

**COMMON COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2024  
6:00 PM**

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present  
Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle – Present  
Attorney Marcia McNagy – Absent

**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 lead by Isabella and Eduardo Covarrubias.

**MINUTES** Leslee Robinson noted at spelling correction to Senator Busch’s last name under the Mayor’s report.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the November 12, 2024, meeting minutes as corrected. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2024-20 SALARY AND BENEFIT ORDINANCE – 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

Jennifer Middleton made a motion to read Ordinance 2024-20 by title only. Leslee Robinson seconded the motion, all voted unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2024-20, an ordinance to be known as the 2025 Salary Benefit Range Ordinance.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-20 on second and final reading. Leslee Robinson seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2024-21 SALARY ORDINANCE ELECTED OFFICIALS – 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Ordinance 2024-21 by title only. Jennifer Middleton seconded the motion, all voted unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2024-21, an ordinance fixing the annual salaries of all elected officials of the City of Columbia City, Indiana effective December 28, 2024, for the Year 2025.

Dan Weigold made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-21 on second and final reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2024-24 AMENDMENT TO PRETREATMENT ORDINANCE – 2<sup>nd</sup> READING**

Tad Varga made a motion to read Ordinance 2024-24 by title only. Leslee Robinson seconded the motion, all voted unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2024-24 an ordinance amending Title V, Chapter 51, Sewage Service, and 55, Pretreatment of Pollutants, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia City, Indiana.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-24 on second and final reading. Jennifer Middleton seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**RESOLUTION 2024-25 ACCEPTANCE OF REAL PROPERTY – JAIL**

Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Resolution 2024-25 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, all voted unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Resolution 2024-25 a resolution authorizing the participation to an agreement by and between the City of Columbia City, Indiana and Whitley County, Indiana.

Mayor Daniel explained this was the agreement for the city to accept the property transfer from the county for the current Whitley County Jail. He advised he was approached by the county about the possibility of the city accepting the jail property and the adjoining parking lot behind it for public benefit. He reported they took a tour of the property and then started having conversations about what this property transfer could look like. He advised he and the Redevelopment Commission engaged an engineer to come in and look at the building to make sure it was solid and was confirmed that it is a solid, strong building with really no major concerns at all. He shared that the county has provided all of the maintenance schedules, all of the repairs and replacements, the blueprints, just everything on the building.

Mayor Daniel reviewed a couple things in the transfer agreement. He advised the property would be transferred to us "as is" and at no cost. He noted the county does have first right of refusal for the first seven years. He reported the possession date would be on or before March 1<sup>st</sup> of 2025.

Mayor Daniel reported the engineer is working up a couple conceptual designs although very, very, very preliminary just to make sure we can actually do some of the things we have talked about such as moving our police department and other things. He shared there is nothing coming up that is sending him red flags or the engineer.

Tad Varga questioned if we were to take it, would it be move in ready for Gary and his team. Mayor Daniel felt the short answer to the question would be yes, but we would still need to do the security cameras and all those little technological things. Gary Parrett felt they could move in pretty quickly and work around any construction that would take place. Tad Varga questioned if, at the bare minimum, we would just move the police department there, with no budget to do anything else but to make it user friendly like installing cameras and changing locks, would that be enough. Terry Wherry advised we would still need to move our fiber network that direction which involves putting up the fiber, installing servers and switches so that their equipment can run on our network and that would only be if all the wiring already there is good. Mayor Daniel ultimately felt the answer was, yes, they could move in there with not a ton of trouble. He shared that he has tasked Gary with figuring out what the square footage was that we currently have at City Hall, the Milo range and some of the other locations that the Police Department is inhabiting. He advised as they think about and plan for that building in the future, he did not want it to just be for the next 5 years, but what we need for the next 30 years.

Dan Weigold advised there was a lot of space there and would be a huge benefit for the police department.

Mayor Daniel felt there was value in the city having control of a property on our square, but the agreement allows for flexibility if we feel it is not working out.

Dan Weigold made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-25 and approval of the property transfer. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**DRONE DEMONSTRATION** Gary Parrett and JJ Branecki gave a demonstration on how our drone works and shared instances where they have used the drone to locate individuals.

**JOB DESCRIPTION: DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF** Mayor Daniel explained the Deputy Fire Chief would do what the Fire Chief does and obviously would step in for him when he is out. He noted we have redundancy in responsibilities in most of the departments, but we do not have a true second in command for the Fire Department. He thought the plan was to fill that position at the first of the year.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the position description for the Deputy Fire Chief. Tad Varga seconded the motion, all voted unanimously.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS** **Kelly Cearbaugh** - update on Timbers Edge Subdivision, continue with leaf pickup and grating alleys. **Chip Hill** - Blue River Trail is looking to start at the end of February or first of March, light poles were being poured today at Eagle Park, Hunger supposed to be in to start the skate park. **Matt Heiden** - winterizing buildings, starting to build the props for father/daughter dance, still waiting to hear back from the inspector on having the DeVol tunnel inspected, Park Board approved increase in admission rates for the pool as well as some other pricing. **Gary Parrett** – Jeffrey Ewing and Jamall Smith were both approved and will start Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, Officer Fuller has started the FTO process before he goes out to the school, new vehicles taken to Cops Gear to be fully equipped, Stuff the Cruiser for Toys for Tots is December 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 8 pm, Patrolling for Presents is December 15<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 3:00 pm and expect to have 80 to 100 children, Lighted Christmas Parade is this Friday and the YMCA Turkey Trot is Thanksgiving morning between 8:00 and 9:30 am, Dispatch replaced a tabletop. **Terry Wherry** - test kitchen is entering its final phases and should be operational soon, server migration going well, Spectrum Engineering was in to install software on the new servers, SOS moving some of our fiber network from the old phone room into the server room, shut down all the servers to update the BIOS on the VMware. **Mike Shoda** – update on lead lines. **Tom LaRue** – delay in getting training facility repaired, have 10 applications for our hiring process, building facade complete, annual Christmas candy giveaway will be December 24<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm or until it is gone, performance evaluations about ½ done. **Mike Cook** - completed the 2024 state upgrades on our liftstations for the SCADA system, letter sent to IDEM after our CSO audit and still waiting to see if it was accepted, still waiting on quote for our Dystor, update on mixers.

**HOMESERVE** Mayor Daniel reminded the Council that a couple of months ago we had a presentation by Mike Chambers with Homeserve, which is the NLC service line program. He could not remember where they left the issue but advised Mr. Chambers had reached out to ask if it was something we wanted to try to move forward with or pass on and requested feedback from the Council.

Tad Varga did not feel it was a bad idea to at least offer it as an opportunity for people who may need this type of service.

Mayor Daniel advised the only thing that we would be involved in is whether or not we want to put a portion of each policy sold aside and use it for hardship for our customers or give money back to the policyholder. He added that we basically were just giving our stamp of approval that this is a reputable company, and we really do not have much in it except to say yes, you can do this business in our community or no, we would rather you not.

Tad Varga questioned if we were comfortable with the due diligence that we were aware of with this organization. Mayor Daniel advised the National League of Cities endorse them, so they are a reputable company. He shared that Homeserve has sent letters in this area anyway.

Council was in agreement to move forward with it.

**MAYOR REPORT** Mayor Daniel reminded Council that Thursday and Friday City Hall would be closed because of the Thanksgiving holidays and Shop Small Saturdays will be the following Saturday as well. He mentioned that Council should have gotten an invitation to tour the new jail on Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2:30 pm. He reported the PEL Study Team will be at the next Council meeting to discuss the Level 3 Assessment.

**ARTS COMMISSION** Jennifer Romano reported the Arts Commission has partnered with the Whitley County Historical Museum and will be having an Arts Marketplace on Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 to 8:00 pm at the museum. She advised different local artists will be setting up booths

**LIGHTING CONTEST** Jennifer Romano asked residents of Columbia City who want to participate in the lighting contest to have their yards ready for judging by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**REGIONAL SEWER BOARD** Leslee Robinson reported there were still 20 individuals who had not reached out, at all, to JPR to make connection. She advised initial letters were sent giving them notice before there is a suit filed against them. She shared that they would not be meeting again until February.

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

---

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

---

Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle