

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD DECEMBER 02, 2024**

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

ROLL CALL: Councilor King, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Piper, Councilor Price, Councilor Robinson and Mayor Barnhart. Absent: Councilor Shepard.

Also present: Interim City Manager Shrives, City Clerk Staaland, City Attorney Breck, City Planner Mulcahy and Police Chief Stephens.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Councilor Robinson motioned to approve the agenda with the following amendments. Add Ordinance #830 under Resolutions/Ordinance, strike notice of Public Hearing and replace with Appointments, and replace Ordinances/Resolutions with Notice of Public Hearing, seconded by Councilor Price and the motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA: Councilor Robinson motioned to approve the consent agenda noting all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor Price and the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Claims - December 2, 2024 - \$746,114.62

Approval of Payroll Claims - November 22, 2024 - \$188,369.79

Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes - November 18, 2024

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on agenda)

Matt Hutcheson, 227 7th St. E., said he witnessed two dogs not on a leash at Rivers Edge Park. Police Chief Stephens said he will look into City Code on dogs at large.

APPOINTMENTS:

Appointment of Austin Green as Probationary Police Patrol Officer

Chief Stephens said Austin Green has completed the applicant testing for the position of Probationary Police Patrol Officer, along with successful candidate testing and background investigation. Mr. Green is a Columbia Falls native, who has attended school and played sports here in Columbia Falls. Chief Stephens said the department is very happy Mr. Green has decided to choose a career of service with the Columbia Falls Police Department.

Councilor Lovering motioned to appoint Austin Green as probationary Patrol Officer, seconded by Councilor Price and the motion carried unanimously.

City Clerk Staaland administered Oath of Office to Austin Green.

NEW BUSINESS:

Letter to Flathead County Commissioners from City Council - In support of NeighborWorks Montana to manage the workforce housing assistance program.

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES HELD ON DECEMBER 02, 2024

Councilor Piper motioned to approve the letter of support to the Flathead County Commissioners, seconded by Councilor King and the motion carried unanimously.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING:

City Planner Mulcahy delivered Staff Report CZC#24-01 regarding a request to amend the zoning classification from CR-5 (Two Family Residential) to CRA-1 (Residential Apartment) within the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction. The site is currently the unoccupied home of the Boys and Girls Club which recently moved across the Street in the old Glacier Gateway school building. The Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country are selling the property, and the new purchaser has a Physical Therapy Business. Medical offices are not allowed in the CR-5 zone but they are allowed in the CRA-1 zone as a permitted use.

Councilor Price inquired about adequate parking near the school zone. Mulcahy said all parking will be required on site and not on the street. They have two lots and will use a portion of the property for customer parking. Mulcahy said they will also be required to pave the alley that abuts the onsite parking area. Councilor Robinson asked if there will be parking in the front on the property on 4th Ave. W. City Manager Shrives said 4th Ave. W. is going to be repaved and he is uncertain of what the parking design looks like. Councilor Robinson suggested taking a close look at parking as there is a blind spot at the intersection.

Mayor Barnhart opened the Public Hearing at 7:16 p.m.

Matt Hutcheson, 227 7th St. E. said he owned property just south of the said property and it is hectic with school traffic. Mr. Hutcheson said he opposes the zone change until further investigation.

Jackie Bullock said she owns Glacier Peaks Mobile Physical Therapy, LLC. She is a buyer of the Boys and Girls Club property. Her intentions are to keep her business small and serve the community of Columbia Falls.

Jesse Plevel, Board of Directors for the Boys and Girls Club and the seller's Realtor. Plevel stated she believes there will be less traffic in the area due to less concentrated traffic.

Mayor Barnhart closed the Public Hearing at 7:21 p.m.

Councilor Piper motioned to accept Staff Report CZC#24-01 as findings of fact, seconded by Councilor King with council voting as follows. Ayes: Lovering, Piper, Price, Robinson, King, and Barnhart.

RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES:

First Reading of Ordinance #830

Councilor Piper motioned to approve the First Reading of Ordinance #830 to amend the Boys and Girls Club property zoning classification from CR-5 (Two Family Residential) to CRA-1 (Residential Apartment) within the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction, seconded by Councilor King and the motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL:

Councilor King said she noticed the lot behind the WFCU was for sale and wondered if MT Land Trust would be interested in purchasing it. Mayor Barnhart said there is a preliminary plat in place, but we have not heard anything on the property lately.

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES HELD ON DECEMBER 02, 2024

Councilor King asked if the City will be participating in the Salvation Army Bell Ringing this year. City Clerk Staland said she will call the Chamber of Commerce to see if they have been contacted with a potential date.

Councilor King said she was pleased with the Police Department response to a traffic violator.

Councilor Price asked if city staff has set a date for the Parks Committee meeting. City Manager Shrives said Public Works Director Bates was working on it.

Councilor Lovering wanted to remind citizens to shovel their sidewalks in front of their homes and places of businesses. Mayor Barnhart said the city has an ordinance requiring property owners to shovel the sidewalks in front of their home or business. Folks are not removing the snow from the sidewalks which is making it a dangerous situation. The City needs to enforce the ordinance or do away with it said Mayor Barnhart. Mayor Barnhart asked City Manager Shrives if the city can get the sidewalks cleared along Hwy 2 before they turn to ice. After council discussion City Manager Shrives said he has a meeting with City Attorney Breck and they will review the snow removal ordinance and bring it back to council at the December 16th meeting.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Shrives said staff recently did a Skatepark walk through and the project is near completion, the final step will be to add a sealant which requires warmer temperatures to apply. There is a 5% retainage that the city will hold until April when the project is completely finished. The warranty will start after the completion date. Shrives said the city is going to keep the Skatepark locked up until spring as there is potential to be damaged without the sealant. Staff has put up fencing and placed boulders around the park and has requested extra patrol from the Police Department. Mayor Barnhart asked about the bathroom for the park. Shrives said it was completed then damaged at the factory and will need to be repaired then delivered in the spring.

The City Manager Recruiter will be here on the December 12th and 13th said City Manager Shrives. He would like to meet separately with each councilmember. Virtual meetings are available and we can send a link for those unable to attend in person. City Manager Shrives said he has provided some questions that the Recruiter is requesting council comments.

Mayor Barnhart asked if there was a Legislative Committee meeting scheduled. Shrives said the League of Cities and Towns has a meeting on December 16th that he would like to attend and would like to schedule the meeting after that.

OTHER REPORTS:

Police Chief Stephens said he has been working with the Lions Club and Public Works Director Bates in getting ready for the Night of Lights Parade.

MISCELLANEOUS

Correspondence

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES HELD ON DECEMBER 02, 2024

ADJOURN

Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Robinson and the meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Mayor Barnhart

City Clerk