

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
HELD FEBRUARY 21, 2023**

At 7:00 p.m. Mayor Barnhart called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL: Councilor Fisher, Councilor Hamilton, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Piper, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Shepard and Mayor Barnhart.

Also present were City Manager Nicosia, City Clerk Staaland, City Attorney Breck and Police Chief Peters.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilor Robinson motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilor Piper and the motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Councilor Lovering made motion to approve the consent agenda after amending the minutes on page 4, seconded by Councilor Hamilton with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, Fisher, Hamilton, Lovering, Piper, Robinson and Barnhart.

Approval of Claims - February 21, 2023 - \$136,487.71

Approval of Payroll Claims - February 17, 2023 - \$154,374.69

Approval of Regular City Council Meeting Minutes - February 6, 2023

City Manager Excess Vacation Carryover and Compensation Approval

Approve City Manager's Execution of MOU - AFG Regional Grant (Radio Replacement)

Approve Amended Public Access and Utility Easement - Cottage Apartments, LLC and authorize City Manager to execute

Approve Amended Sidewalk Easement - Cottage Apartments, LLC and authorize City Manager to execute

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Public Hearing: 10' Right of Way Abandonment - Block 59

Mayor Barnhart read the notice of public hearing: NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to all persons that a petition has been filed with the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana, requesting the abandonment, discontinuance and vacating of certain public way in the City of Columbia Falls, Montana, more particularly described as follows:

A 10' strip of 1st Ave West adjacent to Lot 10A and 6A, Block 59. Abandonment of the 10' strip of street right-of-way will allow the adjacent property owners to improve public safety. The abandonment will be subject to the rights of the City or any other public utility to access, operate and maintain any public utilities currently located within the right of way.

City Manager Nicosia said no public comments were received on the right of way abandonment since the last meeting on February 6, 2023. Staff recommends approval.

With no public comments Mayor Barnhart opened and closed the Public Hearing at 7:04 p.m.

City Manager Nicosia will prepare a resolution for the March 6, 2023 council meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mid-Year Financial Review: City Manager Nicosia and Finance Director Shawn Bates will provide a detailed current year financial activity year to date and begin the 23-24 Fiscal year discussion

City Manager Nicosia noted that Finance Director Bates was not able to attend this evening so she will provide the full report. Nicosia provided a detailed slide presentation of the current year financial activity year to date and began the 23-24 Fiscal year budget discussion. The presentation included the 2023 Historical Revenue Budget vs Actual along with the Expenditure Budget vs Actual and a review of the building permit activity. Nicosia discussed the Resort Tax revenue from July 1, 2022 through February 17, 2023. Nicosia said the City budgeted \$797,865.; cash collections remitted to the city thus far is \$1,130,972.03. Based on state law all revenues in excess of what was anticipated goes toward tax relief. Nicosia reported based on current mill value, the City will rebate approximately 60 mills, 1/3 of the current levy. The Resort Tax is working as intended said City Manager Nicosia. Nicosia noted that she is currently working with the department heads on budget requests and will have Council work on goals in April.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Piper said the rewards of the resort tax are impressive. Piper said least important to him was our State Representatives spending time on HB 455 concerning premade gelatin cup alcoholic products/jello shots.

Councilor Shepard said he has emailed comments to legislators several times and has not received a word from our legislators on bills pertaining to the City.

Councilor Lovering stated she will not be at the March 6th council meeting. Lovering said the sidewalk on 6th St., opposite side of Vaqueros has not been shoveled and is not accessible, therefore making it dangerous. Lovering asked if the city can ask the owner of the vacation rental to shovel the sidewalk. Nicosia said Public Works Director Hanley hand delivered notices last week.

Councilor Fisher commended the street crew for plowing and keeping intersections safe. Fisher also noticed when the weather warmed up last week they were out patching potholes. Fisher echoed Councilor Piper's comments on the Resort Tax. Fisher inquired if the city can roll funds over, and if the delinquent businesses are now current. City Manager Nicosia said yes council can designate or restrict those funds each year. There are only 3 businesses that are severely delinquent at this time.

Mayor Barnhart asked when the city is rebating tax relief funds back to property owners, if there was a way to explore if renters may benefit. Nicosia said there is not a provision in state statute to refund money except through the mill levy reduction. Mayor Barnhart inquired how many city lots are available that are not zoned to allow for a duplex or triplex. Nicosia said the City has significant CR-5 areas within the city that allows for two family dwellings as well as the accessory apartments added by the City Council in all single family residential zones. Council discussed affordable or attainable housing and how to go about acquiring it. Mayor Barnhart said he attended a meeting with Congressman Ryan Zinke and his flathead field representative Steve Howke last week to which Mayor Barnhart asked what the answer was to get attainable housing and the reply was to go to 50 year mortgages. Mayor Barnhart said he would like to see a wage increase for pool staff to encourage staff to return. Nicosia said the City increased wages in order to compete with other employment opportunities in the area. Mayor Barnhart asked if the City needs another part time park employee. Nicosia replied that the City added the second floater position beginning in December which adds another 800 hours to the Parks Department. Nicosia noted that the City will be filling the second Park Maintenance Laborer position which is full-time April – October.

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CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Nicosia said the EPA met last week and they are looking at a TASC program; it provides an independent consultant that works with the community. EPA will select and pay for the consultant.

MISCELLANEOUS

Police Department - January 2023 Activity
Correspondence

ADJOURN

Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn seconded by Councilor Shepard and the meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk