

CITY OF COLUMBUS  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
December 20, 2021  
6:30 P.M.

**ATTENDANCE**

The City Council of Columbus, Kansas met December 20, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. presided over by Mayor Grant Spieth. Council members present: Kathy Doherty, Stephanie Farstvedt, Nate Long, Tom Pryor. Council members absent: None.

Pastor Lyndsey Clarke of the First United Methodist Church provided the Invocation followed the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Spieth opened the budget amendment hearing at 6:32 p.m. and asked if anyone from the public or council had any questions or comments regarding the budget amendment that was published in the newspaper. Seeing none he closed the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

**APPROVE 2021 BUDGET AMENDMENT**

Doherty moved to approve 2021 budget amendment as presented. Pryor seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Long, Pryor. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Farstvedt moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of Council Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2021, Work Session Minutes – November 29, 2021 Appropriation Ordinance 21-560, Treasurer Report – December 16, 2021 and Cereal Malt Beverage License Renewals for American Legion, American Legion Beverage Hut, Casey’s General Store, Dollar General, Fast Mart, G & W Foods, and Petes’s Store #52. Long seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Long, Pryor. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

**Mayor Report-**

Mayor Spieth appointed Dylan Koehler to the Volunteer Fire Department.

**VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER – *Dylan Koehler***

Farstvedt moved to approve the Mayor’s appointment of Dylan Koehler as a Volunteer Fire Fighter. Doherty seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Long, Pryor. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

Mayor Spieth presented Nate Long a certificate of gratitude and appreciation for his two years of service as Ward 4 Council Member.

Spieth noted he also has a certificate for Jan Houser that will be presented at a later date.

## **Department End of Year Presentations –**

### **Police Department**

Highlights from Police Chief Jason Daniel report:

The Police Department is staffed by nine Full-time Officers and two Part-time Officers and an Animal Control position that is currently open. He noted all Officers are Kansas Law Enforcement Certified and named several additional certifications held by members of the department.

Statics show the number of reports written in 2021 is about the same as 2019 numbers. Information based, theft and motor vehicle accident were the top three report types in both years.

A new interview and selection process was utilized in a recent promotion campaign. In addition to the traditional application and resume, candidates provided a written report, put together a project and delivered a power point presentation to a selection panel. The method was very successful and may be used City wide going forward.

Two used patrol vehicles were purchased through the Kansas Highway Patrol Fleet Program, saving the department several thousand dollars while providing newer units for the City.

Staff gained invaluable insight from area professionals during a public forum held in July introducing permitting and code enforcement related matters. This continues to be a work in progress.

Decision to not move forward with a new animal shelter has allowed funds to be distributed to other departments to help get their fleet updated.

Helped purchase a tire mount and balance machine with VIN funds. Equipment is being used by all departments and saved the City enough money to pay for itself in five months.

Plan to bring back the kid's fishing derby and community picnic in 2022.

Department goals for 2022 include financial responsibility first and foremost, more community engagement as COVID allows, professional development training, and an introduction to management and leadership training for all staff.

### **Fire Department**

Highlights from Fire Chief Steven Burton report:

The Columbus Fire Department is a combination department utilizing full-time staff and volunteers to provide service to the community with over 215 years of combined service experience.

The department covers 265 square miles of Cherokee County through primary or mutual aid agreements.

Statistics show 489 calls logged to date in 2021 with a breakdown of 36% fire/alarm, 39% medical, 14% motor vehicle accident and 11% miscellaneous.

Fleet includes two fire engines, one ladder truck, a fire and rescue truck with light and air support, and two brush trucks.

ISO audit dropped Columbus rating from a five to a four. Insurance Services Office is an independent organization that scores fire departments on how they are doing against organizational standards to help determine property insurance costs within the district. Scores range from 1-10 with 1 being the best.

The department meets monthly for training and has logged over 1,200 hours in 2021.

The department has taken over the City's 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks celebration from the Chamber of Commerce.

Received \$108,000 in grants that have helped with truck and equipment upgrades and fire prevention programs.

Participated in several community outreach events including a blanket distribution, angel tree project, shop with a firefighter and fire department open house.

Department goals for 2022 include the sell and replacement of 2003 Brush Truck, successful 4<sup>th</sup> of July event, updates to training room lights, host KU Firefighter 1 course, implement Junior Firefighter program to help with recruiting, smoke detector giveaway and officer training.

### **Property/Parks Department**

Highlights from Director Randy Coble report:

Participated in and oversight of City Hall front office and Police Department remodel to improve function and safety, the addition of restroom at Reeves Park, City welcome sign remodel off High School Street by Dollar General, remodel of animal control shelter.

Old public works building demo and new rebuild. Plumbers and electricians should have 'rough in' complete by mid-January.

Skid steer added to fleet.

Staff mowed 91 code enforcement properties and sprayed for mosquitos 14 times. Calibration of sprayer and adjusting application process saved the City more than 50% in chemical costs.

High School Street project provided mill and 7" asphalt overlay to the street and added sidewalk from Maple Street to Dollar General as well as new curb/gutter and ADA crosswalks in the area.

2021 paving project covered 21 city blocks utilizing 2,875 tons of asphalt and 80' of curb and gutter.

Many park additions and upgrades including donation of splash pad and restroom at Discovery Park, concession stand/restrooms at Eddington Park, and sidewalk/walking trail at Eddington Park

Cemetery update – 17 burials; 48 niche double sided columbarium ordered and set for 2022 delivery.

Staff participated in Park School touch a truck event, Coffeyville Community College equipment operator training, CDL certification class, KU Public Management Supervisor Training Program worked in conjunction with Cherokee County staff to clear vegetation at VFW pond.

Department projects and goals for 2022 include completion of Public Works building and animal shelter projects, find funding opportunities for community building updates, splash pad grand opening, cemetery beautification and columbarium delivery/setup, 2022 street mill and overlay project, continued work on Safe Routes to School and CCLIP projects.

### **Community/Economic Development**

Highlights from Coordinator Jake Letner report:

Development and oversight of Columbus Land Bank, consisting of a five-member board appointed by the Mayor with goal to transform blighted/abandoned properties in Columbus into productive use. The Land Bank transferred deeds to three properties in 2021.

Entering year 2/4 of Pathways to a Healthy Kansas Initiative. Over \$150,000 of funding has been awarded to the community for public health improvements to date.

First year for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and DUFB (Double Up Food Bucks) programs through the Columbus Farmers Market. Nearly \$4,000 in additional sales were created through these projects.

Pilot year for Exterior Home Improvement Micro Grant. City matched half of an approved exterior home improvement project up to \$500. Data shows every dollar of the City's investment was returned to the community through products or services rendered by local businesses.

Worked with Cherokee County K-State Research and Extension Office to provide a composting bin for public use.

Provided oversight of City ARPA funds (The American Rescue Plan). This allocation provides funding for projects related to COVID relief and infrastructure.

More than \$250,000 in grants awarded in 2020-2021.

Department projects and goals for 2022 include Community Building improvements, stormwater planning and management, housing, and more grants for capital improvements.

### **Administration/Clerk Office**

Highlights from City Clerk Chancellor report:

Human Resource aspect centered on training opportunities for all City staff and employee engagement, enrichment, and retention. Diversity/Inclusion education, employee lunches, a summer pool bash and holiday party were a few of the 2021 activities meant to grow relationships and community with staff and between departments. An employee Facebook page and city email accounts were added to enhance lines of communication.

Working with third party on employee wage study. Referral bonus for hard to fill positions. Streamlined hiring process. Improved employee benefit package with dental and life additions. Continuing education on COVID protocols for employee and community benefit.

2021 revenue numbers show municipal court fees and fines are rebounding from a 2020 drop coming in just under \$25,000. Court was not able to meet regularly in 2020 due to COVID. 2021 utility receipts just over \$1,500,000 are slightly up over the last two years.

Using five-pronged communications strategy to reach residents/customers including City Facebook page, marquee, utility bill newsletter, local newspaper, and City website.

Partnered with Kansas Department of Children and Families through an Emergency Water Assistance Program to help residents keep water and sewer service active.

Customer service enhancements include providing 24/7 payment access through phone system/IVR capabilities and website. Utility payment options listed by usage include, ACH (monthly debit to checking/savings account), check, cash, or credit/debit card. Even though cards are the least popular form of payment, data shows that customers choosing to pay with a credit/debit card has more than doubled in 2021 and is closing in on the number of customers who pay with cash.

Staff are involved in several community organizations including but not limited to Columbus PRIDE, Chamber of Commerce and Cherokee County Economic Development Corporation.

Increased City Council communication and transparency through council laptops, digital council packets, city email addresses, Governing Body Handbook, new council orientation and zoom virtual meeting option.

Department projects and goals for 2022 include revising or developing Employee Handbook, expanding on employee retention program, implementing recommendations from the wage study as approved by council, and implementing a records management system.

### **Staff Reports-**

#### **New Business –**

**I.1a. Consider 3% salary increase for City Administrator Daniela Rivas based on her annual evaluation retro to October 15, 2021.** Pryor moved to approve a 3% salary increase for City Administrator Rivas based on her annual evaluation retro to October 15 2021. Doherty seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Long, Pryor. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

**I.3a. Consider approval of Columbus Fire Department use of City's EIN to open a checking account for the fireworks fund.** Farstvedt moved to allow the Columbus Fire Department use of the City's EIN to open a checking account for the fireworks fund. Long seconded the motion. Fire Chief Burton explained that monies are being donated to the department and he would like to have a separate checking account apart from the Smokey Fund and needs an EIN number to do so. Mayor Spieth

explained several years ago the City had several bank accounts and they moved away from this and went to one bank and fund accounting. This is why the department needs approval to open this account. Daniels noted the Police Department Reserves had a separate bank account years ago and were instructed by the auditor to put these monies in the main City account. Administrator Rivas explained this was ran by the City's current auditor and as long as good accounting practices are in place it is ok as these funds are being donated to the fire department for a specific purpose. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Long, Pryor. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

**I.4a. Consider supplemental agreement with BG Consultants, Inc. for preparation of easement descriptions in the amount of \$1,000 to be paid from Street Reserves – 2022 SRTS project.** Letner explained the Safe Routes To School project beginning next year will need four to five easements that were not originally anticipated and recommends BG Consultants to do the work as the City does not have the expertise. BG Consultants will do the legal work and City staff will obtain the signatures. Pryor moved to approve supplemental agreement with BG Consultants, Inc. for preparation of easement descriptions in the amount of \$1,000 to be paid from Street Reserves - 2022 SRTS project. Doherty seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Long, Pryor. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

#### **Old Business –**

**A. Consider renaming Discovery Park.** Mayor Spieth explained Discovery Park is where the new splash pad is located, and a previous discussion was to rename the park to honor those who contributed funds for the splash pad. Rivas noted the H & H Splash Park name was mentioned in the previous discussion, but the minutes were not clear whether the intent was to name just the splash pad or rename the entire park. Columbus Telephone Company donated the park to the City several years ago. Records are not clear where the name Discovery Park came from, and the park was never officially named by City ordinance. City staff will confer with Columbus Telephone to see if they have objections to the rename and report back to council.

Columbus Police Chief Jason Daniels presented a \$500 donation to Fire Chief Steven Burton for the 2022 Fireworks Campaign. Daniels noted the contribution is coming out of the department VIN account which is funded from the City's portion of the vehicle identification number inspections and not from the general department budget which is funded by taxpayer dollars.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Doherty moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. Long seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Long, Pryor. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.


#### **Meetings:**

##### **City Council Orientation**

**Tuesday, December 21, 2021 @ 9:00 a.m.**

##### **Council Meeting**

**Monday, January 3, 2022 @ 6:30 p.m.**

  
Cherri Chancellor, City Clerk

