

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD AUGUST 17, 2020
FINANCE COMMITTEE – 6:30 P.M
(Barnhart, Piper, Robinson)

REGULAR MEETING – 7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Don Barnhart, Councilor Darin Fisher, Councilor Paula Robinson, Councilor Jenny Lovering, Councilor John Piper and Councilor Mike Shepard. ABSENT: Councilor Doug Karper.

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Councilor Lovering motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilor Robinson with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Mayor Barnhart, Councilor Fisher, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Piper and Councilor Shepard. ABSENT: Councilor Karper.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Councilor Piper motioned to approve the consent agenda noting all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor Robinson, with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Mayor Barnhart, Councilor Fisher, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Piper and Councilor Shepard. ABSENT: Councilor Karper.

Approval of Claims - August 17, 2020 - \$393,232.39

Approval of Payroll Claims - August 7, 2020 - \$126,223.77

Approval of August 3, 2020 Regular Council Meeting Minutes

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Public Hearing Continued - Preliminary Budget Hearings Continued until 2020-21 FY Budget is Adopted:

Preliminary Budget

Presentation and consideration of the preliminary budget for fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021. This hearing will be continued until final adoption of the budget after receiving the certified taxable valuation.

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 handed out the Determination of Tax Revenue and Mill Levy Limitations report, Taxable Valuation/Mill levy History and Analysis, and projected General Fund spending for the 20-21 FY. Nicosia said the critical piece to the city budget, particularly to the General Fund, is the mill levy. At the August 3rd, 2020 Council meeting we held the Public Hearing on the Permissive Medical Levy which due to the required expenditure this year and less available resources, the City needs to raise that levy noted Nicosia. Nicosia

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reviewed the statutory mill levy calculation with Council. Nicosia said last year we levied \$1,334,677. Pursuant to State Statute, the City could levy 181.29 mills, providing \$1,395,020 for the General and Fire Relief Funds. After Council discussion at the August 3rd meeting Nicosia said she used last year's 15-10-420 mill levy of 178.38 to fund the General Fund and Fire Relief Pension, leaving 2.91 mills to be carried over to the next year. The monetary difference between last year's levy and this year's levy is \$22,393. Nicosia discussed the City's mill levy and taxable value history.

Councilor Piper asked how much the City was reimbursed for the Montana Cares Act. Nicosia said approximately \$196,000 with both requests submitted. The City has been reimbursed for all applicable Police and Fire Department wages along with any direct expenses related to COVID-19.

Councilor Fisher said after reviewing the report he would like to levy all mills, he would like to see us spend money on needs and not wants.

Councilor Shepard concurs with Fisher if the mills are available we need to use them.

Mayor Barnhart said he believes we are a conservative and caring council and he would like to maintain the appropriate level service without increasing General Fund mills if possible. Mayor Barnhart said it seems like the City should have been able to find a reduction in costs of \$22,393. He would like to see the department's tighten their belts for the \$22,393. It is important that we are trying to treat people fairly during this difficult time said Barnhart. Barnhart said he would like to leave mills on the table. Nicosia said the budget as presented is without the \$22,393. It is based on leaving mills on the table and funding General and Fire Relief with the same mills as last year. Nicosia said she believes the Department Heads have tightened their belts and the \$22,393 is offset in the Transfers out to Capital Projects. The General Fund budget is based on council leaving mills on the table. If council levies the mills per the 15-10-420, MCA calculation, Nicosia said she would put it in transfers to the capital. Nicosia said you do not have to make a decision this evening as she can make two different mill levy resolutions for the next meeting. Councilor Robinson asked how long the carried forward mills can stay on the table. Nicosia said she believes we have to use them in a shorter timeframe, such as the next year, due to legislative changes to the carryover provisions but will find out for certain. Robinson said she agrees with Councilor Fisher with using the mills available as it looks worse increasing mills the following year. Mayor Barnhart said the resort tax is not going to show up until the 2nd half of 2022-23 FY. Mayor thinks we should stay at last year's mills for the General and Fire Relief Funds.

Councilor Piper motioned to accept the budget as proposed, second by Councilor Shepard with voting as follows. Ayes: Piper and Barnhart. Noes: Fisher, Lovering, Robinson and Shepard. Absent: Karper. Motion failed.

Mayor Barnhart said the Public Hearing will remain open until the budget is adopted.

Mayor Barnhart read the Notice of Public Hearing: The Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board held a public hearing for the following item at their regular meeting on Tuesday, August 11th, 2020 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 Tuesday, September 8, 2020 starting at 7:00 p.m. in the same location. Both hearings will be conducted in accordance with the most current recommended and/or required public health and safety protocols in place at the time of the hearing. The City website, will contain updated information if there is any change to the planned hearings.

Request to establish 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 PUD to remove the planned three story south building and will instead remodel the former bank building instead of removing and replacing with a new building at this time. In addition, the owner is amending the north building to allow ground floor residential condominiums on the back half of the building but retaining retail/office space on the front half ground floor. The PUD is proposing two options for 48 parking spacing to serve the site. Option A would construct below grade parking under the north building. The second option would be to construct at grade parking where the old bank offices were located along 1st Avenue West. As with the original PUD, the building height for the north building will be 42'-8" to the top of the roof. The proposed development otherwise conforms to all of the zoning requirements. The property is described as Lots 1-15, Block 37, Columbia Falls Townsite in Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

NEW BUSINESS:

Approval of Notice to Dispose of Surplus Property

City Manager Nicosia requested Council approval to declare the noted personal property, two heavily used pickups, with a value of more than \$100 as surplus. If approved by Council, the Clerk will publish a 15 day notice in the newspaper and afterward, the City staff will dispose of the property in the best manner, such as closed bids, auction, etc.

Motion made by Councilor Lovering to approve the notice to dispose of surplus property, seconded by Councilor Fisher with Council voting as follows. Ayes: Mayor Barnhart, Councilor Fisher, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Piper and Councilor Shepard. ABSENT: Councilor Doug Karper.

Call For Bids - River's Edge Park Improvements

City Manager Nicosia requested Council approve the Call for bids and get both the River's Edge Bathroom/Parking lot and the Recreational Trails project moving along.

Councilor Piper motioned to advertise call for bids on River's Edge Park Improvements, second by Councilor Robinson and the motion carried.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Lovering said there is still graffiti on the little shed at Railroad Park. Nicosia said the City crew tried the graffiti cleaner without luck and Parks was scheduled to paint it, the shed belongs to the baseball association.

Mayor Barnhart said he would like to keep attention on the abandonment of 4th Ave. crossing the railroad tracks. He also noted that he was at the Kreck Park and the sign looks very nice but he would like to see something in place to prevent vandalism. He said it is nice to see the weeds are being taken care of around town. He noted that there is a camper and a boat parked on 1st Ave. W. and you cannot see around it. Can we have the officers have a look at it before there is an accident?

Mayor Barnhart also asked what the status was on getting the falls fountain repaired. Nicosia said we are still waiting on a pump.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Nicosia reported that the State Land Board voted to purchase the land south of the river owned by CFAC. They need to raise another \$500,000. It will provide a significant recreation area near the city. Nicosia reported that she and Tyler had a zoom meeting with the BNSF Quiet zone official. He encourages us to hire a consultant to put an application together explaining what we are proposing and what they will accept. BNSF would be thrilled to get 4th Ave. across the tracks closed. It will be up to the Federal Railroad Administration to pass it. Mayor Barnhart said he sent a letter to Senator Tester's office letting them know we are working with the FRA.

Nicosia reported that the City has not received a yes for the EDA grant funding request but it has not been turned down either. The EDA said to wait a couple weeks as they are reviewing lots of applications. The City Pool closed for the season on Saturday, August 15, 2020. The pool revenue was down about \$5,000 due to lack of family pass sales and lessons.

There was a meeting with the Health Department on the VRBO's and they are one about one or 2 weeks out on inspections and do not believe they are preventing owner/operators from complying with the rules. The City's loan pool held by MWED from the CDBG program repayments has \$485,000 available to loan for small businesses.

Chief Peters reported we are down to the final 3 applicants for the Patrolman position. They will continue with testing and will have the position filled soon.

MISCELLANEOUS

July Police Department Activity Report

ADJOURN

Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn, second by Councilor Robinson and the meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Chairman

Council Clerk