

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**CITY OF EAST HELENA**  
**CITY HALL – 306 EAST MAIN - ROOM 110**  
**COUNCIL MEETING: 6:30 PM**  
**DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023**  
**JOIN ZOOM MEETING: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3787705872>**  
**CONFERENCE CALL-IN: 1-253-205-0468 MEETING ID: 378 770 5872**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:** Mayor Harris called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Councilmember Feist led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CITY OFFICIALS & STAFF PRESENT:** Mayor Kelly Harris, Council President Don Dahl, Councilmember Judy Leland, Councilmember Wesley Feist, Public Works Director Kevin Ore, Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren, City Engineer Clint Smith, City Engineer Brad Koenig, City Engineer Jeremy Perlinski, and City Engineer Kaela Murphy

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Karen Brown, John Brown, Odell Cantrell, Roy Fair, Sarah Eckman, Jeff Buscher, Charlie Hull, Sally Hull, and Dave Jensen

**ABSENT/EXCUSED:** City Judge Dennis Loveless, Police Chief Mike Sanders, Fire Chief Troy Maness, and Councilmember Suzanne Ferguson

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Dave Jensen, referencing the January 3, 2023 council meeting, commented that insurance costs and food and water supply expenses had been allocated disproportionately and inappropriately to the sewer fund resulting in wastewater rate increases. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his public comments for the record.

\*\*\*Mayor Harris moved the meeting to New Business #1 at this time.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

1. **Valley Drive Funding / Grant Applications** – Information on state and federal funding opportunities was on the council room table. Clint Smith of Stahly Engineering discussed each grant opportunity with Council. Dave Jensen commented that the proposed road project would disproportionately benefit non-East Helena residents and that Mayor Harris and Council should seek out funding that would distribute the cost share appropriately. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his comments for the record. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve applying for the TA grant. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
2. **City of East Helena Wastewater System Rate Analysis** – A copy of the presentation was in the packet and on the council room table. Jeremy Perlinski and Brad Koenig of Robert Peccia & Associates delivered the presentation and recommended a wastewater rate increase of \$3.60 with an annual increase of \$1.50 thereafter. They answered questions from Council and public. Dave Jensen commented that estimated expenses for operating, staffing, engineering, and the project total were excessive and that a wastewater rate increase was not warranted. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his comments for the record. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve as recommended by staff. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion and commented in favor of small, incremental rate increases. The motion passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The draft minutes of the January 3, 2023 meeting were included in the council packet. Dave Jensen commented that an amendment needed to be made to his public comments. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his comments for the record. Councilmember Dahl made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**CITY COURT REPORT:** A written report from City Judge Dennis Loveless for the month of December 2022 was included in the council packet.

**DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:**

**Administration** – Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren reported that the East Valley bus service had resumed on a limited basis that day. Regarding a question about increased property and liability insurance rates asked at the previous meeting, she reported that liability insurance rates are based on payroll and property insurance is based on insured value.

**Police Department** – A written report from Police Chief Mike Sanders was on the council room table.

**Public Works** – A written report was included in the council packet. Public Works Director Kevin Ore reported that the sewer line on 6<sup>th</sup> Street collapsed again and was being repaired; DEQ approval for the new ortho injection site was received; and the City of Tacoma, Washington was willing to sell 65 water meter radios.

**Volunteer Fire Department** - Fire Chief Troy Maness was excused.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Request to Hold a St. Patrick's Day Block Party** – Sarah Eckman and Jeff Buscher of the United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area were present to request Council's approval to hold a family-friendly St. Patrick's Day block party from noon to 9:00 PM in Main Street Park and downtown East Helena including suspension of the prohibition on public drinking for the event. Council discussed the potential effect on the businesses located on the section of Main Street that would be closed for the event. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve pending local business support to be provided at the next council meeting. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
2. **Request to Use Main Street Park for Bike Blessing 2023, Saturday, April 29th** – Roy Fair and Odell Cantrell of Set Free Ministries Helena were present to request Council's approval to use Main Street Park including the pavilion and access to portable restrooms and electricity. There was no public comment. Councilmember Dahl made a motion to approve the request and waive the fees. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

\*\*\*Mayor Harris returned the meeting to the Presentations at this time.

3. **Request for Water Utility Bill Adjustment for 6 E Pacific St** – East Helena City Code 8-3-3 and billing records for the property were included in the council packet. Public Works Director Ore explained that broken water pipes had flooded the house up to the floor joists and requested Council's permission to adjust the excess usage charges from the owner's bill. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to

approve the request. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Harris reported that he and Councilmember Feist had discussed the suspension of East Valley bus service with local officials; an agreement to move the rodeo grounds is ready to be signed; he met with Wastewater Superintendent Pursley at the wastewater treatment plant; and he met with Chief Sanders for a one-year review of the police department.

**COUNCILMEMBERS' REPORTS:**

**Don Dahl** reported that there would be an East Helena Zoning Commission meeting on Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM.

**Judy Leland** had nothing to report.

**Wesley Feist** reported that he attended an Air Services luncheon through the Chamber of Commerce; he attended the MBAC meeting; the next Coffee with the Chamber is scheduled for 9:00 AM on January 24<sup>th</sup> at Galaxy Roasters; and that he visited with Clint Smith of Stahly Engineering about RAISE grants. Regarding he and Mayor Harris' meetings with local officials about the bus service suspension, he noted his appreciation for Helena City Commissioner Shirliff's assistance.

**Suzanne Ferguson** was excused.

**LEGAL REPORT:** City Attorney Elverum reported that he had attended a wastewater rate meeting with RPA; he discussed access easements at the meeting about moving the rodeo grounds; and that he was staying busy with the police officers and city court.

**PAYMENT OF BILLS:** Claims 295867 through 295912 were presented for Council's review. Councilmember Leland made a motion to pay the bills. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**MEETING SCHEDULE:**

1. East Helena Council Meeting, Tuesday, February 7, 2023, 6:30 PM, City Hall Room 110
2. East Helena Council Meeting, Tuesday, February 21, 2023, 6:30 PM, City Hall Room 110

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mayor Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:58 PM.

ATTEST:

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Clerk/Treasurer

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Mayor