

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2025
6:00 P.M.**

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present
Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson – Absent
Deputy Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle - Present
Attorney Marcia McNagny – Present

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 December 9, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING - VACATE OF PUBLIC WAY – BALLARD Mart Ballard of 415 Hanna Street was present to discuss the small piece of property adjacent to his that is at the corner of Ohio Street and Hanna Street.

Mayor Daniel referred to the survey that shows where that piece of land does not go anywhere and dead ends at their property. He noted that it was a really small piece of property and cannot access anything from there, as well the Ballard's have taken care of it for many, many years.

Brent Bockelman questioned what the intentions for that piece of property was going to be. Mr. Ballard advised they already have a fence across a portion of it and would actually like to put in a garage. Brent Bockelman mentioned that over the years it has been somewhat of an eyesore with the vehicles. Mr. Ballard advised they restore and race cars and they cannot do that in a week, which was why they would like to put up a building. Brent Bockelman questioned if there might be another way, maybe with an encroachment agreement or something so that we would not be giving up right of way, not knowing what may happen in the future with the trail being back there and if we would need to connect to it. Mayor Daniel understood and mentioned we would have to cross Clifford's property.

Mayor Daniel questioned the timeframe for putting up the fence and building. Mr. Ballard hoped to have the fence up this spring and then the building would be late summer.

Ryan Adamson questioned Mr. Ballard if he was cited. Mr. Ballard advised he was not, just given a warning for the cars he had out back, but he has moved them.

Additional discussion followed.

Mayor Daniel shared that he had conversations with Mr. Clifford after the Ballard's came to the Board of Works. He explained that typically with a piece of property like this that has two different property owners on either side, we usually split it 50-50 if both residents were interested in the property. He advised he asked Mr. Clifford whether he wanted any of this and he said he did not. Attorney

McNagny advised that was actually the law so if Mr. Clifford was not interested, she thought we could have a waiver stating that he is signing off and relinquishing that right to the land. Brent Bockelman did not think we would have to do that. He explained that right of way was part of the dedicated plat. He advised there really is not any interest outside of the property line to Clifford's on that portion of right-of-way, there would not be any underlying rights to that because the plat ends at that triangular area.

Mayor Daniel paused the Common Council meeting and opened up the floor for public comments on the vacation request for the release of right-of-way.

Tad Varga questioned what the discussion was with the Board of Works regarding this. Dan Weigold advised they discussed the situation and did not see much of an issue with it at this point. He shared that he talked with Nathan Bilger a little bit about it and he had concern about being able to get back to the other properties, but you would not be able to get back there anyway without permission from the property owners. He shared that they felt it was probably a good thing to have happen, to fix an area that needed to be fixed. Tad Varga questioned what was meant by being fixed. Dan Weigold stated the actual property ownership lines. Jennifer Romano noted that by somebody owning it, that would generate more tax. Mayor Daniel noted that theoretically, it was going to generate some kind of tax value that is not currently there, although not a lot.

Hearing no further public comments, Mayor Daniel closed the public hearing and reopened the council meeting.

ORDINANCE 2025-27 – VACATION OF PUBLIC WAY – 1ST READING

Ryan Adamson made a motion to read Ordinance 2025-27 by title only. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Deputy Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Ordinance 2025-27, Vacation of Public Right-of-Way.

Brent Bockelman advised he was not necessarily in favor of it, from the natural vacation of property that we have right away for things that are unforeseen and for the way the property has been kept for the last 20-30 years.

Dan Weigold respected the amazing amount of research Brent Bockelman has done on this, but it is the triangular piece, it would be different for him if it had actual parallel lines going back to somewhere. He noted this piece leads to nowhere and there are property owners on both sides, as well as on the back end of that triangle. He felt in order to utilize that land, we would have to get permissions from other property owners to get access to the trail or whatever it is going back there. He stated he was looking at it from the point that this is a triangle that goes to nowhere and does not have access to anything.

Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-27 on first reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, Ryan Adamson, Jennifer Romano, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold approved, Brent Bockelman opposed.

RUSSELL GILLIAM – CHAIRMAN W. C. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Russ Gilliam, Chairman of the Whitley County Historical Society, was present to talk about signage recognizing outstanding people of Whitley County, as well as historical events that have taken place here. He advised there have been some amazing things that have occurred in Whitley County and with signage he felt we could really improve the visitors' aspect of Columbia City. He knew of several people who were really pushing hard on this as well they have been networking with people from other counties to recognize our historic and unique place. He shared some activities they have planned for this year and was hoping to have a lot of involvement celebrating America's 250th anniversary. He advised they were

not asking for money or anything, just the Council's blessings.

Mayor Daniel shared that Columbia City Connect was planning some kind of a patriotic celebration downtown, we will have our 3rd of July fireworks at the park and then on the 4th of July we will be opening the time capsule at City Hall.

Council members were in agreement to support and help with the different projects however needed.

RESOLUTION 2025-28 – DELETION OF APPROPRIATIONS Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Resolution 2025-28 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Deputy Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Resolution 2025-28, an emergency resolution providing for the deletion of appropriations for several departments of the City of Columbia City for the year 2025 for the action and passage pursuant to IC 6-1.1-18-6.

Mayor Daniel reported that the State of Indiana has let us know about the approval of our budget and our revenues just yesterday. He shared the good news is that Parks and Rec and MVH were the only ones that we had to make budget cuts for. He explained with this Resolution, what we are doing for both of these is cutting 2025's budget in order to take that cash and roll it over to fund next year's budget. He advised Parks and Rec will be fully funded but MVH we still have to cut \$63,000 from that budget but we are hopeful to be able to figure out other places to refund those portions being cut.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-28. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2025-29 – TRANSFER RESOLUTION Brent Bockelman made a motion to read Resolution 2025-29 by title only. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Deputy Clerk Treasurer Rosie Coyle read Resolution 2025-29, an emergency resolution providing for the transfer of appropriations for several departments of the City of Columbia City, Indiana for the year 2025 for the action and passage pursuant to IC 6-1.1-18-6.

Mayor Daniel explained this was our annual reappropriation to ensure that there are no funds in the hole and that we balance things out. He noted that we had excess wages for police this year because of the shortage in staff, as well as excess wages in fire. He added that there was a fair amount in some of the other accounts. He pointed out that the big things we moved money to was group insurance, even though we were ending the year with some cash in that account we were adding a little more not knowing what next year will bring. He added that we also moved money into fire supplies to help with the new truck coming in next year. He explained by using cash to pay for the radio systems, compressor and some of those things we would not have to bond for those, but we will still have to do some bonding for it.

Mayor Daniel commended the department heads and certainly Rosie Coyle and Leslee Robinson on their work on this. He advised we were able to do the end of year \$1,000 bonus for everybody and appreciate Council's support on that.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-29. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS Gary Parrett – update on four new hires, two of them will be attending the academy next week along with Officer German, Patrolling for Presents took place on December 14th at Paige's Crossing and went well, several officers working extra shifts over the past couple weeks driving

through the shopping centers and neighborhoods just being proactive during the holidays, special thank you to the fire department for assisting with the new officers in earning their CPR and First Aid certificates. **Kelly Cearbaugh** – trying to work in leaf pickup weather permitting, salt box at W.A. Jones for repair, taking Santa house back to the shop next week. **Matt Heiden** – they hired Carter Nickolson as the Recreation Coordinator and will start January 5th, Cookies with Santa was a huge success, Father-Daughter tickets go on sale Friday and the dance is February 6th and 7th, shout out to electric department for putting in a safeguard back at the concession stand at Eagle Park to help with visibility since they have had some vandalism back there over the last few months. **Terry Wherry** - all major projects for the year are finished, did a walk through at the old jail with Ed Scott from Emergency Management to see if there were any radios left that might have been purchased with grant money so they can be decommissioned and destroyed according to the grant rules.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel reported that our assessed valuation is up \$40 million from last year and our property tax rate is down about \$.03, so we are now at the lowest property tax rate for the city since 2008. He shared that since 2012, we have basically doubled our assessed evaluation so there was a lot of pros in that but also knowing some of that has to do with market factors. He advised that he had not done the recalculation yet since he has not seen everyone's tax rate for this coming year but last year, we were in the top 10 for cities in Indiana with the lowest tax rates. He reported that he met with Representative Judy to talk about the upcoming session and some of the things with Senate Enrolled Act One that we can hopefully tweak to make better for our future revenues, especially on the income tax side. He shared that he was also working with him a little bit on tweaking some of the food and beverage tax reporting issues. He advised he has a ribbon cutting potentially for Impact X workout facility on Saturday January 10th. He reported that Matt Heiden, Chip Hill, Leslee Robinson and he will be holding BOT amphitheater interviews with two different firms on January 12th, and the city retreat is scheduled for January 29th and 30th in South Bend.

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

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson