

SUMMER 2024. VOL 6. ISSUE NO. 1.

CITY SCENE

City of Columbia City



Why Local Government Matters

BY MAYOR RYAN L. DANIEL

It's easy at times to lump all governments into the same box. With the dysfunction at the federal level, and the separation from Indianapolis, it's easy to write us off as "one of them". However, I ask that you give me a moment to try and explain why the most efficient, effective, and responsive level of government for its citizens is local government.

First, we are the closest to you. We grocery shop, eat at restaurants, and enjoy the same downtown festivals as our citizens. We aren't removed in some city hours away, but rather are local and accessible to the citizens. You can take part in public meetings within a quick drive. Or you can call the office and set up an appointment to meet with one of us. Or you may see us out and about town. The point is that local government is the closest to its people and has a better sense of the needs of its people. Not a day goes by where I don't get feedback (both positive and negative) from our constituents and work to put that feedback into action.



[Continued on Page 2](#)

This issue:

Local Government
PAGES 01-02

Lawn Care
PAGE 03

Summer is on the Horizon
PAGE 04

News from the Utility Office
PAGE 05

Summertime Fire Safety
PAGE 06

Citizen in the Spotlight
PAGE 07

Monthly City Meetings
PAGE 08

Why Local Government Matters

From Page 1

BY MAYOR RYAN DANIEL

Second, we have greater accountability through independent audits by State Agencies. The city is audited yearly by Indiana's State Board of Accounts (SBOA). The agency literally goes through every monetary account to check for deficiencies, anomalies, or poor accounting practices. Each cent that comes in or goes out of the city must be accounted for by the city to the SBOA. They also review meeting documentation to ensure that public records are being managed appropriately. Further, the SBOA publishes their audit on their website for the public to review. This oversight helps keep transparency and accountability in the forefront of local officials' minds.

Third, local government provides a wide array of services that the private sector wouldn't or couldn't provide for a reasonable price. When cities and towns started to spring up across the state of Indiana back in the 1800s, it was for the purpose of public safety and utilities. Today, the city provides public safety, utilities, economic development, streets, parks, and so many other amenities for its citizens. It would be hard for a private company to make the case to build an aquatics center, or to build and maintain 56 miles of streets or 90 miles of sewer lines. There isn't a business case to be made to invest in things that don't make money but are necessary for a better quality of life. This is where local government's value is truly determined. Local government exists to provide necessary and needed amenities, and to provide a good quality of life for its constituents.

Overall, your city government works hard every day to provide the needed amenities at the best price for the greatest number of people because that is why we are here. I hope this little overview has provided additional insight into why we do, what we do. Thank you for partnering with your local government as we build a future together!

Until Next Time...



Lawn Care

BY JON GOTZ, WHITLEY COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

How you care for your lawn can increase or decrease water pollution! Polluted stormwater runoff is the biggest cause of the pollution that impairs over 9,000 miles of Indiana rivers and streams. A healthy lawn can absorb a lot of rain which reduces stormwater runoff and decreases water pollution. Here are some lawn care tips from the Stormwater Utility:

Build healthy soil.

Healthy soil contains 3% to 5% organic matter. Periodic top dressing with light applications of mature compost will increase organic matter. Mulch mowing fall leaves into the lawn will also increase organic matter.

Fertilizer.

Get a soil test to find out what nutrients or amendments your lawn really needs. Avoid using quick-release fertilizers in early spring when heavy rains can cause runoff. Choose low or phosphorus free fertilizers for established lawns. Blow or sweep fertilizer granules off pavements and sidewalks back onto your lawn. Don't apply fertilizer when rain is expected soon.

Mowing.

Mow high, 2-1/2 to 3 inches, to shade out weeds and retain soil moisture. Mow frequently so as not to cut more than 1/3 of the leaf at one time. Keep mower blades sharp for a clean, healthy cut and a better-looking lawn. Keep clippings out of streets and storm drains. Blow or sweep them back onto your lawn. Mulch mow clippings into the lawn to recycle nutrients.

Get expert advice.

Homeowner guides are available online from Purdue University's Turfgrass Science program at <https://turf.purdue.edu> or Purdue's Extension Service at <https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu>.

Summer is on the Horizon

BY MATT HEIDEN, PARKS SUPERINTENDENT

The Parks Department is very busy this time of year. We start getting ready for summer. The move to the new office went smoothly and we couldn't be happier in our office.

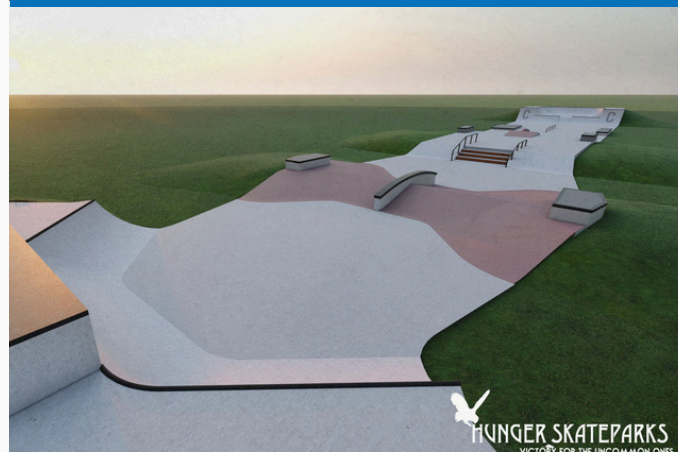
We recently broke ground for Eagle Park to start the construction of the new pickleball courts, inground skate park, and a three-bay trellis swing. The pool will be up and running Memorial Day weekend. You may notice some new items. We have replaced some of the padding and logs and have installed plastic under the zero-entry feature.

As always, we are very busy with baseball, softball, soccer, and swim team. We are having meetings for football as well. So, get ready for football season!

The Parks Department is trying something new this year. We have reached out to Wild Indiana, which is an animal rescue agency from Warren, IN. Their organization will bring reptiles in July to educate our youth about reptiles living in Indiana. They will also bring farm animals in August. Both events will be free to the public.

On July 3 the City will be hosting our annual Independence Day Celebration. We hope to see everyone there for family fun and entertainment before the fireworks show. We will also have food trucks and vendors as we do every year. We are excited to begin our busy summer.

“We recently broke ground for Eagle Park to start the construction of the new pickleball courts, inground skate park, and a three-bay trellis swing.”





News from the Utility Office

BY ROSIE COYLE, CLERK-TREASURER

Save a check, save a stamp, save a tree, save some pennies! We have noticed an increase in customers who are utilizing the direct withdrawal or autopay option to pay their utility bill, which is great! We want you to be aware that if you have signed up for this option through Invoice Cloud, our credit card/ACH payment processor, a monthly fee is charged BUT if you sign up through the utility office there is NO fee! If you would like to sign up for direct withdrawal or make the switch from Invoice Cloud, contact the utility office at 260-248-5100! Please note that if you choose to sign up through the Utility Office it is imperative you remove yourself from any other autopay programs, including Invoice Cloud, to avoid funds being deducted twice resulting in a double payment.

Also, spring is here, which means our lawns are growing quickly! Just a reminder to keep your lawn mowed so as not to be in violation of our grass ordinance. The ordinance allows for grass to be 8" tall before being in violation. If you see properties that appear to be in violation, please call our office!

Summertime Fire Safety

BY TOM LARUE, FIRE CHIEF

Summer is a time for families to enjoy the outdoors, grilling, picnics, hiking, camping etc. All the fun can be swiped away with just one unfortunate event. Don't let misfortune strike down your family's fun.

Summer Fire Statistics

- About 15,000 people are sent to the emergency room each year because of grill related injuries.
- July is the peak month for grill fires (17%), including both structure, outdoor or unclassified fires, followed by May, June and August.
- Leaks or breaks were the factor in 11% of grill structure fires and 23% of outside and unclassified grill fires.
- Gas grills contribute to a higher number of home fires overall than their charcoal counterparts.
- A failure to clean the grill was the leading factor contributing to the fire in one –fifth of all grill structure fires (19%). In 17%, something that could catch fire was too close to the grill.

Summertime Fire Safety-Helpful Hints

- Be safe. If you want to see fireworks, go to a public show.
- Do not use consumer fireworks.
- Keep a close eye on children at events with fireworks.
- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should be used outdoors only.
- Keep children and pets at least three feet from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease buildup.
- Never leave your grill unattended.
- Always make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it.





Jon Gotz: Our “Behind the Scenes” Engineer

BY ASHLEY BUCKLES, MAYOR’S EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

As a lifelong resident of Whitley County, and a current resident of Columbia City, Jon Gotz has left his mark on our community in more ways than one. From volunteering to help our senior citizens to ensuring the City of Columbia City’s stormwater program runs smoothly, Jon may be “behind the scenes” at times, but his impact is felt by all our city’s residents.

Jon grew up in Etna and then Thorncreek, but later moved into city limits and still resides there. He graduated from Columbia City Joint High School in 1972 and then proceeded to obtain a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from Purdue University in 1977. He became interested in water quality during his time in the Peace Corps from 1981-1983. Contaminated water was causing gastrointestinal disease and was a leading killer of children in Nepal. This interest is what led Jon to help the City of Columbia City and other communities protect their water.

As a contracted technician, Jon ensures that all stormwater projects are fulfilling requirements set by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). When a new construction project is proposed, he reviews the plans and after construction starts, Jon completes monthly inspections at the job sites. After construction is complete, Jon helps the project owners complete their own yearly inspections.

He also helps Columbia City’s wastewater program by inspecting grease traps in Columbia City’s restaurants and reports his findings to the City’s wastewater department. Additionally, Jon takes samples from Eel River, Blue River, and Phillip’s Ditch to test for E.coli, nutrients, metals, oil, and suspended solids/sediments. Public education is also important to Jon, so he partners with different businesses through the MS4 program to display information about how to prevent stormwater pollution. Finally, Jon completes an annual report for IDEM on behalf of the City of Columbia City and he also reports to the Common Council annually.

When Jon isn’t working as an engineer, he keeps himself busy through volunteerism. He facilitates a support group for Alzheimer’s caregivers at Columbia City United Methodist and has done so since 2004. He also volunteers for the AARP Tax-Aide program and helps seniors file their tax returns free of charge. When asked who influenced him the most, Jon said his parents. They were both schoolteachers and taught him to value education. Jon plays a vital role within our city, and we are thankful for his dedication to our residents and our stormwater program!



MONTHLY CITY MEETINGS

1st Monday of the Month

Plan Commission | 7:00pm
Whitley County Government Center

1st Tuesday of the Month

Arts Commission | 5:00pm
Council Chambers | City Hall

1st Tuesday of the Month

Board of Zoning Appeals | 7:00pm
Whitley County Government Center

2nd Tuesday of the Month

Redevelopment Commission | Noon
Council Chambers | City Hall

2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the Month

Board of Works | 5:00pm
Council Chambers | City Hall

2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the Month

Common 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 | 6:00pm
Council Chambers | City Hall

4th Monday of the Month

Park Board | 6:00pm
Park Office | Whitley Street

PLEASE CHECK THE MONTHLY CALENDAR ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE
OR WWW.COLUMBIACITY.NET FOR MEETING CHANGES