



Helena Civic Center Board

PO Box 272, Helena MT 59624

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING CIVIC CENTER BOARD August 6, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joann Christnacht, Brad Culver, Mike DaSilva, Bridget Holland, Riley Johnson (4:13pm), Judy Kline, Rick Schlenker, Glenda Seipp

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Steve Crider, Skip Hatveldt, Bonnie Lorang, Kathleen Pace, Trevor Parrish, Kacey Pilon, Craig Wilkerson

OTHERS PRESENT: City Staff: Troy Sampson, Kristi Ponozzo, Bridget Johnston, Rebecca Connors
Mayor Wilmot Collins

CALL TO ORDER: Board President, Judy Kline called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

MEETING MINUTES: Hearing no corrections, the minutes are approved as written.

Mayor Collins read an email in which Commissioner Noonan stated that the DHI and BID have not taken legal action against the City preventing changes to each board. Judy Kline stated that the minutes are written by the secretary and recorded what a board member stated who is also on the DHI board.

HEADS UP HELENA:

Judy Kline asked Mayor Collins if he has received any correspondence regarding the Civic Center. Mayor Collins replied that he has and that he is concerned about mis-information. Judy Kline explained to Mayor Collins that City Manager Cortez had lunch with the executive board and Gery Carpenter. It was then that Manager Cortez was clear she is going down that road and she also stated in a board meeting that she was going to put out an RFI for interest. Mayor Collins stated that “the building will not be privatized”. Judy Kline said she thinks the Commission and the Civic Center board are getting different information from Manager Cortez and she thanked Mayor Collins for his insight.

Mike DaSilva stated that he doesn’t know how a department that mows lawns and installs sprinklers can operate this facility. He said the outside study 2 ½ years ago showed this building cannot survive without a subsidy and keep its community users. He said “this change is illogical”.

COMMISSION MEETINGS AUG 12 & 26:

Judy Kline said that Kathleen has put the dates on the board’s Facebook page as an event so the public will know about it. She said that the ordinance proposal is under the consent agenda as item D. Judy asked Mayor Collins if after this item public comment would be asked for. He stated it is a public meeting and public comment will be asked for. Judy said that for the Civic Center to remain in the Community Facilities department that people just need to recommend no change for Community Facilities.

Bridget Holland stated the Civic Center budget has been cut by \$100,000 and asked what will be eliminated. Mayor Collins replied by asking if they have noticed anything. Mike DaSilva commented that \$100,000 worth of something will be eliminated and the new fiscal year just started. Rick Schlenker asked why the budget was cut \$100,000. Byron Dike answered that in FY19 the subsidy from the general fund was \$470,000 and for FY20 it is \$360,000. He said the City is working towards lower support.

Joann Christnacht asked if anyone knows the reason for the change. Kristi Ponozzo said the purpose is for the Civic Center to be managed as more of an event space rather than a facility and that

she doesn't think there would be much of a big change. Mike DaSilva stated that is how it has been managed and asked why change it. It has been working and the \$50,000 study showed we are doing it the right way. We made a few tweaks and have been strongly moving forward.

Rebecca Connors stated that Kristi has a lot of unique places to oversee such as the walking mall and the pool and has good connections with the community. Rebecca said she appreciated the passion this group has as it is rare these days. Judy gave Rebecca a little history of what the board has done and shared that the Commission isn't listening to their concerns, they didn't acknowledge the first letter of recommendation they sent and didn't acknowledge them when they spoke at a Commission meeting. She said it has them riled up. Joann said the board has not just provided aesthetic improvements to the facility but also safety such as raising the floor in the ballroom and adding handrails in the auditorium. She reminded everyone how the Civic Center was under Parks and Rec before and the department had wanted to add a basketball court in the ballroom. Rebecca asked what the board's fears are of this change. Judy said that the fear is this is the first step in a process. That first step is to bury the Civic Center in a large department where it won't get the attention it always received in Community Facilities. It is the beginning of a slippery slope that will lead to privatization. If it is privatized a lot of current events in the building will go away, an outside company won't be able to maintain it, the public will stop using it and it will slowly go away.

Mike DaSilva asked if anyone has put to paper what privatization would look like. He said he would love to see a profit and loss projection on the Civic Center that shows a 15% profit.

Judy Kline said it is upsetting to be disregarded on the eve of the Civic Center centennial. She said that staff and the board were looking at a big celebration and now the board is unsure of anything. She said she doesn't know what caused the Commission to be upset with them. She said we are an advisory board and our job is to advise the Commission on what we think is best for the Civic Center.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

The meeting was adjourned at 4:39pm. The next meeting of the board is August 13, 2019 at 4pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Bridget Johnston, Administrative Assistant III