



HELENA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

May 12, 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 05/12/2025 Agenda Items

- AP/Bill Payments
- 04/28/2025 Meeting Minutes Review

2. Update from Council Boards and Committee Business

The Farmers Market will be at the Sports Complex this weekend since the Old Town Live concert is this weekend; the past two Farmers Market events have had a lot of rain, causing low turnout so far, so hopefully this weekend will see better crowds.

The Library's Summer Reading program will be starting soon; Dan and Lisa will be presenting in the meeting for the Summer Reading program. Planning & Zoning meeting coming up this week. HOT Board will have another Old Town Live concert this weekend, and the gates open at 4PM. The last Old Town Live concert had great turnout from several different states, and tourism and foot traffic is beneficial for the City. Seniors-Teen's dinner was a success; the Teen Council served over 100 seniors, which is the biggest turnout they have seen this far.

3. Mayor's Update

The lights in the parking lot of the Sports Complex have finished being repaired and updated to LED lights. Fire Department and Police Department are participating in Touch-a-Truck tomorrow night at Chick-fil-A from 4-7PM. Public Works has been extremely busy with drainage cleanup and maintenance, and asphalt patching from all the rain we've had recently. The Mayor passed out bill review and payment vote history to the Council showing which Council members voted to approve the bills from 01.2023-current, and invited Council members to review all Purchase Orders with the Mayor, starting next Thursday at 11AM, to allow Council to have an even closer look at the financials and expenses already received via spreadsheet from Accounts Payable.

4. Discussion of Ordinance to Add an Additional Polling Location

Has not been brought up before tonight, but due to the growth of the City, Alice Lobell felt that an additional polling location is needed. City Clerk has attempted to contact Shades Crest Baptist Church and is still awaiting a response; this will be difficult because the deadline to establish polling locations is at the end of this month, and we do not have a second meeting this month, may need to call a special called meeting if the church allows the City to use the facility for the municipal election, and possible run-off following. It was also discussed that another option could be the Indian Ford Fire Department, which is across the street from Shades Crest Baptist Church. Fire Chief Miller advised that the building would need a lot of work to be usable and ADA compliant, and that there is currently no running water to the building, and the bathrooms are in rough shape. This would have to be passed by ordinance, and a special-called meeting may be necessary.

5. Discussion of Donation to Send Students to International HOSA Convention

Alice Lobell brought up for discussion that this is something that the Council has approved the past couple of years, and going forward would probably fall under the TAG Board, but this came in after and was sent directly to Lobell. Chris Willis and Laura Joseph both recommend covering the registration and half of lodging for the four students going to the convention, which would total to about \$3500.00, or \$875.00 per student. Alice Lobell and Laura Joseph clarified that this would come directly from the One Cent Fund and would be officially decided at the next regular Council meeting. The trip is set for June 17th.

6. Discussion of Municipal Funding Options

Chris Willis introduced discussion for a one cent sales tax increase; feels that this is something that the City has needed for several years, and states that Helena is currently one cent less than all neighboring cities on sales tax. Asking for a once cent sales tax would put the City on par with neighboring cities and would help boost revenue. Willis also states that grocery stores seem to be the main tax base for the City right now, and those seem to be pretty stable business. Laura Joseph asked

how much revenue this tax increase could bring in, per Alice Lobell and Chris Willis we could expect to see somewhere around 2MM, give or take. Andy Healy states that he thinks that this is a smart move currently to bring us up to par with neighboring cities, everyone else is already at 10%. Harold Woodman states that he would need to see more urgency from the City for the money, but that he has always been a fan of putting up for a vote to increase property taxes. Woodman stated that he has always thought that for a city this size, our property taxes are too low, but he still wants to see a true need for the one cent increase. Alice Lobell states that she thinks it is a smart move on our part; Chris Willis agrees, but states that it ultimately won't be something that this Council will be enacting or enforcing. Laura Joseph asks how long this would take to go into effect; Mayor Puckett states it would be at least a month in order to send to the state and give the state time to update their records and tax base. Laura Joseph asked if the funds would be allocated for anything specific, or just for the General Fund; Willis, Healy, Joseph all agree that it should just be towards the General Fund. Alice Lobell states that perhaps down the road a vote to raise property taxes could be up for discussion as well.

7. Discussion of Budget Meetings Dates/Times with Department Heads for FY2026

These discussions usually start in June; Laura Joseph asked that whenever the Mayor starts to meet with department heads, could that also be opened to the Council. The Mayor states that historically, work sessions started early for budget discussions and review. Laura Joseph states that she would like Council and Mayor to meet with department heads a little bit earlier to review the needs and wants of departments before it comes to budget approval discussions. Alice Lobell offered that maybe some of these meetings could be during the lunch hour, or afternoon, if that works with other Council members. The Mayor will draft a schedule for department heads and pass that along to the Council.

8. Discussion of Update to Zoning Ordinance to Correct Clerical Errors

Laura Joseph sent in a draft with updated verbiage due to a previous clerical error in original ordinance. This correction updates the approval of home occupation business licenses previously being approved by the Council back to being approved by the Building Official. The resolution is ready for approval tonight. Chris Willis asked should an application be denied, would the applicant have an appeal process, to which Laura Joseph states that typically that would fall under conditional use and go before Planning & Zoning should that happen.

9. Review of Draft Ordinance to Transfer Signatory Duties

Chris Willis states that he thinks that this ordinance is a knee-jerk reaction, and will also affect the next Mayor as this will take away some of their duties while also having a major salary increase. Laura Joseph states that she disagrees. Alice Lobell states that none of the Council members have an office on-site and this would be a hardship on not only the Council designee, but City workers as well. Would this also have the designee approving Purchase Orders, in addition to checks? Lobell states that she is concerned about how this would realistically and logistically work – would this designee be one person, several people? Laura Joseph states that it would be whoever the Council designates, and feels that since the financial duties of the City fall under the Council it would make sense to also sign checks; this would also be another level of accountability, and if the future City Council disagreed, it could be walked back. Currently the City Clerk is the Council's designee, but Laura Joseph feels that this is a conflict of interest since the Clerk is appointed by the Council but also signs checks with the Mayor. Every check that goes out currently has two signatures on each check. If a first reading of an ordinance is requested for the June meeting, a designee must be named. Hal Woodman states that he likes the designee being tied to a position, such as Council President or President Pro Tempore, in this case it would not be tied to one specific person. Discussion was made for the designee to be the Council President Pro Tempore, so that it would stay with the position and not one specifically named person.

10. Confirmation of 06/09/2025 Meeting date.

There being no further business, the work session was dismissed at 6:00 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President



HELENA CITY COUNCIL

May 12, 2025

MINUTES HELENA CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING May 12, 2025

The Council of the City of Helena met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday night, May 12, 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 6:10 P.M.
Phillip Wolfe, student pastor from the Station Church, led the prayer.
The Pledge of Allegiance was led by James Michael Alford.

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 28, 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 **Chris Willis**.

AYE: Alice Lobell, Andy Healy, Laura Joseph, Chris Willis, Harold Woodman
NAY: None
Motion carried.

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

We've got a full crowd tonight with lots of recognitions this time of year. I'd also like to congratulate all the Seniors that are graduating next week. The lights in the parking lot of the Sports Complex have finished being repaired and updated to LED lights. Fire Department and Police Department are participating in Touch-a-Truck tomorrow night at Chick-fil-A from 4-7PM. Public Works has been extremely busy with drainage cleanup and maintenance, and asphalt patching from all the rain we've had recently.

8. Recognition – Senior Teen Council members, presented by Alice Lobell

9. Jane B. Holmes Public Library Summer Reading Presentation – Color Our World

Dan Dearing and Lisa Han to present from the library.

10. Recognition – Sunshine Award, presented by Kathy Paiml

On behalf of Ms. Senior Alabama, the Human Sunshine Award is presented to Harold Woodman.

11. Resolution 05122025A – Recognizing James Michael Alford's Achievement of Eagle Scout, presented by Harold Woodman

12. Resolution 05122025B – Updating Zoning Ordinance to Correct Clerical Errors

Laura Joseph made a motion to approve Resolution 05122025B – Updating Zoning Ordinance to Correct Clerical Errors with a second by **Harold Woodman**.

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

13. Approve/Deny – ABC License – SF & AR LLC, as Shades Crest Chevron – 3430 Morgan Road – 050 Retail Beer (Off Premises Only), 070 Retail Table Wine (Off Premises Only)

Chris Willis made a motion to approve ABC License – SF & AR LLC, as Shades Crest Chevron – 3430 Morgan Road – 050 Retail Beer (Off Premises Only), 070 Retail Table Wine (Off Premises Only) with a second by **Harold Woodman**.

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

14. Approve/Deny – 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**

Laura Joseph made a motion to approve 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; with a second by **Harold Woodman**.

- Residents to speak RE: Ordinance 1011-2025R signed in prior to meeting; see sign-in sheet.

AYE: Alice Lobell, Laura Joseph

NAY: Andy Healy, Harold Woodman

ABSTAIN: Chris Willis

Motion not carried.

15. Period for Public Comment

Residents wanting to speak will sign-in with City Clerk prior to meeting, and will be given three minutes to speak.

16. Council Comments

Harold Woodman: Again, thank you to Kathy Paiml for the Sunshine Award, I did not see that coming. Also a reminder that the Farmers Market this weekend will be moving to the Sports Complex parking lot because of Old Town Live, please come out and support the farmers. I'd also like to echo the Mayor on congratulating the graduating class this year. And if possible, can the list of those that asked to speak tonight be included with the minutes for the meeting when those are sent out?

Chris Willis: Thank you to the Fire Department Chief and Police Department Chief for responding to the wreck on Morgan Road last week and leading by example.

Andy Healy: Please come out to the Farmers Market and support, and then make plans to attend the Old Town Live concert and support the City.

Laura Joseph: Gates for Old Town Live will open at 4PM on Saturday; the last concert made over \$40,000 in revenue for the City with attendees coming from several states. Make a day of it – attend the Farmers Market in the morning, and then the concert in the evening. Also congratulations to the graduating seniors, I have one this year and I am so proud of them all.

Alice Lobell: I just want to say that we have been charged in this position in doing what is best for the City as a whole, not what we may personally want. I just want to reassure you all that all of us are trying to do our very best for the City.

17. Adjourn

There being no further business meeting was adjourned at 7:09 pm.

ATTEST:



Madison Harris
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Alice Lobell
Council President