

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**CITY OF EAST HELENA**  
**CITY HALL – 306 EAST MAIN – ROOM 110**  
**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING: 5:30 PM**  
**DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 2021**  
**INTERNET ZOOM MEETING: <https://zoom.us/j/8976327748>**  
**CONFERENCE CALL-IN: 1-301-715-8592 MEETING ID: 897 632 7748**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:** Mayor Schell called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM. Councilmember Harris led the Pledge of Allegiance. Masks and physical distancing were recommended for those in attendance at City Hall.

**CITY OFFICIALS & STAFF PRESENT:** Councilmember Don Dahl, Councilmember Judy Leland, Councilmember Kelly Harris, Councilmember Wesley Feist, Mayor James Schell, Public Works Director Kevin Ore, and Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Dave Jensen

**ABSENT/EXCUSED:** City Attorney Pete Elverum and Fire Chief Troy Maness

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Dave Jensen commented that the budget meetings minutes didn't reflect that he had stated that he didn't have enough information to provide public comment at that time and would reserve his right to provide public comment later. He added that he felt information should be posted on the website sooner to allow more time for public review.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

1. **Budget Introduction and Timeline** – Mayor Schell reviewed the timeline of budget meetings that was in the council packet. He noted that there were no votes on budget meeting agenda items until the preliminary budget was complete and ready for public inspection. Dave Jensen commented that the information should be provided to the public in time to comment, that the public ought to have some say, and that it wasn't fair. This was an information-only item.
2. **Review of Open Budget Questions** – The list of open budget questions was in the council packet. Mayor Schell reviewed each with Council. Council added mayoral pay, other potential hires, and cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to the list. Dave Jensen commented that the mayoral wage should be set before anyone runs. This was an information-only item.
3. **Review of Department Budgets & Expenditures (Including Personnel)** – Section 04-10-11 of the personnel policy manual (Cost of Living Adjustments) and a table of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) since 1972 were in the council packet. Mayor Schell reported that the CPI increase for 2020 was 1.2%. Council discussed COLA and requested reports on how it would affect the wage schedule at 1.2%, 1.5%, and 1.8% and a report of how employee wages were allocated to each fund. Projected revenues for FY22 were in the council packet. Clerk/Treasurer Thorngren reported that she had contacted the Montana Department of Revenue for the certified taxable valuation that was in the council packet. Dave Jensen commented that staff has been given a COLA more often than prescribed in the personnel policy manual which states “from time to time”. This was an information-only item.
4. **Review of Capital Improvements Fund** – Clerk/ Treasurer Thorngren updated Council on proposed transfers to the fund toward a fire truck, office equipment replacement, and a patrol vehicle. Council discussed creating capital improvement funds for each enterprise fund. There was no public comment. This was an information-only item.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Review of Department Head Salaries** – A comparison of Clerk/Treasurer wages and salaries in cities of similar size in Montana and elsewhere was handed out. A similar Public Works Directors report was in a previous meeting packet. Mayor Schell noted that the police department budget would be presented at the next council meeting. Council requested departmental budgets reflecting various levels of department head salaries. Dave Jensen commented that qualifications should be used to judge a reasonable wage in line with what the city can afford. Mr. Jensen added that engineering expenses should be reviewed for hired versus contracted labor and that the Pacific Street improvement expenses were over-inflated. This was an information-only item.
2. **Review of and Schedule Upcoming Budget Meetings** – One additional meeting was scheduled for Monday, August 23, 2021 at 7:00 PM and the August 24<sup>th</sup> meeting was changed to a budget meeting as a public meeting was now unnecessary because Public Works Director Ore had contacted all the property owners and residents who would be affected by the Pacific Street water and sewer improvement project. This was an information-only item.

**MEETING SCHEDULE:**

1. East Helena Public Hearing & Council Meeting, Tuesday, August 17, 2021, 7PM, City Hall Room 110 {Zoning Variance Request 2820 Ashley Avenue}
2. East Helena Special Meeting, Tuesday, August 24, 2021, 5:30PM, Kennedy Park Tour, 402 N. Harrison Ave
3. East Helena Special Council Meeting, Tuesday, August 24, 2021, 6:30PM, City Hall Room 110
4. East Helena Special Council Meeting, Monday, August 30, 2021, 5:30PM, City Hall Room 110
5. East Helena Public Hearing & Council Meeting, Tuesday, September 7, 2021, 7PM, City Hall Room 110  
{Water Rate Increase Public Hearing & FY21/FY22 Budgets}

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mayor Schell adjourned the meeting at 7:47 PM.

ATTEST:

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Clerk/Treasurer

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Mayor