

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2023
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 – Absent
Tad Varga – Present
Daniel Weigold – Present

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

MINUTES Motion was made by Tad Varga to approve an overview of the June 13, 2023, meeting minutes as presented, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

SWEARING IN CEREMONY – JUSTIN CORNEJO Rosie Coyle performed the swearing in ceremony for new Police Officer Justin Cornejo.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATEMENT OF BENEFITS – KYOCERA SGS PRECISION TOOLS – PERSONAL PROPERTY 2022-26 Dale Buuck, EDC Director, was present to discuss the statement of benefits. He shared there was a little discrepancy in the actual cost compared to what was estimated on the SB-1. He noted they moved from Raber Road to the Towerview location and were already looking to expand. He advised they have indeed been buying equipment. He reported he has been working with Drew Johnson, the General Manager, over the last couple of days and the list of equipment being presented shows the cost, which the actual was very close to the SB-1. He shared the other issue, as far as wages, was an error and the starting wage of \$17.10/hour has been corrected. He advised they were doing very well in the medical device field and was pleased to present this cleaned up version. He confirmed Drew would be working more closely with his CPA in Cleveland to make sure this does not happen again. He advised he was pleased with how responsive Drew was in getting this done.

Motion was made by Jennifer Middleton to find Kyocera SGS Precision Tools in compliance for the 2022 abatement and grant an additional year of abatement, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

RESOLUTION 2023-11: SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH DRIVING CARDS FOR INDIANA Motion was made by Tad Varga to read Resolution 2023-11 by title only, Jennifer Middleton seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Resolution 2023-11, a Resolution of the Common Council of the City of Columbia City to support legislation to establish Indiana Driving Cards.

Tad Varga shared one thing he was looking for in reading through the Resolution was, if they were given this certification, they would go after citizenship.

Dan Weigold agreed and shared we would be giving these people the right to go ahead and drive but were undocumented and here illegally. He felt the resolution had great wording in it and respected the people trying to be here but at the same time they were here illegally and undocumented. He advised if they would start the process of being a U.S. Citizens, he had no problem with that, but a lot of these people are not. He felt we have enough trouble with American citizens applying for insurance and then cancelling it, so how do we know these individuals will maintain their insurance. He stated if they do not have money to maintain that and then questioned how an illegal immigrant can even purchase a car, without a social security card or income. He advised he respected the people but at the same time they need to respect the United States rules as far as becoming a citizen here. He advised the key words in this resolution were 'illegal' and 'undocumented' and was struggling with it because of that.

Jennifer Middleton felt part of this is we are trying to protect our citizens also. She shared a lot of the immigrants now are driving without driver's licenses and they do not care. She noted you can buy vehicles online with cash money; no one checks for driver's license or insurance. She felt the resolution had great ideas and great things out there for illegal immigrants to get a driver's license so they could do the right thing. She agreed they should go into the process for getting their citizenship. She felt this would help both our citizens and the immigrants wanting to actually do the right thing.

Mayor Daniel noted, in remembering the presentation, believed the legislation being proposed at the time said the card had to be renewed every year. He felt it was also a misnomer that undocumented or illegal immigrants do not have work; he felt plenty of people have plenty of work. He recognized the fact that it is the intentions of this Council, and rightfully so, that individuals who would go through this program would get in line for citizenship. He felt in some ways this would create documentation for these individuals because they have to provide proof of insurance, residency, etc. He suggested maybe the Resolution be tweaked to say that within a year of getting the driver's card they have to sign up for citizenship; however, felt like that was in the original legislation.

Tad Varga thought Ed Rodriguez said when they would present the legislation next year it would be the first time that language would appear; it was not included previously. He shared he would be fine with the Resolution if that language was included; that within one year of acquiring the card they apply for citizenship. He did not think that was unreasonable.

Walt Crowder noted these individuals could not just walk in and get a card; they would still have all of the testing requirements, etc. He felt this was a starting point. He confirmed the Resolution does not have boundaries to it. Mayor Daniel advised we were basically saying we support the legislation under the perimeters of this Resolution. He noted if the legislation does not include these perimeters, this Resolution becomes null and void. Walt Crowder questioned who would monitor the activity to make sure things were being done. Jennifer Middleton felt it would be up to the License Branch; she advised they would have to check it every year because the card would expire.

Walt Crowder questioned if they would move to a different state would the card become null and void. Mayor Daniel explained if they would move to another state, that state would have their own laws regarding the driver's ID card. He advised this was only for the boundaries of the State of Indiana.

Rosie Coyle questioned those present about how long they have been here. It was noted they came from Mexico and have been here 30 years, 28 years, 27 years, and 20 years. Rosie Coyle questioned if they had started the process to become a citizen. It was advised they had not as it was not easy; they come for jobs and opportunities. One mother shared that she and her husband work hard to pay for their children to go to college. She stressed they were not asking for anything free. She shared that they were good families who work hard and want to do the right thing, but it is hard. She said if they could get these cards, they could drive safe but right now do not drive. Rosie Coyle questioned how they have been getting around. It was shared they pay neighbors to take them places.

Mayor Daniel advised he and Attorney McNagny would go back to the drawing board to work on putting in the additional language suggested by Council.

Motion was made by Walt Crowder to table the Resolution, Jennifer Middleton seconded the motion, all voted aye.

AMENDMENT TO SHORT-TERM DISABILITY LEAVE Beth Igney, Human Resources Director, was present to discuss an amendment to the short-term disability leave policy. She advised this comes as a recommendation from the Wellness Committee. She reviewed the proposed changes with Council.

Dan Weigold questioned the definition of short-term disability. Beth Igney explained it used to be labeled as sick time but it was changed so that it would have more recognition for employees to save it in the event of a surgery, etc. Dan Weigold questioned if there was still potential for employees to donate sick time. Mayor Daniel advised there was but is limited. Rosie Coyle suggested maybe changing it to short-term disability/sick leave to be more clear. Beth Igney advised she could do that.

Motion was made by Dan Weigold to approve the change to the short-term disability policy, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

LOIT APPROPRIATIONS ADJUSTMENT Mayor Daniel advised the Fire Department has gone through the hiring process and have 2 lateral transfer candidates who were well qualified and recommended by the panel. He noted the challenge was, we do not have the budget for both of them. He shared we have at least 1, if not 2, who were on the verge of retiring. He explained the point is, trying to figure out if this was a golden opportunity where we have 2 laterals we do not have to send to the fire academy and training. He advised he, Rosie Coyle and Tom LaRue sat down to look at the budget to see where there were additional dollars not appropriated. He shared the Board of Works approved, pending Council approval, to reappropriate \$55,000 in LOIT to cover a second firefighter.

Dan Weigold felt we struggle to get quality people so if we have an opportunity to take 2, we should do it.

Tad Varga advised he was not opposed to taking advantage of it at all but questioned how it would affect next year's budget; he wanted to make sure we were not looking at that money and raise the budget by that. Mayor Daniel noted the \$55,000 also includes the insurance pieces so it was not all wages. He advised we were also talking about less than ½ year of wages; they would be on probationary pay so would not get the full firefighter wage until their 1-year probation was up. He shared, as done in past years, we have the excess levy appeal because of some population and AV growth, comparatively. He advised we would be going after the excess levy appeal again. He noted the highest part of our budget was our staff dollars but on the other side, that is the main thing we do for our citizens. He advised he could not give a great answer outside of saying they were taking it into account in the 2024 budget and it would be built into the budget itself. Tad Varga questioned how long before the individual retiring would come off the books. Tom LaRue advised it would be March of 2025.

Walt Crowder agreed that if we have an opportunity to bring 2 qualified candidates in and hit the ground running that it was a rare opportunity. Mayor Daniel mentioned that Columbia City was the only full-time fire department in Whitley County. He advised we make a lot of runs outside of our City limits and having minimum staffing was critical.

Rosie Coyle shared there was a surplus of about \$100,000 in LOIT so there was a little cushion.

Motion was made by Tad Varga to approve the reappropriation of \$55,000 in LOIT, Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Chip Hill** – met with Columbia City STEAM group. **Shawn Lickey** – completed permanent service to new jail, substation upgrade project complete, temporary service installed for new Bowen Center. **Kelly Cearbaugh** – took equipment to Camp STEAM Ahead for kids to see, tree removal from storm, patch work for Water Department. **Mike Cook** – CSO-19 project almost complete, re-bidding Main and Jefferson force main project, all lift station generators serviced, stopped sludge hauling as metal levels were higher than allowed, CSO operational plan updated and approved by IDEM, waiting to hear back on LTCP regarding agreed order. **Beth Igney** – Safety Committee started work-site surveys at the different departments, update on health clinic, reviewing handbook. **Gary Parrett** – Chris Anderson doing well, waiting on approval for Tim Clark and Brandon Young, update on current hiring process, reported on successful drone attempt, new dispatcher Savanna Fetting doing really well. **Matt Heiden** – pool heater repaired, hosted On-Turf baseball tournament, preparing for fireworks. **Mike Shoda** – changing out meters, installed new services, automation down at the water plant so having to run things manually. **Tom LaRue** – update on Truck 105, hydraulic rescue pump in Truck 102 in need of repair.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel reported he and Chip Hill will be meeting with the engineer to discuss the next phases of Westgate, he reported on Summer in the City events.

CHICKENS Melanie Love of 113 E. Market Street was present to share an article listing other Indiana cities who allow chickens and expressed the importance of allowing chickens.

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

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle