

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026
6:00 P.M.**

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present
Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson – Present
Attorney Marcia McNagny – Present via phone

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 January 27, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING – VACATE – TRIER Scott Trier of Trier Properties reported that they bought a piece of land with the purpose of developing it by putting in duplexes or something of that nature. He explained there was an undeveloped alleyway that goes through the parcels that they would like to have vacated to allow for more flexibility in their development.

Mayor Daniel paused the Council meeting and opened the floor for a public hearing. Hearing no comments or questions, Mayor Daniel concluded the public hearing and reopened the city council meeting.

Tad Varga made a motion to read ordinance 2026-6 by title only. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-6, Vacation of Public Way.

Brent Bockelman made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-6 on first reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING – CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY MUNICIPAL RATE CHANGES

Mayor Daniel paused the common council meeting and opened the floor for a public hearing on all four utility rate changes.

Mayor Daniel questioned if there were any public comments on the electric utility. No comments or questions were raised.

Mayor Daniel questioned if there were any public comments regarding the water utility. It was questioned what the increased amounts were. Mayor Daniel shared that the current water bill would go from \$34.51 to \$36.57, an increase of \$2.06 for 2026 and then for 2027, it increases to

\$39.04 and then \$41.66 in 2028. He reported that over the three years, the cost would go up a total of \$7.15.

Mayor Daniel explained that Baker Tilly proposed to us an average of about 3.5% per year over all the city utilities. He advised that electric was at 1%, but water is at 6% and then 6.75% and 6.75%. He shared for sewer it was 4%, 6%, then 7% and for stormwater it ends up being a 35% increase initially, going from \$10.60 to \$13.58, and then 11% in 2027 and no increase in 2028. He advised that overall, the 2026 increases for water, sewer, stormwater, and electric ends up averaging 3.64%, and then for 2027 it is 3.54%, and then 2028 it is 3.35%.

Mike Dear of 440 Deer Path questioned what was being done about the brown water coming all the time. Mike Shoda advised they redid the filters and put in new media. He explained with the media, they were told to keep a chlorine level in the filters but turned out it was not high enough and they did not get the filters seeded right.

Mike Dear commented that he just wanted to make sure the guys were paying attention and doing the best they should be to make sure income was coming in and there was no money being wasted. He shared a picture that was taken of what he assumed was a city meter hooked to a fire hydrant out on 600. He advised it has been there for over five months and was sure it was not being billed, and that any water left in it has frozen. He noted that it was not a cheap meter. He figured it was probably put on for a contractor to use but felt it was terrible management for that meter to be out in the wintertime. He felt there were areas that could be looked at to make sure there is not wasteful stuff taking place before raising rates just because it is an easy step. He felt there needed to be some internal things looked at.

Mayor Daniel questioned if there were any public comments on sewer. No comments or questions were raised.

Mayor Daniel questioned if there were any public comments on stormwater. No comments or questions were raised.

Mayor Daniel closed the public hearing on the rate increase and reopened the city council meeting.

ORDINANCE 2026-2 AMENDMENT TO STORMWATER RATES – 2ND READING

Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-2 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-2, City of Columbia City, Indiana, an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City Municipal Stormwater Utility.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve ordinance 2026-2 on second and final reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE 2026-3 AMENDMENT TO WATER RATES – 2ND READING Brent

Bockelman made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-3 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-3,

City of Columbia City, Indiana, an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City Municipal Water Utility.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-3 on second and final reading. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE 2026-4 AMENDMENT TO SEWER RATES – 2ND READING 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, City of Columbia City, Indiana, an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City, Municipal Sewer Utility.

Brent Bockelman made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-4 on second and final reading. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE 2026-5 AMENDMENT ELECTRIC RATES – 2ND READING Jennifer Romano 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, City of Columbia City, Indiana, an ordinance amending the rates and charges for the City of Columbia City, Municipal Electric Utility.

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

ORDINANCE 2026-7 RULES FOR ATTENDEES AT MEETINGS Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-7 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-7, an ordinance adopting formal rules of behavior for attendees at meetings.

Mayor Daniel shared that we have been counseled and encouraged by the state and AIM to pass a more formal set of rules for the way we structure these meetings. He explained that this governs the way in which the presiding officer would handle the business, public input, as well as keeping respectful dialogue and timelines.

Leslee Robinson advised she and Jennifer Romano worked on this together. She shared that they looked at multiple ordinances from different municipalities to come up with this final piece.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve ordinance 2026-7 on first reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Mike Shoda** - finishing up inventory, water main break due to the limestone base. **Chip Hill** - working on getting the Build, Operate, Transfer going for the amphitheater, working to get appraisals and demo costs for the jail as well as for another contaminated property in the city, having conversations with Jerry Busche on how to TIF his property. **Mike Cook** – ordered new pumps for Irish Glen and Wooddale as part of the final phase of the SCADA project, performed a leak test on the Dystor and everything is in great shape, quoting new switchover valves for the sludge heater. **Matt Heiden** - registration has

started for baseball and softball and will last until March 7, had a very successful father/daughter dance, received more estimates on the dog park and will be taking those to the Park Board meeting in a couple weeks, sending Kash Uher to get his Certified Pool Operator certification. **Terry Wherry** - installed new copier at Eagle Park office, built a couple new computers for the pool, met with SOS at the jail to discuss having the door controllers and cameras on our system by the end of the week. **Gary Parrett** – update on the 4 new police officers, all of the tornado sirens are working, had several dispatchers attend Critical Incident Crisis Communication training, next week they are doing firearms training with the officers at the state police range. **Shawn Lickey** – continue changing out poles, working on changing and updating some of the job descriptions, North substation testing is scheduled for April 6, met with the engineers on the OCR project. **Tom LaRue** – update on breathing air compressor, update on Truck 101 repairs, Convoy Technology camera mounted on the truck and will be shooting a commercial once the weather breaks, Live Burn Day is scheduled for February 17.

YOUTH COUNCIL Kylah Hockemeyer was present representing the Youth Council. She reported on their past and future events.

CLERK TREASURER REPORT Leslee Robinson reported that she would be joining Mayor Daniel in Indianapolis to meet with Representative Judy and the Department of Revenue regarding the Food and Beverage Tax and ways in which things can be improved for us as well as other municipalities who have this tax in place.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel reported that he would be in Indianapolis for the Mayor's Commissioner's Caucus and also to meet with Leslee and Representative Judy. He reminded everyone that we would be closed for President's Day and then he would be in Indianapolis again for the AIM Legislative dinner. He advised he would not be at the next meeting as he will be in Washington, D.C. with Shawn Lickey for the Indiana Municipal Power Agency's fly-in where they can speak with representatives and senators about municipal power.

ARTS COMMISSION Jennifer Romano reported they were planning a studio art market, instead of a tour, which will bring everyone together in one location. She advised it was scheduled for September 12, 2026 here in Columbia City.

REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION Tad Varga reported they were waiting on one more soil boring recommendation on the old LML property so were getting closer to being able to start marketing that property. He advised they were getting appraisals for the Van Buren/Washington Street site to maybe do a project there. He gave an update on the former Whitley County Jail and the Smith Brothers property. He reported that they approved a TIF district for an apartment complex that could possibly be coming to town in the near future.

CHICKENS Ryan Adamson reported that he was contacted by Mr. Clouse in reference to having chickens in the city and thought he had spoken with a couple other council members. He shared that he essentially encouraged him to come in and speak to the council, if that was his passion. He advised he did some checking and noted that homeowner associations supersede any ordinance, so if the ordinance says you can have something and a homeowner's association says you cannot, then you cannot but if the ordinance says you cannot have something, a

homeowner's association cannot change it and make it broader. He advised he also checked with two cities, Jasper and Terre Haute, on their experiences with chickens.

Mayor Daniel opened the floor for public comment.

Andrew Clouse of 346 North Walnut Street expressed his interest in being able to have chickens and offered his thoughts on a possible blueprint to implementing it. He advised he would email a copy to council members.

Konnie Lutz of 602 West Columbia Parkway was present to express her opposition to allowing chickens.

Having no further comments or questions, Mayor Daniel called the meeting adjourned.

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinsons