

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2021
6:00 PM**

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

Council Members

Walter Crowder – Present
Jennifer Reffitt – Present
Jennifer Romano – Present at 6:20
Tad Varga – Present
Daniel Weigold – Present

The Columbia City Common Council met in regular session with all members present, Jennifer Romano joining late, Mayor Daniel presiding.

MINTUES Motion was made by Tad Varga to approve an overview of the January 12, 2021 meeting minutes as presented, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – HUMANE SOCIETY OF WHITLEY

COUNTY Rosie Coyle explained per the recommendation of our City Attorney they have changed it from a MOU to an agreement. She advised the City gives \$25,000 each year to help care for the animals. Walt Crowder questioned if this was paid once a year or quarterly. Rosie Coyle advised it was paid quarterly.

Dan Weigold commented that it was nice to see the stray intake numbers going down.

Motion was made by Jennifer Reffitt to approve the agreement between the Humane Society of Whitley County and the City of Columbia City, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

PETITION TO VACATE ALLEY- 605 E ELLSWORTH – RYAN AND JULIE BRIGGS

Mayor Daniel explained this really was a City initiated effort. He advised the alley on East Ellsworth Street was a partial, dead-end alley that effectively only feeds the address of 605 E. Ellsworth Street. He noted it was a platted alley but as they talked through it, it did not make a whole lot of sense for the City to maintain since it only feeds one home; it was basically a private drive. He explained he talked with Attorney McNagny and the Briggs's and they all agreed it made the most sense to vacate that alley over to the Briggs's.

Dan Weigold noted usually when there is an alley vacate ½ goes to one property owner and ½ goes to the other. He questioned if the party on the other side was agreeable to this. Attorney McNagny advised this would not be a ½ & ½ split of the property. Mayor Daniel advised he talked with the other property owner, Mr. Sutton, but effectively this was the legal way of doing it. Dan Weigold confirmed the Briggs's were assuming responsibility for the vacated alley. Mayor Daniel advised that was correct. He shared the City would be doing some stormwater improvements as there was some wash out areas.

Rosie Coyle advised the public hearing would be held on February 23, 2021.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to accept the petition, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES – STORM SEWER SYSTEM Rosie Coyle reported Jon Gotz provided the storm water report and asked that it be passed along to Council members. She advised if there were questions to contact Jon.

Mayor Daniel asked Council members if they would like for Jon Gotz to come in and discuss this further to let him know.

ELECTRIC COMPARISION – ELECTRIC RATE ADJUSMENT Mayor Daniel shared there was a comparison for the electric rate adjustment showing the difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2 in the dropbox. He pointed out the differences to Council and recalled the discussion of whether to raise rates in one phase or two. He reminded Council that it has been over a decade that electric rates have been raised.

Jennifer Romano now present.

Tad Varga confirmed the average rate per home is 1000 – 1500 kWh. Shawn Lickey explained in the urban areas it was closer to 750 and rural areas it was closer to 1500 kWh. Tad Varga recalled that Buzz Krohn said Phase 1 would basically cover where we needed to be and then Phase 2 would only be necessary if Phase 1 did not get us where we need to be for the future. Shawn Lickey advised that was correct. He explained Phase 1 was what they felt needed to be done right away that would get us back to operating with a little bit of a profit. He noted Phase 2 they felt was necessary to keep moving forward and making further advancements. He advised if it was decided to do two phases, they were recommending reevaluating after 9-10 months to see if we need to implement Phase 2.

Walt Crowder felt if they would go with two phases it would be easier to look out for the public's best interest. Shawn Lickey advised it was his idea to use the two phase strategy. He noted there was not much difference between the phases but if they would pass the adjustment the way it was written the second phase would happen without any further meetings or approvals. He advised if after 9-10 months they re-evaluate and decide Phase 2 was not necessary they could revoke the second phase. He felt the second phase was going to be real important since we have not had a rate increase in 12 years.

Mayor Daniel noted it was the recommendation of the Utility Board to implement in two phases.

Tad Varga advised he was not opposed to doing two phases at all. He questioned if there was a timeline when the second phase had to be implemented. Shawn Lickey advised Council could set the timeline. Attorney McNagny advised she questioned Buzz about that at the last meeting so should be spelled out in the minutes. Mayor Daniel read the minutes where it stated 'Buzz Krohn shared since they were not sure of the initial effective date he suggested it start one year from the effective date.'

Mayor Daniel questioned Council what route they wanted to take, one phase or two. Council agreed with the two phase rate adjustment.

Walt Crowder questioned if after a year of Phase 1, would they have discussion on whether to move forward or extend. Attorney McNagny advised it would be an automatic start of Phase 2 and thought the recommendation was to have discussion a month or two in advance to decide whether to officially move forward with Phase 2. She advised it would be automatic unless Council decided not to move forward.

Mayor Daniel advised he would have Attorney McNagny draft an ordinance for the next meeting. Rosie Coyle advised she had 1st reading scheduled for next meeting and 2nd reading and public hearing for February 23, 2021.

Mayor Daniel mentioned the solar piece and putting in a fee for solar users. He explained the fee would be because we have infrastructure working as their backup, just as we do for sewer. He shared if we go days without sun we effectively were their backup power. Shawn Lickey explained the cost of our infrastructure was built into our rates. He advised they establish the rates by considering how much power would be used over 1 year. He explained if that was being supplemented with solar then that customer was not using as much power and essentially not paying their fair share of the infrastructure costs.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Shawn Lickey** – dealing with IURC on fine for gas line strike, dealing with IOSHA regarding CSO contractor knocking out distribution line, working with IDEM on our gas pumps, working on street lighting at Deer River. **Mark Green** – update on high school property regarding large hole that will be left from demolition, estimate to bring in fill would be somewhere between \$140,000 - \$240,000. Started baseball/softball registration online, advertising for pool positions. **Chip Hill** – update on Westgate project, reapplying for trail grant, working with Alliance Grain regarding pressure issues. **Scott Leatherman** – looking into flyers being placed on cars in the Columbia Shores area, arrest on US 30 leading to finding 5 lbs. of meth, 2021 vehicle purchase approval.

STATE OF THE CITY Jennifer Romano reported the State of the City annual lunch meeting was scheduled for March 5 at 12:00 pm and will be available to watch online.

Having no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle