City of Columbus
Regular City Council Meeting
December 23, 2024

ATTENDANCE SHEET

PLEASE PRINT

Name:	Address:
Steve Wagamon	13530 Zodiac ST NE
Aaron Berg	Cambridge, MN
Sean L	City of Columbus Code Compliance Insp

CITY OF COLUMBUS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY MEETING FORMAT
STATUTES SECTION 13D.021
12-23-2024

The 12-23-2024 City Council Meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Mayor Jesse Preiner at the City Hall. Present were City Councilmembers Ron Hanegraaf, Sue Wagamon, Rob Busch and Janet Hegland. Also present were City Administrator Jack Davis, City Attorney Bill Griffith, City Engineer Brian Bachmeier, Steve Wagamon, Aaron Berg, and Sean Lessard.

The meeting was held in an interactive technology meeting format.

A. CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order – Regular Meeting, 6:05 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Adoption of Agenda

Motion by Councilmember Wagamon to approve the 12.23.2024 agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilmember Hegland. 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 23, 2024 Payment Summary

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the consent agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilmember Busch. 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

Resident Steve Wagamon thanked the Council and City Staff for putting his name forward for the Rice Creek Watershed Board. He stated that he was reappointed to the board for another three years. Mayor Preiner thanked Steve Wagamon for his hard work with the watershed.

2. Assistant City Administrator Hiring Recommendation

Councilmember Hegland explained that there was previous efforts to hire a new Assistant City Administrator in October of 2024. Unfortunately, the selected candidate turned down the City's offer and the matter of the hiring an Assistant Administrator was postponed to focus on the hiring of the Permit Coordinator and Accounting Assistant. The position was reposted on November 15, 2024, and one of the candidates from the first round made it known that he would still be

interested in the position. After a second round of interviews, the Personnel Committee unanimously recommended Mr. Aaron Berg as their choice for the Assistant City Administrator position. Hegland stated that Mr. Berg has extensive experience in city planning, management and supervision, website development and policy writing, and referred the Council to the Personnel Committee's report in their packet.

Motion by Councilmember Hegland to approve the hire of Aaron Berg as the Assistant City Administrator for the City of Columbus, per the recommendation of the Personnel Committee. Seconded by Councilmember Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

3. 2024 Code Compliance Report

Code Compliance Inspector Sean Lessard provided a report of compliance cases for 2024. He stated that most cases were closed within the same month that complaints were issued and those that stayed open were legal CUP issues or when the resident needed more time to remedy the problem. Seventeen previously open cases were closed in 2024 including Super Bee, Iverson Street storage and Dave's Contracting. There are still two ongoing legal cases involving ROC Communications and LCI Landscapes code compliance. He stated that LCI is currently attempting to sell the property and move. He stated that there have been two animal bites and two gas pipeline issues resolved. He stated that he has also been monitoring farm animal non-compliance and the DNR parking issues in the Zodiac Street area. Lessard stated that he has also been acquiring new safety equipment and training for staff, as well as assisting in elections, Public Works, and the office remodeling project. Councilmember Busch asked for an update on ROC Communications and Lessard stated that they have not been cooperating with City efforts and that the City is looking into legal action. City Attorney Bill Griffith stated that they could start work with the criminal prosecutor and transition the case to a criminal matter. Councilmember Hegland asked for clarification on what LCI Landscapes is non-compliant with and Lessard stated that they have failed to make the required remodeling deadlines set forth in their CUP. The owner recently came into City Offices and told staff that they will not be able to make the changes and are looking for a new location.

Councilmember Hanegraaf asked if Lessard has contacted the resident on West Freeway Drive who has been storing a large amount of lumber on their property. Lessard stated that he did reach out to the resident in late spring and again in late summer; however, there have been no neighbor complaints and there is nothing in the City Code preventing that type of storage. The resident said that the lumber storage is temporary. Lessard and Griffith also clarified that the City's policy surrounding code compliance is reactive and complaint based. Griffith explained that policy does not have the force and effect of law and allows the leeway to monitor long-standing issues, on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that they don't resurface.

4. **Ordinance 24-04, An Ordinance Amending Chapter 4 – Licensing and Chapter 7A – Zoning Regulations for the Columbus City Code for Cannabis Management Regulations**

City administrator Jack Davis stated that the Planning Commission and City Council have been working on an ordinance to regulate the licensing and zoning issues regarding the state cannabis legislation that was approved in 2023. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on December 18th, 2024 to take comments on draft Ordinance 24-04 for cannabis management regulations. There was no comment from the public, and the draft ordinance was unanimously recommended by the Planning Commission to be sent to City Council for consideration at the December 23, 2024 meeting. As the State rules are subject to change, Mayor Preiner asked if this ordinance would be simple to amend later, Griffith stated that any changes to Chapter 7A would have to go through Planning Commission again, but that it should be fairly easy to change later on. He also stated that the moratorium will end at the beginning of January and recommends having some sort of ordinance in place prior to that date. Councilmember Hegland stated that there will still be a lot of changes from the State in the coming months, and that they won't be in the position to grant licenses until late summer or early fall. She advocated for having every type of cannabis business regulated by IUP, rather than only the retail businesses, and suggested waiting to adopt the ordinance until more information is known about how the State will amend the law. She stated that Forest Lake will have every type of cannabis business regulated by IUP. Councilmember Wagamon disagreed with waiting and stated that the City should have something in place by the end of the moratorium, and that any adjustments can be made later. She stated that a lot of time and work has already gone into this ordinance. Griffith stated that this ordinance will provide protection for the City.

Councilmember Hegland provided several suggested changes to the draft ordinance. She asked if they should require the name and contact information for the property owner as well as the business owner for retail licenses. Griffith clarified that property owner consent is always required for zoning matters, and every cannabis business will require zoning approval. Hegland suggested adding Micro and Mezzo business to the retail licensing header in the ordinance, to make it clear that those types of businesses will also require a retail license. She also suggested adding the language that clarifies that the applicant needs to disclose all merchandise proposed for sale, whether cannabis related or not. Griffith suggested these x=changes be scheduled for the next Ordinance update.

Motion by Councilmember Wagamon to approve Ordinance 24-04, An Ordinance Amending Chapter 4 – Licensing and Chapter 7A – Zoning Regulations for the Columbus City Code for Cannabis Management Regulations, with changes discussed under 4-1004G adding the language 'whether cannabis related or not'. Seconded by Councilmember Busch. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Nay, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

Councilmember Hanegraaf asked City Attorney Griffith for an update on what is going on at the legislative level with cannabis management. Griffith stated that the matter is currently in the courts, which could act before the legislature does. The courts could order licenses to be processed prior to rules being finalized. He stated that it is difficult to predict at this time, which is why having protections in place with this ordinance is important.

5. Camping World Temporary Storage Interim Use Permit (IUP)

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that Camping World is requesting an Interim Use Permit for their existing temporary outdoor display of retail goods on the parcel located adjacent to the south of their existing facility at 14025 West Freeway Dr. The Planning Commission reviewed the IUP application at their December 18, 2024 meeting and unanimously recommended approval to the City Council. City Attorney Griffith stated that there is a reference to required landscaping and screening in the conditions of this IUP, and that the City would typically require a modest letter of credit to encourage compliance. Councilmember Busch stated that he is concerned with issuing this permit, as Camping World has been out of compliance with the number of RVs stored on the two sites for so long and continually breaks code regulations at both of their sites. Griffith provided some background, stating that the City has spent approximately five years on this issue, and although they do not want to encourage asking for forgiveness rather than permission, this is likely the best solution to get the property into compliance legally. Councilmember Busch stated that their second site, at 14640 West Freeway Dr, is also out of compliance with fire code. Griffith stated that will need to be addressed through enforcement actions; however, it is a different property than what is being permitted here. Councilmember Wagamon stated that there have not been any complaints regarding the extended storage area, and that they are not adding any new uses or activities.

Councilmember Hegland asked if this permit would set a precedent to allow outdoor storage on otherwise vacant lots. Griffith stated that there has been a change in the law that allows for zoning lot configurations. Essentially, a development agreement can be created that treats two distinct parcels as one parcel for zoning purposes. Since the outdoor storage on the vacant lot will be tied to the primary lot, it will not set a precedent to allow outdoor storage on vacant lots without this unique situation.

Hegland suggested requiring screening of 90% opacity along the western edge of the property. The screening can be a mix of vegetation and fencing. Mayor Preiner agreed that the screening should be on the western side and not along the highway.

Motion by Councilmember Wagamon to approve the Temporary Storage Interim Use Permit (IUP) for J.A. Coates Properties LLC, DBA as Camping World, as outlined in the IUP Application, Agreement and Findings of Fact and recommended by the City of Columbus Planning Commission, with the addition of requiring screening of 90% opacity along the western side of the property.

Seconded by Mayor Preiner. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Nay, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

6. **2025 Fee Schedule**

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that each year, the city reviews the current fee schedule and considers changing charges for permits, billable services, rentals and other non-levy costs. City Staff requests Council to consider approval of the proposed 2025 Fee Schedule and Policy 25-01, regulating the use of the City of Columbus public facilities. Mayor Preiner asked what the increases are, and Davis states that there was 12.5% increase to water and sewer costs, a few small adjustments so fees will end in even numbers, and park tournament rental fees were increased from $400 to $500. Councilmember Hegland stated that she would like to discuss maintenance and repair permits, and when permits are required. She stated that a clarification should be added to the Fee Schedule later in the year after a research and workshop period. She also stated that there should be a reduced fee for building permits that are inspected virtually, as opposed to having the inspector travel to the property. Griffith stated that these fee reductions would not require a Public Hearing to amend.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the 2025 Fee Schedule as presented in the December 23, 2024 City Council Packet. Seconded by Councilmember Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

Councilmember Hegland suggested tabling Policy 25-01, regulating the use of the City of Columbus public facilities until the next City Council meeting to give Staff time to update the proposed policy, taking into account the prior agreement between the City and the Senior group. The City Council agreed by consensus to table the matter.

7. **2025 Meeting Calendar**

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that the 2025 Meeting Schedule sets and approves the meeting calendars for the City Council, Planning Commission, EDA and the Park Board. He clarified that these meeting dates can be changed after the fact as well. There were no changes made by the City Council.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to approve the 2025 City of Columbus Meeting Calendar as presented in Item C.7 of the December 23, 2024 City Council meeting packet. Seconded by Councilmember Busch. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

8. **Companion Animal Control Contract**

City Administrator Jack Davis explained that the City currently impounds animals with Northwoods Humane Society. Due to staffing challenges and inadequate building space for housing impound

animals, Northwoods Humane Society determined they are no longer able to provide animal impound service as of mid-year 2025. The City's Animal Control contractor, Companion Animal Care, will be constructing their own impound facility in May, 2025. Companion Animal Care has requested the City of Columbus approve the Companion Animal Impound Service agreement by January 1, 2025, so Animal Control services in the City can continue as normal once the Companion Animal Center is complete in May 2025. Davis also explained that the City has never had an Impound Agreement with Northwoods Humane Society, and Hegland asked if they should have a contract with them until Companion Animal Control has their own facility. Davis explained that the City has been having difficulty recovering impounding fees from residents who had their animals held at Northwoods Humane Society. Hegland asked if the fees could be assessed to their property taxes, and Davis stated that they would have to have an ordinance change in order to do that. Hegland suggested tabling the contract until the City has a method of collecting the impounding fees and know whether or not they need a contract with Northwoods Humane Society and stating that the Companion Animal Care Impound Service Agreement would not go into effect until May anyways. No action was taken by the Council, and the matter was tabled.

D. CONSULTANT, LIAISON & STAFF REPORTS

1. City Engineer

City Engineer Brian Bachmeier stated that the previous City Engineer Kevin Bittner sent a letter to the property owner on the South end of Hornsby regarding the drainage easement discussed at the last Council meeting.

2. City Attorney

Nothing at this time.

3. Mayor & City Council Report

Councilmember Hanegraaf stated that he was approached by a resident requesting a streetlight on the intersection of Crossways and Lake Drive. Davis stated that the residents will need to petition for a streetlight, and then the City Council can make a direction to install one. He then stated that the Council could begin a City program to install streetlights at problematic intersections. He recommended contacting all the residents around the intersections for comment; however, the decision would ultimately fall on the City Council. The Council may decide to pursue the matter as a City project in early 2025. Councilmember Hegland stated that she doesn't think that the City should require a petition, and would like it to be a City project process instead. She stated that a streetlight would benefit more than just those living at the intersection, and there is more than one location that the City is considering. Davis stated that as a matter of public safety, the streetlight program would not require a petition.

Councilmembers Hanegraaf, Busch and Hegland thanked both Councilmember Wagamon and Mayor Preiner for their years of service.

4. Personnel Committee Report – Janet Hegland & Sue Wagamon

Nothing at this time.

5. Park Board Report

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that Andrea Messina was appointed to City of Columbus Park Board in 2019. Messina served on the Park Board for five years and has sent in a request for reappointment to the Park Board, as her term expires on December 31st, 2024.

Motion by Councilmember Hanegraaf to approve the re-appointment of Andrea Messina to the City of Columbus Park Board effective January 1, 2025. Seconded by Mayor Preiner. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

6. City Administrator Report

City Administrator Jack Davis stated that the Council will need to appoint two or more check signers, as both Mayor Preiner and Councilmember Wagamon will be leaving service at the start of the year. He also stated that there will be an upcoming discussion regarding an electronic check signing system for the City, as the current system is archaic and a carryover from the Township days.

Motion by Mayor Preiner to designate Ron Hanegraaf, Janet Hegland, and Jack Davis as authorized check signers for the City of Columbus. Seconded by Councilmember Hanegraaf. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries.

E. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

Mayor Preiner reminded the Council and public of the following upcoming meetings and dates:

- City Council Meeting, January 8, 2025 at 6:00 PM

F. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Wagamon to adjourn. Seconded by Mayor Preiner. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – Aye, Wagamon – Aye, Hegland – Aye, Busch – Aye, Preiner – Aye. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 8:18.

Respectfully Submitted: Recording Secretary Eleanor Hahn.