



Helena Civic Center Board

PO Box 272, Helena MT 59624

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING CIVIC CENTER BOARD July 23, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joann Christnacht, Steve Crider, Brad Culver, Bridget Holland, Riley Johnson, Judy Kline, Trevor Parish, Rick Schlenker

OTHERS PRESENT: City Staff: Troy Sampson, Byron Dike, Bridget Johnston
Guests: Gery Carpenter, Linda Vaughey

CALL TO ORDER: Board President, Judy Kline called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED ORDINANCE CHANGE MOVING CIVIC CENTER DIVISION FROM COMMUNITY FACILITIES DEPT TO PARKS DEPT, MOVING CIVIC CENTER ADMINISTRATION OUT OF THE BUILDING, AND LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE INDEPENDENT RECORD:

Judy Kline asked Gery Carpenter to explain the ordinance being proposed. Gery explained that the [proposed ordinance](#) contains items other than just the moving of the Civic Center division. It includes renaming of some departments and creating a transportation department. Judy Kline asked if people should go and Gery stated he feels it is important to have a presence at the July 24 meeting. The July 24 meeting is when the Commission decides if they want to proceed. If they do the City will schedule the first passage and a public hearing. According to the proposed ordinance, it is thought that these would take place on August 12 and August 26, 2019. There was much discussion amongst board members and guests. Some highlights:

- **What are the top concerns for the transfer of the division?** The management of the facility needs to stay in the building in order to continue to provide good service to the users of the building, oversee staff, oversee the maintenance and capital needs of the building, assist public and safeguard the building. Outside of Civic Center staff, the only staff with knowledge of these things lies within the Community Facilities department. There is no staff in the Parks department that has that knowledge and can backup Civic Center staff. There is no benefit to be seen for either the Parks department or the Civic Center division for the move.
- **If there is no benefit to the Parks department or the Civic Center, then why do it?** This is believed to be the first step in getting rid of the Civic Center. The City Manager stated to the executive board in a meeting that she did not believe that venues should be supported by government. She also told the board at the March meeting that she plans to put out an RFI for ideas of what to do with the building. Transferring the division to Parks takes away the staff's support, then they will get moved out of the building and their space will be rented to a renter, then the building will be privatized.
- **What can the board or the public do? Is it too late?** The hearing meetings thought to be on Aug 12 and 26 are the only shot they have. Voices need to be heard to convince the Commission not to move the Civic Center. It is within the City Manager's purview to do all of the other things, but she cannot change the division without a public hearing and a Commission vote.
- **Is the City really going to move the management out of the building?** The Community Facilities office has already moved out of the building and that office now sits vacant. Judy called the president of the Symphony board and it was confirmed that they were approached by the City Manager and offered the office space at the Civic Center. He stated they have not made a decision on whether they will rent the space or not.

- **Could you explain the study that was done a couple years ago?** The \$50,000 study was conducted at the request of Commissioners Halladay and Haque-Hausrath in 2016. Civic Center staff worked with the consultant and provided much data, research and facilitated meetings with the users of the building and the public. The consultant came up with 3 options in which to operate going forward.
 1. Do programming in house
 2. Continue doing the same thing and focus on the development of more programming
 3. Find someone else to do programming
 The board supported and recommended to the City Commission option #2 which the Commission accepted. Staff developed a new fee schedule that was more friendly for users and allowed for Civic Center staff to co-promote with promoters to allow for more programming. This was presented and approved by the Commission in 2017. Staff has been following this plan for the last two years and it is showing to be successful.
- **Would it be beneficial to send letters to the Commission?** Yes, the Commissioners need to hear the public's opinion on the matter and ask them to keep the Civic Center the way it is. These changes will go forward unless the public stops it.
- **What is the Mayor's stance on this?** Judy said she talked to him on Friday and he said that he is not in full agreement on everything the City Manager is doing and that he would talk to the Commissioners and get back to her. She has not yet heard back from him.
- **Is there any legal action the board can take?** The DHI/BID has taken legal action against the City as the City Manager has been trying to disband their boards. Judy, Steve and Trevor will meet with a suggested attorney to see if there are any legal steps that can be taken.

There was additional discussion on ideas of who to contact and people to get involved. Gery requested that staff be kept out of this process. Judy reiterated that it is important to spread the word and get people informed. Gery said the action that is needed to stop the move of Civic Center into Parks does not seem like a big deal so people won't really understand so it is important to explain how this is the first step.

Reminders: Admin meeting is Wednesday, July 24 at 4pm. Commission meetings are Monday, August 12 and Monday, August 26.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Bridget Johnston, Administrative Assistant III