

MEETING MINUTES

CITY OF EAST HELENA

CITY HALL – 306 EAST MAIN - ROOM 110

COUNCIL MEETING: 6:30 PM

DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 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, Police Chief Mike Sanders, Deputy Police Chief Ed Royce, Patrol Officer Chris Kirkegaard, and Police Administrative Support Specialist Bonnie Jones

PUBLIC PRESENT: Shaun Murgel, Sheriff Leo Dutton, Undersheriff Brent Colbert, Greg Wirth, Megan Hernandez, Jeremy Hernandez, Kevin Schulte, and Dave Jensen

ABSENT/EXCUSED: City Judge Dennis Loveless, City Attorney Pete Elverum, and Fire Chief Roger Campbell

(0:01:00) PRESENTATION:

1. **East Helena High School Update** – Activities Director Shaun Murgel updated Council on fall sports and homecoming events. This was an information-only item.

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

(0:04:20) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The draft minutes of the August 6, 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 Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CITY COURT REPORT: City Judge Dennis Loveless was excused.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

(0:04:50) Administration – Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren reported that the EHHS Booster Club had dropped off t-shirts and a window cling; she attended the wastewater improvement project funding call; she attended the audit exit interview; and the first payment had been received from the county’s wastewater surveillance program.

(0:06:55) Police Department – Police Chief Mike Sanders reported that there had been 152 calls-for-service so far in August; the department attended a ballistic vest presentation courtesy of LifePoint Church and Shield 616; two applicants had been interviewed for the Deputy Chief

position and Officer Royce had been chosen; he met with Senator Tester's representative regarding public safety; and the new car cameras had been installed.

(0:09:20) Public Works – A written report was included in the council packet. Public Works Director Kevin Ore reported that the headworks and CIPP lining project was going out to bid; Department of Labor and Industry had inspected the wastewater treatment plant; the city crew repaired a broken water main in Vigilante Subdivision; and that the RAISE grant meeting kickoff was scheduled for the following Monday.

Volunteer Fire Department - Fire Chief Roger Campbell was excused.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **(0:12:20) Law Enforcement Coverage Budgetary Concerns** – Sheriff Dutton read a letter stating that the sheriff's department must provide law enforcement in East Helena if local enforcement is not present. He noted that the sheriff's department will not respond to parking complaints or non-emergency calls that can be handled by the East Helena City Police; will enforce Montana Code; and will not send a bill for services unless circumstances require that the city would have paid for them. He hand-delivered a written copy of his letter and documents that it referenced. Police Chief Sanders thanked Sheriff Dutton and his department for their work and gave a status report on the East Helena Police Department's staffing. (0:28:20) Dave Jensen commented in opposition to the lack of supporting documentation in the council packet for this item and in opposition to East Helena residents paying more for law enforcement coverage than nearby county residents. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his comments for the public record. (0:30:30) Kevin Schulte commented in support of annexing nearby county subdivisions. (0:32:10) Megan Hernandez shared her experience of an attempted break-in of her home and expressed her concerns about the law enforcement response time. Sheriff Dutton answered questions from Council. Councilmember Ferguson made a motion to table. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
2. **(0:39:15) Second Reading of Ordinance 287 Adopting Amendments to The Zoning Ordinance to Add Prickly Pear Estates Planned Unit Development Regulations to Chapter 3** – The first reading of the ordinance was included in the council packet. Mayor Harris noted that no changes had been made to the first reading. There was no public comment. Councilmember Dahl made a motion to approve the second reading of Ordinance 287. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **(0:40:00) Second Reading of Ordinance 288 Amending the East Helena Land Use Map by Amending the Zoning District from Industrial District to Prickly Pear Estates Planned Unit Development** – The first reading of the ordinance was included in the council packet. Mayor Harris noted that no changes had been made to the first reading. There was no public comment. Councilmember Leland made a motion to approve the second reading of Ordinance 288. Councilmember Ferguson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **(0:40:30) FY25 Preliminary Budget** – A copy of the draft preliminary budget was included in the council packet. A correction to the capital improvements fund section was

on the council room table. Mayor Harris discussed the highlights of the preliminary budget. (0:56:10) Dave Jensen commented in opposition to certain proposed operating expenses and in opposition to multiple personnel expenses. Mr. Jensen provided a written version of his comments for the public record. (1:00:22) Kevin Schulte commented in support of the preliminary budget and shared his experience with automatic door locks. Council discussed various line items and requested an additional \$20,000 be transferred to the capital improvements fund toward a new fire truck. A stipend for firefighters, allocating marijuana tax revenue to roads, certificates of deposits, and additional police officer were discussed. Councilmember Feist made a motion to table the preliminary budget until the final budget public hearing on September 3rd. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(2:11:10) MAYOR'S REPORT: Mayor Harris reported that he attended the audit exit interview; attended the meeting with the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Department; worked on the preliminary budget; met with Senator Tester's representative regarding public safety; and sat in on the Deputy Police Chief interviews.

COUNCILMEMBERS' REPORTS:

(2:13:00) Don Dahl reported that he had attended the audit exit interview.

(2:13:10) Judy Leland reported that she sat in on the Deputy Chief interviews.

(2:13:15) Wesley Feist reported that he attended the library's grand reopening; the food truck festival; the Smoke Show; and the Helena Mayor's Prayer Breakfast will occur October 16th.

(2:15:10) Suzanne Ferguson reported that she had attended the audit exit interview.

LEGAL REPORT: City Attorney Elverum was excused.

(2:16:05) PAYMENT OF BILLS: Claims 297879 through 297923 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, September 3, 6:30 p.m., City Hall Room 110
2. East Helena City Council Meeting, Tuesday, September 17, 6:30 p.m., City Hall Room 110

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Harris adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk/Treasurer

Mayor