

**COMMON COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022  
6:00 PM**

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

**Council Members**

Walter Crowder – Present  
Jennifer Middleton – 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.

**MINUTES** Motion was made by Dan Weigold to approve an overview of the June 28, 2022, meeting minutes as presented, Walt Crowder, Jennifer Middleton, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold voted aye, Jennifer Romano abstained.

**SWEARING IN CEREMONY – FIREFIGHTER FELICITY CLAWSON** Rosie Coyle performed the swearing in ceremony for new firefighter Felicity Clawson.

**ORDINANCE 2022-24: ESTABLISHMENT OF ARTS COMMISSION – 1<sup>ST</sup> READING**

Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to read Ordinance 2022-24 by title only, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2022-24 an ordinance establishing an Arts Commission for the City of Columbia City, Indiana.

Mayor Daniel explained this has been a passion project for him, to establish an Arts Commission in our City. He shared he has been working with multiple individuals, but mainly the State Arts Commission to get information as to how these Commissions were set up in other cities and towns. He shared this would not only help support and enrich the arts in our community but certainly provide an opportunity for potential grant funding to expand the arts in our community. He advised he set this up very much like other communities, mainly Bloomington and Fort Wayne as they both have a thriving arts community. He felt we have seen the arts really start to come alive in our community and this would just be another way in which the City can support the efforts of many private and non-profit individuals.

Jennifer Romano shared in this passion. She felt the emphasis on elevating the arts in our community has been in the works for a long time and starting a Commission like this was important for every kid in the community whose ‘thing’ is art in one way or another. She felt creating of this Commission was also really important as they have looked into doing public art here much like the different statues you see in other communities but could not afford to do it.

Mayor Daniel explained this ordinance would also create the Public Arts Fund which would be a donation fund held by the City Clerk's Office. He shared the City Council could take funds from their budget and put into that fund and those funds would not revert back to the general fund. He advised it could also be a place to accept grant type dollars as well gives the ability for the Arts Commission to create their own fund in a non-profit, such as at the Community Foundation.

Discussion followed on the membership selection process. Attorney McNagny noted an error under the council appointment term limits. Mayor Daniel advised he would like to have 2 members on a 4-year term and 1 member on a 3-year term. Attorney McNagny advised she would have that changed for the next meeting. Mayor Daniel suggested the memberships did not necessarily have to be ready to go at the next meeting but would prefer to have it filled out by the end of the year and even November would be good.

Motion was made by Jennifer Romano to approve Ordinance 2022-24 on first reading, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS** **Mike Shoda** – finished storm drain in Westgate and will start on the storm drain on Dogwood. **Tom LaRue** – Truck 102 failed pump testing, update on employee interviews, attended training. **Terry Wherry** – SOS installed new switches that were damaged by the storm. **Mike Cook** – met with Midwestern Engineers on CSO-19 project, reviewed drawings for the force main project with Donohue. **Kelly Cearbaugh** – trimming limbs in alleys and streets, small concrete project on South Oak at Vine, poured foundation at Patriotic Park to set a veteran's monument piece, Kevin Cearbaugh retiring August 12.

**CHICKENS** Jennifer Romano shared chickens in the city have been a topic of discussion for years. She advised the Ordinance Committee was not interested in moving forward with it as a Committee; however, there were several who would like to move forward as elected officials representing those in our community who would like to be able to have chickens. She explained they have done a lot of background work as far as looking into ordinances that exist in municipalities who have allowed chickens. She felt it was time to talk about it again, especially with the economy the way it was and people wanting to take responsibility for their own food they are producing. She felt it was very possible to make this something that would not be irritating to neighbors. She noted issues that were continually brought up were noise and mentioned if we would not allow roosters that would take care of that and the other was about pests and could make it that there has to be storage for the feed.

Dan Weigold shared the last time this was brought up, he received more phone calls against chickens than for chickens. He advised there were so many different breeds, like dogs, and then who would police the issues; would that have to be added to our police department. He felt they would need to look at square footage of the grounds that property owners have; he noted some houses were pretty close together. He felt there were a number of issues that come up when discussing chickens, which probably was no different than dogs, but we would be adding more responsibility to 'how do we take care of these' and it always falls back to the police department. He understood the reasoning but at the same time, when bringing up cost, it did not make sense to him because he was seeing \$250 for a small chicken coop.

Jennifer Middleton felt there were pros and cons with anything. She shared some people have companionship with chickens as well they provide meat, eggs and some people like pet chickens. She noted she has a neighbor who's dog barks 24 hrs. a day. She questioned if there would be a limit of maybe 5 chickens with no roosters, what noise would be happening and how would that bother our neighbors?

Jennifer Romano advised she has only gotten calls or inquiries from people who want chickens, never from anyone who did not want them.

Tad Varga advised all of the calls he has had were from people who want chickens, he has never had one person say they did not want them. He shared he was not opposed to looking into it further and felt there should be some research. He noted there were dogs in his neighborhood who were a lot louder than chickens.

Jennifer Middleton noted they did not want people to be able to have 10 or 20 chickens but more like 5 or 6.

Walt Crowder questioned if there would be a piece of property at the Giving Gardens that if people wanted chickens, they could keep them there. Tad Varga felt that would be like telling people if they want to have a dog, they would have to go to the dog park.

Jennifer Middleton suggested looking at the ordinances of the Cities who have approved chickens and do a model off of those.

Jennifer Romano suggested we could potentially do a pilot with a couple people just to see how it goes.

Mayor Daniel pointed out in our current ordinance; it spells out square footage requirements for certain animals. He noted there was some precedence already but at the end of the day it would come down to someone verifying that. He felt it was valuable for us to go to the constituency and get input from them. He recalled in his first term this topic was taken under consideration but since then there has been a lot of communities who have grown in the urban farming area and are allowing chickens.

Walt Crowder felt there was still room to talk to people and see how other communities were handling it. He suggested if it was working somewhere then what were they doing. He noted at the end of the day it would be Gary's department who would police it. He agreed it was a good topic to talk about but felt they needed time to evaluate the idea to see if it was good for Columbia City.

Jennifer Romano questioned what the next step would be, as it normally goes through Ordinance Committee. Mayor Daniel explained the Council was charged with setting the ordinances so if Council has an interest in creating an ordinance for chickens, then it shall be created. He advised it was really up to the Council on what direction to go. Attorney McNagny listed the primary things she would need to know to create a draft ordinance.

Jennifer Middleton questioned the best route to get citizen input. Mayor Daniel shared he could certainly do a poll; however, those tend to bring out the most vocal input. He advised we would want to keep it as unbiased as possible to get true feedback. He added Council members could also, when out and about, ask citizens what their thoughts were. It was decided to move forward with doing a poll.

Melany Love of 113 E. Market Street was present to share her thoughts on allowing chickens. She mentioned that HOA's exist to have rules but for those who do not live in areas that have HOA's the thought is to be a good neighbor. She felt allowing chickens was important now more than ever because of high prices as well as insecurity. She shared being able to rely on your own food was something that should not only be allowed outside of town. She was not sure of the solution but felt a blanket 'No' was a bad idea but a case-by-case basis was a good plan. She agreed with Tad in that dogs can be especially frustrating. She suggested if someone was not following the rules for having chickens they could be fined. She also suggested charging a small amount for a permit; she shared studies have shown that when things are given away the care is not as good as when you have to pay for it.

Kim Gavin of 302 E. Van Buren Street was also present to share her thoughts on allowing chickens. She felt it would be amazing to be able to have chickens in town especially with community growth and helping your neighbors. She felt it would also be great for kids and to be able to teach them how to take care of animals. She advised she would be more than willing to assist in the outreach of gathering input.

**MAYOR REPORT** Mayor Daniel reported he would be attending the Indiana Conference of Mayor's and that the US 30 coalition was moving forward. He and Chip Hill had a meeting with the engineers regarding the Westgate project and reported the pricing for the 3 phases came in exorbitantly high. He advised he was reaching out to State partners on what other funding sources would be available besides Community Crossings. He reported Community Crossing would cover \$1.3 million per phase but the initial estimate for the remainder of the project was \$11 million. He added he has a meeting scheduled with our State Senator to go through some upcoming session information.

Having no further business to discuss, Mayor Daniel called the meeting adjourned.

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Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

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Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle