

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD APRIL 18, 2022**

REGULAR MEETING – 7:00 P.M.

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

ROLL CALL:

Councilor Fisher, Councilor Karper, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Shepard and Mayor Barnhart. Absent: Councilor Piper.

Also Present: City Manager Nicosia, Public Works Clerk Sobczak, City Attorney Breck and Police Chief Peters.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

CONSENT AGENDA:

Councilor Fisher motioned to approve the Consent Agenda noting that all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor Shepard with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, Fisher, Karper, Lovering, Robinson and Barnhart. Absent: Piper

Approval of Claims - April 18, 2022 - \$85,436.28

Approval of Payroll Claims - April 15, 2022 - \$123,042.78

Approval of April 4, 2022 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

Approval of 2022 Agreement with Columbia Falls Swim Team and authorize City Manager to execute

Waterline Replacement Agreement - Parkinson and authorize City Manager to execute

MT DES Notice of Intent for City to participate Regional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Flathead City-County Health Department Presentation by Joe Russell, Public Health Officer

Mr. Russell introduced himself to the Council and presented what the Flathead City-County Health department does in each of the different divisions. Russell noted that the Department's Legal Advisor is David Randall and the Medical Advisor is John Cole. Russell described in detail the different divisions and the duties and responsibilities of each: Community Health, Population Health, Environmental Health, Home Health, Family Planning, Administration and Animal Shelter. He also talked briefly in regards to COVID and how the numbers are getting back to normal but did leave a gap in their services. Councilor Shepard wondered what the department was doing about suicide prevention and Mr. Russell stated that they need to do more around mental health and discussed the success of the co-responder program used in concert with the police and sheriff's departments to assist with mental health issues. Russell noted that the department could be doing more with suicide prevention with the right resources. Russell thanked the City for joining the City-County Interlocal and for providing a Columbia Falls representative on the Board.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Mayor Barnhart read the Notices of Public Hearings:

The Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board held a public hearing for the following item at their regular meeting on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the Council Chambers of City Hall, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana. The Columbia Falls City Council will hold a subsequent hearing on Monday May 2, 2022 starting at 7:00 p.m. in the same location.

Request to Amend a Planned Unit Development in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:

Ruis Holdings 540 Nucleus Ave LLC is requesting an Amendment to their Planned Unit Development overlay for the property located at 540 Nucleus Avenue which was the former Bank of Columbia Falls site. The owner is amending the design of the south building to allow a height of 40-feet to the top of parapet and also allow a casino in the proposed restaurant on the main floor. Otherwise, the building meets all use and dimensional requirements. The property is described as Lots 11-15 and also all that portion of the east half of the vacated alleyway lying adjacent to the west boundary line of said Lots 11-15 inclusive of Block 37 and Lot 10A of the Amended Plat of Lots 1-3 & Lots 6-10 of Block 37 according to the map or plat thereof on file and of record in the office of the Clerk and Recorder of Flathead County, Montana.

Request for an Amendment to Conditional Use Permit to Construct 36 Apartment Units in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:

The applicant, Toby Gilchrist, is requesting an amendment to an approved Conditional Use Permit that allows the construction of 36 apartment units in two buildings, eighteen units in each building. The proposed amendment would allow the north building to allow owners of the units to offer short term rentals of the units. The south building would remain exclusively long-term rental (30-days or more). None of the other elements of the project change with the request of this amendment and this amendment only deals with the length of stay for the north building. The property is located approximately ¼ mile north of Highway 2 at 302 Meadow Lake Blvd. The property is described as Assessors' Tracts 2BDEA and 2BDAEA of Section 7, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Lovering is pleased with the turnout for the Downtown Parking Workshop that was performed last week. There were a lot of good ideas discussed and she appreciated the input from the downtown business owners.

Councilor Fisher shared a copy of a newspaper article about a gravel pit up by Libby noting it had piqued his interest. All the development vs not in my back yard (NIMBY) with the most recent legislative session regarding the Mining Act and how the legislature amended the law so now there is no way for the DEQ to shut down a gravel pit. One of the people speaking against the gravel pit in Libby was State Representative Steve Gunderson who authored the bill that said a local government cannot stop this development. Fisher thought the situation is bitterly ironic. Everything that was said could happen during testimony against the bill is happening. He said it is sad that the legislature is taking away local control. Secondly, he had a question for the City Manager Susan Nicosia about the Community Market. There had been talk several months ago that they might ask for an application to use one of the City parks but that has never come forward so he assumes the Community Market will not be asking. Nicosia answered that she believes that the market has a 5-year agreement to stay at the current Coop location.

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES HELD ON APRIL 18, 2022

Mayor Barnhart mentioned that the City had fixed two major water leaks in the last week. Nicosia presented a piece of water pipe that had been leaking. Mayor Barnhart said that the Public Works Director showed him the difference in well pumping times since the two leaks have been repaired. Nicosia said the City is seeing about a 25% savings and it is the equivalent of 6 million gallons in a month. Mayor Barnhart mentioned that he thought the parking workshop was very good and a couple things came out of it such as parking signage with a 2-hour maximum on 6th through 7th as well as 6th through 5th. They talked about prioritizing parking street rehabs and getting serious about getting some pieces done. He appreciates the fact that we do have a lot of parking but you get out in someone's yard and in the mud and that is not parking it is available to be parking. Nicosia reminded Council as the budget planning comes forward, the priorities will be established and where possible the City can use the Urban Renewal District funding, noting the missing infrastructure was part of the approval process.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Nicosia reported that the Raise Grant was submitted for \$10.5 million project, \$10 million federal grant and 500,000 City match. Nicosia noted that City officials worked with the engineering firm to address all of the issues in the Benefit Cost Analysis as noted by the senior reviewer in the last round. Nicosia said during the post-application review, the City's application made it to senior review and the next step would have been the DOT Secretary's desk but the BCA reviewer didn't believe the traffic numbers could be accurate; they came off of the MT DOT website, so he adjusted the BCA. BCA reviewer is not looking at the whole package he is just looking at that section. Nicosia notified Senator Tester's office that the application had been submitted and they will start that review. The current year funding notice added more biking and pedestrian use and safety. Nicosia will also update Senator Daines' office on the application noting that both offices were very supportive of the City's application.

Nicosia reported that the City's water project application is on the DNRC's list at #78 and is recommended for approval on April 30th. That project is to rebuild 5th Avenue EN to put in a new water main right where we fixed the leaking valve, take out the 2" galvanized main and put in a 6" poly main, new service lines to the homes and put in a fire hydrant. Good news is we will get a competitive grant and use the \$100,000 from the \$1.5 million ARPA aid that came specifically for water and sewer, \$1.4 million is going into the wastewater treatment plant project and \$100,000 in the water project. HDR is starting engineering for the wastewater treatment plant project; we will break out the sewer main expansion on Hilltop and the Lift Station 5 rebuild and will get those projects done before the WWTP expansion.

The City held a Pool Open House on Saturday 16th afternoon. We are still trying to fill all the slots so we can open the pool in accordance with the hours that we have used in the past. Nicosia is looking at wages so the City can be competitive in attracting and retaining employees. City staff is also looking at fees and passes because they haven't changed in 2 to 3 years.

Nicosia noted that she is starting the 22-23FY budget process with the department heads and then will schedule Council Committee meetings to look at council priorities. Nicosia noted that the City held the first session of negotiations with the Fraternal Order of Police as the collective bargaining agreement expires June 30, 2022. The next session will be held in June and the Teamsters have not yet scheduled a session but they have sent the letter requesting to open negotiations.

Nicosia noted that planning continues to be busy and we will have monthly planning meetings for a while. Building has been slower than planning, noting this is the second month that we have had to pay the minimum \$2k in fees to Whitefish.

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES HELD ON APRIL 18, 2022

MISCELLANEOUS

Finance – March 2022

Police Activity - March 2022

Council Correspondence

ADJOURN

Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn at 8:24 p.m., seconded by Councilor Shepard.

Mayor

City Clerk