

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 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 – Present
Tad Varga – Present
Daniel Weigold – Present

The Columbia City Common Council met in regular session with all members present. Mayor Daniel called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. All stood to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES Mayor Daniel noted he had a couple corrections; one that Dan Weigold was present and the other to the spelling of the Youth Council member's name. Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the November 28, 2023, meeting minutes as corrected, Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

ORDINANCE 2023-21 ELECTED OFFICIALS SALARY ORDINANCE 2024 – 2ND

READING Motion was made by Jennifer Middleton to read Ordinance 2023-21 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2023-21 an ordinance fixing the annual salaries of all elected officials of the City of Columbia City, Indiana, effective December 30, 2023 for the year 2024.

Mayor Daniel reminded Council that at the last meeting there was conversation about having a 4% across the board increase, which is the same as what our employees were getting. He advised that adjustment was made to the Ordinance.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-21 on second and final reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted aye.

REZONE: FARM CREDIT MID-AMERICA – ORDINANCE 2023-22 1ST

READING Mayor Daniel explained this was for Farm Credit Mid-America at the corner of Connexion Way and Lincolnway. He shared that Nathan Bilger was not able to be present as he had multiple family conflicts.

Dan Weigold shared there really was not a whole lot of discussion on the rezone. He advised it was really well accepted because of the existing zoning.

Walt Crowder advised one of the main topics was the entrance onto Lincolnway and the exit going out on old 30. He noted it was still under review but nothing to slow down the rezone itself. Dan Weigold advised they were looking at 2 entrances but there was a lot of discussion on the placement of the second entrance.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Ordinance 2023-22 by title only. Jennifer Middleton seconded the motion, all voted aye. Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2023-22 an ordinance amending the zoning classification of certain property from A-1 Agricultural District to the GB General Business District.

Dan Weigold made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-22 on first reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted aye.

ORDINANCE 2023-23: ADD LIFE SAFETY AND FIRE PROTECTION

REPORTS – 1ST READING Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Ordinance 2023-23 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie

Coyle read Ordinance 2023-23 an ordinance amending Chapter 94 to add Life Safety and Fire Protection Reports for the City of Columbia City.

Tom LaRue reminded Council that back in early October he made mention of a company called IROL that has software for sprinkler inspections. He explained when companies perform sprinkler inspections, they will be forced to report to IROL and whether there were deficiencies in a sprinkler system. He advised if there were deficiencies, those would get sent to our inspectors so they can make sure they get corrected.

Mayor Daniel stressed that this was ultimately all about public safety and the fact that we have customers who go into these buildings and businesses, but we sometimes have no clue whether these sprinkler systems have passed or not. He advised it was incumbent upon us to enforce those fire code laws.

Tad Varga questioned if there were costs to this and if so, were they already built into the budget for the coming year. Trent Stamper advised there was actually no cost to government but there was a cost to the fire service providers and would be up to them to either eat that cost or send it onto the customer.

Mayor Daniel questioned if yearly inspections have to happen. Trent Stamper explained there were 2 - five year, a yearly and semiannually, it just depends on the type of business. Mayor Daniel confirmed that was all based on state law. Trent Stamper advised that was correct. He added that this would add more manpower without necessarily having to hire more people.

Jennifer Romano questioned if they would be responsible for collecting the fee. Trent Stamper advised they would not and was all third party between the fire inspection companies. He shared his job was just to make sure the fire inspection companies are doing their job and when there is a problem making sure the businesses get those problems fixed.

Jennifer Middleton made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-23 on first reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

JOB DESCRIPTION: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST Chip Hill explained this individual would assist him with day-to-day meetings as well help get more community involvement out in the public.

Mayor Daniel pointed out in the job description one of the roles would be the overseeing and management of the test kitchen. He advised more and more different boards are wanting City participation, especially when it comes to community development type projects. He noted they would act as the liaison, work on research and grants with our grant administrator; just a lot of groundwork kinds of a things.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve the Community Engagement Specialist position description. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye.

Tad Varga questioned when this would be advertised. Chip Hill advised it would be the first of January.

SUSPENSION OF DELINQUENT UTILITY BILLS Rosie Coyle explained this was the list of customers we cannot find, have moved, are deceased or have filed bankruptcy. She noted the suspended amount was \$6,566.73, the bankruptcy amount was \$414.16 and the deceased amount was \$1,579.52. She explained we keep the suspended accounts in the system so if the customer comes back on our lines or we find them we can still pursue collection of those debts.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to suspend the accounts of customers we cannot find and to write off the bankruptcy and deceased customer accounts. Walt Crowder seconded the motion, all voted aye.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Gary Parrett** - Casey Harshberger started Monday and is in the FTO process, received cars from COPS gear, holding Deputy Chief interviews, held trainers meeting and scheduled most of the 2024 training, Dispatch holding shift lead interviews. **Chip Hill** - Board of Works approved him to be the signer on a sewer project we are doing with the County, bid opening date of January 22 for Eagle Park, working on getting a bid date for the Blue River Trail to the high school, meeting with the County to discuss Westgate drainage and then Monday night will meet with Westgate residents. **Mike Shoda** - started the stormwater separation on South Chauncey Street. **Kelly Cearbaugh** - pouring sidewalks back for Mike's project on South Chauncey Street, finishing up leaf pickup, grating alleys and doing maintenance. **Terry Wherry** - three fiber projects waiting on equipment to come in, fiber break in the network at the park. **Shawn Lickey** – update on the 69 kv project, sending specs out for a new bucket truck to be due in January, attended the IMPA Commissioners meeting and then followed it up with a Municipal Legislative Committee meeting, starting tree work for the Tree Board. **Matt Heiden** - ribbon cutting for the new office, cleaning up fallen trees and cutting down some dead ones that have been marked for removal, ice rink open. **Mike Cook** - working to get some sludge hauling around before the end of the year, staff evaluations completed, Board of Works approved to order 3 monitoring and status units for our main liftstation pumps. **Tom LaRue** – volunteer fire pay is done, all trucks have been repaired, evaluations are done, truck specs have been drawn up and approved by engineering with bid opening scheduled for February 27, Rodney Ousley retired and Rhys Perry has been promoted to shift captain, candy giveaway.

YOUTH COUNCIL Sariah Arnold was present to share Youth Council activities.

CLERK TREASURER REPORT Rosie Coyle reported she was anxiously waiting for our tax approval to come back. She advised she has been meeting with all the department heads to go over remaining budget numbers. She reminded everyone of the FAB tax that is to begin January 1, 2024, and to let her know if local restaurants are not charging that tax.

Tad Varga questioned how the Food and Beverage Tax was being implemented. Rosie Coyle advised she sent letters to every restaurant in town at the time. She explained we do not collect the tax it goes to the State.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel reported Dan Weigold will be coming back on the Board of Works as well as welcoming Lisa Smith to the Board. He noted the next Council meeting is scheduled for December 28. He reported they have a US 30 Coalition meeting and advised information could be found at PROPELUS30.com then go to the US 30 East segment. Saturday at Greenhill Cemetery is the Wreaths Across America ceremony. He reiterated they have the Westgate meeting scheduled to go over the project as a whole. He advised Easter Seals Passages will be to City Hall for a tour.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTING Jennifer Romano reported they hope to wrap up the Christmas light judging Friday or Sunday.

REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION Tad Varga reported they had Redevelopment Commission meeting and are looking at planning some sort of beautification on the South side of town.

CHICKENS Melanie Love of 113 E Market Street was present to share an article from Massachusetts where they have successfully passed a chicken ordinance. She thought it was interesting because they had 10 members in favor with no opposition and one person was absent. She noted this was one of several communities in their region that has been adopting right to farm laws allowing anywhere from 5 to 25 chickens in residential areas. She pointed out that having the chickens has increased access to food security, has enhanced gardens, has improved biodiversity and completes the natural nutrient cycle, which is pretty important if we're going to talk about sustainability and trying to keep our community flourishing. She reminded Council that hens produce less noise than a barking dog, landscape machinery or even playing children, all of which are common neighborhood sounds.

SWEARING IN CEREMONY FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS Mayor Daniel advised the swearing in ceremony would be January 1 at noon at the courthouse.

Hearing no other comments or questions, Mayor Daniel called the meeting adjourned.

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle