

City of East Helena Newsletter - September 2019

As we move into the fall of 2019, it doesn't seem like spring/summer 2019 lasted very long at all. As usual, some great East Helena annual events took place and **a big thank you goes out to the countless individuals who organized and made these wonderful public events happen.** These events include the VFW and Eagles Easter Egg hunts, Loyalty Day and Teachers Appreciation Day at the East Helena Public Schools, the Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention walk, the Christian Motorcycle Association Bike Blessing in Main Street Park, the VFW Memorial Day parade and ceremony, the East Helena Annual Fun Run, the National Guard Motorcycle Poker Run, the Helena Street Rodders Horsepower Roundup in Kennedy Park, the East Helena Rodeo Parade, the East Helena Rodeo, the Rodeo Street Dance, and the East Helena Neighborhood Block Party along Lane Avenue.

This year, in conjunction with Art in the Park and with assistance from the East Helena Food/Culture Hub, the City held an event on August 10th celebrating East Helena's heritage with live music and planned story telling in Main Street Park with "**Stackfest 2019**". Thank you to all that planned and attended this first-time event although heavy rains put a damper on the story-telling portion of the event this year. Tentative plans are in place to continue this tradition as an annual summer event at Main Street Park with live music and stories about East Helena. Getting reacquainted with current neighbors and meeting new neighbors with family and friends is a major purpose of this event. The success of this year's event showed that a repeat next year is definitely in order (without the downpour, hopefully).

The East Helena Food/Culture Hub will host its **second annual community Fall Fest and Apple Press event** Saturday, October 12th, 2PM to 5PM at the Fireman's Hall, 2 E. Pacific St (behind Smith's place). Inside: Special storytelling event (from the rained-out Stackfest day) with Improv Mining Company and local storytellers. Outside: carve pumpkins, play games with family and friends, and press your apples into cider. Main Street Eats (the wonderful East Helena restaurant on Main Street) will serve two different types of chili (one with meat, one without), plus cornbread to keep you warm. FREE. Bring the whole family and enjoy some great East Helena food and stories!

The **2019 East Helena Halloween walk** will be held Thursday, October 31st along Main Street between 5PM and 7PM. J4 Automotive will again hold its annual Fright Night movie in Main Street Park at dusk. This year's movie will be "Mickey's House of Villains." Businesses and homes along Main Street will give out treats, so gather the kids up for this great annual event.

The East Helena VFW Cory-Dullum Post 10010 will again host their annual **Veterans Day Parade** on Monday, November 11th starting at 11AM in front of the VFW on Main Street and concluding with a ceremony at Main Street Park. With the new Servicemembers Monument located in Main Street Park, this year's Veterans Day ceremony will include a ribbon cutting event and dedication to mark this achievement.

First built in 1943 and dedicated on September 6, 1943 as a "War Service Monument", **the original Main Street Park monument** contained 216 names of East Helenans serving in the armed forces. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, names were added with plaques to the monument including those that served in World War I. In about 1980, the original monument was replaced and local names of those serving were added including those who served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. This 1980s monument had 10 large granite name plaques that had permanently stained and discolored over time. In about 2015, the East Helena VFW and City of East Helena began a project to replace the weathered monument and add more names of East Helena servicemembers. The old monument's plaques and eagles are being stored for safekeeping.

Throughout the end of 2018 and several months into 2019, additional names were collected to add to the new monument. The **new Servicemembers Monument**, which was completed as it stands on May 26, 2019, contains 1,464 names of East Helena servicemembers. Many area residents and businesses donated both money and labor to assist with completing the new monument with the majority of the costs being paid for by the East Helena VFW Cory-Dullum Post 10010. Further work is anticipated to take place in the coming year, which may include additions on the grounds around the monument. Much work went into trying to contact as many East Helena servicemembers and families of those whose names could be added and a strict vetting process of the added names took place. At this time a date has not been set to add additional names but the VFW has started a file for future updates to the monument. More information and pictures of the project can be found at easthelenamt.us/city/vets/.

The **2019 East Helena Christmas Stroll** will be held on Thursday, December 5th along Main Street from 5:30PM to 8:30PM. Multiple locations will host local arts and craft sales with Santa Claus and fun kids' activities planned at Main Street Park in the J4 Automotive tent. City Hall will host a Christmas music show at 6PM with performances by children from the East Helena School District and Performing Arts on Main, as well as host arts and crafts for purchase. Please remember to check out the raffle prizes and purchase raffle tickets at locations up

and down Main Street. Main Street will be closed to traffic during the Stroll, except for a bus that can be used by anyone needing a lift along the Stroll. This year's event is once again organized by the East Helena Quality Education Foundation and we thank them for all of the hard work it takes to put this annual event together.

The **City of East Helena government** was officially created in 1928 and shares the same type of government as most municipalities across the state, the Commission-Executive (Council-Mayor) form. In this form of municipal government, the mayor is the chief-executive and the council is the policy-making body. In general terms, the council is the legislative branch and sets the policies and laws. The mayor and city staff are the executive branch and carry them out.

The **City of East Helena contains two wards**, split north and south by Riggs Street. Two council members are elected from each Ward every two years, and serve four year terms. The current elected councilmembers of "Ward 1 South", south of Riggs Street, are Judy Leland and Kit Johnson. The current elected councilmembers of "Ward 2 North" north of Riggs Street, are Don Dahl and Mike Misowic. The current terms of Councilmember Judy Leland, Councilmember Don Dahl, and Mayor James Schell end December 31, 2021. The terms of Councilmember Mike Misowic and Councilmember Kit Johnson end December 31, 2019 and both of these gentleman have chosen not to run in this year's election.

This year's general election to elect one Ward 1 and one Ward 2 council member officially takes place on November 5, 2019. As always, the City's elections are conducted by the Lewis & Clark County Elections Office. This year, the election will be conducted via mail. Ballots will be mailed out to all voters with active voting status on October 16, 2019. There are currently approximately 374 active voters in Ward 1 South and 630 active voters in Ward 2 North. If a city resident does not receive a ballot, please contact the county elections office at 447-8339, or visit 316 N. Park Street room 168 in Helena to assist in determining why and they will be directed to the proper form/process from there. Ward 2 candidates are Kelly Harris and Liza Zeigler. No one applied for the open Ward 1 council seat. More information is available at www.lccountymt.gov/car/elections.html.

A look at the City of East Helena **monthly utility bill** shows three separate charges: **water, wastewater (sewer), and solid waste (garbage)**. The city has been closely reviewing our infrastructure as well as the services that are being provided.

The current city **water rates** were set in 1998. A base rate of \$30 plus a charge of \$1.10 per 1000 gallons make up each resident's and each business' monthly water rate. In 2018 a Water Master Plan was written with the help of

city engineers to review current infrastructure problems and needs, and to make recommendations. Included in the Water Master Plan were funding alternatives to assist in paying for these important water infrastructure problems and needs. Our fresh water is supplied by two sources on opposite sides of the city: three wells along Wylie Drive that pump water to a tank located up the hill on Highway 282 built in 1999 and two infiltration galleries (similar to wells) under McClellan Creek in Jefferson County that supply water to two nearby water tanks. The two aging McClellan Creek water tanks, which operate as a single tank due to a direct interconnection, include a 250,000 gallon tank built in 1926 and a 300,000 gallon tank built in 1948. These McClellan Creek tanks are leaking and in need of replacement. In order to move forward with our water system improvements, the City of East Helena has applied for and potentially received two grants from the State of Montana; a \$500,000 Montana Department of Commerce TSEP grant and a \$125,000 Montana DNRC RRGL grant. We are currently moving forward with securing additional grant funding through the Montana Department of Justice Natural Resource Damage Program to assist in financing a replacement water tank for the McClellan system and other necessary improvements to reduce the impact of water rate increases in the future. For more information the City's 2018 Water Master Plan can be found at easthelenamt.us/wmp.

Current **sewer rates** for the city residential users were last established in 2012 at \$66.40 per month. Business owners' sewer rates are based on this cost and calculated using water usage during winter months. The City of East Helena is moving through the process of writing a Sewer Master Plan to better identify and highlight deficiencies in our sewer infrastructure such as aging sewer mains that may need replacement as well as future system capacity increases if additional expansion becomes necessary.

City of East Helena current **garbage rates** were established in 1994. The cost for residential customers who have one 95 gallon container dumped once per week is \$12.25 per month. Businesses and other residential customers who have multiple 95 gallon containers or a larger 300 gallon container and may have multiple pickups per week have a higher monthly cost based on the original 1994 established price. No other costs for city garbage services are charged, such as the County's Scratch Gravel annual fee. Additional residential garbage services provided by the City of East Helena at no cost include the spring cleanup service, special pickups, recycling drop-off behind City Hall of cardboard, aluminum cans, metal cans, and paper, a spring and summer residential yard waste drop-off site, and residential self-hauling of up to 1 ton to the Valley View Sanitary Landfill. In 2015, the City purchased a used side-dump garbage truck which is aging and an additional truck should be purchased to supplement this existing

single truck during times of repair. A Solid Waste Rate Study is currently being drafted to report existing service and equipment conditions and give the City Council possible options for future garbage service options and rates.

Northwestern Energy was originally slated to replace the street lights throughout the City of East Helena with new, improved **LED street lights** in 2020. Due to a changing schedule, Northwestern Energy is planning on replacing all 219 street lights throughout the city in the coming weeks. Some folks may have noticed that the street lights on Main Street from Wylie Drive to Cleveland Avenue have already been replaced with the new LED lights as a test. The new LED lights use less electricity than our current aging lights and reportedly will need to be replaced less often. The light they emit is much whiter than the current ones. Unlike many cities throughout Montana, the City of East Helena never established any lighting districts which pay for the cost of electricity through additional taxes. The City has no plans to establish any new lighting districts and looks forward to the estimated \$7000 per year electricity cost savings by having our lights replaced.

The city staff and city council are very aware that the majority of City of East Helena streets need **pavement and surface improvements**. Each year, the city receives money specifically for road improvements from the State of Montana based on the amount of road mileage within the city. In 2017, the Montana Legislature passed a bill to allocate money from fuel taxes towards road improvements above and beyond the money received based on the amount of road mileage within the city. This fiscal year, which runs from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, the City of East Helena will receive a total of \$85,000 from these two sources combined. Unfortunately, \$85,000 isn't much money towards paving, maintenance, and pothole repair when increasing costs of these services occur year-after-year. The city must supplement these state funds we receive with general fund dollars to cover road repairs and maintenance. Unfortunately, there are no state or federal grants to assist municipalities such as East Helena to cover pavement replacement, routine maintenance and repairs to roads within the city. The city recently had a comprehensive study done covering all of our streets to document those areas in dire need of repairs as well as the areas that need maintenance to assist in extending their life. The city council and public works department will use this street study for years to come, as well as your comments and suggestions, to highlight and fix problem areas throughout East Helena and to put the little money we have to best use in extending our current street infrastructure.

The City of **East Helena Police Department** has been busy working on crime control, speeding enforcement, and some parking enforcement throughout the entire city.

The Police Department currently has two full-time Police Patrol Officer openings and are grateful for the assistance of the Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office and the City of Helena for their assistance with law enforcement coverage.

A public meeting, **Drugs and Crime in Our Community**, will take place Thursday, September 26th at 7PM, at the Fireman's Hall, 2 E. Pacific St (behind Smith's place). Police Chief William Harrington will give a brief talk about our Police Department's efforts in this area, Kelly McBride from Lewis and Clark County will discuss the county's pre-trial services program, and the Montana Highway Patrol will discuss some of their statewide efforts. We encourage everyone to attend to learn about local, county, and state efforts in dealing with drugs and crime in our city.

The **East Helena Volunteer Fire Department** had a busy year with training, fire hydrant testing, public education and other community events. The department is currently looking for new members, if you are interested in becoming a member please email or stop by City Hall to fill out an application or contact Volunteer Fire Chief Troy Maness at 439-3292 for more details.

With all of the rain this year there are an **abundance of unwanted weeds and overgrown shrubs and trees**. The City will be moving forward with alerting residents of noxious weeds, overgrown nuisance vegetation, and overgrown shrubs, bushes, and trees. Sidewalks, rights-of-way and alleys must be cleared of all noxious weeds and nuisance vegetation. Nuisance vegetation is all grass, dandelions, and weeds growing in excess of 8" in height. Trees and shrubs must be trimmed back from sidewalks & rights-of-way to prevent causing public safety hazards for pedestrians and drivers. We are striving to enhance the safety, beauty, and quality of our City in part by controlling the many unsightly noxious/nuisance weeds, shrubs and trees. Please do your part by maintaining your property as well as the rights-of-way and alleys that abut your sidewalks and property.

The **2020 United States Census** is approaching fast. Article I, Section II of the U.S. Constitution mandates a population count of the U.S. every 10 years. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census to count every resident in the United States. The census is conducted in years ending in zero, and the reference day for the next census will be April 1, 2020 - Census Day. In 2020, three modes of response are being offered so everyone will be able to respond the way they prefer: either through the internet, over the phone, or by returning a paper questionnaire.

It is extremely important that everyone be counted in the 2020 census. The data collected by the census is used in a wide variety of ways including to determine how hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding are spent

and to determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. Montana can gain an additional U.S. House seat based on this census. The 2020 Census officially begins on April 1, 2020 and packets will be mailed to those who receive mail at their primary residence address. While packets do not get sent to residents with PO Boxes only, like most of us within the City of East Helena, they will be dropped off to individual housing units in April and May 2020. Look for more information about the census to be distributed in the coming weeks and months and please participate. The data can be used to assist us in obtaining important grants in the coming years.

The historic **railroad depot building** located in the south east corner of City Hall parking lot was moved and is being renovated by the East Helena Historic Society. Costs for moving and renovation are being handled by the Historical Society, much of it donated material and labor. East Helena's history stems from travel into and outside of this area by rail and the train depot was the area's nerve center for the community for many decades. The first East Helena train depot was built in the 1880s and burned about 1930. The depot located in the City Hall lot was built in about 1910 and was moved to East Helena from Louisville (Clasoil) after the first depot burned down.

City of East Helena **council meetings** take place the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month and start at 7PM in Council Chambers, room 110 at City Hall. The City always welcomes public comments and encourages all to attend. Meeting agendas are posted on the doors of City Hall, at the Post Office on Porter Street, and online on the Friday before the Tuesday meeting and at the same locations at least 48 hours before any special meetings that may be required. City Council meeting agendas as well as approved meeting minutes are posted on the Agenda/Minutes page of the City's website (easthelenamt.us/agenda-new.html).

The City of East Helena offers **free notarization and faxing services for City residents** during normal business hours. Please drop by or call City Hall for more information.

City staff actively updates the City's website and includes information on events, news, and City activities on the **back of monthly utility bills**. Please take the time to read through these sources to get important information on city business, upcoming events, news, and upcoming meetings in the community.

If you have any questions or comments for me, please feel free to call or email.

All the best,
James Schell, City of East Helena Mayor
465-2921 – mayorschell@easthelenamt.us

City Contact Information:

City Hall
PO Box 1170
306 E Main St
East Helena, MT 59635
Hours: Mon-Fri 8AM to 5PM

Website: easthelenamt.us

City/Court Administration: 227-5321 Fax: 227-5456

Police Administration: 227-8686

Police Non-Emergency (Dispatch): 227-5377

Police Emergency: 911

Clerk/Treasurer - Amy Thorngren, Deputy/Court Clerk – Julia Shannon, Utility Clerk - Briona Shipman
City Judge – Dennis Loveless, City Attorney – Peter Elverum
Police Chief – William Harrington, Public Works Director – Scott St. Clair 410-1125

Bus Service to East Helena is provided by Capital Transit (formally known as HATS). East Helena has two bus stops, one on the east side of City Hall and one in front of the East Helena branch library at 16 E. Main Street across from Main Street Park. The Capital Transit buses stop at City Hall and immediately proceed to the East Helena library bus stop. City Hall stops occur at 7:30AM, 8:30AM, 9:30AM, 10:30AM, 1:30PM, 2:30PM, 3:30PM, and 4:30PM. Capital Transit, has a new distinctive look, affordable rates for riders, and new routes with point to point travel to many of the key areas around the Helena area. For more information please call 447-8080 or visit: www.ridethecapitalt.org/.

The **East Helena Branch of the Lewis and Clark County Library**, 16 E. Main Street across from Main Street Park, is currently open Tuesday through Saturday:

Tuesday 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM
Wednesday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Thursday 1:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Friday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

For more information please call 227-5750 or visit: www.lclibrary.org/144/East-Helena.