

**COMMON COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024  
6:00 PM**

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

**Council Members**

Jennifer Middleton – Present  
Leslee Robinson – 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** Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the January 9, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

**SWEARING IN OF NEW POLICE OFFICER – CASEY HERSHBERGER**

Rosie Coyle performed the swearing in ceremony for Police Officer Casey Hershberger.

**PROPEL US 30 PRESENTATION** Rusty Holt, Study Manager for the Propel US 30 East study, was present to give a PowerPoint presentation on ProPel US 30. He reminded the Council that the Propel US 30 Study was a planning and environmental linkage study, which is where PEL comes from. He explained PEL studies were an optional part of the planning process and are performed before a project, or project scope is identified. He added that they look to engage the public and agency stakeholders as early as possible in the process so that their input can be taken into consideration before getting into the project stage. He shared that PEL studies have an overarching goal of identifying the next generation of transportation improvements in the corridor, which is why they were looking at the corridor, it is important for the community so are looking at it holistically. He reminded Council that US 30 East includes Columbia City and Whitley County, but also Kosciusko County and Allen County. He shared they were looking at this segment together so they can get a picture of how this part of the corridor works as a whole and were also in constant communication with the rest of the study teams. He provided a high-level review of their study schedule and noted what phases had been completed. He continued to talk through the broad range of alternatives and the rest of the study process.

Tad Varga noted Level 2 would be spring, summer would be Level 3 and questioned the timeline for the final resolution. Mr. Holt thought it would be in the fall sometime. He advised there were a lot of moving parts and need to make sure they line up with the things that are going on both inside and outside of INDOT. He shared there was a lot of considerations for when things actually get published, but that was generally the timeframe.

Mayor Daniel felt it should be noted that the bypass solution was not being recommended to move forward. He felt it was a big deal for our community and has been talked about consistently. He shared they have seen how other communities have been bypassed and how it really damages their economy and from day one, they have been advocating against the bypass. He really appreciated that the bypass option got taken out.

Mayor Daniel questioned Mr. Holt if the next phase was going to be more granular where they would go intersection by intersection. Mr. Holt explained they would try to show the biggest impact that might be possible at every intersection by looking at all the options that survive the Level 2 screening and then Level 3 would take it further.

Mayor Daniel asked Mr. Holt to define for our City Council what a reduced conflict intersection was. Mr. Holt shared it was a broad range of solutions. He explained all of them reduce the number of conflict points inside of the intersection itself and added the conflict point was anywhere where two vehicle paths cross. He advised they usually do that by moving left turns or through movements to a different area outside of the main intersection, where it is safer for those movements to occur. He noted when thinking of US 30 itself, one of the most dangerous movements right now was to make a left turn onto US 30. He advised it requires crossing one direction of traffic and merging into another direction of traffic but if that left turn was moved to another location, it is a much safer movement; there is less chance of collisions or less moving parts.

Dan Weigold questioned if they would see a design. Mr. Holt shared as they move forward into Level 2 and Level 3, there would be some lines on a map but would not be a full design. He shared in their study, it was more about the concepts that make sense, potential solutions, or reasonable alternatives. He advised if it scores well and INDOT chooses to move forward, that was where a designer would actually show up.

Mayor Daniel reiterated what Mr. Holt shared in that there are a lot of ways to connect. He felt the ProPel Study Team has done a really good job of having open office hours at the library and they did a big session at the Indian Springs Middle School at one point throughout the process. He shared this process was fairly new to INDOT and getting additional public comment throughout every piece of the study is what makes this process unique as there typically is a lot less options to give public input on a project of this magnitude. He shared from the US 30 Coalition standpoint, as well as the City, we were thankful that our residents, our businesses and certainly our elected officials are able to give comments along the way. He asked, with the Council's indulgence, to give anybody in the audience or the department heads an opportunity to give comments. There were no comments.

Mayor Daniel thanked Mr. Holt for giving a presentation.

**MISSION 25 PRESENTATION** Shawn Ellis, CEO of Mission 25, was present to request financial support through the OPIOD Settlement Funds the City has received to assist with their Recovery Engagement Center. She explained that Mission 25 offers an umbrella of services consisting of 4 significant programs; shelter services which is a certified recovery residence, supportive housing that individuals can go into from recovery with them, the Recovery Engagement Center, and then they have a project out at a local mobile home park they provide services to as well.

Shawn Ellis shared the Recovery Engagement Center was located at 605 N. Douglas Avenue and the building was gifted to them in 2018 from the Gospel Land Ministries Church with the idea that they would do something to engage the community into the building. She advised they sat on it for a hot minute because they were not exactly sure what they wanted to do with building. She explained over the last several years, the data that was coming through their organization alone, and then within our own county and the state, they realized that recovery needed to be a pivotal part of the work they were doing. She went on to explain that in 2022, they received funding from the Division of Mental Health Addiction Community Collaboration Grant that allowed them to hire a Director of Recovery Engagement, but also allowed them to remodel that building. She reported in March of 2023, they opened up the doors to begin serving out there and now have 8 recovery groups that are housed out there. She explained it is a meeting space, so is a space to access recovery resources, services and support as well as recovery coaches. She pointed out, as seen in her report, that any group that has moved from a different location in our City, into that space, has more than doubled since they have entered into that building with those in recovery. She shared since March of 2023 to December, they had 1600 recovery engagements inside that building; those recovery engagements encompass those attending recovery groups, any kind of events they had out there, any kind of community training and recovery coaching.

Shawn Ellis went on to explain the scope of work they do there and what they plan to do moving forward. She shared they really just want to make an even wider reach. She reported they have intentions of increasing their ability to provide more community training based around recovery and addiction, making sure they have more access to recovery coaching and continue to increase the amount of groups they provide or offer. She advised their intention is to get to a point where they are seven days a week out there. She explained there were multiple pathways to recovery, they were not a traditional 12 step program, which is also a huge benefit. She advised they were not a residential facility so no one would be spending the night there. She stressed that it was strictly for recovery meeting groups and supports, services and coaching. She shared they would also not be providing medical services; however, they would be serving people who were on medicated assisted treatments because that was a form of recovery pathway. She advised they would not be providing therapy there either but would provide referrals to therapeutic service.

Shawn Ellis advised they have very high expectations in the quality of work they provide, as seen in the different certifications listed on the flyer. She shared they were certified through the Division of Mental Health and Addiction to be a certified recovery residence. She shared all of their recovery coaches were certified by FSSA, DMHA and they carry those certifications and those credentials with pride. She explained they also have to ensure they have the appropriate supervision for all of their coaches. She advised they do not just go through the Academy and were now a coach, they are supervised 4 hours a month with an outside source that works with them to make sure they are upholding the ethics and the standards of ethics. She stressed that anything they do inside the walls of the Recovery Engagement Center would be quality.

Shawn Ellis reported they work closely with Community Corrections and pretty much every department, child services, the school system, local churches, other recovery group leaders. She advised this will be a huge resource for our community, not for just those they are serving, but our community as a whole, along with even our workforce so if workforce needs to access a recovery coach at any time, they can access one of theirs.

Shawn Ellis shared the exclusion for this entire presentation was they were not asking for funds to be directed to shelter services, although they fit within that realm, but are asking just for the Recovery Engagement Center. She advised they would like the City to come alongside and partner with them as they continue to do even more intensive work to make sure they were getting more access to recovery support and services for those who need it the most. She pointed out in her report the list of Opioid remediation uses to help the Council understand how those dollars would be directed towards the Recovery Engagement Center, specifically. She noted, however, those dollars could be subject to change as there were other things coming. She explained a big portion of the funds received to date, they would be used to help with the infrastructure in order to do virtual trainings, webinars and presentations.

Mayor Daniel reported he spoke with Betsy Dinardi from the Attorney General's office about opioid funds and noted they actually made a presentation to the Mayors about the purposes behind it. He mentioned to Council they may remember they had to authorize a new fund to accept these dollars; there were two different kinds of funds an abatement fund and an unrestricted fund. He explained they the abatement fund must go towards recovery of some sort and Shawn Ellis outlined a lot of those pieces. He advised the unrestricted fund does not. He shared in talking to Betsy, she was very forthright as he had shared with her what Shawn and he had been talking about for the Recovery Engagement Center and Betsy confirmed that was absolutely down the lane they want to see. He explained, as the fiscal body, Council has the ability to decide where those funds go and how they are being designated. He advised the money will be distributed to the City through 2038, which is for the next 14 years, and will come in bigger increments at first and smaller increments the further out we go. He noted the Attorney General and the State of Indiana were in additional lawsuits with other manufacturers right now, so the number we are projected to get by the Attorney General's office through 2038 could change, it will

not go down but could go up. He advised for the abatement account, what is projected to come through to the City through 2038 is \$287,153.00 and what is projected to come to the City through the unrestricted fund is \$121,663.00. He advised that is what they have on their website.

Mayor Daniel shared what they are doing at Mission 25 was really one of few, if any, other organization in Whitley County that were doing this kind of work. He felt it seemed to match up really well and was why he asked her to come and make a presentation.

Jennifer Romano shared in looking back to when the City received LOIT funds for police and fire, she felt very strongly about those funds not being used for salaries. She confirmed with Shawn Ellis that there was no plan on their part to use this money for salaries. Shawn Ellis explained the only plan for salaries would be \$5,000 or less each year for staff infrastructure. She advised it would be for one staff member, the Director of Recovery Engagement, who is positioned at that particular location. She explained her responsibility is to keep all those groups informed, operating and she is also one of their recovery coaches. She went on to explain she is the one who is doing a lot of the work with our Community Corrections and our Department of Child Services. She noted that staff infrastructure was appropriate within these funds. Jennifer Romano advised she understood but took issue with building something where that money could go away, then someone's job is threatened. Shawn Ellis advised her Director has been on staff for about a year and a half, so her job would not be threatened. She shared if the funds go away, it is \$4,000 or \$5,000 of her salary which is a small portion of what her salary is.

Mayor Daniel thought the proposal to be a 3-year agreement, as spelled out in the presentation, where the City would dedicate funds to Mission 25 to do the work that has been laid out and then after 3 years they would need to come back. Jennifer Romano questioned if it would be possible for them to give a presentation on an annual basis. Mayor Daniel advised we could structure the agreement however Council would like. He noted the Board of Works would approve the agreement and Council would approve funding.

Tad Varga expressed to Shawn Ellis the work they do out there is outstanding. He questioned if the figures that were put together were based on the expectation of what is coming in. Shawn Ellis advised that was correct but understood it was all subject to change. Mayor Daniel shared that was why his recommendation was if we did the three years, we just save those dollars and whatever we receive is what would be dedicated for this specific purpose. Tad Varga questioned if Shawn Ellis and Mission 25 were the only ones requesting these dollars. Mayor Daniel advised they were but also was not sure there was any other organization that is doing this kind of work within the County.

Dan Weigold agreed the work Mission 25 is doing was amazing. He shared he works with the Jail Ministry and now, for those getting released and not knowing where to go, if they can meet the criteria maybe can get some help and direction.

Shawn Ellis talked a little bit about the new facility they will be constructing. She explained the new facility will be a 54-bed facility with two corridors and four wings. She advised the men's corridor will be separated into 12 single men and 4 fathers and children. She shared having a building that can accommodate fathers and children is very rare in the State of Indiana. She further explained that the other corridor will have two wings; a wing for single females and a wing for mothers and children. She advised the new facility was being funded with opioid dollars through the Division of Mental Health and Addiction. She reported they were awarded 3.2 million, the largest award in the State of Indiana.

Rosie Coyle questioned since there are restrictions on what the funds can be used for if someone needs to report it. Mayor Daniel advised there is a process in which the State of Indiana requires us to report how we are using those funds to ensure that we are using them to their standard.

Mayor Daniel confirmed with Council they would be agreeable to a three-year agreement with review yearly by the Council and a yearly report from Mission 25 to view what was spent. Council agreed.

Dan Weigold made a motion to dedicate the next 3 years of opioid settlement funds to Mission 25 under the tenants of the Board of Works agreement as discussed. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

**AGREEMENT WITH HUMANE SOCIETY OF WHITLEY COUNTY** After some discussion, the topic was tabled until the next meeting to allow for a Humane Shelter representative to be present.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS** **Chip Hill** – opened bids for Eagle Park and they came in lower than last year, opened bids for Westgate road reconstruction and were below what was estimated. **Terry Wherry** - Eagle Park conference room up and running as far as being able to record meetings, Baseline will be out this week to run fiber to finish the Water Department booster station upgrade, waiting on weather to clear to fix fiber break in Morsches Park. **Shawn Lickey** - moving offices around at the MSF, started on Tree Board removal list, ordering new bucket truck, working on specs for another new truck. **Kelly Cearbaugh** – sanding and salting streets, contacted company to grind leaves. **Matt Heiden** – LP tank ran out of gas at the pavilion and had to bring in heaters to unthaw lines, finished up with the splash pad shed, selling father/daughter tickets, ice rink was shut down due to extreme temperatures. **Gary Parrett** – Sergeant Fearnow, K9 Officer, resigned as of January 19th, agreement drafted by Attorney McNagny for the purchase of Biz by Sergeant Fearnow, Officer Bogner also resigned on the 12th, requested permission from the Board of Works to open up a process in February to fill the 3 positions he has open on the Police Department, County-wide training, toured new Bowen Health building, RAVE Mass Notification system in full swing, obtained Hank Workman as our chaplain, with Tim Scroggs as his associate, Shane Caudill and James Wagner replaced leaking faucet in Dispatch, response plans being built by Shane Caudill and Matt Minier for the dispatchers.

**CHAPLAINS** Dan Weigold noted the Chaplains were not getting paid and wondered if that was something they should look into. Jennifer Romano questioned how it works in other communities. Chief Parrett was not sure but could research it.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS CONTINUED** **Mike Shoda** - hooked up well 7 and 8 to the fiber and is working great, performed PFAS test, installed a couple meter pits on Valley River Drive. **Mike Cook** – flow meters calibrated for permit, met with the Wake Contracting Company on restroom project, staff ran wiring for MAS units for headworks pumps, working on the annual report for Steel Dynamics.

**MAYOR REPORT** Mayor Daniel reported he spoke at the Bowen Center grand opening, the Youth Council will be making a trip to Indianapolis, has a test kitchen meeting and grand opening for Renu Aesthetics.

**CHICKENS** Melanie Love of 113 E Market Street was present to talk about allowing chickens in the City limits with reasonable parameters. She shared the eggs are much better and it gives us the opportunity to be better stewards of the land that we are given.

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

Attest:

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Mayor Ryan Daniel

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Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle