

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD JUNE 19, 2023

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

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

Also Present: City Manager Nicosia, City Clerk Staaland, City Attorney Breck, and Police Officer Rice.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

Approval of Claims - June 19, 2023 - \$303,417.95

Approval of Payroll Claims - June 9, 2023 - \$109,210.63

Approval of Regular City Council Meeting Minutes - June 5, 2023

Approval of Change Order # 1 - Sandry Construction Company, Inc- 5th Ave EN Water ARPA Project and authorize City Manager to execute.

Approval of Water/Sewer Plant Investment Fee Agreement, Morrow, 1404 Columbia Drive, and authorize City Manager to execute

Updated Job Descriptions - Public Works Operators:

Water - for compliance with 23 FY CBA (Operator 1, Grade 10, Operator 2, Grade 11, Operator 3, Grade 12 and Lead Grade 13)

Parks/Floater Lead - compliance with 23 FY CBA as well as improved coordination and operation of Parks Department

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on agenda)

Scott Demongin, 6 9th Street W., inquired about having the City run electrical from his building to the historical sign on Nucleus Avenue for lighting. Nicosia said the Columbia Falls Community Foundation installed the signs and it was astronomically expensive to get power to the site based on where electrical was located, from the alley, as the previous owner was not interested in letting the electrical conduit be extended from the building. The Community Foundation looked into installing a solar light. Mayor Barnhart suggested contacting the Community Foundation to see if they would look into getting power from Mr. Demongin's building to the sign. City Manager Nicosia replied she will look into it.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Public Hearings - 23-24 Fiscal Year Preliminary Budget:

Mayor Barnhart read the hearing notice: NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana, will hold public hearings beginning on June 19, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Columbia

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Falls City Hall, 130-6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana, for the following purposes:

Preliminary Budget

Presentation and consideration of the preliminary budget for fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024 will begin on June 19, 2023 and will be continued until final adoption of the budget after receiving the certified taxable valuation in August. City Council will review various departments and funds at each hearing until the budget has been presented in its entirety.

Special Assessments

Consideration of the adoption of the proposed Street Lighting District and Street Maintenance District assessments for FY2023/2024. Council will hear any objections to the final adoption of the resolution levying special assessments for FY 2023/2024. Special Assessments are estimated as follows:

Street Lighting District \$ 30,049 (no change)

Street Maintenance District \$330,000 (4.4% increase)

Individual property payment schedules will be available for inspection ten (10) days from this notice, in the office of the City Clerk, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana, during regular hours Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Permissive Medical Levy

Consideration of adoption on the proposed tax levy to fund health insurance premium contributions for group benefits beyond the amount of contributions in effect on June 30, 1999. The actual mills for consideration will be made available upon receipt of the certified tax valuation for the year.

Taxpayers are encouraged to attend the hearings and give written or oral comments on any or all of the budget-related items. Written comments may be mailed to the City Clerk, 130 6th Street West, Room A, Columbia Falls, Montana, 59912. Questions regarding the proposed items can be made by contacting City Manager Susan Nicosia at 892-4391.

City Manager Nicosia said staff is reviewing Street Lighting and Street Maintenance District budgets with Council this evening. The city did not annex any properties this year; but we will be adding the Cedar Palace property on 12th Ave. W. into the lighting district as streetlights are being added with the 12th Ave West project. Without annexations there will be no change in the street lighting or street maintenance districts. The Street Lighting Fund pays for the electrical power for all city streetlights, but the City is only responsible for the replacement of the special streetlights, such as Glenn's Addition and Cedar Pointe Loop and not the standard FEC streetlight poles.

The Street Maintenance Fund can only be used for maintenance, no construction activities pursuant to state law said Nicosia. The Street Maintenance Fund is supplemented by both Gas Tax and Special Gas Tax funds. In September the city will receive \$135,000 that we desired to designate for chip sealing and crack filling projects. For FY 23-24 the Special Gas Tax will not come in one lump sum; they will send it once a month based on collection of the previous month. The City will receive an estimate of the remittances later in June.

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Nicosia said based on state law, Council has to set the annual assessments by resolution to place the assessments on the tax notices. Nicosia recommended leaving Street Lighting at the same amount as the prior year, \$30,049, and raising Street Maintenance from \$316,000 to \$330,000 as indicated in the hearing notice. The City budgeted to spend down some of the cash reserve in Fund 2500 during this fiscal year and the fund was \$29K in the red before May collections were received from the treasurer in June. Nicosia noted that the City Clerk has not yet received the property file from the county to update the assessment records.

Nicosia also noted that the Department of Revenue just mailed out property assessment evaluation forms; about six months later than usual. There is a protest/review period of 30 days and DOR is holding a workshop on July 12th at the Hilton Garden Inn from 3 p.m. to 6 pm. Most taxpayers are in for a shock as the values are up dramatically since 2021 Nicosia noted. The statute requires DOR to provide an estimate of the new year's taxes based on the last year's mills levied. Nicosia noted that this is very inaccurate as when the values increase, the number of mills decrease for city and county as our permitted tax levy is based on dollars.

Nicosia said the city will put out information for people to understand that just because you received a notice that states your property value went up, it does not mean the City is levying the same number of mills. By statute, 15-10,420, Council can raise their levy by half the rate of inflation and newly taxable property; if property value goes up mills go down. Nicosia noted that City staff will assist taxpayers with these notices and Nicosia will bring information forward at every Council meeting.

Mayor Barnhart opened the Public Hearing at 7:23 p.m. and left the hearing open until the budget is adopted. There was no public comment.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution # 1900:

A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana, Designating Heritage Days 2023 as an Official Community Activity of the City of Columbia Falls and Designating Persons Responsible for Planning the Events of Heritage Days 2023

City Manager Nicosia said in Section Two it notes there are other things going on at different venues, but the city is not assuming responsibility for all the other activities.

Mayor Barnhart recognized the designated planners Shirley, Reynolds, Chandra Reynolds, Vickie Ott, Art Ott, and Todd Deruchia and thanked them for their service.

Councilor Fisher motioned to adopt Resolution # 1900, seconded by Councilor Hamilton with council voting as follows. Ayes: Robinson, Shepard, Fisher, Hamilton, Lovering, Piper and Barnhart.

Resolution # 1901:

A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana, Amending Fund 4020 Capital Projects Fund - General Equipment Fund Budget Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023

City Manager Nicosia said the City needs to amend the Fund 4020 General Equipment Capital Fund due to the timing of the receipt of our emergency Police vehicles. Last year's vehicle arrived this year and we ordered the new vehicle and it arrived on time. In order to accommodate both purchases, City staff is requesting that

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Council amends the appropriations. Nicosia noted that the cash reserve provides adequate funding for the appropriation increase.

Councilor Shepard motioned to approve Resolution # 1901, seconded by Councilor Lovering with council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, Fisher, Hamilton, Lovering, Piper, Robinson and Barnhart.

Second and Final Reading - Ordinance # 826 - Amending 8.16 Refuse and Litter:

Adding 8.16.040 Unlawful to Accumulate Refuse and Litter Resulting in Animal Conflict

With no amendments by City Attorney Breck, City Manager Nicosia recommends adoption of the ordinance.

Councilor Lovering made motion to adopt Ordinance # 826, seconded by Councilor Robinson with council voting as follows. Ayes: Fisher, Hamilton, Lovering, Piper, Robinson, Shepard and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Piper would like to see if we can pursue DOT for left hand turn signals through town. Nicosia said she would invite Bob Vosen to a council meeting, noting that he was scheduled to attend the City of Kalispell's meeting.

Councilor Shepard asked if BNSF is asking us to install railroad crossing arms. Nicosia replied yes, that is correct. John Altof the DOT railroad liaison recommended that BNSF put the crossing in for Section 130 funding but the City does not know what that means in terms of funding or timeline; we are waiting for answers. There is an agreement between the City and BNSF from 1995 that states whoever touches the crossing is responsible for bringing it up to date. The City's goal is to get the sidewalk installed and BNSF have had the plans for a year already.

Mayor Barnhart inquired why swimming lessons have not started at the City Pool. Nicosia said none of our certified Lifeguards are WSI certified; we will have training in the next couple weeks in order to provide lessons this summer.

Mayor Barnhart said he is interested in getting lighting on the sign on Nucleus Ave.

Mayor asked if the Community Market found a new location. Nicosia said not that she is aware of.

Mayor Barnhart reported there is a CFAC meeting in the council chambers tomorrow evening.

Mayor Barnhart stated according to his source at the Health Department, there are approximately 40,000 septic systems in the county.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

There will be another batch of June 30th claims to close out this FY.

The pickleball folks are going to hold their ribbon cutting on Saturday, July 29th during Heritage Days at 10:30 a.m. and she would like to have a volunteer from council to represent the city. Councilors Lovering and Fisher said they would be able to attend the ribbon cutting.

Nicosia said she would like to get the council facility tour on the schedule.

Nicosia also reported that Flathead County reached out earlier today, and they are withdrawing their request for Columbia Falls to accept the flow from the proposed septic facility.

OTHER REPORTS

Officer/SRO Rice said the four new officers are a welcomed addition to the Police Department.

Nicosia said Sergeant Murphy will be retiring on June 28th with nearly 20 years of service.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Police Department Activity - May 2023

Fire Department Activity - May 2023

Finance - May 2023

Correspondence

ADJOURN

Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn at 7:50 p.m., seconded by Councilor Hamilton.

Mayor

City Clerk