

City of Columbia Falls
City Council Regular Meeting Minutes
Held April 7, 2025

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

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

Also Present: City Manager Hanks, City Clerk Staalnd, City Attorney Breck, Sergeant Rice, and Fire Chief Weeks.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Councilor Robinson moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilor Price and motion carried unanimously.

OATH OF OFFICE: City Manager Eric Hanks
City Clerk Staalnd administered the Oath of Office to newly appointed City Manager Eric Hanks.

CONSENT AGENDA: Councilor Lovering moved to approve the consent agenda, noting that the claims were in order. The motion was seconded by Councilor Piper and passed unanimously.

Approval of Financial Claims – April 7, 2025 – \$286,062.80

Approval of Payroll Claims – March 28, 2025 – \$176,994.28

Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes – March 17, 2025

NEW BUSINESS: Department of Homeland Security Grant

Fire Chief Weeks provided an update on the grant application process for two backup generators—one for the Fire Department and one for City Hall.

Councilor Piper motioned to approve pursuing the Homeland Security Grant application, seconded by Councilor Lovering with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Lovering, Piper, Price, Robinson, Shepard and Barnhart.

Interim Employment Agreement – Mark Shrives

Council reviewed a temporary agreement for interim employment of Mark Shrives. City Manager Hanks said the focus of this interim employment agreement is to focus on smooth transition of knowledge and expertise specifically with the wastewater treatment plant project and an ongoing HR item. The agreement would allow for as needed use at the rate of sixty-five dollars per hour.

Councilor Piper motioned to approve the temporary agreement for interim employment of Mark Shrives, seconded by Councilor Lovering with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Piper, Price, Robinson, Shepard, Lovering and Barnhart

Proclamation – Frontline Worker Appreciation

Mayor Barnhart read a proclamation recognizing May 2025 as Frontline Worker Appreciation Month.

Developer Improvement Agreement – Howard Range

City Manager Hanks said the city code requires paved parking driveways within zoning code 18.522.040. The

developer is experiencing delays in completing the paved parking portion of the project. The developer is requesting to bond for the completion of the project in order to proceed with a certificate of occupancy. In accordance with city regulations, the City requires a cashier's check for 125% of the project cost, which equals \$5,925 with a targeted completion date no later than October 26, 2025. Councilor Lovering inquired about the 125%. City Manager Hanks explained it was a bond and would be returned to the developer upon completion.

Councilor Price made motion to authorize City Manager Hanks to sign to Developers Improvement Agreement for Howard Range, seconded by Councilor Lovering with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Price, Robinson, Shepard, Lovering, Piper and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL:

Mayor Barnhart inquired whether Council had reviewed the policy regarding commercial uses and the requirement to pave within five years.

Councilor Lovering noted that the Columbia Falls Skate Park is now open, with a grand opening scheduled for Saturday, April 26th from noon to 5:00 p.m. She reported that Columbus Park was very busy over the weekend and asked for an update on the second gate for the pickleball court. City Manager Hanks responded that he would check with Public Works Director Bates for an update. Lovering also asked if the restrooms at Columbus Park were open. Hanks confirmed he would touch base with Public Works Director Bates.

Lovering mentioned there may be an issue with the application section on the city website. City staff will address it immediately.

Councilor Piper inquired about plans for new playground equipment at Columbus Park. Lovering confirmed that new equipment is on order. Piper would like to see a fence around the volleyball court at Columbus Park as it seems to attract dogs. Piper would like to revisit the idea of a dog park with a nonprofit organization.

Councilor Piper would like an update from MDOT on the turning signal lights at 4th Ave, 6th Ave, and near Super One. He recommended reaching out to MDOT to request turning signal installations.

Mayor Barnhart reported that River's Edge Park was well utilized over the weekend and requested that restroom hours be clearly posted at all city parks. He asked about the restroom installation at the Skate Park and noted that paving the parking lot should be considered in next year's budget.

Mayor Barnhart expressed appreciation for Mr. Shrives' service and suggested sending a thank-you card.

Councilor Shepard welcomed City Manager Hanks to the team.

CITY MANAGER REPORT:

City Manager Hanks expressed his pleasure in joining the City of Columbia Falls and extended his gratitude to Mr. Shrives for assisting during the transition and noting his expertise and experience was greatly appreciated.

Grace Johnson has begun her role in the Parks Department.

The Pool Manager position remains vacant at this time. The City is also accepting applications for all pool staff.

A walkthrough of the Skate Park was conducted, and Public Works is addressing the need for additional fill for parking and landscaping.

The new credenza desk was noted as a useful addition to the Council Chambers.

Councilor Lovering raised questions regarding parking at Columbus Park. Mayor Barnhart responded that angled parking on the west side had been previously considered and may be revisited during the upcoming budget cycle.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT:

City Attorney Breck reported progress with the Department of Revenue regarding the collection of delinquent Resort Tax payments.

POLICE REPORT:

Sergeant Rice shared that the previous month had been particularly busy for the Police Department.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Fire Department – March Report

Police Department – March Report

Correspondence

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Lovering moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilor Robinson.

Mayor

City Clerk