



HELENA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

January 27, 2025, 5:00PM

PRE-COUNCIL: Work Session

A discussion and review of City Council agenda items, projects, department, committee, and board liaison reports, and task assigned for City operations and business.

All Members Present.

1. Review 01/27/2025 Agenda Items

- AP/Bill Payments
- 01/13/2025 Meeting Minutes Review

2. Update from Council Boards and Committee Business

Jeremy Allen, newly appointed head of the HOT Board, introduced himself, and stated that he is excited for this year's concert lineup and thanked those for appointing him to head of the HOT Board.

3. Mayor's Update

We have received a quote from HRM on creating an employee handbook, Laura Joseph is working on getting a few quotes for comparison before we proceed. Our new Accounts Payable clerk started last week in the office. The Police Explorers competed last weekend and placed in all of their competition categories. We picked up four new trucks last week – two for Parks, and two for Public Works. Our Seniors Program has received a grant from Shelby County for a 15-passenger van.

4. Discussion of New Library Location

Laura Joseph stated that the Library Board met last week, and the idea was introduced to use the third floor of the new City Hall for a new library. This could potentially give the Library more space and be more centrally located; however, it does pose some questions and obstacles for accessibility and hours of operation. Mayor Puckett states that they have already reached out to the new City Hall architect to sketch out plans to see if this would even be feasible, and compare those sketches and plans to what the Library had already drawn up for a future location. The current space slated for a new Library building on Coalmont Road would require a lot of engineering to make it stable enough to build on. Ideas for the Library to move to the third floor of the new City Hall could potentially solve complaints and issues regarding how small the Library currently is, the age of the building, etc. It was stated that the original plan for the third floor of the new City Hall was to remain empty and available for storage and future growth as needed. Concerns were also expressed for the Library moving to the third floor of the new City Hall regarding parking and accessibility, since the Seniors Programs would also be housed at the new City Hall on the first floor.

4. Review Applications Received for Beautification Board, Historic Preservation Committee, Planning & Zoning, and Diversity & Inclusion Board

The two applicants received so far for the Historical Preservation Committee will be appointed to the Board this evening, and there are still two more available spaces. No issues for the applications received for Beautification Board as long as there were spots available for them. No appointments to Planning & Zoning tonight. As of this meeting, we have only received one applicant for Diversity & Inclusion Board. We will be extending the deadline for applications for Planning & Zoning, HOT Board, TAG Board, Diversity & Inclusion Board, and Historical Preservation Board to 02/07/2025 at 5PM.

5. Discussion of Vacant Positions on HOT Board and TAG Board

Applications are currently open, will be extended until 02/07/2025.

6. Discussion of Council President Pro Tempore Appointment

Laura Joseph offered to stay as Council President Pro Tempore if no objection – no objection from Council members, so she will remain in place.

7. Discussion of Council Liaison Vacancies

Boards needing Council liaisons include Beautification Board, Utilities Board, and Diversity & Inclusion Board. TAG Board does not have a Council liaison, but Andy Healy asked if he could stay on as a Council liaison with no voting power only to relay

information back to the Council, and all were in favor. Hal Woodman will serve as liaison for Beautification Board; Chris Willis will serve as liaison for Utilities Board; and Andy Healy will serve as liaison for Diversity & Inclusion Board.

9. Continuation of Discussion to Modify Mayor's Salary and Separate Mayor from Helena Utility Board; Discussion of Modification of Council Salaries

Council members all agree that the salary for the Council members should stay the same.

Alice Lobell proposed approximately \$85,000 for the Mayor's salary, plus a \$5000 yearly car allowance, and \$400/month in health insurance reimbursement since we cannot add the Mayor to the City's insurance while part-time. Lobell also stated that there was nothing stating that the Mayor cannot work a second or full-time job in addition to this position.

Laura Joseph thinks that \$85,000 is low, and keeps coming back to the median household salary in Helena being \$110,000. She states that historical salaries for the Mayor combined between the City and Utility Board was around \$150,000 including benefits. Laura Joseph expressed wanting to attract business-minded applicants with an HR mind/background; also stating that even if we offered \$120,000 plus benefits the Mayor wouldn't be the highest paid employee with the City. She would prefer to stay around the \$110,000 point considering that the base Mission Critical Department Head with the City starts at \$111,000. Laura Joseph states that while the Mayor's position is part-time on paper, it is closer to full-time in reality.

Hal Woodman states that he is still on the lower end, around \$85,000-95,000/year.

Andy Healy is leaning towards a salary of \$95,000/year plus benefits package; he states that his main concern is that the position is still part-time, and there's no way to dictate hours worked for an elected official. If using the \$95,000 amount, the total would actually be around \$104,800/year including the \$5000 yearly car allowance and \$400/month health insurance reimbursement.

Laura Joseph asked if the Council would be comfortable with the base salary being \$105,000/year plus benefits package; Chris Willis and Hal Woodman would both feel more comfortable with \$95,000/year plus the benefits package. Chris Willis states that what Laura Joseph is trying to accomplish is leaning more towards having a City manager of some kind; Hal Woodman agrees that that is probably not far off from where the City is headed needing a City manager at some point in the future.

