

COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2016
6:00 P.M.

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present
Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle – Present
Attorney Marcia McNagny – Present

Council Members

Walter Crowder – Present
Nicole Penrod – Present
Jennifer Romano – Present
Tad Varga – Present
Daniel Weigold – Absent

The Columbia City Common Council met in regular session with all members, except Weigold, present, Mayor Daniel presiding.

MINUTES Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to approve an overview of the April 12, 2016 meeting minutes as presented, Nicole Penrod seconded the motion, all voted aye.

REZONE OF NORTH AND MAIN STREET Ryan Swanson with Arc Design Resources was present representing Casey's General Store to answer any questions or concerns. Hearing none, Mayor Daniel opened the floor to the public to speak.

Rusty Parish, resident of Thorncreek Township and President of Pride Convenient Stores, was present to discuss the issue of spot zoning. He advised he had the chance to listen to the recording of the previous meeting and noted some comments that were made regarding what was best for the community, safety and the future. He shared while he does not live in the city limits his office is in the city limits. He advised he likes to think about what is best for the residents as well as business. He shared his own personal experience back in 1997 when starting his business. He discussed the areas in town that have been repurposed. He addressed the high conflict area of traffic and pedestrians. He felt Casey's would be a great addition to the community, in the right place. He advised he has not seen Columbia City start to do a bunch of spot zoning. He felt when you begin to do this you open a box and then how do you stop. He shared cases of spot zoning in other communities. He felt by doing this rezone, there would be losers because there would not be a lot of new customers as they already exist. He mentioned this with some sympathy as there may be some who may not be able to sustain a 30% – 40% cut in business. He believed there would be fallout if this goes through.

Connie Lutz of 602 W. Columbia Parkway shared she drove the north part of town which took her 2 minutes and passed 5 gas stations. She was not sure why we needed another gas station; although the plans sound nice, she was not sure the proposed location was the best. She noted if the homes in that area were not in good shape why was something not done with the homes rather than turning the area into another gas station.

Todd Lassus with Lassus Brothers, representing Lassus Handy Dandy on North Main Street, felt there were enough 'hoses' in this town and had a lot of gas stations in town. He addressed the safety on SR 9 and advised he did not see any deceleration lanes or barriers in the plans. He did not see Casey's being a continuous fit for that corner; however, they do a nice job, he did not feel it was the proper location for a convenience store. He advised Columbia City was beautiful and felt this would be a negative coming into the downtown district. He shared that Lassus Brothers opposed the rezone.

Pat O'Connell with Pizza King was present and shared his concern for the traffic flow. He advised he has been at that location since 1970 and felt it was as good as it has ever been but there were still a lot of accidents at that location. He shared he did not want a divider where traffic going south would be shut off because he would lose a lot of business. He felt Casey's was great but his concern was the traffic flow.

Barry Faucett of 820 Dogwood Drive shared he has been a resident of Columbia City for 24 years. He felt the traffic at North and SR 9 could not be any worse than it was now and felt the traffic flow would be the same regardless of what happens.

Tarah Ihrle of 101 W. North Street shared a letter she had written to Mayor Daniel expressing her feelings in favor of the rezone.

Colleen Hoffman of 343 N. Main Street agreed there were enough gas stations but there was always room for competition. She noted, as pointed out before, there were other already zoned business locations they could go to. She advised there would be one home between her and the proposed Casey's. She explained her home has been in their family since 1960 and she has personally lived there for 26 years. She advised there was a traffic issue at that location. She shared the living arrangements of her children and grandchildren and expressed a concern for property values. She stated she did not want to live next to a gas station. She advised she had no plans of leaving as there was too much history in her home.

Mayor Daniel shared that he had received letters in favor of and opposed to the project. He read in its entirety a letter from Councilman Weigold, who could not be present at the meeting, in which he supported the unfavorable recommendation from the Plan Commission.

Jennifer Romano appreciated and respected those who had contacted her regarding this issue. She shared that they had developed a Comprehensive Plan that a lot of thought, time and consideration had gone into to plan our City. She advised there were so many great opportunities in our community for economic development and were very open to welcoming another business to this community in locations that were ready to go, especially in those locations that were blighted or need to be developed in some way. She noted our City was going to be growing on the south side; there was not a lot on the south or west side of our town and felt it probably would be a good business decision to look to expand in those areas. She advised she personally would not want a gas station right next to her house and sympathized with others who felt that way.

Walt Crowder advised there had been a lot of individual homework and visits to make sure both sides of the fence were understood. He shared that he visited North Manchester, Syracuse, Ligonier and contacted City Chambers to see how involved Casey's was in their communities. He advised he had a lot of respect for Casey's but had to come back to the question; do we want to transfer a residential area to a general business area. He stated, as the Mayor shared before, if Casey's would go out of business the door is open to over 50 different businesses. He advised he needed to focus on if general business made sense and it does not make sense, there were too many things we could put ourselves at risk in the long term. He supported the Plan Commission in their unanimous decision.

Tad Varga advised he was very on the fence concerning the issue and as he talked with neighbors and business owners he continued to waiver on the issue. He shared that he walked the area and fell in line with Walt Crowder and Jennifer Romano and as Jennifer alluded to he was not sure he would want that type of business next door. More importantly, he did not think the zoning change was a good decision to change a residential area to general business; it was a residential area for a reason. He also agreed with the Plan Commission to not have the facility in that location.

Nicole Penrod reiterated what was shared by Walt Crowder.

Motion was made by Walt Crowder to accept the recommendation from the Plan Commission in reference to the March 8, 2016 document on an unfavorable recommendation and deny the request for the rezone from residential to general business, Nicole Penrod seconded the motion, all voted aye.

Nicole Penrod hoped that Casey's would continue to research our community. Tad Varga agreed.

ORDINANCE 2016-3: 1ST READING Ordinance was not considered due to Council's unanimous vote to deny the rezone request.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Jeff Walker** – walk through of proposed combined sewer overflow LTCP mitigation project, OCRA workshop on green infrastructure, US 30 committee. **Mark Green** – opening day report, new parking lot update, quote for parking a Devol Field, aquatics facility update, relocation of skate park. **Terry Wherry** – security camera and digital recorder updates. **Mike Shoda** – Jeffrey Drive water main. **Mike Cook** – IDEM approval on CSO operational plan, field trip tours, employee updates. **Gary Parrett** – continue to work on cemetery vandalism case, Detective Stephenson drug presentation at Orizon Real Estate, extra patrol around high school, bicycle thefts, training update, new officer updates, replacing outdated car computers and scanners. **Shawn Lickey** – Holden Road project update, pole replacements, restoration from tree removal, IMPA meeting on AMI metering.

DOWNTOWN INCENTIVE PACKAGES Jennifer Romano reported she, Mayor Daniel and Ben Romine of the Redevelopment Commission began discussions and initial research into creating incentive packages to spark investment and redevelopment in downtown Columbia City.

Having no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle