City of Columbus
Regular City Council Meeting
December 11, 2024

ATTENDANCE SHEET

PLEASE PRINT

Name: Address:

Chase Roth

Tim Wessels - via Zoom

CITY OF COLUMBUS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY MEETING FORMAT
STATUTES SECTION 13D.021
12-11-2024

The 12-11-2024 City Council Meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM by Mayor Jesse Preiner at the City Hall at 6:00 PM. Present were City Councilmembers Ron Hanegraaf, Sue Wagamon, Janet Hegland and Rob Busch. Also present were City Finance Director Cheryl Jenkins, City Administrator Jack Davis, City Attorney Bill Griffith, City Engineer Kevin Bittner, Public Works Director Jim Windingstad, Chase Roth, and Jennifer Lattin.

In attendance via interactive technology was Tim Wessels and Planning and Zoning Technician Eleanor Hahn.

The meeting was held in an interactive technology meeting format.

A. CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order – Regular Meeting, 6:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Adoption of Agenda

Motion by Councilmember Hegland to approve the 12.11.2024 agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilmember Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

B. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Bill Payments as attached in the December 11, 2024 Payment Summary

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the consent agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilmember Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

C. PRESENTATION(S) and ITEMS FOR COUNCIL ACTION

1. **Public Forum**

Jennifer Latin, newly elected Councilmember, addressed the City Council regarding an incident that occurred after the City Council meeting on November 27, 2024 where a complaint was filed stating that there was concern regarding a possible violation of the Open Meeting Law. City Attorney Bill Griffith explained that the complaint stated that three council members stayed in the chambers after the meeting; however, no official business was discussed and there was no violation of open

meeting law. City Attorney Griffith gave an explanation of open meeting law as a refresher for both sitting and newcoming Councilmembers.

Tim Wessels addressed the City Council regarding the proposed 2025 tax levy. He states that comparable Cities such as Centerville, Linwood, and Circle Pines have a significantly lower tax levy per resident, going on to say that his taxes have increased 19% since 2018. Councilmember Hegland states that there are several factors that have led to this. Firstly, that the residential population of Columbus falls under the requirement to receive State money, which is a minimum of 5000 residents. Additionally, due to our smaller population compared to a disproportionally larger industrial /commercial tax base, Columbus loses approximately $250,000 each year in commercial property tax revenue to a state tax sharing program called Fiscal Disparities. She stated that Columbus is one of the only cities in Anoka County that is a net loser in the program, while other municipalities break even or even receive more back than what they pay in each year. These factors do result in a higher levy amount per person and in spite of these burdens of Fiscal Disparities, the City has kept the overall levy steady or have decreased it over the last two years.

Chase Roth addressed the City Council and asked what the process will be to appoint a new Councilmember to Hanegraaf's seat once he takes office as Mayor. City Administrator Jack Davis explained that it will be up to the new City Council to determine the method of filling the vacancy. There are no specific guidelines that the City Council must follow, other than the candidate must be a U.S. citizen, at least 21 years of age and has been a resident of Columbus for at least 30 days.

2. **2025 Final Levy and Budget Presentation and Request for Approval Resolution 24-19, Resolution 24-20, and Resolution 24-21**

Mayor Preiner opened the floor for public comment. No comments were received. Mayor Preiner closed the public comment period. City Administrator Jack Davis provided an overview of the proposed 2025 final levy and budget and stated that staff recommends approval of Resolution 24-19, approving the 2025 Budget, Resolution 24-20, approving the General Fund Levy, and Resolution 24-21, approving the EDA-HRA Levy. Davis stated that this is the second consecutive year that the City has either maintained or decreased the annual levy. Councilmember Busch stated that both the City Administrator and Finance Director worked diligently to bring the budget down to meet Council goals in order to minimize the tax impact on residents.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve Resolution 24-19, a resolution to approve the Final 2025 Budget. Seconded by Councilmember Hegland. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve Resolution 24-20, a resolution to approve the 2025 preliminary tax levy, for property taxes collectible in 2025. Seconded by Councilmember

Hanegraaf. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve Resolution 24-21, a resolution to approve the final 2025 housing and redevelopment authority property tax levy and budget. Seconded by Councilmember Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

3. **2025 Fee Schedule**

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that each year, the City reviews the current fee schedule and discusses any recommended changes to be approved for the upcoming year's fees. He stated that there was a later amendment to the 2025 Fee Schedule, which included some comments from the City Engineer and resulting in changes to the water and sewer fees. He stated that these schedules require a great deal of review, and that the City is hoping to have it approved by the end of December or the first meeting of January. Councilmember Hegland states that she has some outstanding questions, mainly regarding the options to rent the Community Center. She states that she is in favor of opening the Center to the public but recommends adopting a policy for the rentals. There are still questions regarding who can rent the center, at what cost, and how that process would work. She suggested putting the policy together prior to adopting the 2025 Fee Schedule. Councilmember Hegland went on to ask for a better definition of maintenance and repair regarding required building permits included in the fee schedule.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to continue to the discussion of the 2025 Fee Schedule at the next City Council meeting. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

4. **2025 ARPA Broadband Grant**

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that the City of Columbus will be recipient of an Anoka County grant for American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding directed for broadband service extensions to five underserved and unserved areas of the City. With the possible exception of isolated extensions on Lyons St, which may be addressed by Midco through other programs, broadband service will be available to all Columbus residents at the completion of this work. This grant is administered through Anoka County. The history of this program is outlined in Attachment 1 of the council packet, as county resolution 2014-119.

Midco made applications to the county on behalf of the City of Columbus in June 2024. Although the original grant request was denied, the program was reopened due to the efforts of Columbus City Councilmember Janet Hegland and County Commissioner Jeff Reinert. The northern Anoka County municipalities, Columbus, Linwood, Bethel and East Bethel were ultimately the recipients of $1.6 million ARPA funding. The City of Columbus' share will be $536,000. City Administrator Jack

Davis recommended that the City Council consider approval of the ARPA broadband grant agreement. Councilmember Wagamon thanked Councilmember Hegland for her efforts in securing this grant funding for the community. Councilmember Hegland stated that it has been very rewarding to complete this project of bring highspeed internet to all of Columbus after six years of effort.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the American Rescue Plan Act Broadband Infrustructure Plan, subrecipient agreement between the County of Anoka, MN and the City of Columbus as recited in attachment two of the December 11, 2024 City Council packet, along with exhibits A and B and appendices A, B, C and D, which are included in the council packet and are a part of the agreement as presented. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the Midco cost sharing agreement as presented as item C5 in the December 11, 2024 City Council packet and as amended by the addendum submitted to the City Council on December 9, 2024. Seconded by Busch. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

D. CONSULTANT, LIAISON & STAFF REPORTS

1. **City Engineer**

City Engineer Kevin Bittner provided an overview of a drainage project along Hornsby Street. He explained that there isn't a real good drainage path currently, as the ground on the field is a couple of feet higher than the culvert, and that the City has approached that property owner in regards to obtaining a drainage easement in order to cut the existing ditch to the county ditch. The proposed easement is depicted in the City Council Packet, and the property owner has stated that they aren't opposed to said easement. Bittner states that the City would need to petition the Rice Creek Watershed District to undertake this project. The full cost of the project would ultimately be born close to 100% by the City if approved. Councilmember Hegland asked what prompted this. Bittner stated that when the City did the Hornsby St improvements, we never fully addressed the drainage away from the street, and we are attempting to bring about a resolution. Councilmember Hegland asked if this need is imminent. Bittner stated that this would ensure the long-term integrity of the road. Public Works Director Jim Windingstad explained that the issue will potentially cause undue wear to the road. Mayor Preiner asked for an estimate of cost. Bittner states that it is difficult to estimate at this point and depends on whether the drainage needs to be a piped or ditched. He estimated a very rough cost of a quarter million dollars. Preiner stated that whoever eventually develops this land, will have to meet the drainage requirements. He stated that the City would like to avoid condemnation, or spending that amount of money if it is avoidable. No action was taken.

Bittner recommended approval of the final payments to ASTECH for the City's micro surfacing project. He stated that there was a disagreement with the contractor over final payment, which is why it has taken so long to close this contract. He stated that the total amount due for this project is $11,223.17

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the final payment for the ASTECH Mirco Surfacing Project as recommended by the City Engineer. Seconded by Busch. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

2. **City Attorney**

Nothing at this time.

3. **Mayor & City Council Report**

Nothing at this time.

4. **Personnel Committee Report**

Councilmember Hegland stated that the Personnel Committee recommends that the City engage in a contract with DDA for human resources, as discussed at the previous workshop meeting, with Mark Goldberg as our principal consultant. She recommended contracting for Option 5 as outlined in the proposal with the maximum cost of $11,000.

Motion by Councilmember Hegland to for the City of Columbus to contract the services of DDA for a sum not to exceed $11,000 to perform a Job Classification and Compensation Study as presented in the DDA proposal to City Council on December 3, 2024. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

Councilmember Hegland explained the proposed promotion for the City's planning and zoning technician, Eleanor Hahn, as outlined in the Personnel Committee report included in the Council packet. She stated that Ms. Hahn was hired on May 22nd, 2023, starting at the first step of the pay scale. After a satisfactory 6 month performance review, she moved on to step 2, and after a one year anniversary, she moved on to step 3. The City had developed a promotional pathway in these positions when the last planner was hired. The employee started as a planning technician, they move on to an assistant planner, then there is an associate planner and finally a city planner. Ms. Hahn meets the requirements and is performing the work of Assistant Planner, in addition to the exceptional teamwork ethos she demonstrates.

Motion by Councilmember Hegland to approve the promotion of Eleanor Hahn from the position of Planning Technician to Assistant Planner at step 3 at $30.69, effective December 28, 2024. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

5. **Planning Commission Report**

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that Planning Commissioner Robin Wood's term will end December 31, 2024, and that he has requested reappointment.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the re-appointment of Robin Wood for another term on the City of Columbus Planning Commission effective January 1, 2025. Seconded by Hanegraaf. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that Planning Commissioner Susan Bautch's term will end December 31, 2024, and that she has requested reappointment.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the re-appointment of Susan Bautch for another term on the City of Columbus Planning Commission effective January 1, 2025. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

6. **Parks Board Report**

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that Park Board member Steve Ray's term will end December 31, 2024, and that he has requested reappointment.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the re-appointment of Steve Ray for another term on the City of Columbus Park Board effective January 1, 2025. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

7. **Economic Development Authority Report**

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that EDA member Karen Fleming's term will end December 31, 2024, and that she has requested reappointment.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the re-appointment of Karen Fleming for another term on the City of Columbus Economic Development Authority effective January 1, 2025. Seconded by Busch. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

8. **Public Works Report**

Nothing at this time.

9. **City Administrator Report**

Nothing at this time.

E. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

Mayor Jesse Preiner reminded the Council that the next meeting will take place on Monday, December 23, 2024, due to the holidays.

F. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Hegland to adjourn. Seconded by Busch. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Eleanor Hahn

Respectfully Submitted: Recording Secretary Eleanor Hahn.