

City of Columbus
Regular City Council Meeting
Alternative Meeting Format
MN Statute, Section 13D.021

04.27.2022

The 04.27.2022 meeting of the City of Columbus City Council was called to order at 6:29 p.m. by Mayor Jesse Preiner at City Hall. Present were Council Members Robert Busch, Janet Hegland, Shelly Logren (via teleconference) and Sue Wagamon; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, City Attorney Bill Griffith, City Engineer Kevin Bittner, Public Communication Coordinator Connor Keith and Public Works Director Jim Windingstad.

Also in attendance: Anoka County Assessor Alex Guggenberger (via teleconference), Planning Commission Chairman Ron Hanegraaf, Park Board Vice-Chair Kris King, Director Kate Luthner of the Forest Lake Area School Board and Jennifer Waletzko (via teleconference)

1. **CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**
 1. **Call to Order – Regular Meeting – 6:29 p.m.**
 2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **CONSENT AGENDA**
 3. **MOTION – Agenda Approval with Additions**
 4. **MOTION – Approval of the 03-23-2022 City Council Meeting Minutes**
 5. **MOTION – Approval of the 02-09-2022 City Council Meeting Minutes**
 6. ~~MOTION – Approval of the 04-13-2022 City Council Meeting Minutes~~
 7. **MOTION – Approval of the 02-03-2022 City Council Meeting Minutes**
 8. ~~MOTION – Approval of the 11-22-2021 City Council Meeting Minutes~~
 9. ~~MOTION – Approval of the 12-29-2021 City Council Meeting Minutes~~
 10. ~~MOTION – Approval of the Senior Accountant Job Description~~
 11. **Pay Bills as Posted**

Motion by Hegland to approve Consent Agenda items 3-5, 7 and 11. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

3. **PRESENTATION**
 12. **Public Open Forum**

Kate Luthner of 18627 Jennings St. NE, a Director on the Forest Lake Area School Board, introduced herself to the Council and announced her filing for candidacy for Minnesota State Senate. Luthner also made herself available to the Council to answer any school board questions.

13. Planning Commission Report

The scheduled meeting on April 20, 2022, was cancelled, so no report.

14. Park Board Report

King recapped the five different quotes the Park Board collected for installing trees in the Columbus City Park, highlighting the differences between the estimates regarding the price of the trees specifically as well as installation and watering packages and warranty programs.

Since the price of all maple trees are all priced the same at Rum River Tree Farm, the Park Board recommended approval from the Council of Rum River's estimate (\$6304.40) for the trees (\$4109.40), installation (\$140 per tree), delivery (\$275) and mulch (\$240) with a one-year warranty and allowing the Park Board to reconvene to choose which type of maple they wanted installed.

Wagamon indicated she'd personally purchased trees from one of the nurseries included in the Park Board's presentation, but not Rum River and wanted to know about the quality of Rum River's trees. Hegland and Preiner both vouched for Rum River's trees, including Preiner vouching for utilizing a warranty. Logren also shared that Rum River had worked with municipal governments in the past and would know about the problems different cities face.

Motion by Hegland to approve the Park Board's recommendation to plant 12 trees from Rum River Tree Farm, including the planting charge, the cost of the trees, delivery and the mulch for a total not to exceed \$6500. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

King requested a Park Board meeting be arranged in the next 1-2 weeks to finalize tree selections and planting locations.

15. LBAE Review and Questions

Guggenberger previewed the Local Board of Appeals and Equalization meeting presentation with the City Council members including answering questions about the number of calls (25), increase in residential market value (17.5 percent) and the impact of this increase in market value on the homestead credit, before the LBAE taking place on April 28, 2022.

16. Mark Daly resignation from EDA and Park Board

Motion by Preiner to accept the resignation from the EDA and Park Board from Mark Daly. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

4. STAFF & CONSULTANT REPORTS

17. Engineer's Report

Bittner shared that the City took bids for two different projects on April 22, 2022: Hornsby Street and Kettle River Heights. Both projects received seven bids apiece.

Hornsby Street's improvement is associated with the ongoing construction of the new Love's Travel Stop, who will be fully funding the project. The lowest bid was \$454,520.30 submitted by Park Construction Co., approximately \$100,000 under the City's estimate. Griffith advised that a motion accepting this bid be subject to the receiving of a letter of credit from Love's. The City received notice this evening that this letter is on its way, but it may be a day or two before the letter is in the City's

possession. Bittner recommended that this contract be awarded to Park Construction Co. subject to receiving the letter of credit.

Wagamon inquired why the City has to approve something that a private business would fund. Bittner clarified that the City is the contractual agency for the work, and Griffith further shared that since the improvement was being made to public property, only the City can approve that work.

Motion by Preiner to accept the bids and award the contract to the 2022 Hornsby Street Improvement to Park Construction Co. in the amount of \$454,520.30, subject to receiving the letter of credit. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

The lowest bid for the Kettle River Heights’ street improvement project was submitted by Valley Paving, Inc. in the amount of \$364,112. This project is part of the annual street maintenance program, meaning the bid plus engineering costs of \$25,000 to-\$30,000 fits within the City’s budgeted \$400,000. Bittner recommended awarding this contract to Valley Paving, Inc.

Motion by Preiner to award the contract for the 2022 Kettle River Heights street improvement project to Valley Paving, Inc. in the amount of \$364,112. Seconded by Busch. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

18. Attorney’s Report

Griffith presented Resolution 22-07, which was composed at the direction of the City Council during their April 13, 2022, meeting to not pursue additional easement acquisitions for a 182nd Lane NE cul-de-sac, but instead to follow Public Works’ recommendation to improve the existing turnaround within the current easement.

Waletzko inquired if the City will vacate its easements on the turnaround’s westerly properties since the cul-de-sac is being developed in the existing right-of-way. Griffith said the Council’s direction given to staff was to create a resolution that would improve the existing turnaround in its current hammerhead form within the right-of-way without vacation of the temporary cul-de-sac area to the west so that the area may be improved in the future. Easements are not typically vacated until they are determined to be in excess of the City’s needs.

Motion by Hegland to approve Resolution 22-07 to order 182nd Lane NE cul-de-sac and road design improvement. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

Griffith provided an update to the Small Cities legislation, sharing that Larkin Hoffman is working with Senate Tax Chair Carla Nelson and 3-4 senators representing the 40 impacted communities to ensure the bill is included as part of the overall omnibus tax bill. If successful in the Senate, then Larkin Hoffman will begin a similar process in the State House. Larkin Hoffman is also continuing to lobby for the permanent transportation funding for small cities.

Griffith also provided an update on the City’s attempts to receive an earmark for further broadband funding. After receiving direction from City Council to pursue those funds, Larkin Hoffman touched base with Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith and Representative Tom Emmer’s offices only to find out

that the window for this year's funding was closing the same week as the direction. A call was made to the three representatives' Washington D.C. offices to inquire if there would be a second opportunity to get involved in a community funding program that could direct funding for broadband expansion to cities such as Columbus. Representative Emmer's office reported back that his priority was to fund roads and bridges, but Senator Klobuchar has been a strong advocate for broadband expansion and is willing to work with the City as other opportunities present themselves. In addition, their office will track the flow of funds for broadband expansion from the infrastructure bill through Federal and State channels and will pass those opportunities along to the City so it can get ahead of the queue as these decisions are made.

19. Mayor & City Councilmembers' Reports

Hegland provided an update on behalf of the Personnel Committee on the search for a Senior Accountant, sharing that the City has received 14 applications, two of which scored well enough to earn an interview yet neither of which responded to Mursko's communications. As a result, the City has begun talks with CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) to extend the interim accounting contract for the remainder of May and to pursue options for further extensions if a candidate cannot be hired by then. The Personnel Committee recommended empowering City Staff to extend the CLA contract for a month to allow time to investigate further options.

Wagamon inquired how much CLA is being paid. Hegland said that CLA's rate for this situation is \$120/hour. Wagamon also inquired if the City utilized any recruiting firms since reposting the job posting. Mursko said she'd reached out to some temp agencies, including those focused specifically on accounting, but found those types of agencies are also struggling to find accountants with skills higher than bookkeepers.

Motion by Hegland to direct the City Administrator to extend the contract for CLA through May and to continue conversations with CLA to investigate other contract opportunities while the City continues to post the position and recruit for an employee. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

Hegland shared that the City met with the Lions Club on April 19, 2022, to discuss the return of the Club's monthly Pancake Breakfast to the Columbus Community Center, beginning in September after their traditional summer break. The Council will be presented a proposal at an upcoming Council meeting that would set the terms for reserving the Community Center for the pancake breakfast with the goal of a September return to the City.

Wagamon provided an update from the Community Events Subcommittee's April 22, 2022, meeting, sharing that the subcommittee had decided to recruit volunteers to develop the program and committee's purpose in collaboration with the committee members, City Council and City Staff. Hegland felt that the goals and purpose should be devised before recruitment as it could help attract volunteers.

20. Public Works' Report

Windingstad provided an update on the 2023 road grader that was approved for order at the April 13, 2022, City Council Meeting. Due to a now resolved miscommunication, Windingstad found out that the City must sign a contract for the road grader instead of simply placing an order as initially thought.

Windingstad is requesting a clause in writing verifying that the City is not bound by the contract if the

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price escalates beyond its budget. Griffith advised that special attention should be paid to all language in the contract to ensure that it allows the City a way to back out or added clauses.

Motion by Preiner to direct Public Works to sign the purchase agreement for the new road grader deliverable in 2023. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

21. Public Communications Coordinator’s Report

No report.

22. City Administrator’s Report

Mursko provided the Council with Associate Planner Ben Gutknecht’s two-weeks resignation letter with the recommendation they accept it. Gutknecht has been a great employee for three years and Mursko wishes him nothing but the best.

Motion by Preiner to accept the resignation of Associate Planner Ben Gutknecht effective May 3, 2022. Seconded by Hegland.

Wagamon inquired how quickly the City would be able to post the job opening. Hegland said since the job is being posted with the same job description and budget, meaning the role has already been budgeted, the Personnel Committee advised Staff the opening could be posted without City Council authorization.

Logren inquired if the Planning job opening was posted at Gutknecht’s current level or the one he started at. Mursko confirmed the City’s opening was for an Associate Planner and not a Permit Tech.

Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS

23. LBAE Meeting 04.28.2022 at 6:30 p.m.

24. City Council & Planning Commission Joint Meeting 05.04.2022 at 6 p.m.

25. City Council & EDA Workshop 05.10.2022 at 5:30 p.m.

26. City Council Meeting 05.11.2022 at 6:30 p.m.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Hegland to adjourn. Seconded by Busch. Roll call vote: Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Logren – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectively submitted: