

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021
6:00 PM**

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

Council Members

Walter Crowder – Present
Jennifer Reffitt – Present
Jennifer Romano – Present
Tad Varga – Present
Daniel Weigold – Present

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

MINTUES Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to approve an overview of the February 9, 2021 meeting minutes as presented, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

PUBLIC HEARING: ORDINANCE 2021-1: VACATE ALLEY 605 E

ELLSWORTH Mayor Ryan Daniel recessed the Council meeting to hold a public hearing on the alley vacate at 605 E. Ellsworth Street. Hearing no comments or questions the public hearing was closed.

Motion was made by Jennifer Reffitt to read Ordinance 2021- 1 by title only, Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2021-1 vacation of public way.

Dan Weigold questioned who would own the alley. Mayor Daniel advised it would be Ryan & Julie Briggs.

Motion was made by Walt Crowder to approve Ordinance 2021-1 on second and final reading, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

PUBLIC HEARING: ORDINANCE 2021-2: ELECTRIC RATE INCREASE –

2ND READING Mayor Ryan Daniel recessed the Council meeting to hold a public hearing on the electric rate increase. Hearing no comments or questions the public hearing was closed.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to read Ordinance 2021-2 by title only, Jennifer Reffitt seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2021-2 City of Columbia City, Indiana, an ordinance amending the rates charges for the City of Columbia City Municipal Electric Utility.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to approve Ordinance 2021-2 on second and final reading, Walt Crowder seconded the motion, all voted aye.

ORDINANCE 2021-3 AMENDING TEXT OF CHAPTER 6 OF ZONING

ORDINANCE – 2ND READING Motion was made by Jennifer Reffitt to read Ordinance 2021-3 by title only, Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read ordinance 2021-3 an ordinance amending the text of Chapter 6 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to approve Ordinance 2021-3 on second and final reading, Jennifer Reffitt seconded the motion, all voted aye.

ORDINANCE 2021-5 EXECUTION OF THIRD AMENDATORY

AGREEMENT WITH IMPA Motion was made by Tad Varga to read Ordinance 2021-5 by title only, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2021-5 an ordinance of the City of Columbia City, authorizing the execution and delivery of the Third Amendatory Agreement to the Power Sales Contract between Indiana Municipal Power Agency and the City of Columbia City, and other matters connected therewith.

Mayor Daniel reported IMPA has come to us and requested an extension of our current contract. He advised the extension would go from expiring in 2042 to 2050. He noted there was an opt out clause, etc.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to approve Ordinance 2021-5 on first reading, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

QUOTES FOR PARK POLE BARN Mark Green gave an update on the growth of the Park system and addressed their lack of storage space. He advised he got some quotes for a pole barn and the lowest quote was \$338,000 with an additional \$52,000 for asphalt work making it a total of \$390,000. He shared the Park Board approved the pole barn if funds were made available.

Mayor Daniel shared this conversation has been going on for a while now. He reported he and Rosie Coyle got together to discuss funding options and advised we could pay for it in cash but that would drain the majority of our excess funds. He shared we could also pay for part of it in cash and bond or loan for the remainder. He felt they needed to give the appropriate storage space for the Park as they continue to expand.

Dan Weigold felt if we were going to do this we needed to do it right. He agreed it was an obvious need and should move forward with it but the question was how to finance it.

Walt Crowder questioned if this would be a one story barn or would it have a loft. Mark Green advised it would be one story but a loft could definitely be added. Walt Crowder questioned if they had looked at that, he felt the square footage cost would be less. He shared he just wanted to look at the big picture and make sure they looked at all of the options. He suggested a couple Council members look over options with Mark. He agreed with Dan Weigold in that they should look at the opportunity to do it right.

Jennifer Reffitt questioned, realistically, how many vehicles could be stored in this new building. She shared the Park was going to grow quite a bit over the next 5, 10 years with all this new land. Mark Green advised they would be able to get 6 vehicles plus all of the lawn mowers, carts, etc. in there. Jennifer Reffitt questioned if they were also looking for storage for some of the baseball equipment, soccer goals, etc. Mark Green advised those things would not be stored there. Jennifer Reffitt felt the loft was a good idea but wondered whether 3000 square feet was going to be enough space; instead of coming back in 10 years to request another building, when it would have been cheaper in the long run to do it all at once.

Jennifer Romano understood building costs were quite a bit higher right now and questioned if there was any merit to making due with what they have right now and reassess later when those costs might possibly be less. Mayor Daniel felt it was a twofold issue; how we would handle the storage component between now and when that time might be and also trying to figure out when prices might come down. He advised he was not for blowing money and felt they needed to be respectful of that but from a timing perspective how would it all work out.

Dan Weigold questioned what the best option for financing would be. Mayor Daniel was not sure there was a best option; Rosie Coyle's opinion was to not blow through all of our reserves, which he agreed with. He felt bonding or loan of some sort made sense for the long term and would help with cash flow but the other side is when you have cash to pay for it, is it worthwhile paying interest on money.

Tad Varga advised he was in favor of the barn and would not be opposed to making it a little larger for future expansion. He knew building costs were skyrocketing but have come back down about 35% from the peak of where they were. He shared interest rates were incredible right now; this would be the time to have a bond or loan because of the favorable interest rates that will not last forever. He presented the idea of packaging the first phase of the Park expansion with this to take advantage of the efficiencies of it. Mayor Daniel shared there was a grant opportunity coming up, they believe, that could do a lot of the first phase to the tune of \$450,000 - \$500,000 with using the land donation as a match. He advised he would like to put the conversation for a larger project on hold until they see what the grant opportunity might be.

Tad Varga questioned if there was a certain amount of the cash reserves they would be comfortable using towards the project. Rosie Coyle suggested checking to see if we could maybe get money from the bank, do like we did for the City Hall remodel project, that way we would only be taking a little bit each year and still have our reserve. Mayor Daniel felt they could do maybe \$100,000 from CEDIT and \$100,000 from Rainy Day. He shared they did put about \$75,000 aside in the Riverboat Fund specifically for the high school project that could be used.

Walt Crowder felt they all agreed something was needed but there were still other projects in other departments that will have the same need; he suggested if we could get a loan and maybe pay it off within 5 years that may help to work through this.

Jennifer Reffitt agreed with the financing aspect since money is so cheap to borrow right now. She advised she would rather have money on hand in case it was needed for a different project.

Jennifer Romano advised she would like to see them go back to the drawing board as far as the size and making good use of the space.

After additional discussion, it was requested that Mark Green investigate the cost of putting in a loft, the spacing it would provide and to provide a drawing of what the barn would look like and Rosie Coyle was going to do further investigation on financing.

HIGH SCHOOL PROPERTY Mark Green gave an update on the ravine at the high school property. He shared the Park Board voted to move forward with having Wigent's do the work, not to exceed \$20,000. Mayor Daniel noted that would come out of the Riverboat Funds that were set aside for the high school property.

Mark Green reported they would not be seeding the property so the cost to do that will be credited to the City.

Mayor Daniel shared they were trying to figure out how to use the property donation as a match for a land & water conservation grant through the Department of Natural Resources. He advised based on the information provided regarding the grant we may be able to do the amphitheater, definitely be able to do the trees and sidewalks, part of the road, natural playground and maybe skate park. He advised there was still a lot to work out as the information just hit this afternoon.

WHITLEY COUNTY SEWER DISTRICT PROGRAM Walt Crowder reported the WC Sewer District was still meeting and were getting close to having the logistics done.

Having no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle