



HELENA CITY COUNCIL

September 23, 2024

**MINUTES HELENA CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
September 23, 2024**

The Council of the City of Helena met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday night, September 23, 2024, in the Helena Municipal Building at 6:00 P.M., regular place and time for holding said meetings.

Council President Alice Lobell called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.

Chris VanCleave led the prayer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Helena Teen Council.

Roll Call

Present:

Members: Alice Lobell, Chris VanCleave, Chris Willis, Harold Woodman, and Laura Joseph

Absent:

Visitors: Mayor Puckett, City Attorney Brian Hayes, Dan Dearing, Chief Brad Flynn, Bill Miller, Jason Poe, Bill Miller, DJ Jones, Fire Chief Chris Miller, Fire Marshall Keith Martin, and others (list attached)

Council President Alice Lobell declared a quorum present, and meeting was open for business.

5. Minutes Approved/Corrected from Prior Meeting(s)

Chris VanCleave made a motion to approve the Pre-Council minutes, Regular Meeting Minutes September 9, 2024, with a second by **Harold Woodman**.

AYE: Harold Woodman, Alice Lobell, Laura Joseph, Chris Willis, and Chris VanCleave.

NAY:

Motion carried.

6. Minutes Approved/Corrected from Prior Meeting(s)

Chris Willis made a motion to approve the Work Session Meeting Minutes September 16, 2024, with a second by **Chris VanCleave**.

Roll Call:

AYE: Alice Lobell, Chris Willis, and Chris VanCleave.

NAY:

ABSTAIN: Harold Woodman, and Laura Joseph

Motion carried.

7. Revenue Report: Bill Payment

Chris VanCleave made a motion to approve the bills with a second by **Chris Willis**.

AYE: Alice Lobell, Harold Woodman, Laura Joseph, Chris Willis, and Chris VanCleave

NAY: None

Motion carried.

8. Municipal Operations Report from Mayor J. Brian Puckett: Mayor Puckett advised the fire and police have been actively seeking new recruits for when the new fiscal begins. Puckett advised the fire department have received another grant for rope rescue project. Also, Mayor Puckett quoted the following: "As we approach the new fiscal year, I am pleased to present to you the Fiscal Year 2025 budget for the City of Helena. Crafting and presenting a balanced budget is one of my most important responsibilities as your Mayor, and I am committed to ensuring that this budget not only meets our immediate needs but also sets the stage for future growth and prosperity. The budget process is a comprehensive one, requiring several months of detailed planning and review. Our goal is to allocate resources effectively, ensuring that all departments have what they need while adhering to prudent financial practices. As we have demonstrated over the past four years, our approach remains steadfastly focused on fiscal responsibility, aiming to secure Helena's growth both today and for years to come. A significant development in this year's budget is the integration of the Indian Ford Fire District into our city. This annexation has enhanced our ability to serve our residents with exceptional service and has also generated

additional income. The resources from this acquisition will be instrumental in supporting the expanded services outlined in the new budget. To address growing needs, this year's budget includes an increase in staffing levels in both Administration and Fire Services. In response to the rising volume of medical emergency calls—averaging 45 transports per month, with an additional 20 or so requiring transport by private companies to local hospitals—we are investing in both personnel and infrastructure to improve our response times and service quality. This strategic move will help reduce wait times and ensure that our residents receive prompt and efficient care. Furthermore, we are implementing a 2% cost-of-living adjustment for all city employees, coupled with a 3% step increase for those who are eligible. These adjustments reflect our commitment to fairly compensating our dedicated employees, who play a crucial role in delivering the services that make our city thrive. Overall, the Fiscal Year 2025 budget is designed to support sustainable growth within the year while positioning our city for long-term success. It reflects our dedication to maintaining high-quality services and addressing the evolving needs of our community. Thank you for your continued support and involvement. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss the budget in more detail, please feel free to contact my office."

9. Tom Stanbury

Tom Stanbury was not present at the meeting.

10. Tanner Newhouse

Tanner Newhouse-644 Rosebury Road-Discussion on the FY 25 budget, and his feelings on a better timeline before approving it moving forward.

11. Rod Kanter-Bradley Arant-Acting Bond Council for the City- Attorney Kanter advised that the council has the option to ask for unanimous consent and immediate consideration for the ordinances tonight that deal with the bond and if the council choose to do immediate consideration, then the second reading can happen in front of all in attendance instead of having a special called meeting in the morning as planned.

12. Approve/Deny: Resolution 09232024-FY2025 Budget

Chris Willis made a motion to approve Resolution 09232024- FY 2025 Budget with a second by **Chris VanCleave**.

Roll Call Vote:

AYE: Alice Lobell, Chris Willis, and Chris VanCleave

NAY: Laura Joseph, and Harold Woodman

Motion carried.

13. First Reading: Ordinance 998-2024-Series 2024A and Series 2024B Warrants

Chris Willis made a motion for unanimous consent and give immediate consideration for Ordinance 998-2024-Seried 2024A and Series 2024B Warrants with a second by **Chris VanCleave**.

Roll Call Vote:

AYE: Harold Woodman, Alice Lobell, Laura Joseph, Chris Willis, and Chris VanCleave.

NAY:

Motion carried.

Chris VanCleave made a motion to approve Ordinance 998-2024-Seried 2024A and Series 2024B Warrants with a second by **Chris Willis**.

Roll Call Vote:

AYE: Alice Lobell, Chris Willis, and Chris VanCleave.

NAY: Harold Woodman, and Laura Joseph

Motion carried.

14. Council Comments

Laura Joseph: Helena Library will hold LEGO night on Monday, September 30. Laura Joseph quoted the following: "Back in 2015, I said that if I were to be elected to Helena's City Council, I would serve no more than 2 terms. Now that we're in the last year of my 2nd term in office, I'm proud to announce that I will be keeping that promise. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve you these 8 years and I'm incredibly thankful for your prayers and your support. Things I will never take for granted: This office has provided an amazing opportunity to meet many of our wonderful citizens, several of whom have become dear friends. Thank you for your patience with my endless questions and ideas for "creative solutions". In this job you learn a lot about municipal law and processes, but I think I've learned even more about myself. A very smart lady once told me, "Always vote your conscience" and that's harder than you'd think! I've learned that I can be courageous when it comes to fighting for what's right - limited government, low taxes, individual freedoms, and more. However, the thing I've liked the most about serving you has been having the opportunity to love on people and do good things. During my time on the City Council, I've worked hard to capitalize on opportunities, find solutions to challenges, and connect with people - this part of the job is incredibly rewarding. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity; it's something that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life. Everything has a season, and this season is coming to an end. I'm proud that I held true to my Alabama values and only served the amount of time I said I would and got a lot accomplished. I'm looking forward to spending more time with my family who has been supportive throughout my tenure and I'm excited for what the future holds for our precious city."

Chris Willis: Willis advised that he knew there has been a lot of discord on social media regarding the budget and the bond deal. He feels this council tonight took the steps to move our city forward with a balanced budget and bond deal to begin improvements to our parks and municipal facilities.

Chris VanCleave: Tonight's decision has been a culmination of 25 years of planning, spanning 3 administrations. This is a transformational change that will affect us for years to come.

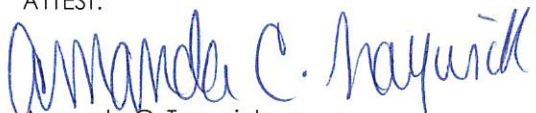
Alice Lobell: Lobell advised this bond deal has been going on for a few years and not just the last few months. Lobell thanked the Helena Teen Council for helping with Octoberfest this past Saturday. Also, the special called meeting has been cancelled for tomorrow and the next meeting will be held on October 28th.

Mayor Puckett: Mayor spoke and reminded all that Buck Creek Festival will be held on October 11-12th to please go and support. Also reminded all that ducks can be purchased for the duck race and the funds go to support the HHS Band.

15. Adjourn

There being no further business meeting was adjourned at 6:24 pm.

ATTEST:



Amanda C. Traywick
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President