

**COMMON COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2024  
6:00 PM**

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

**Council Members**

Jennifer Middleton – Absent  
Leslee Robinson – 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 and Jennifer Middleton present. Mayor Daniel called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. All stood to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES** Tad Varga made a motion to approve the August 27, 2024, meeting minutes as presented. Leslee Robinson seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**SWEARING IN OF FIREFIGHTER** Rosie Coyle performed the swearing in ceremony for Colin Harding.

**MIKE CHAMBERS – NLC SERVICE LINE PROGRAM** Mike Chambers with HomeServe was present to talk about the National League of Cities Service Line Program and how it has benefited communities across the country and could possibly benefit the residents of Columbia City. He explained HomeServe is the administrators of the Service Line Program and through that program, they work with cities and towns across the country to help residents when they have issues with their water and sewer service lines such as frozen pipes, sewer line collapses, tree roots, and more. He shared that a lot of times residents do not realize that the lateral lines running from the main to their house is their responsibility and even the residents that do know it, they do not have the \$6000 - \$8000 it can sometimes cost to fix it. He advised that is where their program comes in; first off, they do a free public awareness campaign to all the homeowners in the community letting them know that these lines are their responsibility and also give them tips on what they can do to keep things working properly. He added, if the resident chooses, they can purchase a warranty through HomeServe to cover their lines in case anything would ever happen. He explained this is a fully turnkey program; they handle all the marketing, all the billing, all the customer service, all the claims and there is no cost or anything for the City to participate. He advised they then share a portion of all the revenue that is generated from the program with City. He reported that the nice part for residents, is that if the City does decide to participate in the program, it is nothing they are forced to take, it is not something that goes on their water bill or anything, it is just simply available to the residents if they choose. He explained they would have 3 products available for coverage and advised there is no deductible on the program, there are no service fees, and they do not do any pre-inspection, so everybody is eligible to enroll. He advised when a resident does have an issue, they do not call the City, they

have a 24/7 U.S. based call center where they will file a claim, and then a local licensed plumber would be dispatched to the job. He noted that was another big benefit of the program is that they only use contractors from here in Columbia City to do the work. He advised that not only ensures the dollars stay in the community, but it also helps to make sure the lines get fixed the way the City wants, that all the permits are pulled, codes are met and that sort of thing. He explained they never do any kind of telemarketing, all the education and offerings of this program is done through a direct mail educational letter and is typically sent out twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. He advised before they ever mail the letter to the residents, they provide it to the City to review and then once approved by the City they will set it up to be sent out to the residents.

Mr. Chambers advised they currently have about 1300 communities that participate in the program with about 40 or so in the State of Indiana. He advised they have been offering the program through the National League of Cities since 2010 and just in the past three years alone, they have fixed over 1.2 million lines across the country, saving residents over \$500 million. He added the program is A+ rated with the Better Business Bureau and is also endorsed by the National League of Cities and here in Indiana, the program is endorsed by the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water.

Mayor Daniel noted it looked like in our area they have Nappanee, Mishawaka, Montpelier, Van Buren; all are different sized. Mr. Chambers shared they have found the program works no matter what the size. He advised they have communities as small as 30 or so households up to some of the largest cities in the in the country.

Mayor Daniel stated that, ultimately, the benefit of the City partnering with this program is having a revenue share component. Mr. Chambers advised that was correct. He explained 10% of every dollar they collect will come back to the City. He shared that some of their communities will set those funds aside for residents who may have a high-water bill and cannot afford it or for those who may not have coverage, and they have a line break. He advised there are also cities who will just put it into their general fund. He stated that about 80% of their partners take the revenue and 20% do not want it. He said if the City decides not to take it, they would just discount the cost to the resident so it is a little cheaper for them.

Tad Varga questioned if they were looking for the City to endorse the program or what was stopping them from just doing it without the City's endorsement. Mr. Chambers advised the City does not have to say you endorse them or anything but some communities, where it is a big issue, do endorse them. He explained the reasons they work with the City is because they want to cover everything their residents are responsible for by working with the utility staff to understand the codes and make sure that coverage is lined up to their responsibilities. But then secondly, because by working with the City more residents will read the information to make an educated decision on whether to sign up or not.

Dan Weigold mentioned it was basically like insurance. Mr. Chambers advised that was correct and was more peace of mind to know if something does happen it would be taken care of.

Rosie Coyle questioned if this was something not typically covered by homeowner's insurance. Mr. Chambers advised that was correct and was how the program got started. He shared there was sometimes a rider you can add through your homeowner's insurance but the problem with

those is a lot of times you have a deductible and with this program there is no deductible, and then also you do not have to tax your homeowner's insurance policy either.

Dan Weigold felt if it is properly communicated to the residents that the City is not asking people to do this, he did not think it would be a problem.

Mayor Daniel shared Mr. Chambers has approached us in the past and it was decided this was not something we necessarily wanted to do at the time but there has been some change in leadership since then and he thought it was important, at the very least, to get the information in front of Council and give an opportunity to ask questions about it. He stressed that he was not saying we should or should not proceed and ultimately it was the Council's decision.

Tad Varga questioned if they could get a sample of one of the direct mailers. Mr. Chambers advised he would send a template.

Leslee Robinson questioned if it would be set up like an insurance policy. Mr. Chambers advised it was not and explained in the State of Indiana it is regulated as a warranty product. He shared that insurance products a lot of times have to be something that happened, such as an accident. He explained this program covers straight wear and tear on the line so is why it is regulated as a warranty product. He explained further that because there is nothing for the residents to sign, they can cancel it any time and is a month-to-month contract for as long as they pay. Leslee Robinson just wanted to make sure it was clear exactly what the warranty was covering. Mr. Chambers advised he would include the terms and conditions along with the direct mailer template for the Council to review.

**SURF INTERNET** Jordan Holzwart Regional Market Manager with Surf Internet was present to introduce himself, thank the City and express that they would like to be a good face in the community. He shared they have been in a little over a year and have just passed over 5000 home sites in the City that have Surf Internet available to them. He advised they recently completed the Gateway Industrial Park and Connexion Way, which they have some folks signing up for it already and puts them at about \$5.5 million invested into the City. He expressed they just want to make sure they are being good partners and will share his information via e-mail.

Mayor Daniel shared we have spent multiple years trying to get fiber into our community and had multiple false starts as well had multiple companies that wanted the world to build out fiber in our community. He advised what he has really appreciated about Surf is not only did they want to come into Columbia City, but they did not really ask us for anything. He was hopeful that our residents have repaid that kindness, as he knew Surf was doing a lot of market share around here.

**ORDINANCE 2024-17: ITINERANT MERCHANT PERMIT – 2<sup>ND</sup> READING** Tad Varga made a motion to read Ordinance 2024-17 by title only. Leslee Robinson seconded the motion, all voted unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2024-17 an Ordinance amending Title XI, Business Regulations, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia City, Indiana.

Mayor Daniel reminded the Council that this was to address itinerant merchants and bring them into the Code.

Dan Weigold made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-17 on second and final reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2024-18: SUPPLEMENT TO THE CODE S-26** Leslee Robinson made a motion to read Ordinance 2024-18 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2024-18 an Ordinance enacting and adopting a Supplement to the Code of Ordinances for the City of Columbia City, Indiana and declaring an emergency.

Mayor Daniel explained this takes everything Council has passed and puts it into the ordinances online and officially codifies them.

Dan Weigold made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-18 on first and final reading and declaring an emergency. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS** **Chip Hill** – Westgate coming along quickly, the swing is up and they are working on the pickleball courts in Eagle Park, materials ordered for the skate park and should be moving onsite within the next couple of months. **Tom LaRue** - breathing air compressor used to fill air bottles was fixed today, the exhaust system was fixed today, received Truck 102 back from the mechanic yesterday, rooftop air conditioner went out and have a new one on order, Truck 101 generator has some issues and mechanic will work that in for repair, working with insurance companies in reference to repairing the training facility. **Matt Heiden** – tearing out dugouts, mowing the riverbank so that you can see into the river, working on day-to-day stuff. **Shawn Lickey** – pole testing complete and have 148 poles to replace, Rolling Hills, Jefferson Street, Park Terrace project is complete and will move across the road to Cul-de-Sac Avenue, Angie Hildebrand and Jason Buckles are in Brownstown for a training on our TUNet software, sending our mechanic to Illinois to do some bucket truck repair training. **Mike Shoda** – getting good iron removal in our filters and chlorine levels are starting to pick up.

**NLC SERVICE LINE PROGRAM** Tad Varga questioned Mike Shoda what his thoughts were on the NLC Service Line Program. Mike Shoda felt it was a good idea to at least offer it to our residents. He noted the resident on Whitley Street has about \$26,000 in repairs so far and probably would have loved to have had it.

Tad Varga confirmed it would not impede with what the Water Department does on a day-to-day basis. Mike Shoda advised it would not.

**YOUTH COUNCIL** Anna Lortie was present representing the Youth Council and shared what they did at their first meeting of the year.

**MAYOR REPORT** Mayor Daniel shared department reports for Terry Wherry, Mike Cook and Kelly Cearbaugh. He reported on the Solid Waste Board meeting and their tire program. He advised WANE TV will be broadcasting live from Columbia City at both 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. newscasts next Monday. He reported the Great Lakes Shrine Association is having their convention parade on Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> at noon and will be taking the same route as the Old Settlers parade route.

**PLAN COMMISSION** Dan Weigold reported the Plan Commission approved a 2-lot subdivision off of Gates Road called Poverty Knob. He advised they are not required to put in sidewalks since they would lead nowhere.

**REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION** Tad Varga reported they approved 3 façade grants. Chip Hill added that they made some changes to the Revolving Loan Fund to be more competitive.

Having no further business to come before Council, Mayor Daniel called the meeting adjourned.

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Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

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Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle