

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD OCTOBER 06, 2025**

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

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

Also present: City Manager Hanks, City Clerk Staaland, City Attorney Breck, Fire Chief Weeks and Police Chief Stephens.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

Approval of Claims - October 6, 2025 - \$454,489.80

Approval of Payroll Claims - Sept. 26, 2026 - \$203,562.09

3rd Quarter Reporting - \$30,545.62

Approval of Regular Council Meeting Minutes - September 15, 2025

Approval of Wastewater Treatment Plant Change Order 5

APPOINTMENT AND EMPLOYEE INCENTIVE

Appoint Jacob Inabnit as Probationary Volunteer Firefighter

The membership of the Columbia Falls Fire Department has voted to accept Jacob Inabnit as a probationary volunteer firefighter. Jacob has completed all pre-hire requirements and has shown great interest in becoming a firefighter. Staff recommend appointment.

Councilor Piper made motion to appoint Jacob Inabnit as Probationary Volunteer Firefighter, seconded by Councilor Shepard and the motion carried.

City Clerk Staaland administered Oath of Office to Jacob Inabnit.

Employee Incentive - Shawn Bates 10-years of service

Shawn Bates, joined the City on September 21, 2015, and celebrates 10 years of dedicated service. Mayor Barnhart said this city service pin and recognition reflects the City's appreciation for his years of loyal service and the positive impact he has made on our community.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution #1953 - Authorizing participation in the Montana Board of Investments of Short-Term Investment Pool and authorizing the execution and delivery of documents related thereto.

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Councilor Piper made motion to approve Resolution #1953, seconded by Councilor Lovering with council voting as follows. Ayes: Lovering, Piper, Price, Shepard, King and Barnhart.

Resolution #1954 - Redefining the area included within the Columbia Falls Street Maintenance District and method of assessment.

City Manager Hanks explained the resolution provides a reduced street maintenance assessed rate for single family home lots and tracts on more one half acre.

Councilor Lovering motioned to approve Resolution #1954, seconded by Councilor Piper with council voting as follows. Ayes: Piper, Shepard, King, Lovering, Price and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Mayor Barnhart would like to see the city to procure new bike stands at City Hall and city parks.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Hanks highlighted the exterior beautification of City Hall, noting that some of the woodwork was replaced and the building was fully repainted.

The October 9, 2025, Planning Commission meeting was canceled due to no agenda items. The Government Study Commission will meet October 22 to review its final report. On November 3, staff will present a street condition prioritization plan given limited street funds.

City Hall will be closed Monday, October 13, for Columbus Day. Finance Director and City Manager will attend the Montana League of Cities Conference in Billings, October 15–17.

The city website update has been postponed until at least January. The annual audit is nearly complete, and staff will provide a brief update at the next Council meeting.

Public Works has transitioned to winter operations. Restrooms are secured, portable toilets are in place, and sprinklers have been winterized. Councilor Price asked about tree removal at Pinewood Park; Public Works Director Bates said staff is coordinating with the contractor for fall availability.

The expansion and modernization project is nearing substantial completion, with full operation expected within weeks. A minor electrical study change order was approved to avoid delays. Less than \$100,000 of the \$300,000 contingency was used, keeping the project within budget and schedule.

A display for *Columbia Falls Ahead 2045* is now in the City Hall entryway and will feature project updates and event flyers. Six proposals were received for the Land Use Planning Consultant, with selection expected this week. Most firms have extensive Montana planning experience.

Federal funding for the Gateway to Glacier Mobility Project remains on track despite the government shutdown. Once final signatures are received, the project will go to bid later this month, with construction targeted for March and an open house planned for mid-January.

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The Downtown Sidewalk and Parking Improvement Project was slightly delayed to include additional drainage and roadway work but remains on track for Spring 2026. The *Railroad Street Pathway Project* is also planned for Spring 2026. MDT has issued letters to property owners regarding right-of-way encroachments.

A meeting with FWP and engineers will be held on October 22 to discuss the Rivers Edge Park Fishing Pier, planned for early spring construction. The City will also meet with the Destination Marketing Office and Flathead River Association to coordinate improved river signage, including bear safety information.

Councilor Lovering asked whether sign relocation near the high school would be funded by the City or the school; City Manager Hanks confirmed it is the responsibility of the school.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

City Attorney Breck reported that he is working with the Public Safety Committee on ordinances addressing e-bikes and vehicles on sidewalks.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORT

Mayor Barnhart reminded the public that communications to the Council must be submitted by Friday morning prior to the meeting to be included in the online Council packet.

Police Chief Stephens announced that Officer Micah Friesen has been selected to fill the DUI enforcement position and will begin in the coming weeks. The department is also advertising for a new Patrolman. Additionally, four officers recently completed a weeklong crime scene investigation training.

MISCELLANEOUS

September 2025 - Fire Department Report
September 2025 - Police Department Report

ADJOURN

Councilor Lovering made motion to adjourn at 7:24 p.m., seconded by Councilor King.

Mayor

City Clerk