

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025
6:00 PM**

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present
Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson – Present
Attorney Marcia McNagy – Present

Council Members

Brent Bockelman - Present
Jennifer Middleton – 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 p.m. All stood to say the Pledge of Allegiance led by combined Troop 84.

MINUTES Dan Weigold made a motion to approve the April 22, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Jennifer Middleton seconded the motion. Tad Varga, Jennifer Middleton and Dan Weigold approved. Jennifer Romano abstained. Brent Bockelman was not a Councilman at the time of the meeting and did not vote.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATEMENT OF BENEFITS – QIG, RINLY PROPERTIES, KC JONES AND SOLAR ARRAY Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve all four Statement of Benefits and approve an additional year of abatement. Tad Varga seconded the motion. Jennifer Middleton, Jennifer Romano, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold approved. Brent Bockelman abstained.

FENCE CODE REVISION 25-C-Z0A-1 – ORDINANCE 2025-4 Nathan Bilger, Planning Director, was present to discuss the fence code revision. He shared that the Planning Commission held a public hearing and reviewed some options on the requested fence code revision regarding types of front yard fences and heights related to that. He reminded Council that he presented 3 different options at the last meeting that would achieve the objective. He shared that the Planning Commission had a pretty detailed discussion about the merits of each one and opted to forward to the Council, with a favorable recommendation, one that would allow for front yard fences of any decorative type up to 4 feet. He advised that currently we only have chain link allowed up to 4 feet and all other types being limited to 3 feet. He noted in the proposed ordinance there were a few changes to tweak the material types, making it a little bit clearer on what is allowed. He advised he provided several different images that were shown to the Planning Commission showing examples of fences that would be allowed under the current code and what would be allowed at 4 feet under the proposed change. He reported there was one fence that went up last week in anticipation of this code, and advised they are aware that if changes are not adopted that there could be enforcement actions taken but due to timing and some other considerations, they were willing to go ahead with it.

Nathan Bilger shared that there was talk about visibility and reminded Council of the site

visibility triangle. He noted that by going from 3 to 4 feet does not impact that. He advised with the encroachment agreements being approved by the Board of Works, they have the authority to refine those placements depending on each situation. He noted that we have quite a few places where we have very wide rights of way and others that do not, so it is a very case by case basis.

Dan Weigold shared that he was contacted by Larry Weiss, one of the Plan Commission members, who wanted to express his reasoning for why he voted against it. He shared with Option 2 there were more variables in the type of fence that could be put up and felt with Option 3 it was a little more restrictive.

Nathan Bilger noted that in his memo he did mention some of the dissenting discussion where a couple members wanted to keep everything at 3 feet to be consistent. He advised one member felt like front yard fences should not be allowed whatsoever and then Mr. Weiss was in between. Jennifer Romano added that the reasoning of those who voted in favor of it wanted to be able to give residents options, especially in the downtown part of the city where they may have less real estate. She shared their front yard may be the best place for a fence for a variety of reasons, for kids, for dogs, or whatever.

Dan Weigold mentioned that this does not happen every day and thought this was the first one for him in his 18 years. He questioned whether things should be changed because of one person but at the same time this code has been in place for a long time and felt that making adjustments or updates maybe need to happen, like we do with the ordinances.

Dan Weigold made a motion to read Ordinance 2025-4 by title only. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2025-4 an ordinance amending the text of Chapter 2 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-4 on first reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE 2025-3 AMENDMENT TO GOLF CART ORDINANCE – 1ST READING

Jennifer Middleton made a motion to read Ordinance 2025-3 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2025-3 an ordinance amending Chapter 73, Bicycles, Unicycles, Three-wheeled cycles and golf carts of Title VII of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia City, Indiana.

Attorney McNagny explained it was the desire of Chief Parrett to add 3-wheeled golf carts. She advised that was the only change.

Jennifer Middleton made a motion to approve ordinance 2025-3 on first reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS – REGIONAL SEWER BOARD, JOINT ADVISORY BOARD, WELLNESS COMMITTEE, ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

Mayor Daniel advised there were positions to fill on several Boards and Committees with Leslee transitioning to the Clerk Treasurer's role.

Jennifer Middleton advised she would sit on the Wellness Committee. Dan Weigold called for a vote to appoint Jennifer Middleton to the Wellness Committee, all voted aye.

Mayor Daniel called for an appointment to the Joint Advisory Board. Nathan Bilger explained because the Planning Department is a joint department between city and county, and then by extension the towns as well, by contract, the Joint Advisory Board was actually the oversight Board over the department. He added that while the employees are county employees, the Board actually functions as the administrative oversight. He advised they meet twice a year, with the first meeting of the year typically in February for review of the year-end report and to go over general business and then the second meeting is dealing with budget and other financial matters. Tad Varga advised he would sit on the Board. Dan Weigold called for a vote to appoint Tad Varga to the Joint Advisory Board, all voted aye.

Mayor Daniel called for an appointment to the Regional Sewer Board. Leslee Robinson stated that she was informed she could continue to sit on this Board if no one was interested. Brent Bockelman advised he might be interested but requested additional time to do more research. Dan Weigold made a motion to table the appointment until the next meeting, Council agreed to table the appointment.

Mayor Daniel called for an appointment to the Ordinance Committee. Brent Bockelman advised he would be open to serving on the Committee. Dan Weigold called for a vote to appoint Brent Bockelman to the Ordinance Committee, all voted aye.

PLAN COMMISSION REPORT Nathan Bilger reported that permits were starting to pick up as of the first week of May. He advised that the first couple of months were definitely very cool in terms of permits for both countywide and city specifically. He reported that single family dwelling permits were still very, very cool in the city and believed they were about half of where we were year to month last year. He shared that Parkers Gym, which is to be located on Connexion Way between Crossroads Bank and the pediatric dental office, will be obtaining their permit and starting to break ground in the next week or two. He advised it was their plan to be open, ideally by this fall. He also reported on a parking lot expansion down on Raber Road.

Nathan reported on the historic tours that were put on by Columbia City Connect and the County Museum staff. He shared that they had 34 attendees and is hopeful that it becomes an annual thing that everybody can look forward to.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Chip Hill** - skate park grand opening is Saturday at 5:00 to 8:00, trail is moving along quickly, new Community Engagement Specialist Jackson Longenbaugh started and everything going well. **Terry Wherry** - finished door wiring for the control doors at the new jail and also got the server rack built, new domain controller coming online Thursday morning and will have a network outage for about 30 minutes, getting new employees entered into the system. **Matt Heiden** - pool is on and circulating and will be ready to be opened Memorial Day weekend, putting in the bricks up at Patriotic Park, baseball and softball in full swing, Melinda is working with the 2 pool managers to find different avenues for lifeguard training for our guards. **Kelly Cearbaugh** - Brooks Construction starting ADA ramp replacements around town, a couple sewer taps put in on North Oak Street and West North Street, concrete crew working out at Eagle Glen putting ADA ramps and sidewalks in, have a couple 50/50 sidewalk applicants. **Mike Cook** - May 1st Mike Shoda and himself attended the

Indiana Finance Authority meeting which allows them to apply for funding through SRF, his staff went through and cleaned all the diffusers in the aeration tanks, secondary valve getting put back together, waiting on response from IDEM regarding issues with the Long Term Control Plan.

YOUTH COUNCIL Jackson Shipman and Daniel Mullett were present to discuss the activities of the Youth Council.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel shared department reports from Shawn Lickey and Mike Shoda.

Mayor Daniel reported that he and Dan Weigold attended the Deer Chase Homeowners Association meeting last Thursday and felt it went really well. He advised a couple of them would be attending the Eagle Glen Association meeting tonight.

ARTS COMMISSION Jennifer Romano gave an update on the activities of the Arts Commission. She shared that they definitely could use some volunteers to help out with some of the things that they want to do. She advised they just came out with an arts calendar that features artists ranging from age 13 to 70 from our community and includes a little bio and some of their work. She reported that they were gearing up for the annual studio arts tour in September and were partnering with the museum again this year for art at the museum in August and September.

REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION Tad Varga reported the Redevelopment Commission met today and were still waiting on final clearance on the LML property. He advised they were working on a parking lot swap with the county for the lot at the corner of Jackson and Line Streets. He shared that they reviewed a counter proposal on the jail and advised it was forwarded to our financial advisors for direction. He reported that they commissioned a phase two environmental inspection for the Smith Brothers property to see if that is something we want to move forward with in developing that property.

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

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson