



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 18, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Roll Call

Council President Finkler called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Members present included: Mayor Joe Hammer, Council President Molly Finkler, Alderperson Rhonda Fuller, Alderperson Michael Lawson, Alderperson Trina Reid, Alderperson Amy Roelke and Alderperson Ryan Rostad.

Notice of Open Meeting

Noted as posted.

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Alderperson Rostad, Seconded by Alderperson Roelke to approve the agenda with the change to move Item #1: Contract Extension by Mike Peters, President & CEO of WPPI Energy ahead of Public Comment. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

New Business

1. Contract Extension Presentation by Mike Peters, President & CEO of WPPI Energy:

Columbus Utilities and Public Works Director, Randy Myrum introduced Mike Peters. Myrum reminded all that the City of Columbus is an energy independent municipality. The city is part of a joint action agency which is similar to a co-op. We are part of an intergovernmental organization which pools our resources to generate or buy wholesale electricity, manage financial risks, and share technical services. We have local control over our distribution system and retail operations. We work with WPPI, who manages our pooled resources. Myrum asked Mike Peters, President and CEO of WPPI Energy to present to Council the contract extension which will also be coming before the Utilities Commission.

Mr. Peters presented information about WPPI Energy and our current contract with them, in addition to what extending the contract would bring to the city. WPPI is focused on serving its communities. They are requesting an extension of our existing contract to the year 2073.

Public Comment *(Public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. Speakers must begin by stating their name and address for the record. To ensure that all individuals have an opportunity to be heard, the presiding officer may enforce the time limit and may call speakers to conclude their remarks when their time has expired.)*

Jake (Jacob) Hartman - 143 N. Water Street, Columbus, WI - spoke on use of Flock and ALPR cameras and having a well-defined policy that would require warrants for search purposes.

Brook Andler - 1015 Park Avenue, Columbus, WI - spoke about the lack of control and volume of music that comes from the Pavilion during the weekends.

New Business, cont'd

2. Discussion regarding Pavilion Noise Concerns and Potential Solutions:

Administrator Amundson led the discussion regarding the noise concerns at the Pavilion in Fireman's Park. The facility is rented heavily during the warmer months. Amundson has drafted language that could potentially be added into future rental contracts. There have been rentals during the last six weeks that have been issued citations for playing music beyond 11:30pm. He also shared a copy of the sign out sheet all users must complete acknowledging that music must cease by 11:30pm. The citation amount is not enough of a deterrent and perhaps withholding a portion of their security deposit as well would help compliance. In conversations with both Chief Weiner and City Attorney Johnson, our noise ordinance should be revised, as well.

Mayor Hammer researched surrounding communities regarding end times for public events which were mostly 10:30pm. Attorney Johnson suggested 10:00pm., or 10:30pm. City of Columbus Municipal Code Chapter 38-106 could be amended to allow for specific guidelines for the Pavilion or other rentals. Alderperson Roelke suggested that there be exceptions for larger events such as the 4th of July, Holiday Train, etc. written into the ordinance. Alderperson Reid shared the concern and added that she feels the patrons should still have the extra half an hour clean up time. Alderperson Rostad is concerned that the 4th of July Committee may be in the process of securing acts for 2027 with bands understanding they have until 11:30pm. He is also concerned that exceptions would not apply to personal celebrations.

Mayor Hammer shared that due to the complaints, contracted renters should understand that there needs to be an adjustment to their contract. Amundson asked the members what would be the trigger to affect their security deposit? Time? And, what amount of the security deposit would be affected by a time and/or a noise violation? Would forfeiture of deposit be in addition to a citation from the police department? Decibel reader devices might be an option.

Committee members agreed to allow staff to rework this item with the following changes: to charge 50% of deposit as penalty, look into decibel reading devices, and review and amend the noise ordinance. For the time being, 11:30pm was the recommendation to stop all music. Mayor Hammer reiterated contacting all parties that currently have a signed contract would be the right thing to do explaining that there will be changes forthcoming and to be respectful of the event end time and noise level.

Committee members did not move this item to the Common Council meeting at this time.

3. Discussion regarding Recreation Program Fee Policy:

Amundson shared that reviewing and adjusting the Recreation Program Fees on an annual basis within the Fee Schedule does not allow for adjustments throughout the year or as programs change. The fees should be representative of the costs incurred. Alderperson Lawson was concerned about the cost recovery portion of the policy. The policy is written with 110% recovery set as a goal. Alderperson Rostad questioned if the previously adopted refund policy was included. Amundson will verify. Committee members agreed to move forward to the August 18, 2026 Common Council meeting.

4. Discussion regarding the proposal from the Columbus Chamber Choir:

Dr. Jonathan Overby, Director of the Columbus Chamber Choir has requested rental of the Pavilion for four concerts during the upcoming season. These dates are currently available and occur on Sundays when the Pavilion is typically not reserved. They are requesting no rental charge and they are willing to share their proceeds with the Recreation Department. Committee Members agreed to move forward to the August 18, 2026 Common Council meeting.

5. Discussion concerning the request of a citizen for a Flock camera policy:

Chief Weiner shared his background in policy making in his previous and current employment. Current City of Columbus ordinances give Weiner governance over policy within the City's Police Department. This request for a Flock camera policy has been reviewed and Weiner shared that currently the city has four policies that address this citizen's concerns. As an example, during the last thirty days there were eight uses of the system. It was accessed to look for a vehicle involved in a theft; a road rage incident involving a firearm; recovery of a stolen vehicle; complaint from a local business that people were illegally dumping stuff in their dumpster; on another stolen vehicle; looking for an armed robbery suspect; used it to assist in looking for a suicidal person; and display of a firearm while a person was driving down the street. Weiner has restricted its usage from the start and Flock is being used responsibly by those allowed access in the department. If there is a violation, or it is being used for personal reasons, that behavior will be stopped and he will deal with the employee involved.

Weiner insists it is a great system and it is used when needed. To get a warrant, there has to be a crime. It's not a crime to be suicidal or be under a silver or green alert. There are safeguards in place for its use. He asked members to uphold Sec. 58-59: Rules and Policies for the Police Department when making their decision.

Aldersperson Reid asked who owns the Flock cameras used in the city. Weiner shared that record requests may be asked for camera information, but it may or may not be granted due to legal factors with redactions, etc. Flock holds data for seven days. The equipment is owned by a company, and the pictures and videos are the city's. Staff logs into a website to perform their searches. Aldersperson Rostad asked if the contract restricts Flock's own access to the data collected on Columbus's cameras. Weiner said he would check that out for him. Rostad also asked if Flock uses, retains or shares our data with other agencies, federally or commercially, and under what terms. Weiner shared that Flock doesn't make the decision on who the information is shared with. Weiner stated that they share only with another department that is in the Flock network if need be, but not with Federal agencies, or I.C.E. He also shared that our system is monitored and audited internally to prevent misuse. Council President Finkler asked if Flock takes pictures of the person inside the vehicle and what they are doing. Weiner shared that, no, absolutely not. It's a picture of a license plate and the windows are mostly grayed out or refracted on the picture/video. Flock is not to be used for traffic enforcement purposes and in the State of Wisconsin, citations are not allowed. Rostad asked for an explanation for the public on how the purchase of our Flock system came to be without having to come to council for approval. Weiner shared that it was under the \$15,000 threshold for council approval, and he had spoken to Amundson about it before purchasing. Also, there was money in the budget for the equipment.

Mayor Hammer shared that he read through the current policies and he does not see the need for a separate policy. Weiner also added there are numerous social media posts about how many cameras the city has. He stated we have two ALPR license plate readers.

Committee members did not move this agenda item forward to the August 18, 2026 Common Council meeting.

Adjourn

Motion made by Aldersperson Roelke, Seconded by Aldersperson Rostad to adjourn at 8:22pm. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

*A quorum of city committees and/or commissions may be present at this meeting. No action will be taken or considered by those committees and/or commissions.