

CITY OF COLUMBUS  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
November 21, 2022  
6:30 P.M.

**ATTENDANCE**

The City Council of Columbus, Kansas met November 21, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. presided over by Mayor Grant Spieth. Council members present: Kathy Doherty, Stephanie Farstvedt, Sammie Opela, Tom Pryor, Lindsay Shoemaker. Council members absent: None.

Councilmember Tom Pryor provided the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Spieth opened the budget amendment hearing at 6:32 p.m. he discussed that maintenance was needed on the water towers, the recreation commission, and pathways were the reason for the amendment. He 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 6:35 p.m.

**APPROVE 2022 BUDGET AMENDMENT**

Doherty moved to approve the 2022 budget amendment as presented. Pryor seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Pryor moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of Appropriation Ordinance #22-584, Treasurer Report – November 2022, Municipal Court Docket Summary – November 14, 2022. Farstvedt seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Janet Longtin of 301 N. Highschool Ave, spoke to council regarding her concerns that individuals are gathering cats and taking them outside of town. She stated that a group of residents have been gathering cats, getting them fixed and then taking them to a no-kill shelter to be rehomed. She said it is very important to her that these cats have a home and not to be taken into the country for animals to kill them. She requested that council consider opening a cat shelter in town or adding cats to the current Animal Shelter.

Chief Daniels spoke to our current TNR program and explained the benefits, he also informed Ms. Longtin that our current facility is only licensed for dogs and that funding would need to be sought after for a new facility. Mayor Spieth asked for this topic to be discussed at the next work session.

**Staff Reports-**

**City Administrator Report -**

- Still taking applications for the planning commission.
- December 2<sup>nd</sup> is the deadline for offers on land.
- Councilmember Opela requested that the opportunity be published again as once no longer seemed sufficient.

### **Community Development Coordinator Report -**

- Continuing to look for grant opportunities.
- Working on finding and retaining donors within the community.
- Meeting with Pathways and coordinators, pledge for Farmer's Market.

### **Police Chief Report –**

- Pep rally and playoff game had no issues.
- Working on Square9 records management.
- Delivering turkeys received from the Sherriff's Office to deliver to families in need.

### **Property & Parks Director Report -**

- Received RFP's for 2023 Street Project, will present at next work session.
- Curb replacement started.
- Leaf pick up behind schedule due to crew assisting with valve replacement.
- Public Works building almost complete.

### **Utilities Director Report –**

- Central School project complete.
- Hydrant fixed in front of City Hall.
- Water meters around square stuffed with insulation to prevent freezing.
- Trash pickup for Wednesday will be completed on Thursday this week and the trash pickup for Friday will be completed on Monday for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Resident Wiley Sanders who resides on Park St. dug beside a manhole, busted a pipe by the manhole resulting in raw sewage on the ground. KDHE was contacted to ensure the City stays in compliance. We received a proposal from Goins Enterprises in the amount of \$12,800 to have the area repaired. With the upcoming forecast predicting a significant amount of rainfall this repair is a top priority. Mayor Spieth questioned whether the proper steps were taken by the landowner, Davis stated that he had not. Letner stated that he would like to approach the landowner for reimbursement of the costs.

Opela asked for clarification regarding the land this took place on and if it was standard practice to have a homeowner digging close to our lines. Letner stated the City of Baxter Springs was holding a meeting to implement a process to prevent these types of situations from occurring. He stated he would like to do something similar. Opela asked if this type of service could be offered by adding a charge onto the tap fee. Letner expressed concerns with manpower but would look into options. Mayor Spieth stated that by not following the rules they should be responsible to pay for what they hit. Pryor mentioned that the resident's homeowner's insurance might help with the costs, but it is their responsibility to pay for the damages. Davis recommended having Goins make the repair, the manhole that was affected is only one away from where the INI issues were occurring prior. The quote reflects utilizing pumps in another manhole to bypass the area that they will be working in.

**Consider quote from Goins Enterprises, Inc. in the amount of \$12,800 for emergency sewer and manhole repair.** Shoemaker moved to approve the quote from Goins Enterprises, Inc. in the amount of \$12,800 for emergency sewer and manhole repair. Farstvedt seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting Nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Utilities Director, Zachary Davis, informed the council that he turned in his resignation on Friday citing his return to the Cherokee County's Sherriff's Office and that he feels that he belongs in the First Responder world. Mayor Spieth stated he was sorry to hear that. Davis further stated that he feels this is what is best for his family.

#### **New Business –**

Letner discussed the concerns with the quoted 21% increase of the employee health insurance renewal with the grandfathered Blue Cross Blue Shield plan. With this large of an increase, it would make raises and capital projects more difficult but would be manageable. He did inform the council that after meeting with staff, their preference was to maintain the existing plan due to the excellent coverage it provides.

Opela stated that with the additional cost of \$80,000 to the City she looked into the numbers, and it will actually cost the employees if they elect the family plan. The new plan with Unified Health would be a savings monthly if they did not have to pay the out-of-pocket maximum. She also stated that she has a problem with the staff raises already projected in the 2023 budget, the amount that was already paid in 2022 in benefits and then by asking to pay this additional \$80,000 in insurance, two extra holidays and then also asking for Christmas bonuses and that the insurance was discussed with staff prior to discussing it with council making them the bad guys. Letner cited the reason he discussed the insurance with staff prior was to get feedback regarding the risk for higher out of pocket or if they would prefer the larger premiums.

Assistant City Clerk, Erin Williams, furthered the discussion by informing council that most employees utilize the employee only or employee and child plans, rather than the family plan. Police Chief, Jason Daniels, stated from a department head standpoint he has already had to reduce staff due to the wage study and that his department suffers from wage compression and that he does not feel this is feasibly sustainable. Farstvedt questioned how the provider network was compared to the current plan, Letner stated the network should be similar. Opela stated that she wants what is best for employees, but it can't be at the expense of the taxpayers as that is who she represents. Shoemaker raised concerns that the new plan could potentially bankrupt someone if they were faced with paying the \$10,000 out of pocket, along with the current plan being used for employee retention.

Property and Parks Director, Randy Coble, sympathized with council regarding how difficult this decision is. He informed council that from the highest to lowest paid staff at public works they unanimously agreed that they would rather have the higher expense each month to ensure they had the lower out of pocket. Williams added that historically the grandfathered plan has been a highly used recruitment tool when interviewing candidates. Pryor added that healthcare is over utilized due to the culture we live in, but he was concerned with where the City would have to pull from to pay for the plan.

**I.1.A. Consider employee health insurance renewal.** Opela moved to approve Unified Health Plan for the 2023 employee health insurance. Pryor seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor. Voting nay: Shoemaker. Motion carried 4-1.

**I.1.B. Consider employee holiday bonuses.** Opela moved to approve employee holiday bonuses. Farstvedt seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

**I.3.A. Consider closing Maple Street from Pennsylvania Street to Kansas Street beginning at 4:45 – 7:00 pm for the Chamber Christmas festivities and parade on Wednesday, November 30, 2022.** Farstvedt moved to close Maple Street from Pennsylvania Street to Kansas Street beginning at 4:45 – 7:00 pm for the Chamber Christmas festivities and parade on Wednesday, November 30, 2022, Doherty seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

**H.5.B. Consider purchase of 6” EZ valve from Schulte Supply.** Shoemaker moved to approve the purchase of a 6” EZ valve in the amount of \$7,9795.48 from Schulte Supply. Pryor seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: Opela. Motion carried 4-1.

**H.5.A. Consider proposals from Water Treatment Plant Feasibility Study RFP.** Shoemaker moved to approve the proposal for water treatment plant feasibility study from Allgeier, Martin, and Associates in the amount of \$56,991 to be paid from ARPA funds. Doherty seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

**Executive session for discussion prior to acquisition of real property within the City limits.** Shoemaker called for a 15-minute executive session at 8:29 p.m. for discussion prior to acquisition of real property within the City limits with the Council, Mayor, City Attorney, and City Administrator in attendance. Meeting to reconvene at 7:44 p.m. Doherty seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Regular session 8:44 p.m.  
No action taken.

**ADJOURNMENT**

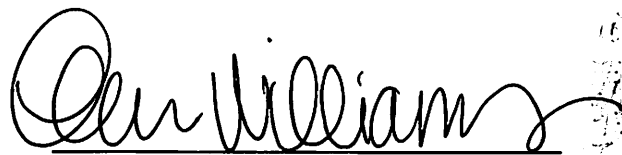
Doherty moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Farstvedt seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Farstvedt, Opela, Pryor, Shoemaker. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

**Meetings:**

**City Office Closed- Thanksgiving Day - November 24, 2022 & November 25, 2022**

**City Council Work Session – November 28, 2022, 6:30 p.m.**

**City Council Meeting – December 5, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.**

  
*Erin Williams, Assistant City Clerk*

