

**COMMON COUNCIL**  
**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 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, led by Annabelle Brown.

**MINUTES** Mayor Daniel noted a name correction under the department reports. Leslee Robinson pointed out that a word was missing under the Mission 25 discussion.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the January 23, 2024, meeting minutes as corrected. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye.

**ARTS COMMISSION PRESENTATION** Becky Walter and April Frazier were present to talk about the Columbia City Arts Commission and the year they have had. Becky Walter reported they started in January of last year and in February made a Facebook page and voted for officers. She advised in March they started identifying what they wanted to work on and had a list of goals to accomplish, and felt they did a really good job of hitting their goals. She shared they received grants from the Whitley County Community Foundation to help with Art in the Alley opportunities that were in partnership with Columbia City Connect, Sample of the Arts that was held across the street and then their big event which was the Studio Arts tour. She reported that Doug Egolf started painting on the sidewalk outside of Chapman's and then down on the corner. She shared they were opening a web page, and the Artist Studio tour next year is scheduled for September 7th. She reported in November they were able to allocate money to the Whitley Arts Partnership which provides financial aid for any child who cannot financially afford to participate in the Youth Theatre program and they have enough for 10 scholarships. She continued to report that in December, they had an Art Market during Christmas at the Courthouse and had a room full of artists. Becky and April shared pictures that were taken throughout the year. Becky Walter shared when the Arts Commission was started, they had no idea how many artists there were in this County. She advised she kept getting names and getting bio's and reading about the amazing talent that is here that we do not hear about. She thanked Mayor Daniel for letting them be a Commission.

Mayor Daniel noted that Council passed the ordinance to create the Arts Commission. He, along with the Council, felt it was an important thing for us to have an Arts Commission here. He thought Columbia City was probably one of the smaller communities that had an Arts Commission but felt it was important for the future of our community. He said, as we know, individuals are choosing where to live because of the environment, not necessarily because of jobs anymore.

Mayor Daniel confirmed the Arts Commission website was [www.ccartscormission.com](http://www.ccartscormission.com). Becky Walter advised it was.

**HUMANE SHELTER AGREEMENT** Abbi Carroll, Director of Operations, was present to review Shelter statistics from 2023 and to share a little bit about their contract with the City.

Abbi Carroll shared, in reference to bringing people to Whitley County and Columbia City,

they had 16 out of state adoptions last year. She further explained the number of dogs and cats they moved to other organizations or took in from other organizations. She explained they have 3 or 4 shelters they work with regularly to help with space issues. She advised they had 12,000 hours logged by their dedicated volunteers which includes people coming from outside of the community to volunteer with them. She shared they have the Dessert Dance in March, the 5K is in September, their auction, which is their biggest fundraiser of the year, is always in November and then pictures with Santa in December. She continued to review numbers with the Council. She advised they primarily take in cats and dogs, but they do also take in anything with fur, so rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, ferrets and one time had a potbelly pig, although was not happy about that. She shared, to put in perspective, they go through about 700 lbs. of cat litter a month and about 400 lbs. of dog food a month. She went on to review the contract they had with the City.

Rosie Coyle noted the City pays ½ at the end of the year and ½ in the middle of the year. She questioned if it would be better for them if the City would pay quarterly. Abbi Carroll advised it did not matter as every municipality does it a little different,

It was questioned if the Shelter was maybe in the hole financially according to what was on the invoice. Abbi Carroll advised she was just showing that the contractual obligation was met but that they did take in additional animals that were not covered under the contract, just to make the Council aware.

Mayor Daniel mentioned one thing that has been consistently discussed in this group has been chickens. He mentioned the Shelter would only really take anything with fur, but feathers were not mentioned. He confirmed with Abbi Carroll that they were not set up to take in chickens. Abbi advised that was correct and shared that she spoke with Chief Parret at some point last year that chickens were just not something they have the space for or the capability of housing.

Mayor Daniel thanked Abbi for the efforts of the Humane Shelter.

Leslee Robinson made a motion to approve the Humane Shelter agreement for 2024, Jennifer Middleton seconded the motion, all voted aye.

**JON GOTZ – ANNUAL MS4 REPORT** Jon Gotz with the Water and Soil Conservation District was present to review the MS4 report with the Council. He shared we were in the second year of the new MS4 General Permit that IDEM instituted. He advised they submitted the first Stormwater Quality Management report which is posted on the Stormwater web page and describes what we are doing as an MS4 program. He noted IDEM wanted us to update the Water Quality Characterization report as the original report was done back in 2003 and has never been updated. He advised one of the things that we need to do this year is to update the stormwater ordinances, he has been reviewing the current ordinances and trying to develop a list of recommendations for the Ordinance Review Committee. He reported there were two possible approaches to doing that; one would be to update the current ordinances to get them to conform to what the State requirements are, or the Purdue Local Technical Assistance Program has produced a model stormwater ordinance where all the stormwater requirements are put together in one ordinance. He went on to talk about Minimum Control Measure requirements. He shared the departments were doing all the things that are required for the stormwater program, but we do not always document everything we need to and need to make sure we have that documentation in place to show IDEM we are doing what they want us to do.

