



HELENA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

April 28, 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 04/28/2025 Agenda Items

- AP/Bill Payments
- 04/14/2025 Meeting Minutes Review

2. Update from Council Boards and Committee Business

Diversity & Inclusion Board hosted the Helena United Festival this past Saturday, and it went well. The railroad closing may have affected turnout, but we all had a great time.

TAG Board has only received one application for the board member vacancy, and will be awarding the teachers tonight for the Spring grants.

Farmers Market is starting this Saturday. They are starting early this year and only running through the end of July in the hopes of avoiding some of the summer heat. They are still looking for volunteers to help each Saturday

Helena Historical Preservation Committee held their guided hike on April 26th at Lee Springs Park.

Beautification Board had their annual basket planting day this past Saturday and also cleaned up around the Caboose. Thank you to the City employees who helped to set up tables for the Board to assemble the planters.

Old Town Live's next summer concert will be on May 17th, and is shaping up to be a great show.

Teen Council has their annual Seniors-Teens dinner on Sunday, and they have had over 100 seniors RSVP to attend.

Harold Woodman also added that he and Atty Brian Hayes spoke to Pelham RE: flyover project. The meeting went well and was productive; some of the project has been put on hold. There was discussion about Helena potentially setting money aside specifically for this project to be prepared when the project resumes and funding starts.

3. Mayor's Update

The new valve has been put on at Joe Tucker Pond at no cost to the City; the company replaced the valve because of an error during the first installation.

4. Fire Chief Chris Miller – Requested to Speak RE: Fire Department Update

Chief Miller spoke to not only the Fire Department employees, but for all City employees, stating that these unprecedented times with social media are beginning to affect morale, and asked that Council and the Mayor consider all City employees during discussions on social media.

5. Brad Green, Raymond James – Requested to Speak RE: Helena Forward Project

Brad Green wanted to speak RE: the Helena Forward Project, and how the most recent audit has attracted a lot of attention. He states that the headlines have been concerning to investors, but after reviewing the audit he believes that the headline was misleading. He states that in order for the City to secure the bonds for the Helena Forward Project, Raymond James went back through five years of historical audits of the City, and states that the City has a strong credit rating. Chris Willis asked how our annual audit stands up to others that he has seen; Brad Green states that revenue is trending upward, and expenses, while below the revenue, are also trending upwards which is to be expected. There was a deficit, but that was only due to large capital projects. Brad Green also stated that with the City's interest rates, the City actually stands to come out of this Helena Forward Project with an additional 1.5MM.

6. Discussion of Vacancy on TAG Board and Accepting New Applications

Discussed as part of Committee Business; only one application received.

7. Discussion of School Donations and Including Jefferson County Schools

Alice Lobell introduced the discussion that Helena does not have City schools, yet the current school donations from the City are only going to schools within the Shelby County portion of Helena. The TAG Board has opened up applications to receive from teachers in Jefferson County schools that have Helena students, should the City donations do the same?

Andy Healy stated that he can work with the TAG Board on trying to get numbers on how many Helena students are attending the schools in Jefferson County, and recommends on sticking with only Helena schools for now until we can get accurate students numbers. Chris Willis stated that roughly one third of our city is now in Jefferson County, population wise. Laura Joseph states that it's late in the year to discuss this for the current school year, and could look at a budget amendment once we decide on the amount of money. Alice Lobell invited JR ADAMS to speak—he stated that if we put out notice that money may be available to these Jefferson County school, teachers may reach out then if that's the case. PHIL ALBRO stated that as a resident in Jefferson County, the donation should be based on a per capita basis; donations should be to all schools teaching Helena residents, even if those schools are not in the City limits. Laura Joseph not wanting to consider it at this time because Council does not have enough information; all members agree to table the discussion. Chris Willis stated he was surprised that this topic has not come up before now, since Helena annexed property in Jefferson County almost twenty years ago.

8. Discussion of Update to Resolution 08122024D

Laura Joseph introduced discussion on updating how often financial reports are sent to the Council, wanting the City Clerk to send them in the same month before the month was closed out. The City Clerk advised that with our current accounting software that would not be possible, since we have to close out a month in order to process reports, and are typically working in arrears to close out the month prior. Andy Healy asked if we could update our software; City Clerk advised that she has met with two different software companies about this, but it would be a large expense and onboarding and training time to consider and would not be an immediate fix. City Clerk advised that reports would still be in arrears, but could look at potentially sending reports monthly if able.

9. Discussion of Home Occupation License Approvals

Laura Joseph introduced discussion stating that the current zoning ordinance has all Home Occupation business licenses being approved by the City Council, not the Building Official as previously stated. An update to the ordinance and/or application is needed to get both updated and corresponding. Laura Joseph states that she will work with the Building Official and Atty Brian Hayes to get it all updated and bring back to Council for review and approval.

10. Discussion of Scheduling Budget Meetings for FY2026

Laura Joseph introduced discussion regarding budget meetings for the upcoming fiscal year. Meetings typically start in June or July, and she wants the Council to take a more direct approach this year meeting with Department Heads and also making sure that the City stays in a good financial position. Council liaisons could potentially work with the Department Heads directly, but Chris Willis and Laura Joseph state that they would still like the Department Heads in Work Sessions to present what their needs and wants are to the Council. Mayor asked if the Council wanted the Department Heads to meet at first June meeting, and then come back closer to the end of the budget process; all members agreed. Alice Lobell said she would work with the Mayor on which Department Heads can come to which meetings to streamline the process.

11. Discussion of Potential Ordinance Transferring Signatory Duties to Council Designee

Laura Joseph introduced discussion for the signing of City checks; current procedure is that the Mayor and City Clerk sign all checks written by the City. Laura Joseph wanted to open discussion for possible changing one of these signatures; could be a member of the City Council, or someone designated by the Council. Joseph states that she has heard requests from residents for Council to be more hands-on with the City's finances. Alice Lobell presented potential issues in that checks are written and processed as needed, which could be almost every day, and would this designee be able to come to City Hall on a daily or near-daily basis to sign checks, and also to approve Purchase Orders. Lobell states that the Mayor is effectively the CEO and responsible for day-to-day operations, and to transfer that duty to a Council member or designee would be difficult. Andy Healy argued that major corporations can have designated check printing and check signing days, so why couldn't the City do the same? Healy states Council could create a process where the second in command could sign checks if the designee is unavailable. Healy states that we need to work on building back trust with the residents, get off Facebook, and get the budget rolling. Harold Woodman states that if this is something other cities can do, he doesn't see why Helena couldn't. Chris Willis states that if this is something that the Council wants, we could look at it. Woodman states we are just trying to find a solution, and having a discussion at this point.

12. Confirmation of 05/12/2025 Meeting date.

There being no further business, the work session was dismissed at 6:06 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President



HELENA CITY COUNCIL

April 28, 2025

MINUTES HELENA CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING April 28, 2025

The Council of the City of Helena met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday night, April 28, 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 6:13 P.M.

Council President Alice Lobell led the prayer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Teen Council Members Piper Boss and Gabriel Two Bears.

4. 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: City Attorney Brian Hayes, Fire Chief Chris Miller, Police Chief Mike Wood, Dan Dearing, Jason Poe, and others
(see attached list)

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 April 14, 2025, with a second by **Chris Willis**.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN:

Motion carried.

6. Revenue Report: Bill Payment

Harold Woodman made a motion to approve the bills with a second by **Andy Healy**.

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

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

First, I want to thank the Council for agreeing to pay the bills each and every meeting. Also the new valve has been put on at Joe Tucker Pond at no cost to the City; the company replaced the valve because of an error during the first installation. The high school softball and baseball teams are in playoffs right now, we wish them all luck.

8. Presentation of TAG Team Grants

Ken Griffin, chairman of TAG Board presented checks to HES, HIS, HMS, HHS, and McES totaling \$60,243.12.

9. Resolution 04282025 – Recognizing Wyatt Toole's Achievement of Eagle Scout

Wyatt Toole was sick and unable to attend; will reschedule for a later date.

10. Approve/Deny – Low Bid to Massey Asphalt Paving for City of Helena CR-17 at CR-58 Right Turn Lane Addition, funded by a Grant from the Rebuild Alabama Act

Chris Willis made a motion to approve Low Bid to Massey Asphalt Paving for City of Helena CR-17 at CR-58 Right Turn Lane Addition, funded by a Grant from the Rebuild Alabama Act with a second by **Harold Woodman**.

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

11. First Reading – Ordinance 1011-2025R – Rezone Request – Paden Realty Appraisals, Inc. – 3990 Woodhaven Road – from A1-Agricultural District to B2-General Business District, with a favorable recommendation* from Planning and Zoning on April 17, 2025

- **Favorable recommendation from Planning and Zoning is subject to a minimum 20-foot planted buffer with a reserved option to increase said buffer, a 7-foot fence, berm, and controlled lighting**

12. Public Hearing

- **RE: Ordinance 1011-2025R**

RESIDENTS TO SPEAK IN OPPOSITION:

DYLAN MUNGER – 2324 RUSSET MEADOWS TERRACE
KATHRYN OWEN – 2037 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE
RHONDA BEACHAM – 2177 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE
ROBERT BORRE – 2166 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE
JOE MARCHETTI – 2150 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE
BRITTANY SMITH – 2178 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE
JENNIFER GILL – 2133 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE
CELESTE VEST – 2312 RUSSET MEADOWS TERRACE
JUDY SILHAN – 2111 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE
REBECCA BEACHEM – 2177 RUSSET MEADOWS LANE

- **RE: Ordinance 1005-2025R**

RESIDENTS TO SPEAK IN OPPOSITION:

LATOYA POON – 6522 CREEK CIRCLE
PHILLIP ALBRO – 6604 RICE CIRCLE
BYRON ALDRIDGE – 6566 CREEK CIRCLE

RESIDENTS TO SPEAK IN FAVOR:

CALVIN COOK – 3323 MORGAN ROAD
ZAC PARRISH – 8673 LAKE DRIVE – CURRENT PROPERTY OWNER
RUSSELL WARE – PO BOX 20603, TUSCALOOSA – ENGINEER REPRESENTING THE DEVELOPER

13. Approve/Deny – Ordinance 1005-2025R – Rezone Request – Merry Millenium Inc, Represented by Capstone Engineering Group LLC – 3311 Morgan Road, Rezone from B1-Neighborhood Business District to B2-General Business District, with a favorable recommendation from Planning & Zoning on Thursday, February 20, 2025

Andy Healy made a motion to deny Ordinance 1005-2025R – Rezone Request – Merry Millenium Inc, Represented by Capstone Engineering Group LLC – 3311 Morgan Road, Rezone from B1-Neighborhood Business District to B2-General Business District, with a favorable recommendation from Planning & Zoning on Thursday, February 20, 2025, with a second by **Harold Woodman**.

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

NAY:

Motion to deny approved.

14. Council Comments

Harold Woodman: I want to thank you all for showing up—residents and teachers.

Chris Willis: none

Andy Healy: none

Laura Joseph: Congrats again to the teachers, and thank you to the TAG board for all of their hard work. This was a longer meeting than normal, but thank you for coming and sticking it out.

Alice Lobell: Go Huskies! The baseball team lost, but softball is still going.

15. Adjourn

There being no further business meeting was adjourned at 7:06 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President