



*Helena Business Improvement District*

**BID Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**February 13, 2024**  
**3:30 – 5 pm**  
330 N Jackson St. – Trailhead Office  
Zoom [Link](#) ~ Meeting ID: 831 5034 7334

***BID Board of Trustees***  
Seth Brandenberger, Chair  
Onawa Linden, Vice-Chair  
Ryan Stavnes, Treasurer  
Rex Seeley  
Randy Burrington  
Alice Santos  
Brienne Harrington

John Dendy, BID Executive Director

## **Minutes – February 2024**

**Board members present:** Onawa Linden, Seth Brandenberger, Ryan Stavnes, Rex Seeley, Alice Santos

**Board members absent:** Randy Burrington, Brienne Harrington

**Staff:** John Dendy, Megan Helton, Mike Thiel, John Murdy

**Others:** Emily Dean (City Commissioner), Diane Tolhurst (Sanderson Stewart, remote), Callie Aschim (Chamber, remote), Jeremy Herring (Sanderson Stewart), Peter Strauss (Great Divide and Farmer’s Market), Doug Smith (City Parks, remote), Andrea Opitz (Visit Helena)

**1. Welcome and introductions**

**2. Agenda review/housekeeping**

Sanderson Stuart moved up to right after Public Comment. John: Add public restroom after Parking.

**3. Public comment**

Peter: Farmer’s market last weekend of April until last weekend in October

**4. January BID financials**

John: Received the assessment (\$212k). This appears to include late payment for the previous 6 months plus the current. We are ahead on sponsorships due to contributions from PMI and cost sharing with Visit Helena. Rex: Question on auditing. It was an increase. Did we budget for it? John: The budget was for \$4500, it was \$5k, which was more expensive this year because the city couldn’t get a local bid. Emily: It’s an issue across the board, everyone is short auditors. John: This group that did the audit, it was their first time and way more extensive than in the past. We got a better product, but it cost a lot.

**Motion to approve January financials: Alice, Onawa second. No discussion. Approved 5-0.**

## 5. January BID minutes

**Motion to approve January minutes: Rex, Ryan second. No discussion. Approved 5-0.**

## 6. Roundabout at LCG/Helena/Neill – Sanderson Stewart

Jeremy: Tasked by city to look over roundabout option at mini misfunction junction at Last Chance Gulch and Helena Ave. Reviewed feasibility for 2 different options –a modified signal or single lane roundabout. Recommended alternative is a single lane roundabout. In the process of moving forward, will start to engage the public. Will look at minimizing businesses and parking disruptions. Jeremy is the project manager located in HLN, and Diane will do a lot of public outreach. There is an active link on the city's website that will update as the project moves along. Diane: There will be opportunities to meet with property owners. Can share the link to website to stay in contact.

Rex: How much space will it occupy? What happens to the corners? Jeremy: Should fit in existing footprint. Potential loss to north side of park. Looking at closing spur between Last Chance and 11<sup>th</sup>. So could expand the park that way.

Rex: What about the south side? Jeremy: Trying to stay in existing footprint. Will be a bit of a funnel in. Existing parking lot at T-Mobile will still have access to parking lot. Can maintain 1 way access and full parking right there.

Rex: What about the loss of parking? Jeremy: Potential loss of parking closer into the intersection. Roads are wide coming in, can flare the curb out to maintain parallel parking. Don't have numbers for loss but should be minimal. Wide streets lend themselves to do bulb out and keep parking. Looking at changing the operation at 11<sup>th</sup> and Cruise. The light there is tied to both intersections, maybe a smaller roundabout, which would function the best. Maybe pulling slope back to maintain right away.

John M: Could it facilitate 2-way traffic? Jeremy: That option was voted down. Not something that was wanted by the public or others. Analysis showed it didn't function well.

Seth: Where are we in the process? This outreach is to let the public know it is coming? Jeremy: Yes, letting public know this is the best option. Then we will move forward with funding options.

Seth: Has 11<sup>th</sup> been decided? Jeremy: No, it is just an option to fix it. Could also go with a stop control.

Seth: Mainly you are looking for comments regarding construction and displacement? Jeremy: Yes

Seth: Where is the money coming from? Jeremy: Hasn't been decided. Probably federal grants and local match. Seth: Timeline? Jeremy: We will wrap up this phase at the end of spring and then meet with the city again about design and construction.

John D: What about pedestrians? How do you walk across one? Jeremy: It functions better than what is currently there, splits the time in conflict zone for a pedestrian in half. You only go through one at a time, there is a refuge in the middle. Several ways to set up, all of them are a lot safer than current configuration.

Ryan: Can you do an underpass on Montana as part of this? Jeremy: That would have to be a stand alone project.. Emily: \$50 million for that, need a study first. Very difficult to get money for that kind of project for this size of city.

John: We will help get the word out as we go.

## 7. **Parking meeting**

On Feb 21 the Business Roundtable will talk about parking concerns. Suggested by Commissioner Shirtliff and business owners. Some folks want employee parking, some are concerned about perceived enforcement increase. John: If you have concerns, email me about them. BID is only facilitating, no ask right now.

Rex: North of Neil we are happy. John: the survey we sent out over 30% mentioned parking as an issue.

Rex: Revenue would have to come from somewhere else. Seth: Sure, business owners or employees could pay for it. Rex: What's the cheapest right now? Mike: \$70 a month for the lot.

Emily: \$270k left on the loan for the kiosks. Once that's paid off, there is an interest in what the possibilities could be. Parking garages are expensive to build and maintain. On street parking – open to changes. Got the parking meters because downtown wanted them. The city will have to look at the expenses first. Parking Commission dissolved in 2018. Want to do what makes sense for downtown.

### **Downtown Toilet:**

John: Went to city county parks board last Wednesday. Parks board didn't recommend the toilet but did recommend we go through a public process. Happy to do that. Very close to not being able to get it done in this construction season, though. Seth: We are going to lose the bid. Need the process from the city sooner rather than later. Is it acceptable for BID to decide the process? John: It has to come from the city. Parks board is nervous about public outcry.

Doug: Time to regroup for next month. As a citizen I want the toilet. If many more people are going to be coming with Heritage Center, we need to think 30 years ahead, put in men's and women's, toilets and many more options. Seth: I've built many of these facilities for FWP. We figured half million for a men's and women's comfort station. Probably way above that now. BID would look to parks to come up with that kind of money.

John: If we can find a spot on private land, then let's go for it. I don't know where that would be, but it would take Parks out of it.

Rex: I hate spending the money but there's a sense of urgency on this. Doug: What's the right thing to do long term? Need to do it right first time. John: Needs to be in a spot that is observable, one of the benefits of Constitution Park. John M: 2 conversations: one is about nighttime and one about daytime. Daytime – businesses and Chamber could open up restrooms. Signs that say public restroom available. "No" doesn't sell anything downtown. See that sign in a lot of spaces.

John D: Everyone makes that decision on their own. Next summer there will be no place to go at night time if we are delayed. One of the reasons we need to get this done.

Seth: Accepted this money based on Portland Loo. Thought we could put this together because we could put the money together to fund. If it's gone beyond this, then it's a whole other issue. John: We will go to the meeting with directors who will present other options. Seth: If the PDX Loo goes away so may our involvement. John: Let them present an alternative.

Alice: Because of the urgency, is it possible to do both PDX Loo and a larger facility in the future? Instead of all or nothing? John: Certainly, have larger public restrooms on walking mall and PDX Loo somewhere else. Alice: Not a big crowd at nighttime. Seems like we could have both.

Rex: Farther down are bars and restaurants that could be used. Need it on this end, not that end.

John: Constitution Park is a proven location with our portables, and we see everyone using it.

## **8. Committee/program updates**

John: Getting new committee structure going. Biggest challenge getting everyone in the same room at same time. Had promotion and econ vitality meetings already.

### **a. Promotion**

John: Survey sent out by email and social ad. \$500 social media buy. 500+ responses. The survey provides a list of things the BID does. Real info is in the open-ended categories, but checkbox data is interesting. (Everyone gets hand out of answers to review). Things most visible and obvious get the highest marks. Not everyone is eligible for a parklet or façade grant, so maybe don't seem as important to some. For beautification efforts – banners get the lowest.

Onawa: This is also to tell people what BID is responsible for downtown. John: No matter what the survey says that part has been achieved.

Onawa: Did we collect emails? John: Yes, required, some should be new to us.

Seth: So this was successful. We should reconsider banners. Rex: We spend \$19k on banners?

John: \$13k is budgeted to replace them. People don't like the red in the summer, but we could probably spend money better elsewhere. People might miss them when they are gone.

John: Seth wanted to talk about when to promote biz and happenings outside of BID on social media.

Seth: DHI promoted everybody. Want to concentrate on BID biz only. Confuses me when I see things outside of BID. Chamber charges members for social media. I want to stick to stuff within the BID.

Onawa: Permanent posts are within the BID. Stories and reels are different, they are temporary. Jordan shared everything. Newsletter should be downtown centric, but we should be the authority of what is going on in town, so people look to us regularly for information. If people send us stuff, we should include it at bottom of the newsletter. Downtown Helena should be the authority on what is happening everywhere. Peter: Both are right – this might be part of the growing pains. This is figuring out what it looks like without a DHI. John: We did clean up the Inc of Downtown Helena Inc on the pages. We now represent Downtown Helena.

Seth: Issue with newsletter and social media having non-BID entities in it. Ryan: Goodwill between Great Divide and Gates of the Mountains helps us Downtown. They will help encourage people to visit us too.

Seth: Camera on Walking Mall that could capture people and people would watch that on Instagram.

John: We have a contractor and a promotion committee to address all this and will take it all into consideration.

Next promotion meeting is Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3pm

b. Economic Vitality

Next meeting Wednesday 21st at 3pm

c. Design

Next meeting Thursday 2/15 at 3pm at Painted Pot

d. Organization: no discussion.

9. Adjourn 4:57pm

Next BID Board Meeting: March 12, 2024, 3:30 pm

Submitted by Megan Helton and John Dendy.