

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD SEPTEMBER 03, 2024**

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

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

Also Present: City Clerk Staaland, Finance Director Bates City Attorney Breck and Acting Police Chief Rice.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

Approval of September 3rd Claims: 211,766.14

Approval of Payroll Claims August 20, 2024 - \$29,446.01

Approval of Payroll Claims August 30, 2024 - \$191,001.91

Street Department Job Descriptions - Updated for CBA Grade Changes

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on agenda)

Chris Peterson with the Hungry Horse News said they can no longer maintain the small section of lawn on the east side of their building. Chris said the HHN purchased some trees for that area and all but one died. Public Works Director Bates said he will make sure the parks department is aware they will be maintaining the area from now on.

Mr. Peterson said he resides near Marantette Park and there have been overnight campers this summer. Peterson requests that the city put up no overnight camping signs around the park. Peterson said this is the first time he has had to contact the police department on camping at Marantette Park. Acting Police Chief Rice said PD tried to make contact with the owner of the camper but were unsuccessful.

NEW BUSINESS:

Announcement of Hiring of Chief of Police Chad Stephens

Former Acting City Manager Clint Peters said the hiring process for the new Police Chief was very successful. Chad Stephens is from Yakima Washington and comes with 30 years of Law Enforcement experience. Mr. Stephens has been on Patrol, Detective, Swat Commander and now Lieutenant Patrol and has continued to be successful in Yakima. Peters said the interview committee had good interaction with Mr. Stephens and he was the top candidate in the interview process. Mr. Stephens spent time in the police department doing a ride along with the officer on duty and had good interaction there as well. His family is fully committed to moving to Columbia Falls and is excited to be making the move to the Flathead. Peters said he and the hiring committee are excited to be filling the position with an extremely qualified candidate and hopes the community will support Mr. Stephens in his new role as the Chief of Police. Mr. Stephens' official start date will be September 30, 2024 said Peters.

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Mayor Barnhart said he was on the interview panel and concurs with Mr. Peters that Mr. Stephens had an outstanding interview.

Approval of Interim City Manager Contract

Susan Nicosia said council asked for her assistance in recruiting an interim City Manager until the city can fill the position permanently. Nicosia said Councilors Robinson and Piper met with Mr. Mark Shrives on Tuesday, August 27, 2024 to review Mr. Shrives' resume and discuss the City's interim City Manager position.

Mr. Shrives has over 20 years of City Manager experience in Montana and Oregon. The council members were satisfied after meeting with Mr. Shrives that he could capably serve the City in the interim position for approximately 6 months, giving the council time to search for a permanent City Manager while ensuring the city was operating smoothly. Councilors Robinson and Piper advised staff to prepare an agreement for the agenda for full council approval. Mr. Shrives indicated he could begin Monday, September 9, 2024.

Councilor Piper motioned to approve the Interim City Manager contract with Mr. Mark Shrives, seconded by Councilor Robinson and the motion carried unanimously.

City Clerk Staaland stated she conversed with Mr. Shrives regarding the use of a city cell phone being added to the contract for the duration of his employment. Staaland said housing may not be available for the first week of employment and the city could allow a travel allowance for travel expense for the first week upon council approval.

Councilor Shepard motioned to amend the Interim City Manager Contract allowing for the use of a city cell phone and a mileage per diem for the first week of work, when housing is not available, seconded by Councilor Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Public Hearing Continued - 24-25 FY Budget

Susan Nicosia will present the 24-25 FY Budget to council. By law the council must adopt the taxes and assessment by resolution.

The Preliminary Tax Levy Schedule and Non-levied Funds - Preliminary Summary Schedule were presented by Susan Nicosia, both schedules will be in the final adopted budget book at the September 16, 2024 council meeting for further discussion.

Mayor Barnhart opened the Public Hearing at 7:57 p.m.

Roger Hopkins, 949 Vans Avenue, inquired about the permissive levy for the Study Commission being \$55,000 and not \$50,000 as discussed. Ms. Nicosia said the city reduced the amount due to canceling the election for a lack of candidates. Mr. Hopkins asked how long the council will accept letters of interest from the public. City Clerk Staaland estimated around the middle or end of October.

With no further comments Mayor Barnhart closed the Public Hearing at 7:59 p.m.

Mayor Barnhart said at the September 16, 2024 council meeting council will adopt the FY 24-25 Budget.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

RESOLUTION #1930 - A RESOLUTION OF THE *CITY* OF COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA, LEVYING ASSESSMENTS UPON PROPERTY WITHIN SPECIAL IMPROVEMENTS DISTRICTS TO DEFRAY THE *COST* OF SAID SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2024-25

Councilor Shepard made motion to approve Resolution #1930, seconded by Councilor Lovering with council voting as follows. Ayes: Lovering, Piper, Price, Robinson, Shepard and Barnhart.

RESOLUTION #1931 - A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA, REDEFINING THE AREA INCLUDED WITHIN THE COLUMBIA FALLS STREET MAINTENANCE DISTRICT AND METHOD OF ASSESSMENT.

Councilor Piper made motion to approve Resolution #1931, seconded by Councilor Robinson, with council voting as follows. Ayes: Piper, Price, Robinson, Shepard, Lovering and Barnhart.

RESOLUTION #1932 - A RESOLUTION OF THE *CITY* COUNCIL OF THE *CITY* OF COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA, SETTING AND ADOPTING THE *MILL* LEVIES ON *ALL REAL AND* PERSONAL PROPERTY WITHIN THE *CITY* OF COLUMBIA FALLS; APPROVING SPECIAL LEVIES FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES ON PROPERTY WITHIN THE *CITY* OF COLUMBIA FALLS FOR THE 2024-25 FISCAL YEAR

Councilor Lovering motioned to approve Resolution #1932, seconded by Councilor Shepard with council voting as follows. Ayes: Price, Robinson, Shepard, Lovering, Piper and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL 44.53

Councilor Piper said he noticed some sheds that are encroaching into the alleys. He would appreciate it if the Police Department could look into them as the alleys are emergency routes.

Councilor Shepard said some vehicles are traveling at a high rate of speed during the night on the east side of town and asked if the police department could patrol the area more frequently.

Councilor Lovering asked if a gate was going to be installed on the other side of the pickleball court. Ms. Nicosia stated it will be installed soon.

Councilor Lovering asked if the city has an update on the railroad housing project. Nicosia said she believes the Habitat for Humanity consultant is working on applications with City Planner Mulcahy.

Lovering said there is an electrical box in Columbus Park that is dangerous and looks terrible with wires hanging out of it. It has been that way for a long time and nothing is being done about it said Lovering. Nicosia said Cable Company owns the box and thought it was taped up.

Mayor Barnhart said the noxious weeds are starting to bloom and folks are not paying attention to them. They are flammable and dangerous at this point.

Mayor Barnhart said he would like staff to get ahold of someone about the condition of the exterior of the post office; it is horrendous and looks bad for our city. If the city could send pictures along with a letter would

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be best said Barnhart. Nicosia said the council should send a letter with pictures to the congressional delegation.

Mayor Barnhart commented on the letter to the editor from Mayre Flowers, Mayor said the City of Columbia Falls is smaller than the county and surrounding cities and we adopted policy years ago to protect council from litigation. All correspondence comes through the city clerk who then passes the information on to council and it works perfectly. Mayor Barnhart said he was offended that she indicated council doesn't want to hear from the community which is not true. Councilor Lovering said she believes if someone wants to serve on city council that their private information need not be public. Lovering believes the way council is contacted through the city clerk works great and does not see the need for change. Councilor Shepard said council needs to be careful on when we meet and private discussions we have concerning city business. Councilor Piper said he does not comment on social media but has had conversations at his home. If citizens have something they want to discuss with council they should attend a city council meeting or contact the City Clerk.

MISCELLANEOUS

Correspondence

ADJOURN: At 8:16 p.m. Councilor Lovering made motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Shepard.

Mayor

City Clerk