangers of fire. Surprisingly, many people still don't change their smoke detector batteries, so the Fire Marshall will stress the importance of that, as well as what to do when the smoke alarm goes off.

HCC members are welcome to come and watch the 2nd grade presentations at the station. The tours

happen Tuesday through Friday 10/10 – 10/13 and the following Monday 10/17. They take place at 9am, 10am, 12:30pm and 1:30pm. They target 2nd graders due to lack of manpower to take it further - it would be useful to talk to middle and high schoolers (again).

The week after the kids tour the station, the HFD takes Sparky to each of the schools for a follow up visit. They'll quiz the kids about what they learned, have a coloring contest where the grand prize winners get chauffeured to lunch at McDonalds on a fire rig.

Fire Service Review Report: Bruce and Martin, Emergency Services Consulting Inc. (ESCI).

Fire Chief Larson is working to get a copy of the review report loaded to the City's website. He has a hard copy of the report for the HCC and will make cd copies available to any HCC member that would like one.

The report covers the following; 1) analysis of current system, 2) recommendations and 3) opportunities for cooperative effort regionally and throughout Lewis & Clark County.

The diversity in the Helena area makes us relatively unique. ESCI reviewed every aspect of our current fire services; management, City Charter, training programs, what happens when the bell rings. They found the HFD operates at a high degree of competency, but they're stretched too thin.

Resources per 1000 population – estimating a population of 25k to 50k people.

Regional Median

Helena Fire Dept

Stations

0.093

0.063

Pumpers

0.114

0.094

Aerials (ladders)

0.021

0.031

Where HFD Funds are Spent

Personnel

85.14%

Supplies

2.03%

Purchased services

4.66%

Intra City charges

.95%

Internal charges

7.20%

Fixed costs

.02%

Services HFD can provide depend entirely on the community's viability to fund.

The cost per capita for the typical fire department career range is \$150; HFD is at \$95.53.

In 2005, residential building permits outpaced commercial permits.

ESCI projects L&C County to grow to 50k people by 2025, and the City to 27k by 2025.

The City has decided to move forward with annexation. In the past, people have been driven outside City limits to keep housing costs down, but they think that trend will reverse due to lack of waste water treatment facilities and contamination risks.

Current HFD Staffing Levels

Administration

Operations

Fire Chief

1

Battalion Chiefs

3

Asst Fire Chiefs

2

Captains

6

Fire Inspector (also a FF)

1

Lieutenant

6

Senior Admin Asst

1

Firefighters (FF)/EMS Coord

15

Total Admin/Support

6

Total Ops Staff

30

% of total HFD Staff (Avg is 10 - 20%)

16.66%

% of Ops officers to FF

50%

Resources per 1000 population – estimating a population of 25k to 50k people.

Regional Median

Helena Fire Dept

1.08

.97

The national average of firefighters on duty (in cities of a similar size) is 18.8. HFD's average on duty is 7.0. HFD staffs to 10, but will run short due to sick leave and vacation time vs. calling staff back to operate at 10 FF. Staffing levels are driven by population, but also by an area's culture and the responsibilities of each FD (i.e. ambulance service).

HFD's annual overtime (OT) budget is \$54k. It allows them to calculate work schedules during a 30 day period. Their contract allows them to pay part straight time and part OT.

If HFD wanted to add a person to a shift, it means they'd have to hire 3 people (1 per each of the 3 shifts they run). With salary, outfitting with gear and training, it's costly. A person would must work to fill shifts 80% of the time to be considered cost effective.

OT can be cheaper than additional staff, but they must also consider the burnout factor.

Turnover at HFD is low – they don't see a lot of movement. And they are finding it harder to attract the rank and file into administrative positions.

FF have extremely labor intensive jobs; their body is one of their most important tools.

Helena is considered a "regional center"; people come here from Boulder, Townsend, Montana City, etc. So the analysis also considered "affected population", or the number of people who live outside City limits but are in the city on a daily basis. Sgt Foskett estimates this number to be apx.15k people daily.

Montana On-Duty Averages - per 1000 population

State-wide Average

1.08

Billings

3.24

Bozeman

.69

Butte

.87

Great Falls

1.85

Helena

.97

Kalispell

1.01

Missoula

2.17

Recommended Staffing Levels for Various Fire Types

Risk Level

Type of Structure

Staff Needed

Low (most calls)

Shed

6

Moderate

Single family dwelling, 1200 to 1600 sq feet

13

High

Garage/home, apt. building, larger homes 4000+ sq feet

17

Maximum

Large event

49

Condition of Helena Fire Stations

Built

Square Feet

Condition

General Appearance

Civic Center

Station 1

1938

10k

Fair/good

Good

East Side

Station 2

1979

4k

Good

Good

Service Calls by Year

2001

2456

2005

2680

2006

2814 (projected)

2010

3420 (projected)

Service Calls by Type

Fire

3%

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

70%

Other

27%

* Peak activity times are 8am, Noon and 5pm (obviously driven by human activity).

HFD's Response Times

Average

90th Percentile (excluding the highs and lows)

Fire

5:26 min

8:32 min

EMS

5:18 min

7:41 min

Other

6:29 min

10:21 min

Total

5:43 min

8:59 min

Fire growth vs. reflex time includes:

Ignition, detection and report to the FD. The FD has no control over this time.

Dispatch (2 min), turnout (1 min), respond to the scene (drive time) and set up.

Based on how long a fire's been burning before it's even detected and reported, and then the drive time to the scene, structures can be fully engulfed before HFD arrives at the scene.

70% of calls are EMS. The % of recovery in cardiac patients is entirely time dependent. If they get help within the first minute, their recovery rate is 95%. When the response time reaches 9 minutes, their recovery rate drops to 0%. The "response time" calculation includes detection, report, dispatch, turnout, respond, set up. This process can easily take more than 9 minutes which drops a cardiac patient's chances for recovery to zero.

The nationally recommended response time is 4 minutes, which is virtually impossible based on Helena's topography and traffic flow.

HFD's goal is a 5 minute response time, under ideal conditions (traffic, weather, etc.).

Both of Helena's fire stations are located south of the railroad tracks, which present several barriers to HFD response.

HFD's response times includes back to back service calls, where they don't respond from the station – they're already out in the community when they get the next call.

Other things that effect response time are concurrent calls, not always responding from the station, both stations respond to an incident leaving nothing in reserve.

Response time and available resources are crucial to HFD's success. Human resources aren't the only way to fight fire – prevention and safety measures (sprinkler systems, for example) make a big difference.

The fire service review identifies a need for additional resources. Washington/Cedar Streets would be a good location for a 3rd fire station. ESCI recommends having a total of 4 to 5 stations in 25 years.

Although they have an agreement with the National Guard, HFD is responsible for the airport. If there is an emergency at the airport, HFD has command and control. Structural fires are significantly different than airplane fires.

Helena has lots of opportunity for cooperative efforts. During stakeholder meetings, they asked "What are the obstacles to enhanced cooperation between agencies?" and "What are the opportunities for increased cooperation?"

Priorities are station construction, current personnel retention (majority are volunteer), new personnel recruitment, availability of FF/EMS, funding/budget, acquiring new vehicles and equipment, training needs.

It's harder to maintain certifications today.

Based on increased call volume, it's a big time commitment for volunteers.

Opportunities/prospects include joint training, shared training facilities, enhanced mutual aid and automatic aid, strike teams and task forces, a fire coordinator for the County, Duty Chief officer rotation, joint purchasing.

Chief Larson has the reputation of being an ally of rural fire districts (fire depts., US Fire Service, Montana DNRC).

This review was presented at the City Admin meeting this afternoon and was well received. Now HFD must review it and let us know where they recommend Helena should be. Then it's a matter of creating the revenue to do what HFD recommends.

To build and staff a 3rd fire station will cost apx \$1.6 million annually. It would require 18 firefighters to staff an additional station.

The City is working on impact fees, but these will only affect new construction.

Can County residents still contract with the City for fire support? Not anymore. If residents want to take advantage of City services, they must be willing to be annexed – you receive all City services or none.

The biggest part of the review is determining where the HFD is and what that means to our community.

DISTRICT DISCUSSIONS: Due to the Fire Service Review report, there was no time for this portion of the agenda. Marshall Gingery submitted the following written report:

The Airport Authority appointed Michele Steele, Wingate Inn Manager, to the board.

Commissioners took a tour of the Tennis Association Building; renovation of the “older” portion of the building should be completed within a couple of months. The new court will be ready within a month or so.

The Fly Helena marketing plan will kick off in October.

The airport is nearly finished with its obligations for site work and infrastructure. Costco still plans to open in mid to late November.

The Airport Authority Exec Committee will serve as the airport's Land Development Committee and will address issues such as infrastructure, zoning, annexation and site development while planning for

future uses of Airport property.

The Authority approved the revised FY06 and FY07 scope of work related to the 5 year airport improvement program; Rocky Mountain Emergency Services Training Center upgrade plans (\$947k), overlay of taxiways A, B and C (\$2.7 mil), additional security equipment (\$166k), remodel/expansion of the Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting and Snow Removal Equipment Building (\$3 mil).

OLD BUSINESS:

How to Approve HCC Expenditures is tabled to the October agenda.

HCC Community Service Project: Teresa Klotz

KMTX recorded a PSA for airing on the radio and sent it to all the local stations.

There is an article in today's IR.

We purchased a ¼ page ad in the September 27th edition of the QCN.

We've divided 100 posters among the districts, so please be sure to get those up.

We'll have flyers to use for handouts; Teresa will get them to each district.

We're working out the details of the materials drop offs/pickups with the City and will let you know as soon as that is finalized.

To be covered by the City's Work Comp, volunteers must sign in, along with their social security #'s. Teresa will get each district copies of the sign-in sheets.

Rebecca Ridenour is actively working to compile the results of the Quality of Life Survey responses we received. She'll let us know when she has something to present.

None of our HCC vacancies have been filled. Justin Trafton will follow-up with Debbie Havens about the City's PSA. Larry Kline at the IR should also be contacted.

HCC should consider asking all City divisions for an opportunity to tour their facilities. The water treatment facility, 10 Mile water treatment plant, etc. would all be very interesting. A presentation from the City/County information technology group would also be helpful, to see what they're working on.

Justin has a box of miscellaneous HCC resource materials. He'll make a list of the contents for us, and we are welcome to borrow or review the materials if we're interested.

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

CITY MEETING ASSIGNMENTS:

City Admin Meetings: 4-6pm

October 11; Marshall Gingery (?)

October 25; Marshall Gingery (?)

City Commission Meetings: 6pm –

October 16; Mark McDonnell

October 30; Teresa Klotz

City Manager's Meeting: 10am -

October 24; Justin Trafton

Next HCC Meeting: 7 -9pm

October 25 – Ron Mercer from the Helena Airport Authority. Tentatively, to be held at the Law Enforcement Center.

November 15 – Community Gardens (AERO and WEEL)

December 20

Respectfully Submitted by Teresa Klotz, HCC Secretary, District 3