



Independent Record

Bob Ward's
Sports & Outdoors
to close Helena
location by
end of year

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'Mouse that
Roared' lets
Capital drama
students tickle
a funnybone

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Thursday, November 6, 2025

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ELECTION 2025

DEAN WINS RACE TO BE HELENA'S NEXT MAYOR



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Emily Dean, Helena mayoral candidate, waves to motorists in the early morning of Election Day, Nov. 4, 2025.

Queen City native overcomes 12-point deficit in primary to prevail over fellow commissioner

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From a 12-point deficit in the primary to a 2-point win, Emily Dean prevailed in the Helena mayoral election after clashing with fellow City Commissioner Andy Shirtliff.

"I am really truly honored and humbled," Dean said Tuesday night. "We truly tried to finish this campaign how we started — with hard work."

As of 11:40 p.m. Nov. 4, the last of early election results, Dean overcame Shirtliff by 203 votes. Dean claimed 5,440 (50.56%) votes, and Shirtliff took 5,237 (48.68%).

While provisional ballots will be counted Nov. 10, there wouldn't be enough to sway the results, Elections Division Supervisor Connor Fitzpatrick said. The race is effectively called.

"I feel really good about the campaign," Shirtliff said Wednesday afternoon. "I have nothing but respect for Commissioner Dean."



SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Andy Shirtliff, mayoral candidate, speaks with an attendee of his campaign party Nov. 4, 2025, at The Sidecar in Helena.

The campaign

The 2025 municipal election drew eyes after current Mayor Wilmot Collins turned down a third term.

With no incumbent, five mayor hopefuls registered to run, trigger-

ing the Queen City's first primary in 24 years.

Dean and Shirtliff, two city commissioners and neighbors, surged ahead of the competition.

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'We've spent seven years building this business'

Owners of Helena store respond to backlash over worker's threat to Sheehy

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Owners Major and Michelle Robinson aren't sure what the future holds after an employee's viral voicemail drew hundreds of phone calls, emails and reviews condemning their Helena store.

"We've spent seven years building this business," Michelle said. "One phone call changed everything."

Sage & Oats Trading Post is a Native-owned store in downtown Helena specializing in Indigenous-made goods.

Haley McKnight, the then-manager of Sage & Oats, left a July 1 voicemail wishing U.S. Sen. Tim Sheehy "die like a dog in the street" and develop pancreatic cancer, among other comments. As of Wednesday afternoon, McKnight was terminated from her role.

McKnight declined to comment.

The voicemail was revealed in a National Review article the day before Helena's municipal election, where McKnight was running for a nonpartisan Helena City Commission seat.

Please see SAGE & OATS, Page A7

McKnight apologizes for voicemail to Sheehy

BLAIR MILLER
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Haley McKnight, a Helena City Commission candidate under fire this week for a threatening voicemail she sent Montana's Republican U.S. Sen. Tim Sheehy earlier this year, issued an apology Wednesday afternoon, calling her comments "inexcusable."

After the voicemail was first published in the National Review on Monday, McKnight's comments were publicized across the country. She subsequently lost her bid for election Tuesday night, saw her workplace forced to close because of threats stemming from her voicemail, then was fired on Wednesday by the owners of the business.

McKnight sent the apology to the

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