

**City of Columbus**  
**Regular City Council Meeting**  
**11.13.19**

The 11.13.19 meeting of the City of Columbus City Council was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Mayor Preiner at the City Hall. Present were Council Members Janet Hegland, Jeff Duraine, Denny Peterson, and Shelly Logren; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, City Attorney Bill Griffith, City Engineer Dennis Postler, and Public Communications Coordinator Jessica Hughes.

Also in attendance were: Barb Bobick, Ron Hanegraaf, Kris King, Paul Peskar, Matt Kelley, Pat Kelley, Randy Allee, Rober Allee, and Wendy Lene.

**A. CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**

- 1. Call to Order - Regular Meeting – 7:01 P.M.**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**B. CONSENT AGENDA**

- 3. Motion – Agenda Approval with Additions**
- 4. Motion – Approval of 06.12.19, 07.10.19, 07.24.19 City Council Meeting Minutes**
- 5. Motion – Pay Bills as Posted**

**Motion by Duraine to approve consent agenda items 3-5. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

**C. PRESENTATIONS**

**6. Planning Commission Report**

Pam Wolowski came forward to give the Planning Commission report from their 11.06.19 meeting.

Billboard Ordinance and Publication Summary

Wolowski reported that the Planning Commission is on their third draft of the new billboard ordinance. The Planning Commission was unanimous in their decision to reduce the number of billboards in the City and require cleaner aesthetics. Wolowski added that the Planning Commission requested feedback from the billboard companies on the proposed changes, and they have received little to no response.

The new draft ordinance designates billboards as a primary use on a property. City Attorney Bill Griffith said that City Staff recommend changing the effective date to immediately from 2025 for mandating at most one principal use on a property with a billboard. This change would not apply to single family residential properties, agricultural uses, or the one billboard property that already has a commercial use on it. The other change recommended by Staff was requiring a complementary color scheme for the billboard and supporting structure.

Mayor Preiner asked how the design criteria will be applied when new billboard applications come in? Mursko explained that the Planning Commission has intentionally kept the design criteria

language vague. And when an application comes in with a design that the Planning Commission particularly likes, they will update the ordinance with more specific language.

Hegland asked, with regard to requiring a complementary color scheme, if the term “complementary” should be defined further? Griffith agreed, saying that “uniform” could be a more exacting term to use. Council agreed to replace the term “complementary” with “uniform”. Hegland continued to say that this portion of the ordinance should refer to “approved design standards”, which would be a list of desirable colors like tan, beige, or earth tones. The list of design standards would be referencing kept in City Offices for applicants to reference. The Council agreed and determined the appropriate list of design standards should be approved by them at a later date.

Hegland continued to say that the billboard’s supporting structure should be required to say “Columbus” rather than “City of Columbus”.

Griffith finished by saying the standard approach for ordinances is to make them effective at the time of passage and publication. The ordinance currently says it shall become effective on a specific date. It will be amended to say it shall become effective at the time of passage and publication.

**Motion by Hegland to adopt Ordinance 19-06, an ordinance amending Chapter 7B of the City Code of Ordinances to large off-premises sign regulations as amended to include; changes to the General Requirements section of the code to require a “uniform” color scheme, the addition of “Columbus” to the billboard’s supporting structure, and reference to an approved set of design standards; and changes to Section III of the code stating that the ordinance will become effective at the time of passage and publication. Seconded by Duraine. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion by Duraine to approve Ordinance 19-06’s publication summary, an ordinance amending Chapter 7B of the City Code of Ordinances, large off-premises sign regulations. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### High Density Design Standards Update

Wolowski continued to report on an additional discussion that the Planning Commission has been having on high density mixed-use design standards. She said that it appears to Planning Commission members that the developer for the proposed multi-family housing project in the NE I-35 Quadrant is the driving force behind these design standards. Commission members have concern that this is forcing discussion to be rushed. Some specific concerns relate to the number of units, number of parking spaces, and uncertainty about snow removal and storage.

Wolowski then asked the Council to provide guidance on high density design standards. The Planning Commission would like to receive feedback on things that the Council likes and dislikes about the current draft, and any suggestions they can give for where to focus their energy.

Mayor Preiner said that he and others visited Forest Lake to look at a new multi-family housing project called Cherry Point. He said that this building has lap siding, multiple colors, and structural

columns. He and Mursko encouraged Planning Commission members to visit this project because it has many of the design elements that they have been discussing.

Mayor Preiner continued to say that the 25% masonry requirement should not include cinderblock to place the building above the water level. Wolowski agreed.

Hegland commented that there is a lot left to do in the draft ordinance that is unrelated to design. She encouraged the Planning Commission to start discussing uses and standards for commercial entities coming to the area as well.

## **7. Public Open Forum**

Barb Bobick – 8414 140<sup>th</sup> avenue

Bobick came forward to discuss a letter that she received regarding issues with Certificates of Liability that were associated with Sternberg Electric (a business in Columbus). She said that a similar letter was sent to City Offices, and asked Mayor Preiner why it was not addressed by the Council? Mayor Preiner responded that the former Mayor addressed the issue and then instructed City Staff to file the letter in the appropriate place in City Offices.

Bobick continued to say that she saw five Certificates of Liability that had her name and signature on them. She explained that she had zero involvement with the certificates. Bobick added that at the time the certificates were falsified, she was a member of a civic organization that was against Bituminous Roadways building an asphalt plant in Columbus. As such, she testified at Planning Commission meetings where Garth Sternberg (owner of Sternberg Electric) was the chair.

She added that this information was passed on to insurance companies, investigators, and lawyers. She was advised to file a complaint for identity theft and forgery, and she did so with the Columbus Deputy from the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. Fraud alerts were also placed on her accounts.

Bobick requested that a copy of the letter she received, the falsified certificates, and her statement read at this meeting be filed with the City.

Griffith replied that this is a reasonable request and said those documents will be entered as part of the City record with minutes from this Council meeting.

## **8. Census Count Committee**

Mursko reported that a representative working for the 2020 Census approached the City to discuss initiatives for ensuring an accurate Census count in 2020. One of the things they would like to do is advertise job openings for the Census and perhaps have a meeting with the Council about how Cities can promote it.

The reasoning behind this initiative is that a number of people living in Anoka County were not counted in the last Census, which resulted in Anoka County losing roughly \$150 million in funding from the Federal Government. In addition, legislative districts are drawn based on Census information, which makes accurate representation in the Census important for our political

process.

One opportunity that Cities may pursue is creating a Census Count Committee. Such a committee would be responsible for distributing flyers, handouts, posters, or other information. Essentially, they would create materials with a local angle to distribute to residents in the City. There are also large doorknocking events in the spring that the committee would be expected to participate in.

Griffith noted for the Council that, with the City at the current estimated population, they can begin to think about securing money from the State's gas tax. At this time the City does not receive proceeds from the gas tax (although residents pay it) because the City's population is less than 5,000. With a higher percentage of people participating in the Census, the estimated population could move closer to that breaking point.

Hegland noted that the highest percentage of participation that an Anoka County City achieved in 2010 was 91% (Columbus was 89%). Based on those percentages, she is unsure that census promotion efforts would make a big difference in the participation numbers. She asked if there are any funds available to assist in these efforts? Mursko replied that there is grant money available, but it would be less than \$1,000 in total.

Public Communications Coordinator Jessica Hughes said that she added a page to the City's website that is dedicated to Census information. On that page there is general information, links to external websites, a video, and graphics explaining the Census efforts. These materials were shared with the City by Anoka County and the Census Bureau.

Overall the Council felt that it was unnecessary to form a Census Count Committee, and that Hughes should continue to share information via the website and social media about the Census efforts.

Griffith recommended approving a resolution that states the Council's support of a complete census count, and delegates responsibility for distributing census information to City Staff.

**Motion by Duraine to approve Resolution 19-34, a resolution supporting participation in Complete Census Count efforts. Seconded by Logren. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **D. STAFF AND CONSULTANT REPORTS**

### **9. Engineer Report**

#### Local Water Surface Water Management Plan

City Engineer Dennis Postler said that the Local Surface Water Management Plan is completed and has been approved by all three watersheds in Columbus. Logren asked if this plan can be retained and simply updated the next time the City goes through this process? Postler said that is standard practice. The reason this plan took so long was because a lot of changes were made by the watershed districts since the previous plan was approved.

**Motion by Duraine to accept the Columbus Local Surface Water Management Plan update**

**dated 09.13.19. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

SW Sanitary Sewer and Water Main Pay Request (Project 2018-01)

Postler continued to present a pay request relating to the SW sanitary sewer and water main extension. This is partial payment number 2, in the amount of \$344,864.55.

The project is 95% complete. In the next week or two the lift station will be functioning and, due to the early onset of winter weather, the access road will be paved in the spring.

**Motion by Hegland to approve the SW Area Sanitary Sewer and Water Main Phase 2 (Project 2018-01) partial payment request in the amount \$344,864.55 to Veit and Company, Inc. Seconded by Duraine. Motion carried unanimously.**

Ziegler Water System SCADA – Phase 2 Electrical Change Order (Project 2018-07)

The next item from Postler was a negative change order, crediting money back to the Ziegler Water Tank Conversion project. The change order results in a \$2,370.63 decrease in the cost.

**Motion by Peterson to approve the Ziegler Water System SCADA – Phase 2 Change Order to revise the EIM Construction, LLC contract to reflect a deduction in the amount of \$2,370.63. Seconded by Duraine. Motion carried unanimously.**

General Update on City Projects

Based on previous direction from the Council, an application for a grant which funds road projects that lead to Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) was submitted. This grant money could be used for the extension of W. Freeway Drive to the north of Lake Drive.

Postler continued by distributing an update on the City's projects from the past few years up to 2020-2021. Potential projects for 2020 listed in the update were the reconstruction of Hornsby Street south, the extension of W. Freeway Drive north, the paving of Furman Street, and the extension of Zurich Street north.

Griffith asked if the bridge project is concluded for the season? Postler replied that they are pretty much done. Shafer's batch plant in the NE I-35 Quadrant is being cleaned up, and they have left a gravel pad for use in developing the quadrant. MnDOT's overall project on I-35 is almost complete, the only remaining item is to clean up equipment.

The Hornsby Street realignment project is finishing up this week, and there will be coordination with MnDOT to complete striping in the near future.

## **10. Attorney Report**

No report.

## **11. Mayor and Council Members Report**

## Council Member Logren

No report.

## Council Member Hegland

### Sunrise River Watershed Maintenance Organization (SRWMO) Joint Powers Agreement

Hegland began her report by discussing the Joint Powers Agreement between Columbus, East Bethel, Ham Lake, and Linwood for the SRWMO. The agreement describes how entities fund the organization.

Several months ago, Ham Lake indicated that they did not believe the agreement was appropriate from a funding perspective. The original agreement split funding costs equally between the four municipalities, and Ham Lake argued that funding costs should be split based on the amount of land each community has in the SRWMO.

The agreement has been redistributed to the communities to figure out a solution. An email was sent requesting each City to respond with comments on what they believe would be a fair distribution of expenses and to name a person from the City Council that would participate in a workshop to determine alternate language for the agreement.

Logren noted that the City of Columbus encompasses 16% of the SRWMO but has been historically required to contribute 25% of funding expenses. She added that Columbus receives little return on the money that they are contributing, which is the reason that Ham Lake has refused to approve the agreement.

Hegland added that the Council previously approved the SRWMO agreement because 16% was not much less than 25% and amending the percentage of contribution required changing the agreement itself.

Hegland said that she will forward the email she received and the current joint powers agreement to the rest of the City Council. She added that any comments on the agreement should be sent to Jamie Schurbon.

**Motion by Logren to nominate Hegland to represent Columbus in the workshop to consider amendments to the Joint Powers Agreement for the Sunrise River Watershed Management Organization. Seconded by Duraine. Motion carried unanimously.**

### “One Watershed, One Plan” Initiative

The second item Hegland raised was the “One Watershed, One Plan” initiative that is being spearheaded by BWSR. The main goal of the initiative is to carve the state into larger watersheds, where each would create their own watershed plan. The goal is to ensure that the State’s priorities for water conservation are met and to promote better collaboration. The larger watershed’s plans will overlay the smaller ones.

One of these larger watersheds, Lower St. Croix (which the SRWMO is located in), is pushing for a vote at the end of November on whether they will form a Joint Powers Collaborative or a Joint Powers Entity. There is a legal difference between the two; the Joint Powers Entity is a legal organization that requires a formal structure while the Joint Powers Collaborative is more informal. Hegland finished by saying there is a meeting on 11.19.19 with SRWMO to discuss the decision.

### Park Board Meeting

The next item in Hegland's report was direction from a previous Park Board meeting. At their meeting the Park Board discussed the rates for using the ball fields and picnic shelter. Overall the park fund has a roughly \$1,300 shortfall. Based on that, the Park Board voted to increase fees for reserving fields from \$15 per 4 hours per field, to \$20 and to increase the tournament fee to \$350 for a weekend. They voted to leave the shelter fee as is. The City recently added electricity to the shelter, so the Park Board would like to see how that affects reservations before increasing the fee.

Mursko noted that these changes will be built into the 2020 Fee Schedule.

**Motion by Duraine to approve the recommended fee changes from the Park Board to be included in the 2020 Fee Schedule. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

Another discussion from the Park Board was about their structure. They are considering having Park Board members rotate giving reports to the City Council, in a similar fashion to the Planning Commission reports. As long as the City Council appoints a member to work with the Park Board if questions arise, they would like to move forward with this new structure starting in January.

**Motion by Peterson to approve the new Park Board reporting structure, eliminating the requirement for a Park Board liaison from the City Council. Seconded by Duraine. Motion carried unanimously.**

The Park Board will be carrying a few outstanding items into 2020; replacing playground equipment and installing native plants in the City's roundabouts.

### Senior Center

Hegland reported on research that is being done to determine what the City may be able to use the Senior Center for. The Senior Center was built around 1983 using mostly Federal funds from HUD. There were a number of grants given to Anoka County at that time, which were then passed onto City's to use for certain things. In Columbus' case, this money was given because at that time senior citizens met the definition of an underserved community, and Federal dollars were made available to build Senior Centers. Many communities in Anoka County took advantage of this opportunity.

However, the funding that was received came with requirements. The requirements were that most of the use of that building had to be for senior citizen activities. Each year the City had to undergo an inspection to ensure that the building and equipment was being used for their designated purpose. As time went on the Senior Center group began using the space less but were still

responsible for paying for maintenance and insurance, which they have recently indicated to the Council is financially prohibitive.

After hearing this from the Senior Center, Hegland worked to get clarification on the terms of the grant. After speaking with a Federal office, she was told that the \$95,000 that the City was previously responsible for is now forgiven. This means that the City can now use the Center to benefit the entire community, rather than just the Seniors group.

The Council will have to consider how they would like to proceed. For the time being the Seniors group will continue to use the space as they have in the past but starting in January they will no longer have to pay rent.

Mayor Preiner commented that a large portion of the Senior Center's expenses was spent on paying someone to shop, cook, and clean up for their weekly meals. He spoke with Running Aces Harness Park (RAHP) who said that they would be willing to provide meals for the Center's weekly gatherings for \$6 plus tax. With this arrangement, the Senior Center employee Julie will remain as their food coordinator. The menu for meals will be published in advance, and the Seniors will place orders for it. He added that the Center had their first meal with this arrangement last week and it went well. Mayor Preiner finished by thanking everyone involved for making this new arrangement work.

### Mayor Preiner

Mayor Preiner gave an update on the Hagert Park Donated Land. The City has been researching what will happen to the land since the Park Board recommended that it be disposed of because it will likely never be improved.

The City held a Neighborhood Meeting with residents that abut the property on 11.12.19. The purpose of the meeting was generally to exchange information about the property and the City's options moving forward. A few issues arose during discussion about what the property will look like in the future. The general consensus from the group was that they would really prefer if the property was maintained in its current state.

Another concern was about the public easement that is being used as a private driveway. Current maps show the public easement/driveway as being named Volga Street. However, all of the properties that use this public easement/driveway for access actually have addresses off W. Broadway Avenue. Mursko recommends that in light of this, the City ask Anoka County to remove the Volga Street name from their mapping systems.

In addition, Anoka County installed a stop sign at the end of the public easement/driveway when they widened the shoulders on W. Broadway Avenue. Residents gave feedback that the stop sign is adding confusion because people driving on W. Broadway Avenue think that the public easement/driveway is actually Potomac Street. Mursko is also therefore recommending that the City Council ask Anoka County to remove that stop sign and replace it with a sign saying something like "private drive" (whatever Public Works recommends would be best).

Public Communications Coordinator Jessica Hughes has been working with City Attorneys to

understand the process for selling City-owned property in the residential district. At this point in the process the City Council should determine if they would like to order a survey, order an appraisal, order both, or simply do nothing with the land.

The Council discussed the options. Mursko said that one reason not to order a survey would be because the neighboring property may acquire the piece and not develop or subdivide it (which is what most residents indicated they would prefer). In this scenario, the City would not need to retain any additional land for right-of-way purposes, so a survey may not be necessary. Another reason to retain the necessary right-of-way is to ensure that the Hagert Park property would have 220 feet of road frontage, which is a requirement for development. If the City felt strongly that the public easement/driveway would be improved to the City's road standards, it would be prudent to order a survey and retain the right-of-way needed to do so.

A few reasons to order an appraisal were also discussed. It would be helpful for the Council in determining next steps if more information was gathered about the value of the property. Griffith added that if the property is determined to have value, the City must ensure that they receive the value back if it is sold. If the property does not have value, it can be disposed of at no cost. Griffith finished by noting he would only recommend not ordering an appraisal if the Council was certain they wanted to hold onto the property and do nothing with it.

**Motion by Duraine to ask Anoka County to remove Volga Street from their mapping systems, add a "Private Drive" sign at the end of the street, and ask Anoka County to remove the stop sign. Seconded by Logren. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion by Duraine to order an appraisal on the Hagert Park property, PIN #03-32-22-34-0006. Seconded by Peterson. motion carried unanimously.**

Logren asked if the appraisal will say whether the property is suitable for a house? Mursko replied that they will pull all public information such as floodplain and wetland maps to produce a fair value for the property. This value will factor in the likelihood that a house can be built on the property.

Wendy Lene – 7756 W Broadway Avenue

Lene came forward to read a statement to the Council. Essentially her statement said that her family (relatives of the original owners Elmer and Lorine Hagert), if they were to acquire the property, desire to maintain it in its current shape. They have no desire to subdivide or develop the parcel. However, if they ever did, they would do what is right for everyone involved in terms of preserving easements for access. She thanked the Council for their time.

Council Member Peterson

No report.

## **12. Public Works Report**

No report.

### **13. Public Communications Coordinator Report**

No report.

### **14. City Administrator's Report**

#### 2020 PEIP Group Insurance Application and Allowance

Mursko began her report by presenting the 2020 PEIP Group Medical Application to the Council. The City has been a part of PEIP for 20 years. Mursko and the Personnel Committee are recommending approval of the application.

The application shows an increase of \$83.00 per month for full-time employees. Across all departments the increase is \$3,386 for the medical insurance budget, which will set the medical allowance at \$913 for employees.

**Motion by Logren to approve the 2020 PEIP Group Medical Application with the Policy Guidelines outlined on the Application. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion by Logren to approve the FY2020 (40 hours) Employee Benefit Allowance at \$913.00 per month. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### City Council Workshop and Interview Schedule

Based on conversation at the City Council workshop, Mursko reported that the City is considering new contracts for certain professional services. To continue the process an interview schedule needs to be established and the Council needs to determine if they would like to interview candidates as a whole or if they would prefer to delegate the responsibility to a select number of Council Members. The Council agreed they would delegate responsibility to the Personnel Committee.

The two positions that need to be filled are the City Assessor and City Engineer. As of right now the City has received proposals for the City Assessor position from Anoka County and another candidate.

Duraine asked Mursko if she has looked for a freelance assessor? Mursko said she has not found any freelance assessors but will continue to pursue this option.

**Motion by Duraine to approve the Personnel Committee to interview for City Assessor and City Engineer positions. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### December City Council Dates and Office Closure

Mursko continued to report on the City's December calendar. The current calendar has the second City Council meeting of the month set for the day after Christmas, 12.26.19. She said that typically

the City tries to schedule this meeting as close to the end of the year so that liabilities can be taken off the books. However, the question is whether the Council would like to keep that date for the meeting or move it to a later date, Mursko suggested 12.30.19.

**Motion by Duraine to reschedule the 12.26.19 City Council Meeting to 12.30.19. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion by Duraine to change the 12.30.19 City Council Meeting start time to 6:00 p.m. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

In addition, the City recognizes a Holiday on 12.25.19, and a half-day Holiday on 12.24.19. Mursko is requesting to close the offices Monday – Wednesday, 12.23.19 – 12.25.19, and reopen on Thursday, 12.26.19, at normal hours. Employees will be expected to use vacation time or take time off without pay for the day and a half that is not recognized as a Holiday.

**Motion by Duraine to close City Offices from 12.23.19 – 12.25.19 and reopen for normal hours on 12.26.19. Seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### Zurich Street North Next Steps

The City has been considering the future of the intersection of Lake Drive and Zurich Street, and whether there will be a fourth leg extending north. After Viking Industrial’s application came in for the property northeast of the intersection, the City realized that a right in and right out for that property is not ideal and other options should be explored.

Based on direction from a previous meeting, City Staff met with the owners of the property exactly north of the intersection. The property owner said the property is for sale and the current renter is interested in purchasing it. However, the City may also be interested in purchasing the property for the purposes of extending Zurich Street to the north. The property owners are going to have another meeting between themselves and get back to Staff afterwards.

#### Treasurer’s Report

Receipts:	\$ 203,314.90
Disbursements:	\$ 436,559.38
Balance:	\$ 8,723,752.40

### **15. Closed Meeting**

At this time Mayor Preiner closed the City Council meeting to execute a closed meeting under Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.05, subd.3(c) to consider offers or counteroffers for the sale of the City-owned Quad 35 property.

At 10:01 p.m. Mayor Preiner reopened the closed meeting.

## **E. ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS**

## **16. Calendar of Meetings.**

The next Planning Commission meeting on 11.20.19 at 7:00 pm.

The next City Council Workshop will be on 11.25.19 from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm.

The next City Council Meeting is on 11.25.19 at 7:00 pm.

## **F. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Duraine to adjourn. Seconded by Hegland. Motion carried unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jessica Hughes, Public Communications Coordinator