



HELENA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

February 10, 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 02/10/2025 Agenda Items

- AP/Bill Payments
- 01/27/2025 Meeting Minutes Review

2. Update from Council Boards and Committee Business

The TAG Board is working on scheduling a meeting within the next couple of days to finalize a timeline for the next round of grants.

3. Mayor's Update

Sgt. O'Farril and Lt. Hudson are working well together in the Police Department; Mayor states that morale is going up in the Police Department. Driver testing and recertification for the Police Department will begin soon for all officers. Helena Drugs will be moving forward with their new build on Hwy 261 in the coming weeks and will be rebranding as Honea Pharmacy. Christian Brothers will also be coming into the city in the next few weeks to build on Hwy 17 across from the storage facility. Public Works is working on preparing for the spring weather; tuning up equipment, and getting ready for mowing season, etc. Mayor will be meeting with both Public Works and Parks directors at the location of the future dog park donated by Kinder Morgan behind the new City Hall to walk the property and see what all will be needed for that project. Parks Department and Athletics had over 700 kids sign up for spring sports, which is record-breaking, and may also cause difficulties for the Parks team as they are already spread thin around the city.

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

Alice Lobell took averages from all five Council members of the salary number they were considering, and it averaged out to a total of \$103,000/year, or \$8583.33/month. This number would consist of a \$93,000 base salary, \$5000 car allowance, and \$5000 insurance stipend. Alice felt that this number was a good basis to start the conversation tonight, since Council needs to have a first reading of an ordinance tonight, if possible, to avoid a special-called meeting. Laura Joseph states that the overall is still low for what she was considering, but she can live with that. Hal Woodman, Andy Healy, and Chris Willis all expressed that the number was more than generous for what is still currently considered a part-time position. All Council members were in favor for using this number in the new ordinance as a first reading.

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

Beautification Board is in need of four new members, and four new applications were received, so all four members will be appointed to serve on the board. Historic Preservation Committee chose two new members at the last council meeting, and no new applications were received since then. Planning & Zoning will move David Landrum from serving as the Mayor's proxy vote to a full voting member, and the Mayor expressed interest in wanting to go back to attending the meetings without a proxy. The Mayor recommended John Earley to the remaining open position on the board; states that he has known him for years, and his background in real estate will be beneficial to the board. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion board had space available for up to six new members; three applications were received, and all three will be appointed to serve on the board. TAG Board needed one member to replace Andy Healy since appointed to Council; received one application, and they will be appointed to serve on the board. HOT Board needed one member, but at this time, no applications were received. Laura Joseph encouraged residents to volunteer with the HOT Board this season and see if they would be interested in applying to serve on the board.

6. Term Limits on Council Members

Introduced in Work Session by Harold Woodman. Hal stated that he thought it was a good idea to introduce and start the conversation, thought that it would be a good idea to enact and have Helena lead the charge in this. Hal stated that he thinks term limits are a good idea, even though there is a general resistance to term limits across the state. He stated that he would want to word it specifically to not go into effect until next term starts, and to not count against a Council member should they be appointed mid-term and not have run for election. Chris Willis stated that he doesn't love the idea of term limits, stating that there are only so many people willing to serve the city, and he feels that those people should not be limited in length of time they wish to serve. Chris Willis stated that he is not opposed to the general idea of term limits, but stated that serving on Council is a big learning curve, and that it can take several years to truly learn and get a feel for the position. Laura Joseph stated that she has limited herself to two terms, stating that nine years is a long time to dedicate to the city. She stated that she felt it was time for her to step down at the end of this term and allow someone else the opportunity to serve the city. She stated that she has seen other proposals for other cities/locations presenting term limits with different wording. Alice Lobell stated that even with the amount of time she has served, she feels that she is still learning every day. Laura Joseph and Harold Woodman both volunteered to do more research on the topic, and bring it back at a later date. The Mayor stated that term limits can be enacted by ordinance, and would not need to be done by a specific time for the upcoming election.

7. Police Chief Applications

Laura Joseph wanted to ask about the process for choosing a new police chief. Alice Lobell stated that it would be nice to narrow down the applicants to maybe a top five before council reviews and/or conducts interviews. Chris Willis stated that he had received the question "Would the Council be interested in waiving the residency requirement until after the election?" Currently the application states that he/she would be required to relocate if not located in Helena within three months of accepting the position. Chris Willis expressed concern for a new police chief to relocate here in the next few months and relocate themselves and potentially a family, only for the new Council to potentially choose another person for the position in November. These are valid concerns that will be discussed further at the next work session. It was also discussed since we have opened up the application process to accept emailed applications in order to encourage more applicants to apply, how we would go about meeting with them if they are farther away; Zoom meetings were brought up as a possibility to potentially meet with the top five applicants once that time comes during an executive session.

8. Confirmation of 02/24/2025 Meeting date.

There being no further business the work session was dismissed at 5:25 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President



HELENA CITY COUNCIL

February 10, 2025

MINUTES HELENA CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING February 10, 2025

The Council of the City of Helena met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday night, February 10, 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 6:00 P.M.

Rudy Guess from Helena Methodist Church led the prayer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Boy Scouts James Clevenger, Samuel Hannum, and Parker Johnson.

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, Police Sergeant Cacey O'Farrell, 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. Minutes Approved/Corrected from Prior Meeting(s)

Laura Joseph made a motion to approve the Pre-Council minutes and regular meeting minutes on January 27, 2025, with a second by **Chris Willis**.

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

6. 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.

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

City of Helena has two job openings – chief of police, and field technician position. Parks had over 700 kids sign up for Spring Sports, breaking records for registrations, which causes difficulties for Parks team. Congratulations to all of the new board members being appointed tonight, thank you for being willing to sacrifice your time and yourself to serve this city and make it better.

8. Resolution 02102025A – Recognizing Josiah Benson for Outstanding Achievement

Mayor Puckett presented Josiah Benson with Resolution 02102025A.

9. Resolution 02102025B – Recognizing Helena High School Athlete Abigail Parsons on Winning Fifth Place Girls Pole Vault in the 2025 AHSAA 6A Indoor State Championship

Mayor Puckett presented Abigail Parsons with Resolution 02102025B.

10. Resolution 02102025C - Recognizing Helena High School Athlete Michael Sestili on Winning Fourth Place Boys Pole Vault in the 2025 AHSAA 6A Indoor State Championship

Mayor Puckett presented Michael Sestili with Resolution 02102025C.

11. Proclamation – February 22, 2025 as Arbor Day in the City of Helena

Harold Woodman read the proclamation and declared February 22, 2025 as Arbor Day in the City of Helena.

12. Approve/Deny – Appointment of New Members to Planning & Zoning

Chris Willis made a motion to approve Appointment of New Members to Planning & Zoning Board, to include John Earley; with a second by **Andy Healy**.

Roll Call Vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

13. Approve/Deny – Appointment of New Members to Beautification Board

Harold Woodman made a motion to approve Appointment of New Members to Beautification Board, to include Cathy Hamman, Thomas Hart, Stephanie Fredrick, and Jamie Barnes; with a second by **Laura Joseph**.

Roll Call Vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

14. Approve/Deny – Appointment of New Members to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Board

Chris Willis made a motion to approve Appointment of New Members to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Board, to include Shardae Thompson, John Allen Baggett, and Tiffany Kemp; with a second by **Andy Healy**.

Roll Call Vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

15. Approve/Deny – Appointment of New Members to TAG Board

Laura Joseph made a motion to approve Appointment of New Members to TAG Board, to include Amber Bordelon; with a second by **Chris Willis**.

Roll Call Vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

16. Approve/Deny – Conditional Use 3309 Helena Road with a Favorable Recommendation from Planning & Zoning Commission with Conditions

Laura Joseph made a motion to approve Conditional Use 3309 Helena Road with a Favorable Recommendation from Planning & Zoning Commission with Conditions; with a second by **Chris Willis**.

Roll Call Vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

17. Approve/Deny – Ordinance 1006-2025 – Renewal of MCImetro Franchise Agreement

Harold Woodman made a motion to approve Ordinance 1006-2025 – Renewal of MCImetro Franchise Agreement; with a second by **Chris Willis**.

Roll Call Vote:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

18. First Reading – Ordinance 1007-2025 – Establishing the Monthly Salary of the Mayor and Councilmembers

19. Council Comments

Harold Woodman: Congratulations to all of the new committee members, and thank you to the Boy Scouts for attending the meeting tonight.

Andy Healy: Congratulations to all of the new committee members. I'd also like to recognize all of the students that have placed, and just overall done a great job, in recent competitions and events. Serving in this position has made me more aware of these events and just how well our students are doing across the board, so I am thankful for that.

Chris Willis: Thank you to the new committee members, volunteering to serve is a commitment and we appreciate it. Thank you to the Teen Council for attending tonight, and each meeting as well.

Laura Joseph: Congratulations to all of the new committee members, and thank you for being willing to serve the city. Congratulations also to the Helena Dance Team for placing second in the large varsity high kick and fourth in large varsity gameday in competition, and also to the JV cheer squad for placing third and the varsity cheer squad for placing ninth in the nation at UCA National Finals Competition in Orlando. Also, the Library is having a book sale Thursday-Saturday this week—it's a great way to support the library, and also to get some new books!

Alice Lobell: Thank you to the new committee members, and thank you to the Teen Council—some are not here tonight because they are on that cheer squad down in Orlando!

20. Adjourn

There being no further business meeting was adjourned at 6:23 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President