

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD JANUARY 06, 2025**

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

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

Also present: Interim City Manager Shrives, City Clerk Staland, City Attorney Breck (via zoom) and Police Chief Stephens.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Councilor Robinson motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilor King and the motion carried.

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

Approval of Claims - January 6, 2025 - \$472,710.91

Approval of Payroll Claims - Dec. 16, 2024 - \$185,641.66

Approval of Payroll Claims - Dec. 31, 2024, 4th Quarter Reports- \$24,232.36

Approval of Payroll Claims - Jan. 03, 2025 - \$122,044.07

Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes - Dec. 16, 2024

Tree Board Appointments - Paula Robinson and Eric Lovering

3 year term - expiring 12/31/2027

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor King inquired about the city snow plowing schedule. City Manager Shrives replied there is a schedule based on the amount of snow. There is a snow plow call out list that is used when the street department is off duty.

Councilor King said she noticed a MDOT grant was available and asked if the city has applied for it. Police Chief Stephens said he just received his ID and grant application number and intends to apply for the MDOT grant for high visibility control.

Councilor Price inquired about the city street crew and how many were on shift for snow plowing.

The city has 5 employees that plow city streets; each employee has a certain section of town they are responsible for, when they complete their route they help each other out in other areas of town said Shrives. Mayor Barnhart said they work on priority routes first which includes the school routes and emergency services. They are doing good work but he would like to see more gravel on the side streets. Mayor Barnhart said he has noticed an improvement on residents clearing the sidewalks.

Matt Hutcheson said after shoveling his driveway the city plow trucks come by and put snow back in his driveway. He said the streets are getting plowed and some residents get snow pushed out of their driveway while others do not.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Shrives said there are 6 applications that have been submitted for the City Manager position, while there have been approximately 25 others that have shown interest. The full recruitment started this week and will continue for three weeks. Shrives said he has been tracking reviews on the podcast that was released last month by the recruiting firm and there are great reviews.

The City has received a quote of \$5417.00 for council chamber microphones and speakers. This upgrade should resolve the hearing issue during the city meetings.

Today is day one of the legislative session said Shrives. They are tracking over 900 bills that have been proposed. Mr. Shrives said he will update council during the legislative process.

There is a need to do a budget amendment at the January 21, 2025 council meeting. The city will include the notice for Public Hearing to be held on February 3, 2025 for the purpose of amending the FY budgets, fund 2100 resort tax fund. Additionally we will also be looking at Tax Increment Fund, Industrial Fund and Columbia Rising Fund, and the Building Code Fund said Shrives.

The Parks Committee is scheduled to meet on January 14, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. The Tree Board will meet on January 14, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

The City and Rural Fire Board meeting is January 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at the Fire Hall.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

There are some businesses that are in arrears with paying the City Resort Tax; staff has been looking to getting a process in place for collection. City Attorney Breck said the city is allowed to file civil suit and collect civil penalties if they prevail in a civil suit for collection of Resort Taxes, not to exceed fifty percent of Resort Taxes found due plus costs such as attorney and audit fees that may be incurred. Delinquent payers have received letters from the City with back and forth communication, yet there has been no remittance of the Resort Tax due. MCA 17-41-03 refers to the collection of claims; the Department of Revenue may assist in the collection of a delinquent account owing to a city or state and may separately charge the agency for the cost of the assistance. The City will need to send a notice to the delinquent payer giving them a 30 day notice that the City fully intends to turn the collection over to the Department of Revenue Collection Services Bureau. It will be one last attempt for them to pay before the Department of Revenue gets involved. City Attorney Breck believes the City will get more response from the delinquent businesses when the Department of Revenue gets involved.

Mayor Barnhart said if businesses continue to be in arrears how does the City keep them current without getting the Department of Revenue involved. City Attorney Breck replied he left a message with the Bureau to see what records and process they would require on a reoccurring basis if the city has to continually remind businesses of delinquent accounts. This could be on an annual or quarterly basis whichever is needed.

Councilor Price said with the Department of Revenue, if a person owes over \$2,500 they will charge penalties and interest, does the city have something in our code that states if they go over a certain amount without paying, the city can collect penalties and interest from them. City Attorney Breck replied yes it does plus attorney fees. Councilor King asked how we keep businesses from being delinquent on a quarterly basis. City Manager Shrives said the businesses are already collecting the tax, but they are not remitting the collected tax

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to the city. City Attorney Breck added the Department of Revenue has the ability to impose a lien against their property for past due taxes. Councilor Price asked if the names of delinquent businesses were available. City Attorney Breck said he would rather not say during a public meeting but the council does have a right to know.

Mayor Barnhart said he will not be able to attend the City Rural Fire Department meeting and does support the 4th FTE Firefighter.

MISCELLANEOUS

Correspondence

ADJOURN

Councilor Piper made motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor King and the meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk