

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD OCTOBER 17, 2022**

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

ROLL CALL:

Councilor Hamilton, Councilor Piper, Councilor Lovering via Zoom meeting, Councilor Shepard via Zoom meeting and Mayor Barnhart. Absent: Councilor Fisher and Councilor Robinson.

Also Present: City Manager Nicosia, City Clerk Staaland, City Attorney Breck and Police Chief Peters.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The motion passed to approve the Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Councilor Hamilton motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Councilor Piper and the motion passed.

Approval of Claims - October 17, 2022 - \$98,855.54

Approval of October 14, 2022 Payroll - \$98,148.60

Approval of Payroll Quarterlies ending Sept 30, 2022 - \$23,064.45

Approval of October 3, 2022 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

Correct Ordinance # 822 - Levang Zone Change (Had 2 Ord. # 819)

Acceptance of Sewer Main and Sidewalk Infrastructure - Ace Hardware

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on agenda):

Andrea Getts said she was pleased with the newly installed 4 way stop signs on 1st Ave E/6th St E.

NEW BUSINESS:

Columbia Falls Representative - Solid Waste District Nomination

City Manager Nicosia has served as the city representative for several years and has expressed interest in continuing for another two year term.

Councilor Piper nominated City Manager Nicosia as the City of Columbia Falls representative to the Solid Waste District, seconded by Councilor Lovering and the motion passed. The Mayor will sign a letter to the Flathead County Board of Commissioners notifying them of the City's nomination.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

Second and Final Reading - Ordinance #821 - Approving a PUD in the Columbia Falls Zoning Area:

An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana, Amending the Columbia Falls Zoning Map to Allow the Development of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Overlay at 230 Highway 2 East Described as Tract 1 of COS No. 3040 and COS No. 3778 In Section 17, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County, Montana.

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES HELD ON OCTOBER 17, 2022

Councilor Piper motioned to approve the Second and Final Reading of Ordinance # 821, seconded by Councilor Shepard with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Lovering, Piper, Shepard, Hamilton and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Hamilton asked if there would be an opportunity for volunteer groups to take care of city park vandalism cleanup. Nicosia said the city does utilize volunteer groups as often as we can, typically in the summer months. When vandalism is reported city staff gets it removed/repared as soon as possible. Hamilton believes residents are unaware this is happening. Mayor Barnhart suggested putting out a reward and getting it on social media. Nicosia noted that information can be put on the popular Police Department Facebook page. Nicosia also noted that staff is working on installing motion lights and cameras in city parks.

Shepard said at the last meeting he handed out information on concerns with digging/debris removal at the CFAC site. He has spent countless hours on the internet on removal of the cleanup. He will continue to research and fill council in at the next meeting.

Councilor Lovering echoed Ms. Getts on the four way stop and is excited to see how it will affect the area.

Mayor Barnhart asked where we are in the hiring process of the full time firefighters. Nicosia said we are in the process of vetting our candidates with fingerprinting, physical and mental evaluations. We should hear about the Safer Grant by the end of October.

Mayor Barnhart previously requested getting some publicity on the Council Budget message and has not seen anything yet. Nicosia said it was reported in the Hungry Horse News, the city website and filed with the state. The City Clerk will add the budget memo to the budget page on the website.

The recent vandalism is frustrating said Mayor Barnhart. He asked Police Chief Peters if it was considered felony charges. Chief said it depends on labor and costs. Mayor Barnhart said he believes in putting some posters out with a reward to get more information out to the public.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Nicosia reported on the following:

The pickleball courts are coming along and should be finished by now. The basketball courts will be completed next spring per the contractor's recommendation for warmer weather in order for the sealant to hold.

There were no bids received for FEMA River's Edge Park project. FEMA guidelines allow us to follow our procurement standards so we are soliciting 3 quotes. The FEMA and Engineer's estimate was below the \$80K threshold but one quote is over \$138K. We received a few quotes but nothing in bid form. The debris must be removed by December 16th. The other work can be completed after one year but we need immediate repairs made for public safety.

Nicosia reviewed the top ten property tax payers for the 2022-23 fiscal year. The top ten taxpayers make up 19% of the total property taxes, about the same as the two prior years. Nicosia reported that the top ten taxpayers pay a combined \$308,827 in city property taxes net of the resort tax rebate of \$25,186. The top ten taxpayers paid \$327,709 the prior year. The top tax payer is FEC at \$91,828 with Northwestern Corp 2nd at \$45,945.

Mayor Barnhart said the City's growth has been exponential and asked if it is possible to get a larger share of that money and point it toward affordable housing. Nicosia replied there is opposition to any increase in the city's mill levy calculation, both in terms of the inflation factor and newly taxable. Nicosia said the Legislature is looking for alternatives as there was extensive discussion on affordable housing, particularly in the release of the Housing Task Force recommendations.

Nicosia reported on the 5th St. closure for the construction staging area and the City's criteria in determining that to be the best location. The city required the developer to use it for staging purposes and to keep 6th St. and 1st Ave. open. Shepard assumes they will open the 5th St. when the parking area is completed. Nicosia

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES HELD ON OCTOBER 17, 2022

said public safety will continue to be reviewed, noting that first paved parking area is for the first building which will be occupied in the near future and would not be available for staging for the 2nd building. The current staging area is also in use for construction of the second building.

City staff is still working on the motion lights and cameras in city parks. The city ordered \$9k in bear proof garbage containers, which is a long term investment. The parks crew removed the garbage cans that were not bear compliant, and park visitors put their trash on the ground instead of looking for other containers or packing it out.

The Lions Club is interested in a golf course in a city park and there is an Eagle Scout that is proposing a children's memorial garden project at Marantette Park. Nicosia will schedule a Parks Committee meeting when more information is available.

The Chamber's Economic Development Committee is meeting in person in the Council Chambers and also via zoom tomorrow morning at 7:00 a.m. to talk on the marijuana tax that is on the ballot in November.

Miscellaneous Report:

Police Chief Peters said he appreciates the help from the Public Works department on street signage; every intersection on the east side is now controlled.

Next week the City is interviewing 4 individuals for the vacant Patrolman positions. There are currently 7 working officers and 2 out on injury.

ADJOURN:

Councilor Piper motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Hamilton and the meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Mayor Barnhart

City Clerk