

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, JUNE 22, 2021
6:00 PM**

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

Council Members

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

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

MINUTES Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to approve an overview of the May 25, 2021, meeting minutes as presented, Tad Varga seconded the motion, Walt Crowder, Jennifer Romano and Tad Varga voted aye, Dan Weigold abstained.

Approval of the June 8, 2021, meeting minutes was tabled until the next meeting.

KC JONES HEARING – SUBSTANTIAL COMPLIANCE Keith Nickolson shared they were trying to bring in laborers; they have put in some incentives, bonuses and changed their attendance program but are just not getting people in. He advised they have reached out through social media and temp agencies as well. He stressed they had the work and positions available they just need laborers.

Mayor Daniel noted it looked like employees were down about 20 from what was estimated and overall, the manufacturing equipment costs were down about \$400,000.00 compared to what was estimated. He noted when this abatement came up it was shortly after the fire and was aware that caused some other issues. He questioned how many jobs were unfilled. Mr. Nickolson advised there was 15 – 20 positions unfilled.

Tad Varga confirmed they had the work just not the employees and questioned if they had a feel for when that might turn around. Mr. Nickolson thought the unemployment benefit was to end in September but could not put a timeframe on it.

Walt Crowder shared that knowing the challenges, which right now is no different from anyone else's challenge, gives Council more insight as to what was going on. He advised when Council gives a tax abatement, it is taken very seriously. He appreciated Mr. Nickolson coming in to share how their business was being impacted.

Jennifer Romano shared Council was not being critical of the shortage of employees, especially in the current environment, but it was important that someone be present to answer questions.

Tad Varga agreed that knowing what was causing the shortfall helps Council to understand better.

Jennifer Romano felt this was an opportunity for businesses receiving abatements to come in and talk about their business and maybe from that could possibly bring in more employees.

Walt Crowder questioned the process and if Council would table and re-evaluate at the end of the year. Rosie Coyle advised if it were tabled until the end of the year, they would lose their abatement. Walt Crowder noted this is a certain skill set and could be part of the challenge. He advised he was willing to work with them and recommended approving the abatement and re-evaluate next year. Mr. Nickolson questioned if he could come back in 3 months to give an update. Council was supportive of that. Tad Varga advised any information that could be presented helps them to understand what the company is going through.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to find KC Jones in compliance and grant another year of abatement, Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted aye.

JOB DESCRIPTION AMENDMENTS – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Chip Hill explained our GIS employee is located at the MSF but is under Terry Wherry, who is located at City Hall. Chip advised he is at the MSF daily and feels that he can give more guidance to GIS from day to day. Chip shared that he and Terry have discussed the idea of transferring GIS to be under him since he works with the utilities more and knows what the utilities need. He advised they have talked it over with the Mayor. He shared it was more of having an onsite boss. Mayor Daniel shared GIS was originally under Electric, then Community Development, then IT but, in practice, they have realized the position makes more sense to be under Community Development.

Dan Weigold shared, understanding what GIS does, felt this was a good move because the GIS position does work under all of the utility departments. He advised Terry was the IT person but does not understand all of what the other departments do. He felt it would be good having Chip there to watch over and delegate jobs.

Walt Crowder advised this position was started several years ago and felt that, today, we were reaping the rewards of our investment from 10 years ago. He advised we were growing and need the technology to help keep our City vibrant.

Motion was made by Dan Weigold to approve the Community Development Director position description, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

JOB DESCRIPTION – IT ASSISTANT Mayor Daniel shared that he and Terry Wherry have been talking pretty regularly about his position and if something were to happen to him; no one knows the IT system. He shared they have been talking about ways to build in some redundancy and take some of the work load off of him as his timesheets are significantly over 80 hours. He shared they have discussed, for next year's budget, the idea of including an IT Assistant that would work maybe 20 hours a week. He explained they would do the odd and end jobs and soak

up some of Terry's knowledge of the IT system. He advised we were not looking for another full-time position but a way to create some redundancy and the ability for Terry to diversify his work. He stressed it was not to create another position for this year's budget as it was not budgeted for this year but next year.

Dan Weigold felt it would be really difficult to find a quality person to only work 20 hours. He felt with the City's technology it might not hurt to look at someone for full time.

Jennifer Romano suggested they could maybe spend 20 hours doing something else for the City if the feeling was there is only 20 hours for IT. Mayor Daniel felt that was a good point. He shared they would like to ease into this position, specifically from a budgetary perspective. He felt once we jump into it, we may find that we need more hours for that position.

Walt Crowder noted there were so many subcategories of IT; you can have a title, but it may not be what you end up doing 100%. He felt Terry has done a great job in keeping our network secure but suggested maybe another individual may bring some other background in regard to security. Mayor Daniel shared Terry was completely doing different things from when he started as Mayor almost 10 years ago and anticipate it continuing to change.

Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to approve the position description for IT Assistant, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

JOB DESCRIPTION AMENDMENT – IT DIRECTOR Mayor Daniel explained this was changed to remove overseeing the GIS Coordinator and add overseeing the IT Assistant.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to approve the position description for IT Director with the noted changes, Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted aye.

JOB DESCRIPTION AMENDMENT – GIS COORDINATOR Mayor Daniel explained this was just changing who they report to.

Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to approve the position description for GIS Coordinator, Walt Crowder seconded the motion, all voted aye.

EMPLOYEE POLICY CHANGES Mayor Daniel shared this change was based on legislative changes. He explained we cannot exclude in our job process individuals who do not reside in Whitley County. He explained the legislature heard from some communities who were having trouble finding police officers and firefighters who live within or adjacent to their county.

Attorney McNagny advised it was not within an area anymore. She explained the law changed to state 'have adequate means of transportation to the City and maintain telephone service' she noted the 15 minutes was added in (the policy) but the new law was #1 (as amended in the policy). Mayor Daniel advised they would have to respond within 15 minutes and be onsite within 30 minutes. He explained we tried to address the legal change to ensure we were legal in the way in which we were doing things. Attorney McNagny advised Council needed to at least approve #1 (of the policy) but Human Resources added #5 (regarding response time).

Walt Crowder advised this has been a topic off and on for a long time. He thought at one point we tried to do that with our own jurisdiction. Tad Varga questioned police officers having taken home vehicles. Mayor Daniel advised we do allow them to go one county away in certain circumstances. He discussed the gas prices and the limitations we have had to put on take home vehicles at times. He shared we have always believed in the take home car program because having the patrol cars in the neighborhoods tends to make people think before doing.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to approve Policy 3.1 as presented, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel advised he had a conversation with SDI regarding US 30 and their thoughts and concerns, he will be talking with the Community Foundation on the property transitions with the Park Department, he discussed a situation with the carnival workers for Old Settlers and how it was being addressed.

FLAG COMPLAINT Dan Weigold advised he received a complaint regarding a flag that was being displayed in a window across from the old high school property. He questioned if there was a way to address this situation. Attorney McNagny advised it was freedom of speech. Mayor Daniel shared they also had an issue on Main Street. He advised the Mayor's List has been filled with this question and the consistent response coming back from City Attorney's is it is a freedom of speech issue, even though it is profanity. He felt it was a poor representation of our community but nevertheless, they have the freedom to fly the flag.

ORDINANCE COMMITTEE Jennifer Romano reported the Ordinance Committee met and discussed parking in bottleneck areas in the community and getting public safety vehicles through. She also reported a portion of Columbia Parkway would be one side parking on July 3rd, 2021, due to high traffic for the fireworks.

Having no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle