

# CITY SCENE

City of Columbia City



## Could a Food & Beverage Tax Fund Eagle Park?

BY MAYOR RYAN DANIEL

Let's start with the basics. The Food and Beverage Tax (FaB) is a state legislature-approved, locally-created, 1 cent tax on a dollar of prepared food and/or beverage purchases. More plainly said, restaurants would charge this tax on ready-to-eat food that is served with napkins and/or utensils. Groceries are not taxed. As an example, if you go to McDonalds to buy a \$5 Value meal, the FaB would be 5 cents. If you buy a \$50 steak, the FaB tax would be 50 cents. Also know that if you've grabbed a bite to eat in Shipshewana, Fort Wayne, Nashville (IN),

Indianapolis, or many other communities across the state, you've paid the FaB on your food bill.

Let me state the obvious... no one wants more taxes. With the price of goods and services going up due to inflation, budgets continue to tighten throughout the country and here at home. We, too, at the City have been squeezed.



[Continued on Page 2](#)

## This issue:

Funding Eagle Park

PAGES 01-02

Growth is on the Horizon

PAGE 03

Wastewater Surveillance

PAGE 04

Don't Fall Victim to a Scam

PAGE 05

2023 Limb Pick-up Program

PAGE 06

Stay Safe this Spring

PAGE 07

A Servant to our City

PAGE 08

# Could a Food and Beverage Tax Fund Eagle Park?

From Page 1

BY MAYOR RYAN DANIEL

We've also, on the other hand, been encouraged by the Legislature to find creative ways to pay for quality-of-life projects, as they have through tax deferral and other programs.

I also rarely talk big-P "Politics" in these articles, but as a conservative, consumption-type taxes are more towards my liking because it puts the power in the hands of the consumer. In this instance, a FaB allows residents to choose where they spend their dollars versus a forced tax like income or property taxes. Further, the FaB can capture dollars from the 30,000 daily travelers going through Columbia City on US 30 who stop to grab a sandwich or a quick coffee and reinvest it into additional amenities for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Which brings me to the reason for a FaB: Eagle Park. As many of you know, the City has received much public input on what residents want to see constructed in Eagle Park. We know that this public space has the potential to be the crown jewel of our parks system and a tourist magnet. Yet, there is no financial way we will be able to construct this park to the fullest extent without a new revenue source. Tax revenues from Property, Income, and other minor sources (including grants) will never be able to provide enough revenue to build the plan that the community has dreamed. For instance, Eagle Park Phase 1a that we are building now (Skate Park, Pickleball courts, Trellis with swings, etc.) will have taken us nearly 3 years of grant requesting and storing up local funds to complete. Yet, the project represents a very small piece of this massive park project. Future phases are unfunded with an unknown timeline.

With a vision for the future of Eagle Park, based on the comments of so many of you, I am now supporting a Food and Beverage Tax for the City of Columbia City. Our financial advisor indicates an annual revenue of \$400,000 that would be devoted specifically to the improvements of Eagle Park. With increased visitors to Eagle Park comes increased dining at our restaurants. That is why many of our city's restaurants and the Whitley County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center is supporting this plan. I am also advocating for an ending date of this tax to be 20 years to ensure the dollars only go towards this specific project for a designated period of time and not become a slush fund. These dollars would be directly invested in the amenities and used as leverage for grants and other opportunities to build the park of our future.

I anticipate that the Columbia City Common Council will take up this matter later this year in a public forum for debate, in full transparency for our citizens. As always, if you have questions, feel free to contact me to discuss your thoughts. For more information on future plans for Eagle Park, click this link: [EAGLE PARK](#) or find the Eagle Park Plan on our website at [columbiacity.net](http://columbiacity.net). Thank you for all you do to make our community better for current and future generations.



## Growth is on the Horizon

BY SHAWN LICKEY, ELECTRIC SUPERINTENDENT

The Columbia City Electric Department will be celebrating its 125th year of service in 2023. On September 29, 1898 the Columbia City Common Council voted to establish the City's electric utility. This city-owned utility was placed into operation on October 1, 1898. At that time, customer self-generation was the only available source for electric power, therefore, the city erected a coal-fired power generation facility between South Main Street and South Chauncey Street to provide power to its 396 electric customers.

Since 1898, the Columbia City Electric Department has grown to over 5000 customers, serving Columbia City as well as some Whitley County and Noble County rural residents. The Electric Department currently employs 10 linemen, a meter technician, and a mechanic, who all operate out of the Columbia City Maintenance Services Facility.

In 1980, the Columbia City Electric Department joined the Indiana Municipal Power Agency (IMPA) as an associate member and in 1993 the City contracted with IMPA as the City's sole supplier of wholesale power. Still today, Columbia City is a proud member of IMPA and proud to be a public power provider.

The Columbia City Electric Department has several infrastructure improvement projects on the horizon in the coming years, including: continued installation of new underground infrastructure to replace aging overhead lines, increasing reliability, decommissioning of the aging former high school sub-station, transitioning all transmission circuits and substations from 34.5KV voltage to 69KV voltage, developing software to make paying your utility bill easier, and rebuilding much of the infrastructure through the heart of the city. These projects will ensure low-cost public power for Columbia City Electric customers for many years to come.



# Wastewater Surveillance

BY MIKE COOK, WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT

Wastewater is a rich source of information. It provides deep biological and chemical information on a community with less biases than other types of public health surveillance. Using wastewater information for public health data is known as "wastewater surveillance". When used specifically for diseases, it is also called wastewater-based epidemiology.

Wastewater surveillance isn't new technology. There are papers looking at sewage surveillance for polio in 1939 in the United States. In 2001, researchers began talking about using wastewater to track pharmaceutical use and illicit drug use. Wastewater surveillance has been used to track antimicrobial-resistance and chemical exposures. During the COVID-19 pandemic the practice saw an explosion in popularity. There are hundreds of programs and thousands of sampling sites worldwide; surveillance is being carried out in 63 other countries. The most popular use for wastewater surveillance today has been for infectious disease. Surveillance also helped detect the polio virus in 2022.

Several testing options and test methods are available. Program collaboration between wastewater utilities, laboratories, and local and state health departments is essential for the purpose of testing, analysis, data interpretation, funding, and guidance. Wastewater surveillance is beneficial because it can be performed without a direct measure in humans, it is faster and less expensive than clinical testing, and it requires fewer resources. This practice makes it anonymous, more inclusive, and less invasive. There are some drawbacks, though; the practice cannot track systems that pre-treat wastewater, high levels of tourism have skewed results, and combined systems have to account for rain events. The data does not pinpoint who's infected, but instead just confirms the presence in a general area.

The CDC's National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS) launched September of 2022; the NWSS data provides data analysis and results that health departments can use to support their COVID-19 response. More than 1000 testing sites across 46 states and five cities are reporting surveillance data to NWSS; these contributing sites serve more than 130 million people. New research continues to improve the practice, which has already proven to be useful in tracking outbreaks of other diseases. There is a need to study trends to understand why surveillance is predictive and other times not predictive. Improvements will help health professionals prepare for the next challenge. When the times comes wastewater surveillance could be a significant tool for a collective response.

SOURCE: Water World Magazine September 2022

**"More than 1000 testing sites across 46 states and five cities are reporting surveillance data to NWSS; these contributing sites serve more than 130 million people."**





## Don't Fall Victim to a Scam

BY TERRY WHERRY, IT DIRECTOR

1. Scammers **PRETEND** to be from an organization you know.

Scammers often pretend to be contacting you on behalf of the government. They might use a real name, like the Social Security Administration, the IRS, or Medicare or make up a name that sounds official. Some pretend to be from a business you know, like a utility company, a tech company, or even a charity asking for donations. They use technology to change the phone number that appears on your caller ID; so the name and number you see might not be real.

2. Scammers say there's a **PROBLEM** or a **PRIZE**.

They might say you're in trouble with the government. Or you owe money. Or someone in your family had an emergency. Or that there's a virus on your computer.

Some scammers say there's a problem with one of your accounts and that you need to verify some information. Others will lie and say you won money in a lottery or sweepstakes but have to pay a fee to get it.

3. Scammers **PRESSURE** you to act immediately.

Scammers want you to act before you have time to think. If you're on the phone, they might tell you not to hang up so you can't check out their story. They might threaten to arrest you, sue you, take away your driver's or business license, or deport you. They might say your computer is about to be corrupted.

4. Scammers tell you to **PAY** in a specific way.

They often insist that you pay by using cryptocurrency, by wiring money through a company like MoneyGram or Western Union, or by putting money on a gift card and then giving them the number on the back. Some will send you a check (that will later turn out to be fake), then tell you to deposit it and send them money.

Source: Federal Trade Commission



## 2023 Limb Pick-up Program

BY KELLY CEARBAUGH, STREET & SEWER SUPERINTENDENT

The City of Columbia City would like to announce that our limb pick-up program is beginning soon. This program has been initiated to dispose of limbs and branches from storm-related events and small pruning projects. Dates for this year are as follows:

APRIL 3rd  
MAY 1st  
JUNE 5th  
JULY 3rd  
AUGUST 7th  
SEPTEMBER 5th  
OCTOBER 2nd

### Program Guidelines

Limbs are to be placed along the curb in front of your property. Do not place limbs in the roadway. This is curbside pick up only! We do not pick up in alleys. The limb-pick up program is limited to residents who pay for City utilities and live in city limits. There will only be one pass in an area. Please have your limbs out and ready for pick-up by 7:00 A.M. on the dates listed above so you will not be missed. The City reserves the right to refuse pick-up for those properties it considers not fitting within the guidelines of the program.

#### Acceptable:

- Piles that do not exceed a pickup truck size load
- Limbs and branches up to 4" in diameter
- Bushes (without roots)

#### Not Acceptable:

- Piles that exceed a pickup truck size load
- Brush from fence-row clearing
- Whole trees, logs, and limbs cut by a contractor or homeowner
- Branches left from tree removal by a contractor
- Bushes with roots attached
- Grass clippings, leaves, and garden debris
- Alley pick up

If you have any questions regarding the acceptability of your materials, please contact Kelly Cearbaugh, Street Superintendent at 248-5131 or 248-5115 ext. 2721.

# Stay Safe this Spring

BY GARY PARRETT, CHIEF OF POLICE

As spring approaches, so does warmer weather and outdoor activities. The Columbia City Police Department wants to pass along some tips to help keep you, your family, and your property safe this spring.

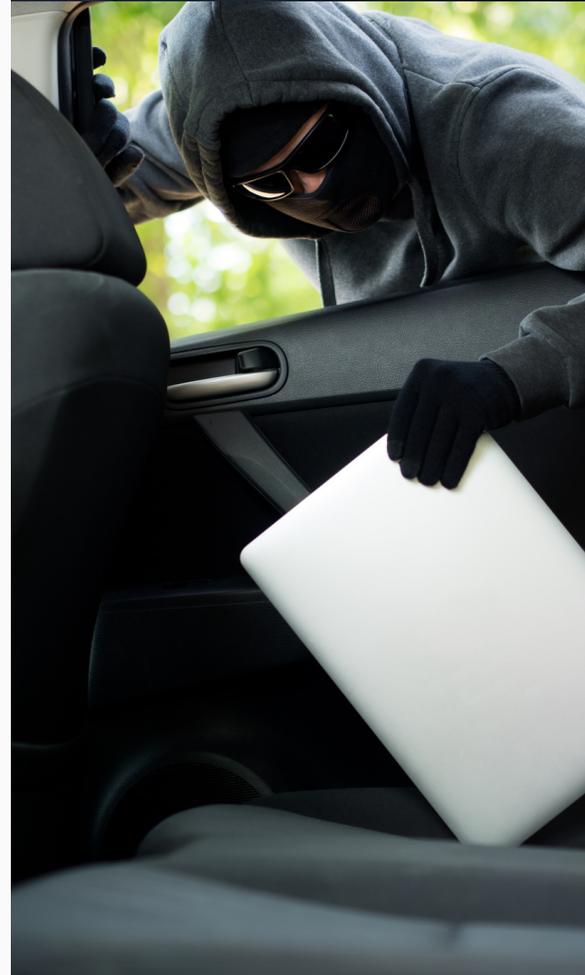
As warmer weather comes along, so does the potential for vehicle thefts and break-ins. Remember to roll up your windows and lock the doors to your vehicles. If possible, do not leave valuables in your vehicle. Often times individuals who break into vehicles are looking for firearms, garage door openers, house keys, storage unit keys, wallets, purses, and other valuable items.

In addition to vehicle break-ins, as warmer weather approaches we see an increase of thefts from citizens' yards and garages. We encourage citizens to put away their bicycles, scooters, or any other outside recreational equipment after their use. Refrain from setting these items close to the sidewalk or the road because they may become an easy target for a thief. Always lock your home when you leave and close windows when you are not home as well.

Exercising outside is often a great release from being cooped up all winter. When exercising outside, if possible, have a partner in case you have an injury or an emergency while exercising. While outside, maintain awareness of your surroundings and report potential dangers or issues.

Here at the Columbia City Police Department, we want to wish everyone a safe, healthy, and happy spring. We consider it a great privilege to have the opportunity to serve this community. As always, we encourage you to call the Columbia City Communications Center at (260)248-5121 or call 911 in the event of an emergency and to report any suspicious activity or thefts.

Have a blessed spring,  
Chief Gary Parrett (Big G)





## A Servant to our City

BY ASHLEY BUCKLES, MAYOR'S EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Mike Rush became a resident of Columbia City in 1948 at the age of three years old. To this day, Mike is still a resident of our city, and he has made quite the impact during his time here. From having an impactful high school class to being a past Senior Judge, there is no end in sight as Mike continues to pour into our city.

The Columbia City High School class of 1963, which of course included Mike Rush, is the only class to have their very own scholarship. This scholarship is given to the student who ranks 63rd at CCHS each year, as long as the student is going to further his education through college or a trade school. If the student does not qualify, the school will find a student close to the rank of 63rd to receive the scholarship instead. This scholarship will continue on with the help of the Community Foundation, even when all the members of the class of '63 pass on. Mike's class is close knit and continues to engage in reunions.

After high school, Mike received his undergraduate degree from Hanover College and then joined the United States Army from 1968-1970. Directly after, he attended law school at Valparaiso, which was his school of choice. Mike practiced law for 18 years, until Governor Evan Bayh appointed him to fill a vacant seat as a judge for Whitley County. During his time as a judge, he helped to start, with the hard work of many others, our county's Alcohol and Drug Program and our Work Release Program, which are both housed in the same building. When it came to addicts, he always sought the advice of mental professionals and asked himself "What do they need to succeed?" because one day they would be part of our community again. He continued to serve our county until he retired in 2011. At that time, he served as a Senior Judge, which provided him the opportunity to fill in for judges in Whitley County and surrounding counties part-time. He served as a Senior Judge for 10 years and is now finally retired.

Mike continues to stay busy and can't help but to serve our residents. He has been part of Rotary Club for nearly 50 years and loves to distribute our residents warm meals when they are in need. He is also writing the history of his family, starting with both his paternal and maternal grandparents. This written history will be passed on to his children, with the hope that they continue to write their family's story in the blank pages he will provide at the end of each book.

# Monthly City Meetings

1st Monday of the Month	Col. City Plan Commission   7:00pm Whitley County Government Center
1st Tuesday of the Month	Board of Zoning Appeals   7:00pm Whitley County Government Center
1st Tuesday of the Month	Col. City Arts Commission   5:00pm Council Chambers   City Hall
2nd Tuesday of the Month	Redevelopment Commission   Noon Council Chambers   City Hall
2nd Tuesday of the Month & 4th Tuesday of the Month	Board of Works   5:00pm Council Chambers   City Hall
2nd Tuesday of the Month & 4th Tuesday of the Month	City Council   6:00pm Council Chambers   City Hall
3rd Tuesday of the Month	Housing Authority   5:00pm Council Chambers   City Hall
3rd Tuesday of the Month	Tree Board   5:30pm Police Training Room   City Hall
4th Tuesday of the Month	Park Board   6:00pm Council Chambers   City Hall

PLEASE CHECK MONTHLY CALENDAR ON THE CITY'S FACEBOOK PAGE FOR ANY CHANGES.