

MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF EAST HELENA
CITY HALL – 306 EAST MAIN - ROOM 110
COUNCIL MEETING: 6:30 PM
DATE: TUESDAY, JULY 1, 2025
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 Dahl led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITY OFFICIALS & STAFF PRESENT: Mayor Kelly Harris, Council President Don Dahl, Councilmember Judy Leland, Councilmember Wesley Feist, Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren, City Attorney Pete Elverum, Public Works Director Kevin Ore, Zoning Officer Jeremy Fadness, Deputy Police Chief Ed Royce, Patrol Officer Chris Kirkegaard, Patrol Officer Zack Butler, and Fire Chief Roger Campbell

PUBLIC PRESENT: John Finn, Andrea Eckerson, Maggie Meredith, Jacob Kuntz, Jeff Downhour, Gretchen Krumm, Scott Walter, Troy Maness, Cody Maness, Parker Maness, Dan Rispens, Dan Maness, Jim Stipcich, Callie Aschim, and Josh Buissereth

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

(0:00:35) PUBLIC HEARING:

1. **Request for Variance to Allow the Change of Use of an Existing Accessory Structure (Garage) to a Primary Structure (Single-Family Residential)** – The public notice and staff report were included in the council packet. Zoning Officer Fadness discussed the staff report and recommended approval of the zoning variance. This was an information-only item.
2. **Request for Variance to Allow the Change of Use of an Existing Accessory Structure (Garage) to a Primary Structure (Single-Family Residential)** – Mayor Harris called for public comment on the proposed zoning variance. (0:03:30) Troy Maness commented in favor of the request and answered questions from Council.
3. **Request for Variance to Allow the Change of Use of an Existing Accessory Structure (Garage) to a Primary Structure (Single-Family Residential)** – Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve the zoning variance. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(0:09:55) PUBLIC COMMENTS: Jacob Kuntz of Helena Area Habitat for Humanity invited Council to attend a home dedication ceremony in the Highland Meadows Subdivision on July 29th.

(0:11:05) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The draft minutes of the June 17, 2025 meeting were included in the council packet. There was no public comment. Councilmember Leland made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Councilmember Feist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CITY COURT REPORT: City Judge Dennis Loveless was excused.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

(0:11:35) Administration – Clerk/Treasurer Amy Thorngren reported that the admin department was wrapping up FY25 and getting on with FY26.

(0:13:00) Police Department – Police Chief Mike Sanders was excused. Deputy Police Chief Ed Royce reported that the department had received 344 calls-for-service in June; he attended the monthly Tow Truck Association meeting; he attended the 911 Advisory meeting; Officer Kyle Butler participated in field officer training and will be attending firearms training; the department was awarded a bronze plaque from Lexipol for the third year in a row; and that the department was prepared for the Independence Day holiday and rodeo weekend.

(0:16:35) Public Works – A written report was included in the council packet. Public Works Director Kevin Ore reported that the CIPP lining project was finished; the water main replacement at Lewis Street and Montana Avenue was almost complete; and that an updated grant agreement template was received from Federal Highways.

(0:19:15) Volunteer Fire Department - Fire Chief Roger Campbell reported that he had been working on the department's budget; he had coordinated with Prickly Pear Land Trust on access to the new trail area; and that the department was preparing for the Independence Day holiday.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **(0:21:10) JFK Park Land for New East Helena Branch Library Building** – Copies of the presentation and the feasibility study were included in the council packet. Lewis & Clark Library Director John Finn, East Helena Branch Librarian Andrea Eckerson, and Jeff Downhour of Mosaic Architects gave presentations on the proposed new library. (0:37:20) Scott Walter of the East Helena School Board commented in support of the proposed new library. (0:38:50) Callie Aschim of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce commented in support of the proposed new library. (0:39:30) East Helena Public Schools Superintendent Dan Rispens commented in support of the proposed new library. Written support for the proposed new library had been received from Montana State Senator Mary Ann Dunwell. City Attorney Elverum noted that the request at hand was not to transfer the land at this time, but approval for the location. Library Director Finn answered questions from Council. Councilmember Feist made a motion to continue working with the Lewis and Clark Library in order to facilitate a transfer of a portion of JFK parkland to be used as a new library branch for the Lewis and Clark Library to serve the residents of

East Helena. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. **(0:49:10) Appointment of Josh Buissereth as Patrol Officer** – Relevant MCA and the East Helena Police Commission Certificate of Qualification of Applicant form were included in the council packet. Deputy Police Chief Royce discussed Josh Buissereth’s qualifications and requested his appointment as Patrol Officer for the City of East Helena. City Attorney Elverum discussed the process of hiring a patrol officer. There was no public comment. Councilmember Leland made a motion to approve the appointment of Josh Buissereth as Patrol Officer. Councilmember Feist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **(0:55:25) Resolution of Intent to Modify Existing Lighting District No. 101** – Draft Resolution 620 was on the council room table. City Attorney Elverum explained that once the resolution of intent is passed, adjustments to the Highland Meadows Lighting district could be made by resolution to include new residential properties and cost estimates in the district. The estimated yearly assessment is \$30.97 per property. . A public hearing will be held on August 5th. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve Resolution 620. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **(1:00:50) Resolution of Intent to Modify Existing Lighting District No. 201** – Draft Resolution 621 was on the council room table. City Attorney Elverum explained that once the resolution of intent is passed, adjustments to the Vigilante Lighting district could be made by resolution to include new residential properties and cost estimates in the district. The estimated yearly assessment is \$143.61 per property. A public hearing will be held on August 5th. There was no public comment. Councilmember Dahl made a motion to approve Resolution 621. Councilmember Leland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
5. **(1:02:50) Resolution of Intent to Modify Existing Street Maintenance District No. 101** – Draft Resolution 622 was on the council room table. City Attorney Elverum explained that once the resolution of intent is passed, adjustments to the Highland Meadows street maintenance district could be made by resolution to include new residential properties and cost estimates in the district. The estimated yearly assessment is \$293.09 per property. A public hearing will be held on August 5th. There was no public comment. Councilmember Feist made a motion to approve Resolution 622. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
6. **(1:05:20) Resolution of Intent to Modify Existing Street Maintenance District No. 201** – Draft Resolution 623 was on the council room table. City Attorney Elverum explained that once the resolution of intent is passed, adjustments to the Vigilante street maintenance district could be made by resolution to include new residential properties and cost estimates in the district. The estimated yearly assessment is \$283.15 per property. A public hearing will be held on August 5th.

There was no public comment. Councilmember Leland made a motion to approve Resolution 623. Councilmember Dahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(1:12:35) MAYOR'S REPORT: Mayor Harris reported that he had been working on the FY26 budget; had attended the Board of Health meeting; was interviewed by the Boulder Monitor regarding East Helena's growth; was moving forward with the BUILD grant; had attended two meetings regarding the future of the wastewater treatment plant; and that Tri County Disposal would be changing ownership August 31st.

COUNCILMEMBERS' REPORTS:

(1:17:00) Don Dahl reported that he attended the Hauser Dam OSHA Safety Recognition event and toured the dam.

Judy Leland had nothing to report.

(1:18:00) Wesley Feist reported that he attended the Montana Opioid Abatement Trust meeting and the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce Board meeting.

Suzanne Ferguson was excused.

(1:19:45) LEGAL REPORT: City Attorney Elverum reported that he had attended two meetings regarding the future of the wastewater treatment plant; the transfer of ownership of Tri County Disposal emphasizes the need for a new garbage truck; the court and the police officers are performing well; and that he is prosecuting a case for the City of Helena.

(1:24:10) PAYMENT OF BILLS: Claims 298916 through 298969 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, Tuesday, July 15, 6:30 p.m., City Hall Rm 110
2. East Helena City Council Meeting, Tuesday, August 5, 6:30 p.m., City Hall Rm 110

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk/Treasurer

Mayor