

**COMMON COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2026  
6:00 P.M.**

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present  
Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson – Present  
Attorney Marcia McNagy – 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 6:01 p.m. All stood to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES** Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the January 13, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

**ARTS COMMISSION – ANNUAL UPDATE** April Frazier and Taylor Ford were present to give a recap on their 2025 community events.

April Frazier shared that at the end of June they had a Spark Arts Camp, which was intended to spark creativity through the arts and to provide low-income families in our community an opportunity in the arts. She stated that they have typically, in the past, worked with Mission 25, BABE and Park Terrace to pull kids for this camp; however, Mission 25 and BABE were both moving at the time of the camp, so was all Park Terrace kids. She advised it was a one-week camp and transportation was provided through Whitley Transit. She reported that they received an Indiana Arts Commission grant that helped make everything for that camp possible. She went on to report that on September 6<sup>th</sup> they had their 3<sup>rd</sup> annual studio art tour and had 12 artists participate. She advised they added 9 new artists and also added 2 music artists who performed at the outdoor stage next to the Shops at The Sanctuary. She reported that in December they had an Arts Marketplace in conjunction with the Whitley County Historical Museum's Merry Museum Event where local artists were invited to sell their locally made art. She advised there was also a children's project area where they could paint wooden ornaments. She shared that they took that opportunity to pass out the yearly calendars that the Arts Commission had made for local residents.

April explained that they have not only had events, but they have also provided support to various art programs and/or events. She shared that the Old Settlers Committee had a children's coloring contest, and the Arts Commission Board members were the judges. She shared that they gave some monetary support to various art programs in town that they knew could use a little bit of help and were in the process of working with Woodland Senior Center to provide art activities for their residents. She advised that they also provided monetary support to the Columbia City High School Band and theater programs. She reported that the middle school arts teacher

approached the Arts Commission for help in advertising and possibly judging for their Spring Fling Art Show in March.

April shared that they have already started some planning for 2026; they have some interest in Baker Park to do some art things there and potentially have the studio art tour there, so everyone is in one spot. She stated that they would also potentially like to start an art cabinet at Baker Park much like the book cabinet concept but with free art supplies. She noted that some other things they have started talking about was various spots for public art installations like the Blue River Bridge and maybe on some public infrastructure like the electrical boxes such as in Thomas Marshall Plaza and maybe on stoplight control panels. She explained that someone would create an art design, put it on a decal and then wrap the electrical panels with artwork. She stated they were also hoping for maybe some Eagle Park options. She advised they have started the process of collaborating with the American 250 Project Committee to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S. and will plan to do murals in South Whitley, Churubusco and Columbia City with the theme of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

**ORDINANCE 2026-1 – REZONE HODGES** Brent Bockelman made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-1 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-1 an ordinance amending the zoning classification of certain property from the R-1 Single-Family Residential District to the GB General Business District.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-1 on second and final reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2026-2 – AMENDMENT TO STORMWATER RATES** Brent Bockelman made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-2 by title only. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-2 an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City Municipal Stormwater Utility.

Mayor Daniel noted that this was discussed at the last meeting with Baker Tilly and our Utility Rate Advisory Board. Leslee Robinson advised the public hearing will be held at the next meeting.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-2 on first reading. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2026-3 AMENDMENT TO WATER RATES** Dan Weigold made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-3 by title only. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-3 an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City Municipal Water Utility.

Mayor Daniel noted that one thing being looked into was the water tap fee. He informed Council that a cost comparison was being done of what it costs us to actually do the water tap versus what we are charging. He did not think anything would happen in this ordinance but that could

change depending on the analysis.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-3 on first reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2026-4 AMENDMENT TO SEWER RATES** Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-4 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-4 an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City Municipal Sewer Utility.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-4 on first reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2026-5 AMENDMENT TO ELECTRIC RATES** Tad Varga made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-5 by title only. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-5 an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City Municipal Electric Utility.

Brent Bockelman made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-5 on first reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS** **Tom LaRue** – update on Truck 101 repairs, equipment starting to come in for new truck, continue looking at all options for 800 radios, repairs to the west side of the fire station is complete, looking at using some of the old compressor components to upgrade our cascade system on Engine 102. **Gary Parrett** – update on new officers, build Lego’s with local police community event filled up within three hours of posting it and will plan to do more of those events throughout the year, update on winter storm event. **Kelly Cearbaugh** – reported on snow removal and expressed appreciation to all the departments who helped out, repairs to sewer vac truck. **Matt Heiden** - got the water line in for the dog park, working on getting fence quotes, the father-daughter dance is sold out, baseball/softball registration started. **Chip Hill** – permit for the railroad trail crossing was approved, Meyer Najem was chosen for the Build Operate Transfer for the amphitheater, RDC gave direction to get appraisals for demolition costs for the jail and the Smith Brothers property. **Mike Shoda** – getting quite a few calls about frozen water lines from customers who are either in trailers or in the newer homes where the pips come up in the garage and then they forget to close their garage doors. **Mike Cook** - received patch kit for the Dystor and waiting for warmer temperatures to install it, still working on year-end sludge report for EPA and Steel Dynamics Annual Report.

**MAYOR REPORT** Mayor Daniel reported that he would be in Indianapolis tomorrow for the Mayor’s Roundtable as well as a couple of legislative meetings. He reminded Council that the City retreat was Thursday and Friday and will be featuring Councilman Bockelman on Lunch with the Mayor the following Friday.

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

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Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

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Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson