

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING- MINUTES
HELD MAY 20, 2024

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

ROLL CALL: Councilor King, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Shepard, and Mayor Barnhart.
Absent: Councilor Price and Councilor Piper
Also present: City Manager Nicosia, City Clerk Staal and Police Chief Peters.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

CONSENT AGENDA: Councilor King made motion to approve the consent agenda noting all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor Shepard with council voting as follows. Ayes: Robinson, Shepard, King, Lovering and Barnhart.

Approval of May 20, 2025, Claims - \$399,442.95

Approval of May 10, 2024, Payroll Claims - \$105,531.83

Approval of May 6, 2024, Special Payroll Claim - \$1,447.26

Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes - May 6, 2024

Approve Change Order # 3 - 12th Ave West - Sandry Construction (Cancels remaining contract items) and authorize City Manager to execute.

Approve Change Order # 1 - Sidewalk and Improvement Project - Knife River and authorize City Manager to execute.

PRESENTATION:

Local Government Review/Study Commission - June Ballot

City Manager Nicosia reported that the Local Government review question is on the June election ballot. The local government review is constitutionally required every 10 years as in Article XI, Section 9 of the 1972 Montana Constitution therefore the City Council was required to put the question before voters on whether the citizens would like a review. Election Day is June 4, 2024.

This is an opportunity for citizens to review their city's powers and form of government and to make recommendations for changes to their structure of government. The study does not include personnel, fees, taxes, etc. noted Nicosia.

If a majority of voters say no, the process ends. If a majority of voters say yes, a three-member commission will be elected in November to examine and submit recommendations to the public. The commission would begin work in 2025 and in 2026 the voters accept or reject the commission's recommendations.

As calculated for the ballot, the cost of the study commission would not exceed \$55,000, funded by a permissive levy. The City would incur additional costs paid for out of the General Fund for support of the commission. Nicosia noted that the Flathead County Election website reported that all Columbia Falls precincts will vote at the Senior Center on Nucleus Avenue.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Review of Development Proposal - RR Street Property

The Parks Committee met on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, and reviewed the proposed development plan for Habitat Housing on the RR Street Property. The Committee is recommending approval of moving forward with the Planning/Zoning actions that are required for the proposed development. The Parks Committee preferred option 3, substantial parkland development on the west side with seven housing units on the east side. The question for the council is do you want to move forward with the necessary planning and zoning actions. It does take a Growth Policy map amendment, a subdivision plat and zone change.

Councilor Lovering noted the park area is shown as a concept and would not include a water feature, but the size is accurate.

Mayor asked if they are single family homes. Nicosia said yes, they will be built as townhomes with a yard and a shared common wall but all on individual lots.

Mayor Barnhart asked when they develop the park are they going to put in parking for the neighborhood or is it a private park. City Manager Nicosia said it is not a private park, it would be a public park with typical park amenities and the parking, whether on street or as developed will be addressed; Nicosia noted that the street is a full 70' width.

Councilor Lovering motioned to move forward with the proposed plan, seconded by Councilor Robinson with council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, King, Lovering and Robinson. Noes: Barnhart.

NEW BUSINESS:

Adopt 2025 FY City-Share Health Insurance Premiums

Mayor Barnhart asked how many times health insurance has increased in the last 5 years; from his recollection it would be about 25%.

City Manager Nicosia said the insurance premiums have increased nine percent for the last two years; along with prior increases of 7 percent and 5.5 percent. Staff looked at this increase in terms of dollars; we can put money into insurance without paying the fringe benefits on employee wage increase. With this proposal the city is paying 89.68 % and the employees paying 10.3%. This is the recommendation from the insurance committee consisting of Teamster representative Matt Cox, FOP representative Craig McConnell, non-union representative Barb Staaland and City Manager Nicosia.

Councilor Shepard motioned to adopt the 2025 FY city share health insurance premiums, seconded by Councilor Robinson and the motion carried unanimously.

Review of City's 2023 Water Consumer Confidence Report (CCR)

City Manager Nicosia said every year by June the City must publish the Consumer Confidence Report. The bottom line is the City's water meets or exceeds the federal and state requirements. The City has no failed samples and will continue routine testing along with the additional testing requested by the City Council due to the City's proximity to CFAC. Once approved by DEQ, this report will be posted in the newspaper, on the City's bulletin board and on the City website. Nicosia reviewed the annual report with the Mayor and Council.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution # 1916 - A Resolution of the City Council of Columbia Falls, Montana Establishing Fees for the Use of the City's Pool for the 2024 Season

City Manager Nicosia said the Parks and Pool Committee reviewed the pool use and lesson fees. Staff recommends raising the swim lesson fees to \$40 in city and \$50 out of city, a repeat class is \$30 in city and \$38 out of city. The committee agreed to eliminate private lessons. Lesson sign-up will provide for Columbia Falls residents (within CFHS boundary) to have a priority sign-up schedule.

Councilor Robinson motioned to adopt Resolution # 1916, seconded by Councilor Shepard with council voting as follows. Ayes: King, Lovering, Robinson, Shepard, and Barnhart.

Resolution # 1917 - A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana Adopting the Columbia Falls Public Participation Plan

City Manager Nicosia said as required with the adoption of SB 382, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on Thursday, May 9, 2024, and upon conclusion of the hearing, the Planning Commission recommended the adoption of the Columbia Falls Public Participation Plan by City Council.

Councilor Shepard asked how they are going to manage the Facebook disaster. Nicosia said there are many means and methods of communication, it may or may not include Facebook but other forms of social media. The City does not post official information on others Facebook pages. The City will post the adopted Public Participation Plan on the city website with the Planning and zoning documents. When the City hire consultants, they will utilize social media methods for communication.

Mayor Barnhart asked if the City Planning Commission should report to the Council monthly so the Council can be informed on upcoming projects. The City Manager said the Planning Commission operates in the same manner as the Planning Board; they will continue making recommendations to Council. The City Planning Commission meeting packets and minutes are on the City website. The City Planning Commission has no stand-alone authority to approve or deny; they only make recommendations to the Council. Nicosia noted that the council will approve the Growth Policy work plan as well as hiring any consultants for working on the required components including the housing study, and water and sewer preliminary engineering reports which will all require budget authority.

Councilor Shepard made motion to adopt Resolution # 1917, seconded by Councilor Lovering with council voting as follows. Ayes: Lovering, Robinson, Shepard, King, and Barnhart.

CITY MANAGER REPORT:

Solid Waste Board Appointment effective July 2024

City Manager Nicosia said the City Council will need to appoint a city representative to serve on the Solid Waste Board effective July 1, 2024, since she is the current representative. The meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 3:00 p.m. On the June 3rd agenda, Council will recommend a replacement and the letter of recommendation will then go the Flathead County commissioners for appointment.

Nicosia also reported that the water/sewer account changes are almost complete and, as noted on the claims report, the renter deposits have been refunded.

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING- MINUTES HELD ON MAY 20, 2024

Nicosia also reported that the Raise Grant RFP for engineering is due Tuesday May 28, 2024. There were nine engineers representing seven different firms expressing interest. The Public Works committee will join city staff in reviewing the results.

Teamster and FOP wage openers are coming up this month, we meet on the 22nd with Teamsters and the 30th with FOP, reported Nicosia.

Nicosia noted that the City has not had a formal water and sewer rate study done in some time; we know the rates must increase. The cost of the study is based on the scope, i.e., utility rates, plant investment fees.

Nicosia stated that it is better to have small incremental rate increases than a necessary large increase at one time. Nicosia noted that the Public Works Committee discussed at their meeting last week and concurred that a study is needed. Nicosia will put out an RFP for a rate study.

Nicosia reported she was recently awarded the 2024 University of Montana MPA Distinguished Alumni of the year. Nicosia said she was very honored and humbled to have received this recognition.

MISCELLANEOUS

Police Department - April Activity
Correspondence

ADJOURN: Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Shepard and the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk