

**COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026
6:00 PM**

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present
Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson – 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 April 14, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT There were no public comments.

ORDINANCE 2026-12 AUTHORIZING PREPAYMENT OF CERTAIN

CLAIMS Leslee Robinson explained this ordinance came about from her training which, according to State Statute, authorizes the Clerk Treasurer to pay some claims ahead of Board of Works approval. She shared that since the Board only meets twice a month there are times when claims come in that need to be paid prior to that. Attorney McNagny reported that the Board of Works passed a Resolution allowing for this. She advised that the claims still go through State Board of Accounts approval, and Leslee still has to go through the proper processes as well. She shared that this just helps with those claims that need to be paid prior to Board approval.

Ryan Adamson assumed this referred to regular bills. Leslee Robinson advised that was correct.

Brent Bockelman mentioned that the funds were probably already in the budget, it was just the claim itself comes in at a time that requires payment. Leslee Robinson advised that was correct and gave an example of the Enterprise bill that comes in and is due within a week of receiving the claim.

Ryan Adamson made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-12 by title only. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-12 an Ordinance authorizing prepayment of certain claims prior to Board of Works allowance and approval.

Ryan Adamson confirmed with Leslee that she would still bring those prepaid claims to the Board. Leslee Robinson advised that was correct. Attorney McNagny advised those claims still have to be approved by the Board of Works and the Ordinance lists the claims that are allowed to be prepaid.

Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-12 on first reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

WHITLEY COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT REPORT

Jon Gotz was present to review the annual activities report for the MS4 that was submitted to Council. He shared that this report was required as part of the permit process.

Jon Gotz shared that 2026 was the fifth year of the current permit cycle and noted that IDEM will be updating the MS4 general permit and the construction general permit at the end of the year. He advised IDEM was contemplating some changes and one of the changes was to look at a tiered permit based on the population of the communities. He reported that based on Columbia City's population we would be at the lowest tier which would not have much impact on what we are required to do. He shared another change they were looking at involved facility inspections and reported that right now we have 3 facilities that we do inspections on. He reported that IDEM was trying to ease the regulatory burden and since they already regulate water and wastewater treatment, they are going to back those out of our facilities inspections. Mayor Daniel commented that IDEM trying to ease regulatory burden was not something that happens very often. Jon Gotz reported that another thing IDEM was doing in that regard was the Water Quality Characterization report and felt they have decided it was becoming too much. He shared that it has to be updated every year and can be quite an extensive process. He advised that we would continue to do water quality monitoring, which is what they are interested in; the data showing what our water quality is and what is happening based on what we are doing programmatically. He reported in that regard it seems like we continue to benefit from the CSO project; our e-coli levels have been substantially lower since that project was completed.

Jon Gotz reported that we were audited on our MS4 program for the public education and participation, the illicit discharge detection eliminate, and the municipal operations. He shared that we had a few minor deficiencies that have been corrected including getting our stormwater ordinances updated.

Jon Gotz shared that one of the things the new MS4 general permit may ask of us is to look at our development regulations and reduce anything that may be a barrier to using green infrastructure and impact development. He explained there was a wide disparity in communities as far as their approach to green infrastructure and impact development.

Jon Gotz felt that we were doing a pretty good job in municipal operations. He reported that street sweeping has been a big one in that we have removed 293,000 lbs. of debris from our streets that eventually end up in either our storm sewers or combined sewers. He advised that all of that sand and grit have a negative impact on our liftstations. He noted the dog waste stations throughout town help to keep that cleaned up, which the waste can be a contributor to e-coli. He advised they continue to do annual training for the staff, which is one of the requirements of the permit. He shared that they use the Local Technical Assistance Program online courses that are free of charge to anyone interested in learning more about the MS4 program.

Jennifer Romano questioned with the recent storms we have had and the high amount of water moving through, were the waterways being checked during those occurrences or only a scheduled basis. Jon Gotz advised that he does check the Blue River and Phillips Ditch once a year to walk the banks as well as survey the stormwater outfalls to see if anything is coming out of them that should not be. He shared he has walked part of the Blue River and noted some areas where the banks are sluffing off. He explained part of the issue there is that a lot of the river passes through soil that is sandy, so when there is a high volume of stormwater it soaks into the sandy soil and puts excess pressure on the banks which tends to weaken the banks causing them to sluff off.

Jennifer Romano questioned Mr. Gotz if his office does any type of bank stabilization projects. Mr. Gotz advised that they do not but there were watershed groups that could do that. He noted there were mechanisms in place where watershed committees could be set up and could apply for funding.

RESOLUTION 2026-13 REAL PROPERTY ABATEMENT – VECTOR

MIXERS Dale Buuck was present to discuss the tax abatement for Vector Mixers and shared that this was a specialty manufacturer. He shared that Vector was unique in that

they take on the remanufacturing of an existing truck that has seen its better days; not a lot of people want to handle that. He advised that Dane Keener was present and shared that he and his wife were considering a very risky future investment to expand where they were currently at in the old More's Farm Store location. He noted that if they go forward with this, based off the assessed value over 10 years it would be almost \$250,000 in tax revenue for the City.

Dane Keener, President and owner, along with his wife, of Vector Mixers shared that he has been in this business for about 30 years. He advised that they have a lot of customers who like to reuse components and rebuild their old trucks, which is what they were focusing on right now. He shared that once they get the addition built and as time goes on, they would like to start working on building new trucks as well. He advised they would eventually like to get to the point where they are building about 250 trucks per year out of that location. He reported when they started out, they did not build any trucks, the second year they built 35, last year they did 41 trucks and this year they are going to finish out with about 50 trucks. He advised that they were landlocked with the current building, so it was time to do something.

Mayor Daniel confirmed they do not have a major corporation backing them and they do their own thing. Mr. Keener advised that was correct; he and his wife own the whole thing.

Dale Buuck advised that the proposal was phased in and was asking to slowly phase in to 100% of the tax rate. He noted that the calculation was based off of 5 years.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Resolution 2026-13 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Resolution 2026-13 a Resolution of the Columbia City Common Council approving the deduction of assessed valuation for real property improvements. Mayor Daniel noted that it should be for real property rather than personal property. Leslee Robinson also noted that it references Whitely County Council at the bottom. It was noted to mark through and make the needed changes.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-13 with the noted changes for a 5-year abatement. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, Brent Bockelman, Jennifer Romano, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold approved, Ryan Adamson was opposed.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATEMENT OF BENEFITS – DOT AMERICA Dale Buuck reported that DOT was doing really good and loved by Zimmer. He advised they continue to be a really interesting and unique company. He reported that they were always hitting their numbers as best they could and were the first to get in their CF-1. He reminded the Council that they were in last year to share that they were getting ready to buy a really expensive piece of equipment that is only made in Switzerland. He reported that there was currently a massive tariff on it to the tune of almost \$300,000 so the parent company was holding off for a little bit in hopes the tariffs are lowered a little bit. He advised that once that vacuum chamber finally gets here, they will be doing even better on their employment that shows on their CF-1. He stressed that they were a really, really good company in the supply chain for medical devices.

Jennifer Romano made a motion to approve the personal property abatement 2017-24, real property abatement 2017-23 and real property abatement 2022-6 for DOT America, find them in compliance and approve another year of abatement. Tad Varga seconded the motion, Brent Bockelman, Jennifer Romano, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold approved, Ryan Adamson was opposed.

ORDINANCE 2026-9 – AMENDMENT FOR ZONING CLASSIFICATION Tad Varga made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-9 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read

Ordinance 2026-9 an Ordinance amending the zoning classification of certain property from the R-1 single family residential district to the R-2 two family residential district.

Nathan Bilger, Planning Director, stated that during the first reading there were comments from the Council as to how to handle the Plan Commissions condition that there not be more than 2 units. He felt like the Council wanted to make it into a formal written commitment and shared that the ordinance has been amended to reflect that. He advised the commitment was prepared for the applicant to sign if this gets approved.

Mayor Daniel reported that our electric department did go out and remove the third meter from the residence.

Dan Weigold made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-9 on second and final reading. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, Jennifer Romano, Tad Varga and Dan Weigold approved, Ryan Adamson and Brent Bockelman were opposed.

REVISED JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Police Department - Gary Parrett shared that these job descriptions had not been updated since 1995. He reviewed the changes made to the Deputy Chief and Administrative Secretary with the Council.

Brent Bockelman made a motion to approve the Administrative Secretary and Deputy Chief job descriptions as presented. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

Test Kitchen Manager - Chip Hill explained this was to run the Test Kitchen at the Marshall Building. He shared that Leslee Robinson came up with the idea of having one of her clerks, who has a direct interest in, to assist with the Kitchen. He advised this job description lays out all of the responsibilities and duties.

Leslee Robinson explained the “meat” of the job description was pulled from the Community Engagement Specialist job description. She shared in order for us to be able to compensate her clerk for the additional work load we needed to have this job description so that it could be added to the salary ordinance.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve the Test Kitchen Manager job description. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

POLICY UPDATES – COMP TIME AND WORK SCHEDULING

Leslee Robinson reported that we needed to tweak some verbiage because some of our departments were allowing Flex Time and Comp Time but it was not specifically spelled out in the policy on the civil side. She pointed out the revisions made to the policy definitions as well as the additional wording to allow for Flex Time and Comp Time. She noted that it would also have to be included in the salary ordinance.

Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve the definitions and abbreviations 1.3 Policy as presented. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve Policy 4.4 and 4.7 as presented. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Mike Shoda** – working on Jeffrey Drive. **Chip Hill** – downtown clean up went well, have potential interest in the jail. **Matt Heiden** – opening day went well, pool tile repairs continue, interviews for open spots. **Toby Fralick** – update on new breathing air compressor and new truck, Truck 107 still has leak and have about a 6-week lead time on parts. **Mike Cook** – roof completed, waiting on new VFD for gravity belt thickener, received quote to repair headworks pump, started second round of biomonitoring. **Kelly Cearbaugh** – finished up assisting with tree board tree removal, crew working on ADA ramps, street patching

and sweeping, limb and appliance pickup coming up. **Gary Parrett** – officer updates, everything in dispatch running well, gearing up for First Fridays and Farmers Market, 3 interns from the high school.

YOUTH COUNCIL Kirra Buckles was present representing the Youth Council and gave an update on their activities.

CLERK TREASURER REPORT Leslee Robinson reported that we received proposals for the fire truck financing and depending on when it was scheduled to be delivered will depend on if those quotes are brought to Council the first or second meeting in May.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel reported that Lunch with the Mayor will be Friday. He reminded everyone that City Hall will be closed Tuesday for the primary election. He shared that on Monday evening the Plan Commission will be having the hearing and hopefully adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. He advised that the America 250 Committee thought it would be neat to do a red, white and blue lighting contest much like we do for the Christmas lighting awards and do the same type of awards system. Council was in support of the contest.

ARTS COMMISSION Jennifer Romano requested that anyone having a proposal for the Pursuit of Happiness traveling canvas to submit those by May 1. She advised it was a way in which the Arts Commission can partner with the America 250 group.

TREE BOARD Brent Bockelman reported on the Arbor Day celebration at the middle school.

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

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Attest:

Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson