

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD JUNE 16, 2025**

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

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

Also present: City Manager Hanks, City Clerk Staaland, City Attorney Breck, Fire Chief Weeks and Police Chief Stephens.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

Approval of Claims - June 16, 2025 - \$209,532.69

Finance - Void Outstanding Checks - Effective 06/30/2025

SLIPA Grant - Fire Hydrant Replacement Change Order #1

Approval of Payroll Claims - June 6, 2025 - \$120,680.50

Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes - June 2, 2025

Records Destruction Document

APPOINTMENT: Volunteer Firefighter Sydney Mainolfi

Fire Chief Weeks recommended Sydney Mainolfi for appointment as a probationary volunteer firefighter. Ms. Mainolfi, a current EMT-B, participated in the West Valley Fire Department cadet program and has shown consistent dedication.

Councilor Piper made motion to approve Probationary Volunteer Firefighter Sydney Mainolfi, seconded by Councilor Shepard and the motion carried unanimously.

City Clerk Staaland administered oath of Office to Mr. Mainolfi.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Public Hearing - 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Preliminary Budget Hearings:

City Manager Hanks announced the beginning of the FY 2025–26 Preliminary Budget Hearings. Hearings will commence July 7, 2025 and remain open through September 2025, concluding with final budget approval. The hearings will cover capital projects, projected revenues, and expenditures.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution #1944 - Establishing Fees for the use of the City Pool

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City Manager Hanks stated that fees remain unchanged from 2024, but a new resolution is required to make the fee schedule open-ended.

Councilor Piper made motion to approve Resolution #1944 Establishing Fees for the use of The City Pool, seconded by Councilor Price with council voting as follows. Ayes: Price, Shepard, Piper and Barnhart.

Staff Report #CPP25-02: Preliminary Plat – T&C Business Park

City Manager Hanks stated City Planner Mulcahy is not present this evening and he would be delivering the submitted report regarding a proposed five-lot light industrial subdivision at 330 Meadow Lake Boulevard. The 10.47-acre site, previously used for equipment storage, requires structural fill to replace organic material. The property is zoned light industrial (CI1) and lies within municipal water and sewer boundaries.

Key findings include:

- Geotechnical recommendations require substantial excavation, particularly on Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- Wetland presence on Lot 5 is acknowledged, with no current development proposed within it.
- Groundwater was encountered 17–27 feet below grade; proposed utilities will mitigate environmental impacts.
- Traffic projections estimate 153 average daily trips, not requiring a traffic study.
- Staff recommends a pedestrian path along Meadow Lake Boulevard.
- Variance requested for no internal sidewalks, curb, or gutter due to light traffic.
- Private internal roads will be maintained by the subdivision association.

Councilor Price questioned the 24-foot-wide private road and absence of sidewalks given potential truck traffic. Hanks responded that the road width meets safety and zoning requirements for light industrial areas. Hanks confirmed that a private road is not uncommon, and the City recommends that any roads in the subdivision remain private. Price also inquired about the phrasing “but not limited to” five lots. City Attorney Breck clarified that the preliminary plat specifies five lots, and further lots would require future approval.

Councilor Shepard motioned to approve Staff Report # CPP25-02 as findings of fact, seconded by Councilor Piper with council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, Piper and Barnhart. Noes: Price.

Resolution #1945 - Preliminary Plat Approval T & C Business Park

Councilor Shepard made motion to approve Resolution #1945 Preliminary Plat Approval T & C Business Park, seconded by Councilor Piper with council voting as follows. Ayes: Piper, Shepard and Barnhart. Noes: Price.

Resolution #1946 - Heritage Days 2025

City Manager Hanks introduced the resolution to formally recognize Heritage Days 2025 and designate event planners: Shirley Reynolds, Sean Reynolds, Jordan Reynolds, Art Ott, Vicki Ott, and Todd Deruchia.

Councilor Price motioned to approve Resolution #1946 Heritage Days 2025, seconded by Councilor Piper with council voting as follows. Ayes: Price, Shepard, Piper and Barnhart.

Resolution #1947 - Children’s Memorial Garden at Wildcat Park

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Life Scout Merrick Fairchild presented the final design for her Eagle Scout project. The City Council previously authorized development of the project, which has been reviewed and approved to move forward to council by the Parks Committee. City staff will oversee construction and maintain the garden.

Mayor Barnhart confirmed maintenance and sprinkler system details. Ms. Fairchild confirmed that the City Parks Department would maintain the garden and that she would supply components for expanding the existing sprinkler system.

Councilor Price motioned to approve Resolution #1947 a Children's Memorial Garden at Wildcat Park, seconded by Councilor Shepard with council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, Piper, Price and Barnhart.

Ordinance #833 Final Reading - Amending the Columbia Falls Zoning Map from CB-2 Commercial to CR-5 Two-Family Residential at 394 Railroad Street

Councilor Shepard made motion to approve the Final Reading of Ordinance #833 - Amending the Columbia Falls Zoning Map from CB-2 Commercial to CR-5 Two-Family Residential at 394 Railroad Street, seconded by Councilor Piper with council voting as follows. Ayes: Piper, Price, Shepard and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Shepard questioned the reintroduction of public comment during deliberations. City Attorney Breck confirmed that Council may do so but must be clear about it.

Shepard also confirmed weed notice enforcement is underway.

Councilor Price asked about curb painting around town. Hanks said crews are prioritizing pedestrian paths and intersection painting. Price raised concerns about e-bikes exceeding speed limits on walking paths. Police Chief Stephens noted they are not permitted on walking paths, and the department will increase patrols. Piper asked if a license is required to operate e-bikes; Stephens replied that it is not.

Mayor Barnhart expressed concern over non-functioning falls at Glacier Bank. City Manager Hanks said the motor has failed and it may need to be replaced. He noted high weeds and grass at city entrances, urging code enforcement. He also raised budget concerns related to reduced Canadian tourism and emphasized caution. Barnhart addressed an abandoned, overgrown property near the railroad on Highway 2, calling it a fire hazard, and requested owner identification and follow-up.

Mayor Barnhart emphasized adherence to land amendment rules. Councilor Shepard added that many light industrial subdivisions in nearby cities also lack sidewalks, reinforcing the staff recommendation.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

- **Horine Well:** The variable frequency drive has failed. The city is operating on two wells while evaluating backup solutions. The city could be without the Horine Well for up to 60 days as they reconstruct a new variable frequency drive. We're also working with the engineers to have backup solutions and working through other options.

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- **City Pool:** Boiler failure forced closure. A technician identified a faulty thermal switch. Repairs were underway with reopening expected by Wednesday.
- **CFAC Site:** Work on aligning the diversion ditch is on track, fully funded by CFAC.
- **Farmers Market:** Staff is working with organizers to ensure parking and safety requirements are met under the CB-2 zoning.
- **Columbus Park:** Playground equipment has arrived; installation is scheduled for mid-to-late July.
- **Gateway to Glacier:** Temporary construction easements are being sent to approximately 70 homeowners for grade corrections related to infrastructure work.

OTHER REPORTS:

Police Chief Stephens reported that two experienced Patrol Officer have been hired, Officer Fields has already started, and Officer Doyle begins on June 28.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Fire Department is out checking hydrants daily.

Chief Stephens said a new officer started and another one starts on the 28th.

Police Department May Activity Report

Correspondence

ADJOURN

Councilor Shepard motioned to adjourn at 7:53 p.m., seconded by Councilor Piper.

Mayor

City Clerk