10. Motion to Enter Executive Session to Discuss Pending and/or Potential Litigation

Chris Willis made a motion to move into executive session at 5:42PM; with a second by Laura Joseph. All members of Council voted in favor of entering executive session. Invited into executive session were all members of City Council, City Attorney Brian Hayes, Mayor Puckett, and City Clerk Madison Harris.

Chris Willis made a motion to end executive session at 6:02PM; with a second by Laura Joseph. All members of Council voted in favor to end executive session.

Work Session was back in session at 6:03PM per Council President Alice Lobell.

10. Confirmation of 02/10/2025 Meeting date.

There being no further business the work session was dismissed at 6:04 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President



HELENA CITY COUNCIL

January 27, 2025

**MINUTES HELENA CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
January 27, 2025**

The Council of the City of Helena met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday night, January 27, 2025, 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 6:05 P.M.

Alice Lobell led the prayer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Laura Joseph.

Roll Call

Present: Alice Lobell, Andy Healy, Chris Willis, Laura Joseph, Harold Woodman

Members: Alice Lobell, Andy Healy, Chris Willis, Laura Joseph, Harold Woodman

Absent:

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

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

5. Acceptance of Police Chief Resignation

Laura Joseph made a motion to accept the Police Chief Resignation from Chief Brad Flynn, with a second by **Chris Willis**.

AYE: Chris Willis, Laura Joseph, Andy Healy, Alice Lobell, Harold Woodman

NAY: None

Motion carried.

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

Chris Willis made a motion to approve the Pre-Council minutes and regular meeting minutes on January 13, 2025, with a second by **Laura Joseph**.

AYE: Chris Willis, Laura Joseph, Andy Healy, Alice Lobell, Harold Woodman

NAY: None

Motion carried.

7. Revenue Report: Bill Payment

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

AYE: Chris Willis, Alice Lobell, Andy Healy, Laura Joseph, Harold Woodman

NAY: None

Motion carried.

8. Municipal Operations Report from Mayor J. Brian Puckett:

We have received a quote from HRM on creating an employee handbook, Laura Joseph is working on getting a few quotes for comparison before we proceed. The Police Explorers competed last weekend and placed in all of their competition categories. We picked up four new trucks last week – two for Parks, and two for Public Works. Our Seniors Program has received a grant from Shelby County for a 15-passenger van.

9. Presentation of TAG Team Grants

Ken Griffin, Christy Sanford, and Kimberly Ray presented grants to 41 teachers from Helena Elementary, Helena Intermediate, Helena Middle, Helena High, McAdory Elementary, and McAdory Middle schools.

10. Proclamation – National CRNA Week January 24-31, 2025

Mayor Puckett presented the proclamation with Kyle Vanderford and declared January 24-31, 2025 as National CRNA Week in Helena.

11. Approve/Deny – Helena Historic Preservation Committee Members – Andre Klein and Kristi Averette

Laura Joseph made a motion to approve Andre Klein and Kristi Averette as members of the Helena Historic Preservation Committee; with a second by **Harold Woodman**.

Roll Call Vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

12. First Reading – Ordinance 1006-2025 – Renewal of MCImetro Franchise Agreement

13. Appointment of Council Liaison Vacancies – Helena Utilities Board, Beautification Board, etc.

Boards needing Council liaisons include Beautification Board, Utilities Board, and Diversity & Inclusion Board. TAG Board does not have a Council liaison, but Andy Healy asked if he could stay on as a Council liaison with no voting power only to relay information back to the Council, and all were in favor. Hal Woodman will serve as liaison for Beautification Board; Chris Willis will serve as liaison for Utilities Board; and Andy Healy will serve as liaison for Diversity & Inclusion Board.

14. Appointment of Interim Police Chief

Alice Lobell stated that an Interim Police Chief would not be appointed tonight; rather the Mayor would be appointing an Officer in Charge of day-to-day operations until an Interim Police Chief could be named and/or hired. Mayor Puckett named Sgt. Cacey O'Farrell as Officer in Charge.

15. Council Comments

Andy Healy: Congratulations to the teachers awarded grants tonight, as a member of the TAG Board before this Council appointment, I really enjoyed the process of reading over applications and the process for granting those funds.

Congratulations to the dance team and the Police Explorers for great work in your competitions last weekend.

Laura Joseph: Congratulations to the teachers, we appreciate all of your hard work! And thank you to Police Chief Brad Flynn for your almost 30 years of service to the City, your retirement is well-deserved and we will miss you.

Chris Willis: Congratulations to the teachers awarded grants tonight, we appreciate all of your hard work!

Harold Woodman: I want to echo the others on congratulations to the teachers awarded tonight, thank you for all of the work you put in not only for these applications but also for our students every day.

Alice Lobell: I'll also echo the others in congratulating the teachers awarded tonight, and also recognize Teen Council for always attending the Council meetings.

16. Adjourn

There being no further business meeting was adjourned at 6:34 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President