



PUBLIC MEETING

August 5, 2021
MINUTES

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners Public Meeting was held on Thursday, August 5, 2021, at 9:00 AM in Commission Chambers, Room 330.

Roll Call

Chair Andy Hunthausen called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Commissioner Jim McCormick and Commissioner Tom Rolfe were present. Others attending all or a portion of the meeting included Eric Austin, Roger Baltz, Marni Bentley, Charles Lane, Greg McNally, Chris Sinrud, Brian Coplin, George Harris, and Nadine McCarty, Recording Secretary.

Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone recited the pledge.

Consent Action Items

a. Vendor Claims Report for Week Ending August 6, 2021. (Marni Bentley)

Roger Baltz reported on consent action item 2 a and recommended approval.

No public comment was received.

A motion to Approve was made by Commissioner McCormick and seconded by Commissioner Rolfe. The motion Passed on a 3-0 vote.

Contract Between Lewis and Clark County and CompuNet, Inc. (Chris Sinrud)

Chris Sinrud, Information Technology Services, presented the contract with CompuNet, Inc. for 24/7 emergency telecommunications support to the City and County. The contract provides network consulting for the challenging issues with the phone systems or the core network infrastructure. The current infrastructure includes 36 sites, 49 buildings, 11 routers, 73 switches, 650 plus phones and 3 phone servers. The contract is not to exceed \$12,000 a year and expires June 30, 2026. The funds were approved in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. Staff recommends approval of the contract with CompuNet, Inc.

No public comment was received.

A motion to Approve was made by Commissioner Rolfe and seconded by Commissioner McCormick. The motion Passed on a 3-0 vote.

Quarterly Update of the Helena Valley Planning Area Blue-Ribbon Panel, known as the Zoning Advisory Panel. (Greg McNally and Dr. Eric Austin)

Greg McNally, Planner III gave an overview of the 12-member Zoning Advisory Panel (ZAP) that meets twice a month, tasked with providing recommendations on regulations for the approved Urban and Suburban Residential Mixed-Use Zone Districts. The other task is to suggest potential options to address three key issues of water, roads and fire; as well as to suggest potential options or alternatives to the temporarily deferred 10-acre minimum lot size/density parameters for the Rural Residential Mixed-Use Zone District. The panel will soon begin meeting in person with an option to participate via Zoom if preferred.

Dr. Eric Austin, Zoning Advisory Panel Moderator, gave an update on the status of the process based on the original workplan and timeline set in three stages. The first stage was to provide baseline and background information, primarily focused on the technical areas outlined in the existing growth policy. They discussed a number of other issues that included the coordination relationship between the County, Helena and East Helena, water availability, water quality, and wastewater. Stage 1 extended about two meetings longer than expected, due to the extent of the issues and panelist questions. The timeline was designed to allow for additional time if necessary.

Currently they are in Stage 2 of the process that started the beginning of July. This is the Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental and Political (STEEP) analysis process. They have worked through the technical and environmental categories. He started with them because much of the discussion in Stage 1 had been focused on technical and environmental issues. The first element of the STEEP analysis is brainstorming and the second element is a collective prioritization, which they are currently working through this. The next focus will be the economic category and the panel is already brainstorming. It is anticipated the STEEP analysis will conclude the end of August. The last phase will be the development and discussion of potential proposals. The work of the panel should be complete the end of October or beginning of November.

Water issues have become the most focused topic of the panel. They have discussed acquiring additional information, with no determination on the sort of information. No discussion has occurred regarding the specifics of any potential proposal. The process will identify the parameters; the criteria will inform the proposals prior to development of the proposals. This will allow the panel to weigh proposal options against the criteria.

Public participation has been a consistent level. There is a mechanism to collect public comment digitally linked to the project website and they routinely receive written public comment. They are working on developing additional meetings as listening sessions for the public to engage with panel. They are trying to be as inclusive as possible for any public concerns and input.

Broad discussion has occurred regarding getting additional hydrological information, with no specific details discussed. As the process progresses, he suspects there may be issues or topics that the panel believes are important but do not fit within the parameters of what a zoning regulation might include.

Commissioner Rolfe discussed the availability of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds regarding water and wastewater possibilities for research and construction and Dr. Austin noted the topic has come up in recent meetings and not yet sure where it fits.

Commissioner Hunthausen asked if the panel understands, what the zoning would do if it was in place today, and are they able to keep focused on the charge-at-hand. Dr. Austin noted the panel has done a good job of keeping each other on task with what they are charged to do. From his perspective, the panel is on point and in a good position. He keeps in frequent contact with County staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT -

George Harris, 1450 Big Horn Road, Helena Association of Realtors Chief Executive Officer, gave an update on what the Association has been doing and how they are participating in the process. They have a representative on the panel, John Rausch.

The Association is actively engaged. He expressed their appreciation for listening to their concern about having in-person meetings as work schedules have hindered public involvement.

They appreciate the funds the County has put toward the analysis and the effort to address the 10-acre minimum, a great concern to the realtors, affiliates and community. They would like to present professional, factual information that would assist in the process. They have worked with the National Association of Realtors (NAR), the Montana Association of Realtors and found the issue is also a national issue. They received two grants from NAR, one for an overall analysis and the other an affordable housing and economic analysis grant. Through the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana (UNM), they will do an economic analysis on housing affordability and the economic impact of the 10-acres that affect the private property owners, real estate and developers. The NAR engaged American Strategies to conduct a polling analysis of residents from the entire county. They have received the results and request 20 to 30 minutes for the experts to present the results to the panel, the implications of the polling and the results of the economic analysis. If that were not possible, they would ask to be able to present the information to the Commission.

Commissioner Hunthausen noted from the beginning the Commission has committed to not directing the work of the ZAP. He asked if the ZAP or local government had any role in creating the questions and Mr. Harris informed him they did not. The questions derived from local businesses, real estate, the government affairs committee, and the professional and economic approach from Dr. Andrew Thomas of Carroll College and then went to the National Association of Realtors. The questions represent the entire county.

Commissioner Hunthausen stated no action is necessary.

Board Appointments. (Roger Baltz)

Roger Baltz, Chief Administrative Officer, presented the board appointments and recommended the appointment of Jenn Vieth to the Heritage Preservation and Tourism Development Council to a term that expires June 30, 2024 and the appointment of Patrick Johnson to the Water Quality Protection District Board to a term that expires June 30, 2024.

No public comment was received.

A motion to Approve was made by Commissioner Rolfe and seconded by Commissioner McCormick. The motion Passed on a 3-0 vote.

Public comment on any public matter within the jurisdiction of the Commission that is not on the agenda above.

Brian Coplin, 1610 Hudson St. #2, stated COVID derailed much of the community processes and the ability to interact with each other by going to an electronic format. Many of the people he works with are most vulnerable and he helps with food, shelter and medical services. He discussed the Coordinated Entry System, a national program and noted the system in the county is not functioning. Many people fell through the cracks during COVID. People had nowhere to go, no way to get there, no phone, no internet access. He asked for an update on a mobile crisis response unit grant given to St. Peter's Hospital.

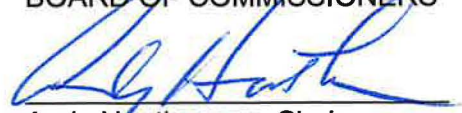
He provided information packets to each of the Commissioners. He recognized Our Place and all the help that they have provided. He is unable to attend the Behavioral Health Local Advisory Council (LAC) meetings due to no internet and he cannot busy his phone line as so many people call him for help. He requested that meetings be back in person as soon as possible; so much more is accomplished when in person. He wanted to know about the process if a contractor does not fulfill their service contract.

Commissioner Hunthausen suggested the best way to get social service programming information would be to contact the LAC.

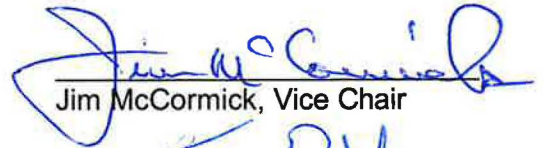
Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:11 am.


LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Andy Hunthausen, Chair



Jim McCormick, Vice Chair



Tom Rolfe, Member

ATTEST:



Amy Reeves, Clerk of the Board