Dan Weigold noted in looking at some of the graphs, it looks like with all the work that has been done in the past through stormwater separation it is looking really good for the water quality versus what it was years ago. Jon Gotz agreed and felt the completion of the LTCP was really going to make a difference on E-coli. He shared it is just going to take some time for it to kind of catch up. He thought the E-coli bacteria could live in the stream bed for an extended period of time, so will take a little while to wash those out.

Mayor Daniel questioned Jon Gotz what kind of time frame he was thinking for getting the ordinances updated. Jon Gotz advised IDEM wants those in place by July 1st of 2024. He

stated he hoped to have his recommendations pulled together sooner, but it took longer than expected to do some of the other stuff. He shared that was why he was leaning more towards updating what we already have in place as opposed to doing a total overhaul of the ordinances.

Mayor Daniel thanked Jon Gotz for his work and the partnership with the Soil and Water Conservation District.

**PETITION FOR ANNEXATION – CONNIE DYE** Chip Hill reported this was the final phase of the Connie Dye annexation. He advised the entire annexation would take in roughly 200 acres.

Mayor Daniel confirmed the Fiscal Plan would be the same as the previous annexation since this is just an expansion of the same property. Chip Hill advised that was correct.

Attorney McNaghy explained the annexation process.

Jennifer Romano reiterated that this was a voluntary annexation; they were choosing to join the City.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to read the petition by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Petition for Voluntary Annexation of land to the City of Columbia City, Indiana.

**ORDINANCE 2024-2: USER FEES FOR TRASH COLLECTION** Jennifer Middleton made a motion to read Ordinance 2024-2 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted aye. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2024-2, an Ordinance amending Chapter 53 regarding the user fees to pay the costs of trash collection for residential customers within the City of Columbia City.

Mayor Daniel advised the Trash Committee went out and talked to other communities about what their rates were, what kind of contracts they were seeing and what their numbers were coming in at. He shared the Committee felt like what was being provided to us by Waste Management for a three-year contract extension was very reasonable compared to what other people were paying. He advised there was still a price increase, so the Trash Committee considered multiple options but felt like it made the most sense to do an adjustment to the trash fee. He reminded Council that when an individual pays the trash fee on their monthly utility bill, they are paying for a weekly trash pickup but also, we are setting aside a little money from those bills to pay for the annual junk cleanup that happens once a year. He explained this was really a money in/money out situation, meaning that residents pay for the services provided and we pay it right back out to the trash company, so we really do not make money off of this. He advised the proposed increase was \$2.00 taking the fee from \$11 to \$13 per month.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-2 on first reading. Second motion by Leslee Robinson seconded the motion, all voted aye.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS** **Chip Hill** - Board of Works approved a contract with Pulver Construction to do the asphalt work at Westgate, Eagle Park bids looking to be signed at the end of the month, utility relocation started for the Blue River Trail. **Terry Wherry** - fiber cut in Morsches Park has been fixed, waiting on Baseline to get the Water Department booster station ready to be put on the network, four computers replaced in the squad room, meeting with Spillman to go over a new server for Police Department. **Shawn Lickey** – changing poles on Bair Road, mechanic was away at training on fire engine maintenance, ordered a new wire trailer, working on possibly purchasing our own fiber splicing equipment. **Matt Heiden** – Father/Daughter dance was sold out both nights, tore down the wooden skate ramp as it was a liability and safety hazard, update on hiring process for administrative assistant and summer help. **Mike Shoda** - working on South Chauncey Street, working to get water main ready for Wigent's to connect to for 200 East water main to service the Connie Dye property. **Mike Cook** – piping in for force main project, continue

with sludge hauling. **Tom LaRue** – update on interview process, sprucing up fire station, working with some of our area businesses with their alarm systems, mechanic working towards emergency vehicle technician certification, IMPA contacted him regarding training on emergency response on solar parks.

**MAYOR REPORT** Mayor Daniel reported for Gary Parrett and Kelly Cearbaugh. He reminded everyone of the City retreat planned for Thursday and Friday down in Noblesville. He had the honor of being interviewed by AIM for the Hometown Innovations podcast. He advised he would be out of the office next week. He reported the State of the City address has been scheduled for Friday, March 8 at the Library.

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

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Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

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Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle