



On the Gulch

A Newsletter For and About City of Helena Employees

What Does a City Manager Do?

*Sarah Elkins

Ever wonder about our city's form of government and the roles of our manager, mayor and commissioners?

The City of Helena has a modified Council-Manager form of municipal government. The modification is that our mayor is elected separately from our commission members. Our city charter defines the roles of our commissioners, mayor, and city manager, click [here](#) to see the entire document.

Section 3.02 - Duties and Responsibilities

The city manager shall be the chief administrative officer of the city and shall be responsible to the commission for the administration of all city affairs required by this charter, law, ordinance or resolution.

The way I describe the manager's job is to compare it to being the CEO of a corporation with about 15 different, mostly unrelated businesses that share administrative and support functions. Just like the CEO of a corporation, he must be responsive to a board (mayor and city commissioners). He also has to take into account a large budget with a variety of stakeholders and shareholders, all with their own sets of priorities.

Shareholders are the equivalent of any resident who pays taxes, fees and assessments.

The wider group of stakeholders are city employees, residents and non-residents who live in and near the city and use city services and resources.

In comparison to a corporation, the city's mayor and commissioners are equivalent to the board of directors, the mayor being chairman of the board, facilitating meetings and keeping the discussion moving forward. The commissioners act as the remaining board members, setting policy, determining priority projects, and having budget oversight.

Section 2.02 - Powers and Duties

The city commission shall be the legislative and policy determining body of the city. All powers of the city shall be vested in the commission, except as otherwise provided by law or this charter, and the commission shall provide for the exercise thereof and for the performance of all other duties and obligations imposed on the city by law.

City staff are resources for the manager, mayor and commissioners. We provide data and research to help make decisions for city services, priorities, and policy issues. It's also our responsibility, as city staff, to provide quality services to all of our stakeholders.

Employee News

Congratulations to:

David Gambill on his confirmation to the Helena Fire Department;

Welcome to:

911 Dispatcher Joshua Schmidt

When you see our new employees, please congratulate and welcome them!

Heroes & Helpers

*Farah Lane

This winter, the Helena Police Department worked with Target stores to host an event called Heroes and Helpers. The HPD applied for and received this grant from Target and was awarded \$500 toward the purchase of gift cards to be distributed to grade school kids.

After hearing about the program, the Helena Police Protective Association, which is made up of Helena Police Officers, matched Target's contribution and the HPD purchased twenty gift cards of \$50.00 each.

The School Resource Officers for the department contacted schools in the city to

select two students from each school, ranging from 1st through 8th grade, to participate in the program.

On December 19th, twenty officers from the department volunteered personal time and met with the students at Target. Students and officers paired up to shop at Target to purchase whatever the student wanted with a \$50.00 gift card.

This was a great event that everyone enjoyed. The children were wonderful and grateful to be

able to purchase gifts for themselves and for their family members during the holiday season.



***Like* and *follow* the City of Helena, Local Government Facebook page to see news & information about our city!**

Valentine's Day Splurge: Molten Chocolate Lava Cakes

- ♥ 4 pieces (squares) Semi-sweet Baking Chocolate
- ♥ ½ cups Butter
- ♥ 1 cup Powdered Sugar
- ♥ 2 whole Eggs
- ♥ 2 whole Egg Yolks
- ♥ 6 Tablespoons Flour
- ♥ Top with whipped cream or coffee ice cream

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Spray 4 custard cups with Pam and place on cookie sheet.

Microwave chocolate and butter in large bowl on high for about 1 minute, until butter is melted. whisk until chocolate is also melted.

Stir in sugar until well blended. Whisk in eggs and egg yolks. Stir in flour.

Divide among cups.

Bake 13-14 minutes until sides are firm and center is soft. Let stand 1 minute.

Invert cakes onto dishes and top with whipped cream or coffee ice cream.

<http://thepioneerwoman.com/cooking/2009/07/molten-chocolate-lava-cake/>



MMIA, the organization we contract with to provide our health insurance, published an article in their Winter 2014 newsletter about how the program will (or will not) affect our insurance plans. Here are some key points from the article:

“Is Obamacare going to make our health plan go away?”

No. The MMIA Employee Benefits Program is not going away. MMIA plans are all in compliance with the requirements of the ACA and will continue to offer the same great benefits that you are used to.

“How does Obamacare impact me?”

- * Dependents can stay on through age 26.
- * Certain preventative care is covered 100% without age restrictions or limitations unless imposed by a physician.
- * Benefits deemed “essential” no longer can have plan limitations. These are things such as physical therapy after a surgery.

- * There is no lifetime maximum.
 - * Pre-existing waiting periods go away as of January 1, 2014.
 - * Waiting periods to be eligible for the plan cannot exceed 90 days from date of hire.
- “So, the change doesn’t affect me, but what about my spouse or children?”
- * If your spouse or dependent children thought their plan was being canceled but now find it’s not, they have a decision to make. If an individual product is canceled by a current carrier, then that is a qualifying event and that person can be added to the MMIA coverage. This must happen within 31 days of the cancelation and all eligibility standards must be met.

To read the entire article, go to the MMIA website:

<http://www.mmia.net/doc/MMIAWinter2014.pdf>

Happy Valentine's Day



Email Archiving - Going Live!

There’s an old saying “never put in writing something you do not want to see splashed on the front page of the newspaper.”

Newspapers may not have the biggest audience any more, but the concept is right, just replace the word newspaper with Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.

Some tips for the new email archiving to be implemented this month:

- ◆ Train yourself to call or visit colleagues for conversation-style communication; do not use email for general conversation.

~~“Hey - can you get me a copy of that permit we issued yesterday? Do you have fun plans for the holiday weekend?”~~

- ◆ Learn records retention requirements for your department. If you have questions, ask your supervisor.
- ◆ Change your signature block and/or stationary to be basic text without images. Those images and background colors take up a lot of memory!
- ◆ Delete messages you are not required to keep when you finish reading them, including your sent messages; set a calendar alert to empty your deleted items folder each evening.

Questions? Call or email Ellen Bell, ebell@lccountymt.gov, x8360

Did you know that our city uses a very small amount (3%) of salt in the sand for our roads? The salt helps the sand stick to the ice and keep it from freezing. BUT - salt does not melt ice when the temperature is below 16°. No matter what our street crews do, ice is a hazard for our town. If it’s icy, drive slowly and avoid steep hills. If you encounter a particularly slippery spot, contact Ben Sautter (x8571, bsautter@helenamt.gov) and let him know.