

MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF EAST HELENA
CITY HALL – 306 EAST MAIN - ROOM 110
COUNCIL MEETING: 6:30 PM
DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024
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 p.m. 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, Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren, Public Works Director Kevin Ore, City Attorney Pete Elverum, and City Engineers Brad Koenig and Colin Sassano

PUBLIC PRESENT: James Gonzales, Blaine Verbanac, Blair Verbanac, Ron Whitmoyer, Cheryl Verbanac, Cindy Brooks (via Zoom), Dan Rispens, Dave Jensen, and Mary Hollow

ABSENT/EXCUSED: City Judge Dennis Loveless, Police Chief Mike Sanders, and Fire Chief Roger Campbell

***Mayor Harris moved the meeting to New Business #2 at this time.

PRESENTATIONS:

1. **(0:07:55) Informational Q&A about the East Helena Public Schools (EHPS) Levy Request** – A copy of the Basis for EHPS Levy Request was handed out. EHPS Superintendent Dan Rispens explained the factors contributing to the projected budget deficit, budget cuts that are being implemented, the programs the board prioritized to keep with a successful levy, and how the levy would affect taxpayers. He responded to questions from those in attendance. This was an information-only item.
2. **(0:35:35) Parks Plan** – A written copy of the presentation was on the council room table. Brad Koenig and Colin Sassano of Robert Peccia & Associates (RPA) discussed existing parks as well as the pool, cemetery, and trail system; future parks in the new subdivisions; and current needs. They responded to questions from those in attendance. (0:56:30) Dave Jensen commented in favor of fiscal responsibility with planning funds. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his comments for the record. Council discussed the future park development. This was an information-only item.

(1:05:30) PUBLIC COMMENTS: Dave Jensen commented on the condition of the new concrete on Pacific Street and damaged pavement on the 400 block of Gail Street. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his comments for the record.

(1:07:25) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The draft minutes of the April 2, 2024 meeting were included in the council packet. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Councilmember Ferguson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CITY COURT REPORT: City Judge Dennis Loveless was excused.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

(1:07:55) Administration – Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren reported that the fire department relief association had received their portion of funds from the state auditor’s office; four more new houses would be connecting to the water and wastewater systems; and that gym users were very pleased with the new paint in the gym.

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

(1:10:15) Public Works – A written report was included in the council packet. Public Works Director Kevin Ore reported that the March copper samples had passed; a large number of blue shop rags had plugged the sewer main in the 500 block of East Groschell Street; a reject pump failed at the metals removal building; the park lawn mower failed and needs to be replaced; and that the city crew did a great job installing the new basketball hoops.

Volunteer Fire Department - Fire Chief Roger Campbell was excused.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **(1:14:20) East Helena Rodeo Association Request of Funds** – On behalf of the rodeo association, Ron Whitmoyer requested that funds received from soil excavation at the new rodeo grounds be donated the rodeo association. The Montana Environmental Trust Group (METG) has approved purchase of an estimated 11,000 cubic yards of topsoil at \$3.50 per yard and use it to cover the slag pile. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve the request. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
2. **(0:00:25) Prickly Pear Creek Greenway Trail System Vault Toilet Deviation Request** – A copy of the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway Trail System Segment 2 South Trail Project construction drawings was included in the council packet. Mayor Harris noted that there was no water or sewer infrastructure in the proposed location yet. Mary Hollow of Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) requested Council’s approval of a wastewater ordinance deviation to allow a vault restroom at the head of the North Trail. Council discussed the current wastewater ordinance and the suitability of vault restrooms in certain locations versus others. There was no public comment.

Councilmember Leland made a motion to approve the deviation. Councilmember Feist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

***Mayor Harris moved the meeting to Presentation #1 at this time.

3. **(1:18:45) TextMyGov Proposal** – A printed proposal was included in the council packet and on the council room table. Public Works Director Ore asked Council if they would like to see a text notification system for residents in the FY25 budget. He answered questions from those present. Councilmember Ferguson made a motion to approve considering the service in the FY25 budget. Councilmember Feist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **(1:24:51) Request for Kennedy Park Pavilion Fee Waiver for Rick Pyfer Tree Dedication June 17, 2024** – Public Works Director Ore requested Council’s approval of the fee waiver for the tree dedication and a picnic in memory of Rick Pyfer. There was no public comment. Councilmember Leland made a motion to approve the request. Councilmember Ferguson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
5. **(1:26:00) Request for Kennedy Park and Pavilion Fee Waiver for School District 9 for the Remainder of the School Year** – Public Works Director Ore presented the school district’s annual request to use the Kennedy Park pavilion during the day for the remainder of the school year. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve the request. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(1:27:00) MAYOR’S REPORT: Mayor Harris reported that he had spoken with Ron Whitmoyer about the rodeo grounds topsoil; spoken with Mary Hollow regarding the vault toilet for the new walking trail; and that he marked potholes with Public Works Director Ore.

COUNCILMEMBERS’ REPORTS:

Don Dahl had nothing to report.

Judy Leland had nothing to report.

(1:30:35) Wesley Feist reported that he attended the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee meeting; the MBAC meeting had been cancelled; and that he attended Coffee with Lewis and Clark County Historic Preservation where the relocation of the Manlove Cabin had been discussed.

(1:32:10) Suzanne Ferguson reported that a resident had asked her when NorthWestern Energy would be replacing street lights.

(1:32:45) LEGAL REPORT: City Attorney Elverum reported that court had been going well and the officers had been busy. He expressed his appreciation for the parks plan and discussed it’s importance as development continues.

(1:35:40) PAYMENT OF BILLS: Claims 297422 through 297468 were presented for Council's review. Councilmember Leland made a motion to pay the bills. Councilmember Feist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MEETING SCHEDULE:

1. East Helena City Council Meeting & Public Hearing, Tuesday, May 7, 6:30 p.m., City Hall Room 110
2. East Helena City Council Meeting, Tuesday, May 21, 6:30 p.m., City Hall Room 110

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Harris adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk/Treasurer

Mayor