

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2025
6:00 P.M.**

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

Council Members

Ryan Adamson - Present
Brent Bockelman – 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.

MINUTES Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the November 25, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Tad Varga seconded the motion, Brent Bockelman, Jennifer Romano, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold approved, Ryan Adamson abstained.

2025 UTILITY WRITE OFF/SUSPENDED LIST Mayor Daniel explained this was the list of write-off's that we do yearly for accounts that either the customer has declared bankruptcy, have become deceased, or accounts that are suspended for the purposes listed on the spreadsheet.

Leslee Robinson shared that the girls and Attorney McNagy were doing a great job with collecting and getting accounts up to date. She stated that they were revising the service applications to make sure Marcia has all of the information she needs to pursue collections if necessary. She stressed that Attorney McNagy has been a great partner on this and pointed out that last year we had almost \$1200 in bankruptcy write-offs and this year we were down to \$438.

Brent Bockelman made a motion to approve the 2025 write-offs. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS Mayor Daniel shared that these appointments were for boards or committees that Jennifer Middleton served on as the Council appointment. He stated that the Wellness Committee takes place on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 a.m. here in City Hall, the Solid Waste Board is now every other month on the first Monday over at the County Government Center and then the Trash Committee, which is really more of an ad-hoc committee. He explained that the Trash Committee was something where if there is a policy change or something needs to be addressed or is a contractual matter then the committee will meet but generally speaking, they have very few meetings.

Ryan Adamson advised he would serve on all of them unless someone else wanted to.

Brent Bockelman questioned what time the Solid Waste Board meets. Mayor Daniel shared that they meet at 9 a.m. over in the County Government Center every other month and meetings usually last for about an hour or less. He explained that they handle the budget for the Solid Waste District, they oversee the compensation of employees, they handle the contractual matter with GFL, which is our current recycling contractor, as well as handle policies and

procedures when it comes to the bins. He advised the recycling bins were actually owned by the Solid Waste District and not by the contractor.

Dan Weigold made a motion to appoint Ryan Adamson to the positions of Wellness Committee, Solid Waste Board, and Trash Committee as presented. Tad Varga seconded the motion, Brent Bockelman, Jennifer Romano, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold approved. Ryan Adamson abstained.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Tom LaRue** – Truck 107 is back in service, all equipment is functioning correctly and he is working on department evaluations. **Terry Wherry** - all major projects for the year were done, day-to-day stuff keeping him busy. **Mike Cook** – update on the Dystor project, SDI force main has been cleaned for the last time this year and he has a couple more evals to write. **Chip Hill** – update on the amphitheater and jail projects. **Mike Shoda** – drained, cleaned and filled South water tower. **Shawn Lickey** - still working on pole replacements on Brown Road, working on inventory, he had the pleasure of speaking with the eighth-grade class at Indian Springs Middle School about the trades, how to become a lineman, what it looks like to be a lineman and what it looks like to work for the city. He advised that Duane Richardson with IMEA was along to promote the new lineman training school that he is starting and the school has asked them to come back to do more presentations. **Matt Heiden** - stopped working on the water line for the dog park because of weather, keeping everything plowed and checking on heaters to make sure things are not freezing up, took a pool motor to Indianapolis to Cook Electric to get rebuilt before next pool season and are starting to work on the father-daughter dance.

YOUTH COUNCIL Charlotte Misiara reported that at their last meeting they started brainstorming for their pickleball tournament, they volunteered at Autumn Trace, and toured the new jail.

TAX APPEAL DENIAL Leslee Robinson reported that our tax appeal was not approved. She shared that she fought it twice and was denied both times. Mayor Daniel advised it really was not even a technicality, but a decision literally on the hundredth of a point. He reported that it was a rounding thing where they rounded one way and we rounded another. Leslee Robinson advised she sent it onto Krohn & Associates for further explanation and in talking with Nathan he said that every municipality he was working with was also getting denied, so it was not just us. She shared that we would have had an additional \$297,000.00.

COMMUNITY CROSSINGS Mayor Daniel added that we also did not get Community Crossings funding for this coming year. He reported that they had \$247 million in requests and only had \$100 million to give away, which was less than they have had in the last couple of years. He explained the plan was to do phase three of Westgate, so are having to go back to the drawing board to figure out the plan going forward.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel reported that they held a comprehensive plan meeting and felt that it went really well. He advised they went through some of the draft items, the changes to the current plan as well as the additions because they have accomplished, he thought 67% of the actual plan we had 10 years ago. He shared that they would be putting a draft together and then will make a presentation. He noted that employee evaluations were happening right now as well as a couple different projects they were working on with high schoolers. He reminded Council members that the next meeting was scheduled for December 30.

EMPLOYEE BONUS – 2025 Mayor Daniel shared from a budgetary standpoint, wage increases were not approved for next year because of being down about \$400,000 from this year to next year. He stated because of the

stewardship of our department heads and others, we will have accounts that will still have dollars left in them, so in lieu of having a wage increase next year, Leslee and he have had conversations and would like to propose doing a \$1,000 across the board bonus for all of our staff. He said that since we were not giving a wage increase next year this would be our way of giving them an increase without it being on next year's budget and is a way in which we can show our appreciation for our employees. He advised the dollars were available and wanted to ask for Council's blessing or approval to do this.

Dan Weigold felt if we have a little bit of a surplus, our employees deserved it for all the work and time they put in, especially since they were not getting raises next year. He felt it would be an added 'thank you' because without our employees, we do not have much of anything. He also felt that the clerk-treasurer and mayor should be included in getting that bonus, not necessarily the Council members though.

Tad Varga shared that he personally was on the fence about it. He felt it was great to give bonuses but coming from a business standpoint, for him, he would probably roll that over and keep it in the coffers for the next year in case there was a shortfall. He mentioned if we lost \$400,000 this year, can we project out what the cash flow is going to be the following year.

Mayor Daniel explained that the state did projections based on Senate Enrolled Act 1, and they are saying that this coming year is going to be the biggest hit when it comes to the property tax side, with the other hit coming on the income tax side in the 2028 time period. He advised that AIM was already working to mitigate some of those challenges projected for 2028, 2029, et cetera, for the income tax piece. He shared that this next week we will probably get our actual dollar figure from the state with the official dollars that we will have for our budget.

Leslee Robinson reminded Council that when we set our budget, we always go in high so some of our payroll accounts still have a lot of funds left in them; because we project higher than normal, that is what leaves us with that overage amount.

Ryan Adamson agreed that Council should not receive the bonus and questioned if there was a possibility, once the figures come back that the employees could get more, or were we tapped out at \$1,000 per employee. Mayor Daniel explained that when they first started talking about it, they were on the fence about whether to do \$500 or \$1,000. He shared that Leslee and Rosie went through the accounts to see what we anticipated having at the end of the year from a cash standpoint. He was not sure he would recommend more than that, because he does want to roll some cash over into next year. He shared that we have about 100 employees, and when it comes to the taxes and stuff, it would end up being about \$107,000 with an expenditure of \$1,000 per full-time employee.

Dan Weigold felt it helped to know that we would still have funds to roll over to next year.

Brent Bockelman stated that he was a firm believer that our employees were a great investment and felt it was a great idea.

Jennifer Romano shared that she would rather do something for the employees than nothing.

Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve a \$1,000 bonus this year for full-time employees with the caveat that we look at the numbers when they come in from the state and to include the mayor and clerk-treasurer. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

ARTS COMMISSION Jennifer Romano reported that the Arts Commission calendars were out and were being distributed. She shared that they were partnering with the local radio station, WJHS 91.5 to do a little feature on historic Whitley County artists every month in 2026.

Having no further business to discuss, Mayor Daniel called the meeting adjourned.

Attest:

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson