COMMON COUNCIL
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2026
6:00 P.M.

Mayor Ryan Daniel – Present
Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson – Present
Attorney Marcia McNagny – Present at 6:10 p.m.
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 September 8, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT There were no public comments.

PUBLIC HEARING – REAL ESTATE EQUITIES VOLUNTARY ANNEXATION Mayor Daniel reminded the Council that at the last meeting there was a petition provided for 100% voluntary annexation from Real Estate Equities involving 4 parcels off of River Bluff Drive for a future apartment project.

Roger Musselman was present to talk about their plans. He reported that overtime they hope to build 342 high quality market rate apartments on the approximately 20 acres that will be called Eagle Landing. He shared that they believe it will be a great addition to Columbia City and look forward to being a good neighbor and long-term partner.

Ryan Adamson questioned if the apartments would be income based. Mr. Messelman advised they would not be and will all be market rate.

Mayor Daniel recessed the Common Council meeting and opened the floor for a public hearing on the voluntary annexation.

Hearing no comments or questions, Mayor Daniel closed the public hearing.

ORDINANCE 2026-29 – VOLUNTARY ANNEXATION REAL ESTATE EQUITIES – 2nd READING Tad Varga made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-29 by title only. Jennifer Romano seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.
Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-29 an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Columbia City, Indiana, annexing certain territory to the City of Columbia City, Indiana placing the same within the corporate boundaries thereof and making the same a part of the City of Columbia City.
Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-29 on second reading. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

It was noted that third reading will be at the next meeting.

GMP FOR EAGLE PARK AMPHITHEATER & SITE IMPROVEMENTS
Mayor Daniel shared that this has been a project that has taken a lot of twist and turns but finally in front of Council was the Maximum Guaranteed Price for the amphitheater. He advised that we would continue to work with Meyer Najem, who is our consultant and construction manager, to continue to drive the cost down further while ensuring a high-quality environment and product. He mentioned that along the

way there has been bonding authority approved and a Building Corporation created. He stated that this was a BOT process; build, operate, transfer.

Mayor Daniel pointed out to council the Maximum Guaranteed Price, which ends up being the $6,542,717 number. He referenced the CC Building Corporation financing piece showing in totality of the lease structures of $7.475 and noting that there will obviously be interest and other costs in there. He stressed that they would continue to attack this issue from a fundraising direction as well as drive the cost down further. He reminded Council that the majority of this will be covered by the food and beverage tax revenues and reported that they have estimated it bringing in $458,000 per year; however, thought we were exceeding that estimate right now. He shared that will help to cut down on the amount of Cum Cap Development funds used. He shared that he was hoping to be able to inform Council of a large donation coming in but have run into a snag on that and will continue to aggressively pursue it.

Mayor Daniel referenced the rendering of the amphitheater and explained the layout.

Dan Weigold questioned if this would be managed by our Park Department. Mayor Daniel advised it would.

Jennifer Romano questioned what was inside the actual structure. Harrison Massonne with Meyer Najem explained there are block walls that are designed for sound and would separate the back stage from the front stage. He advised there were some decorative brown columns in there, lights and preparations for people to bring in their equipment.

Brent Bockelman questioned if the cost included sound equipment and electrical. Mayor Daniel advised it would include electrical hookups. Mr. Massonne reported that it would include raceways for wiring of AV equipment. Mayor Daniel shared that they have been working with our electric department to make sure there is substantial power there for both large and small events. Chip Hill added that there will be a sound booth area that they would run standard cabling to.

Mayor Daniel reported that they have been working diligently with Meyer Najem as our recommended BOT Contractor, Ice Miller as our bond counsel as well as with Baker Tilly, our financial advisors. He stated that the hope was that if approval of the recommendation is granted at this meeting, they could break ground by the end of October, and completion would be by the end of August next year.
Tad Varga felt it was important to make sure people were aware that this has been in progress for several years. Mayor Daniel advised that in 2020 it was in the initial plans for Eagle Park. He stated that having an outside performance space was the number one thing requested by our residents when we conducted a survey. Jennifer Romano felt it was also worth pointing out that it was a reason for establishing the Food and Beverage Tax, which was a very long and involved process. Ryan Adamson confirmed that was an optional tax. Mayor Daniel advised it was and was a tax that many cities and towns having been doing for years.

RESOLUTION 2026-31 – FINANCING BY CC BUILDING CORPORATION

Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Resolution 2026-31 by title only. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Resolution 2026-31 a Resolution of the Common Council of the City of Columbia City approving matters related to financing by Columbia City Building Corporation.

Mayor Daniel explained how the BOT process works in that we effectively have contracted with the Building Corporation to be our bond holder, and we then pay those bonds through the Building Corporation.

Tad Varga made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-31. Dan Weigold seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING 2027 BUDGET Mayor Daniel shared that Leslee Robinson has worked hard on this budget as it has been a struggle. He reminded Council that from 2025 to 2026 the City had $400,000 less in property tax funds than we had last year and for 2027 we anticipate $250,000 less than this year. He stated that there has been significant cuts pretty much across the board but noted there were some areas they had to increase such as insurance dollars. He shared that in talking with the high school students about property taxes he explained that revenues continue to go down as expenses continue to go up. He pointed out that there were a lot of minus signs in this budget and specifically noted a large expense under city hall repairs regarding the elevator. Leslee Robinson shared that the elevator was in need of a full replacement as we cannot get parts for the current one. Mayor Daniel clarified that it was still functional and passed inspection, but it was to the point where if it breaks down, we cannot get parts to repair it. He reported that was a large expenditure we were not expecting to have. He also pointed out where they moved funds from one account to another such as from the fire fund over to LOIT to help pay for the new fire truck.

Leslee Robinson reported that she was working with Krohn & Associates, our CPA, because our numbers were not good. She shared that they were able to get some final numbers to at least get us through 2027. She advised that they were working on a 5-year projection plan and noted that we did not have one and was not sure there was ever real concern for having one in the past, but with the future loss of property tax monies it was important. She advised our budget probably would not get approved until the end of December. She reported that it was recently made known that our DLGF Rep was leaving and was unsure that we would get much help from them so was relying on Krohn to give us additional guidance.

Leslee Robinson reported that we would be paying off the water bond this year, as well as the sewer bond at the first of the year, so are making some traction with those departments. She shared, as told to the department heads, we are going to have to make some hard decisions for 2028 and moving forward, especially if we continue to lose tax dollars. She reported if the LIT goes through and the projections from the MUST meetings is passed it would put us in a better position however there is no guarantee as things seem to change every day.

Mayor Daniel shared that the state legislature will continue to tinker with property taxes. He advised that the idea of stability when it comes to taxes is nonexistent right now and reported that there were 4 or 5 different plans at the state level. He mentioned that at the end of the day what this does is basically handicaps the services we can offer, and our residents are not paying any less in property taxes, which is very frustrating. He added that the Governor, for whatever purpose, has suspended the gas tax for the last several months but thankfully has been given clearance to reimburse cities, towns and counties for what has been lost in that timeframe. He was unsure what was going to happen there in the future but was something that could also be taken away. He mentioned that the nice thing we have going for us is that we are a growing community.

Brent Bockelman confirmed that we still do not know for sure what we are going to get so the budget they are looking at currently could be temporary approval. Mayor Daniel advised that was absolutely correct.

Mayor Daniel recessed the Common Council meeting and opened the floor for the public hearing on the 2027 budget. Hearing no comments or questions, Mayor Daniel closed the public hearing.

APPROVAL OF THE 2027 BUDGET Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve the 2027 budget. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE 2026-30 – PROHIBITING COMMERCIAL USE OF PUBLIC RECORDS – 2ND READING Jennifer Romano made a motion to read Ordinance 2026-30 by title only. Tad Varga seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

Clerk Treasurer Leslee Robinson read Ordinance 2026-30 an Ordinance to prohibit the commercial use of public records for electronic data storage system.

Mayor Daniel stated that this is to make sure people are not making public records requests and then turning around and utilizing that information to solicit. He advised that is was really a consumer protection method.

Ryan Adamson made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-30 on second reading. Brent Bockelman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

2026 YEAR TO DATE BUDGET UPDATE Leslee Robinson shared that she was going to start sharing a budget update once a month so that Council can know where the budget stands. She noted there were a couple negatives, one being in the park donation account but understood that Chip Hill and Lori Shipman have done a final walk through with the DNR on the trail so hopefully will be getting that money soon. She stated that she just wanted Council to be aware of those funds they had control over and to answer any questions.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS **Shawn Lickey –** still cleaning up Park Terrace and restoring grounds at Eagle Park, continue switching customers over to the new infrastructure, breaking ground for new fuel pumps at Morsches Park. **Chip Hill –** fixed sinkhole in the Thomas Marshall Park, started Phase III of Westgate, continue to work with the railroad on the trail crossing, working on getting a DORA in place for downtown. **Matt Heiden –** removing old skate park at Morsches Park, shade structures being installed over the dog park, working on Mother/Son Halloween event, JFL is moving forward. **Terry Wherry –** shut network down to do an upgrade on the firmware on the firewall. **Mike Shoda –** drained and patched East tower due to a leak, water main break at SDI. **Mike Cook –** working on industrial flow monitoring, pumping and cleaning out tanks, replaced garden tractor. **Toby Fralick –** continue to install tools on the new engine, Trent Stamper working on fall prevention program, completed 189 hours of training last month.

MAYOR REPORT Mayor Daniel reported he spent the day at the high school teaching classes, has the Walmart grand opening on Friday and Youth Council on Thursday. He reminded everyone of the Family Safety Festival on Saturday and the AIM Ideas Summit the following week. He reported that the last First Friday is October 2nd, and he will be out of town for the next council meeting.

Mayor Daniel shared his realization in the dichotomy of having such a tight budget but then approving a massive amphitheater project and wanted to make sure the public understands the different resources we can use. He explained that we can build certain things with utility funds, property tax dollars, income tax as well as food and beverage tax.

ARTS COMMISSION Jennifer Romano reported on their art in the park event and shared that it was fantastic. She was hopeful that in the future Baker Park can become more of an art location.

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