

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD JULY 17, 2023

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

ROLL CALL: Councilor Fisher, Councilor King, Councilor Lovering via Zoom, Councilor Piper, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Shepard and Mayor Barnhart.

Also present: 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 King and the motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA: Councilor Fisher made motion to approve the consent agenda noting all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor Shepard with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Piper, Robinson, Shepard, Fisher, King, Lovering and Barnhart.

Approval of Claims - July 17, 2023 - \$406,825.12

Approval of Payroll Claims - July 7, 2023 - \$167,513.89

Approval of Payroll Claims - July 14, 2023 Special/Final - \$10,511.92

Approval of July 3, 2023 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

Approval of RAISE 22 Grant Agreement and Authorize City Manager to Execute

Approval of Subdivision Improvement Agreement, Saint Richard's Subdivision/Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country, and Authorize City Manager to Execute

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

23-24 Fiscal Year Budget Hearings Continued

Nicosia will continue presenting the 23-24 FY Preliminary Budget to Council. This meeting will include reviewing significant maintenance and capital items.

City Manager Nicosia discussed the capital and significant maintenance needs for the city departments to include Police Department flooring, replace the boiler at the pool, fencing the basketball court, and reroof the pool bath house. Last week the transmission went out of the 2018 Police vehicle and currently there is a wait time to receive vehicles. The Fire Department is well set up but we will need to replace the rescue sooner than originally planned. In Water, both the generator project and the 5th Ave EN are complete, so we are not carrying over those projects into 2024. There are no significant water projects planned in 2024. Phase I on the lift station is coming along and is 50% complete. Nicosia said the engineers are two months behind where we wanted to be with engineering at the Treatment Plant. We will be carrying over \$4.8 million in sewer. The street project will be finished in August and is being carried over into the 2024 budget.

Nicosia said she will be sending the RAISE Grant Agreement to the project coordinator tomorrow. The first phase will be engineering which has been estimated at \$800,000. We will put out RFP's, select an Engineer, negotiate the contract then start moving forward. The 2024 FY budget will reflect the engineering. At the last TA Grant (Railroad St. project) meeting, DOT wants to add a right of way phase due to 30 feet at Church

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Women United corner property. They indicated that the engineering would not be completed until 2024 with construction delaying to 2025.

The City found a good used vehicle for the Parks Department and traded in the well-used Trailblazer at a cost of \$20k.

Nicosia noted that the Department of Revenue is doing a very good job of messaging that they are required by law to put out the estimated tax number based on the prior year's levies, knowing it is not accurate.

The budget hearings will continue until adopted.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Letter of Acknowledgement - Need for Community-wide Solutions to Current Crisis of Homelessness and Housing Instability

(Sean Patrick O'Neill, Chairman, Collaborative Housing Solutions of NW Montana will attend in person to discuss)

Councilor Shepard said he was at a barbershop property in Kalispell and there was a mess with needles, rubbish, clothing etc. that was thought to be from the homeless. Some have commented they have encountered the Carhatt folks and were less than impressed. There is a path they travel through Kalispell; the American Legion has tried to help some of the veterans. Shepard's concern is the property owners end up with a mess to clean up.

Mayor Barnhart said the Flathead County Health Department has had an issue getting folks to fill the crisis team positions. This year they have the money to get a second person but the position has yet to be filled. The Health Department is aware of the problem and is trying to take care of it the best they can. Council discussed the need for mental health assessments and for resources.

Sean O'Neil thanked Council for reading the letter he submitted. Mr. O'Neil acknowledged having several issues with the homeless folks. There is a national problem and a local issue. Mr. O'Neil is aware Kalispell is the hub for the homeless in the Flathead; however, there are a lot of resources in Kalispell. We have a lot of housing help in the Flathead. Mr. O'Neil said they have come up with a 5 year plan to address homelessness in the local areas. Folks have lost housing for one reason or another and will live in a camper or worse on the streets. The homeless have had severe trauma in their lives whether it is mental health, addiction, disabled or their family has abandoned them. We were bursting at the seams before Covid hit and now there are no seams said O'Neil. We have to work together on this for a solution. We are growing faster than our resources said O'Neil and the locals are suffering the most. Mr. O'Neil pointed out we are the second largest homeless community in the state. We need partners such as local government to be creative and come up with a solution.

Mr. O'Neil said having him here today is one of the biggest steps any local government has taken, and he appreciates council concern.

City Manager Nicosia drafted a letter of acknowledgement for the need for community wide solutions to current crisis of homelessness and housing instability. Councilor Shepard motioned to have Mayor and Council individually sign the letter and the motion carried.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution # 1902 - A Resolution of the City Council of Columbia Falls, Montana Approving the Final Plat of Saint Richard's Subdivision, a Two Lot Minor Subdivision Located at 1210 9th Street West, Further Described as Assessor's Tract 6D in Section 18 T30N R20W, Flathead County, Montana.

City Manager Nicosia said the Final Plat of the St. Richard's property is a two-lot minor subdivision and is the location The Boys and Girls Club is looking at for their new facility. They have bonded for the water and sewer extension as required in the plat. They have met all conditions and staff recommends approval.

Councilor Piper motioned to approve Resolution # 1902, seconded by Councilor King with council voting as follows. Ayes: Robinson, Shepard, Fisher, King, Lovering, Piper and Barnhart.

Resolution # 1903 - A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana Amending Fund 3020 GO Street Improvements Budget Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023 and Authorizing Closing the Account Balances into the General Fund

City Manager Nicosia said this resolution is a statutory requirement. Fund 3020 is the general obligation street improvements loan that was paid off. This increases the budget authority and transfers the remainder to the General Fund. Staff recommends approval.

Councilor Fisher made motion to approve Resolution # 1903, seconded by Councilor Shepard with council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, Fisher, King, Lovering, Piper, Robinson, and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Piper asked if there was an update on left hand turn signals on Highway 2. Nicosia replied on August 21st Mr. Vosen from DOT will be attending the council meeting to answer questions council may have.

Councilor Shepard inquired when the next railroad meeting is. Nicosia said there is no meeting. BNSF stated they want a new crossing, what we don't know is how much became our responsibility said Nicosia. We have calls into MDOT.

Mayor Barnhart said he recently visited the full time firefighters and we are lucky to have them with the multiple fatalities we have had in the last few weeks. Mayor wanted to congratulate paid staff and volunteers for the work they have done.

Mayor Barnhart asked if we are getting the weed letters out. Nicosia replied yes.

Mayor said he read a social media post about loud music at the COOP after midnight. Chief Peters said they can play until 2:00 a.m. Our Officers went down to have them close the large doors, which did make a difference. Chief said his department received one complaint.

Mayor Barnhart said after we fixed the 5th Ave EN waterline have we noticed any water loss. Nicosia said we are pumping less water now that the line was replaced and saw a savings of approximately eight million gallons last month.

Mayor asked Nicosia what she is projecting for Resort Tax collection for the budget. Nicosia replied she is looking at collections with the Finance Director and will have an amount very soon.

Mayor Barnhart said years ago affordable housing wasn't the contractor supplying housing it was federally subsidized housing. Mayor Barnhart asked if we could work towards doing that again. We need it as a priority to get the housing for Columbia Falls. Nicosia said the City has to qualify for projects as our community income level is too high to automatically qualify for funding. Also, we have to partner with others, such as Habitat or

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CAPN, as we have in the past because we are too small to be certified housing authority. There was council discussion on affordable housing.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

City Attorney Breck said on July 10th there was a selection of representatives meeting regarding Montana cities affected by SB 382. The League will draft guidance and templates for cities. Mayor Barnhart asked if we had self-governing powers would we be able to make our own policy Nicosia said the legislature eliminated more local authority during this legislative session adding more sections taking away control from self-governing communities.

MISCELLANEOUS

Correspondence

ADJOURN:

Councilor Shepard motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Fisher and the meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk