

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**CITY OF EAST HELENA**  
**CITY HALL – 306 EAST MAIN - ROOM 110**  
**COUNCIL MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING: 6:30 PM**  
**DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 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 Leland led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CITY OFFICIALS & STAFF PRESENT:** Mayor Kelly Harris, Council President Don Dahl, Councilmember Judy Leland, Councilmember Wesley Feist, Councilmember Suzanne Ferguson, Public Works Director Kevin Ore, City Attorney Pete Elverum, Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren, City Judge Dennis Loveless, Police Chief Mike Sanders, Police Administrative Support Specialist Bonnie Jones, Fire Chief Troy Maness (via Zoom), City Engineer Brad Koenig, and City Engineer Jeremy Perlinski

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Shaun Murgel, Steve Strong, Tim Opie, Ramon Mercado, Regina Mercado, Scott St. Clair, Maigen Oyler (via Zoom), Mitchells (via Zoom), and Dave Jensen

**ABSENT/EXCUSED:** None

**PRESENTATIONS:**

1. **(0:00:30) East Helena High School Update** – East Helena High School Activities Director Shaun Murgel gave updates on spring sports, 227 Day, and prom. He reported that the school needed bus drivers. This was an information-only item.
2. **(0:02:35) City of East Helena Wastewater System Rates** – A copy of the presentation was included in the council packet. Jeremy Perlinski of Robert Peccia & Associates (RPA) discussed the need for the upgrade to the wastewater system, available project funding, and how the proposed rate increase was calculated. He answered questions from residents Scott St. Clair and Dave Jensen. This was an information-only item.

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

1. **(0:19:45) Resolution 581 Increasing Rates for the Users of the Municipal Sewer System** – Draft Resolution 581 was included in the council packet. City Attorney Elverum noted that recently updated city ordinance allowed for wastewater rates to be adopted by resolution. Commencing with the April 2023 billing, the monthly charge would increase \$3.60 with subsequent increases of \$1.50 in July of 2024, 2025, 2026, and 2027. This was an information-only item.
2. **(0:20:45) Resolution 581 Increasing Rates for the Users of the Municipal Sewer System** – Mayor Harris called for public comment on the proposed sewer rate increase. Written public comment in support of Resolution 581 from resident Levi Kershaw was in the council packet. Written public comment in support of Resolution

581 from residents Tucker Reisbeck and Traci Weston were on the council room table. Written public comment in opposition to Resolution 581 from resident Dave Jensen was on the council room table. (0:21:35) Dave Jensen commented in opposition to Resolution 581. (0:25:10) Scott St. Clair commented in support of Resolution 581.

3. **(0:26:55) Resolution 581 Increasing Rates for the Users of the Municipal Sewer System** – Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve Resolution 581. Councilmember Ferguson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** There was no public comment on non-agenda items.

**(0:28:05) APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The draft minutes of the February 21, 2023 meeting were included in the council packet. There was no public comment. Councilmember Dahl made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**(0:28:30) CITY COURT REPORT:** A written report for February 2023 was in the council packet. City Judge Dennis Loveless thanked the mayor and council for his reappointment to another term. He reported that receipts on the written report come primarily from local traffic stops and commended the police department on their work.

**DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:**

**(0:31:35) Administration** – A written report was in the council packet. Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren reported that newly hired Deputy Clerk Scott Ferguson had begun training with current Deputy Clerk Julia Shannon and was doing well; the Lewis and Clark County Records Management Storage and Archives Working Group will be republishing their request for proposals; the Helena Transportation Advisory Committee had completed a final draft of the transportation plan; local kindergartners had toured city hall for 227 Day; building and zoning permit applications were beginning to pick up; and several residents had requested a letter confirming resolution of the DEQ water violation.

**(0:35:05) Police Department** – Police Chief Mike Sanders commended Judge Loveless and City Attorney Elverum for their work in the city court and reported that there were 199 calls-for-service in February; eight Patrol Officer applicants will be interviewed on March 20<sup>th</sup>; he attended a flood tabletop exercise at St. Peter’s Hospital; the garage fire on Riggs Street is being investigated; Officer Johnston is now certified to inspect and repair the department’s Glock firearms; he has been assisting the Montana Association of Chiefs of Police in supporting and opposing legislation during this legislative session; and the new patrol vehicle will be arriving in the next few weeks.

**(0:41:20) Public Works** – A written report was in the council packet. Public Works Director Kevin Ore reported that he had met with Robert Peccia & Associates regarding wastewater infrastructure for the proposed subdivision; the new water tank passed the concrete break tests; he attended the parks master plan kickoff meeting; Valley Drive will be closed the last full week of March for canal bridge reconstruction; and that NorthWestern Energy was experiencing a shortage of LED lights and delays in repairing street lights.

**(0:51:30) Volunteer Fire Department** - Fire Chief Troy Maness reported that the department had 18 calls-for-service in February; a garage had burned on East Riggs Street;

the department's Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Firefighter StairClimb team would be competing in Seattle soon; and new recruits were being onboarded.

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

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **(0:55:00) Confirmation of Police Officers** – Montana Code 7-32-4113 was included in the council packet. There was no unfinished business. Mayor Harris reported that all the police officers had successfully completed their one-year probationary term and requested confirmation of Police Chief Mike Sanders, Deputy Police Chief Cliff Cox, Patrol Officer Trent DeBoo, Patrol Officer Ken Harris, and Patrol Officer Kirk Johnston. (0:56:35) Tim Opie commented in support of the East Helena Police Department. Councilmember Dahl made a motion to confirm the appointment of the police officers. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
2. **(0:59:40) Request to Use Main Street Park for a Craft Show July 8, 2023** – Clerk/Treasurer Thorngren presented the request from Juli Moden of High Country Craft Shows to once again hold the craft fair in Main Street Park during rodeo weekend. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve use of the park (including the pavilion) for \$100 and for High Country Craft Shows' business license to serve as a blanket business license for the vendors. Councilmember Ferguson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**(1:01:05) MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Harris reported that he had attended the Board of Health meeting; attended the Executive Forum; attended the parks master plan meeting; he and Councilmember Feist will be speaking to the Rotary Club; and that the East Helena St. Patrick's Day Celebration will run from 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM on March 17<sup>th</sup>.

**COUNCILMEMBERS' REPORTS:**

**(1:03:45) Don Dahl** expressed his concerns about Valley Drive road engineering and animal control expenses. He reported that he had attended the TDS Fiber Optics ribbon-cutting and received comments from residents regarding the cluster mailboxes in the new subdivisions and the status of the proposed cemetery district.

**(1:14:40) Judy Leland** reported that she had attended the Water Quality Protection District meeting.

**(1:14:50) Wesley Feist** reported that he had attended Coffee with the Chamber; volunteered at the SWISH tournament; continues to participate in Vision Helena; he will submit an agenda item for the Main Street Program; and that he will be speaking to the Rotary Club with Mayor Harris.

**(1:16:45) Suzanne Ferguson** had nothing to report.

**(1:16:50) LEGAL REPORT:** City Attorney Elverum reported that he had attended the parks master plan meeting and encouraged Council share ideas and get input from the community on how they would like parkland to be developed in the future.

**(1:20:05) PAYMENT OF BILLS:** Claims 296024 through 296072 were presented for Council's review. Councilmember Leland made a motion to pay the bills. Councilmember Feist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**SPECIAL MEETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

1. United Way East Helena St. Patrick's Day Event, Friday, March 17, 2023

**MEETING SCHEDULE:**

1. East Helena Council Meeting, Tuesday, March 21, 2023, 6:30 PM, City Hall Room 110
2. East Helena Council Meeting, Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 6:30 PM, City Hall Room 110

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mayor Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:50 PM.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk/Treasurer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor