

CITY OF COLUMBUS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
July 15, 2024
5:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

The City Council of Columbus, Kansas met July 15, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. presided over by Mayor Grant Spieth. Council members present: Kathy Doherty, Laura Epler, Tom Pryor, Wiley Sanders and Lindsay Shoemaker. Council members absent: none.

Melvin Myers of Quapaw Free Will Baptist Church provided the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSENT AGENDA

Doherty moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of Appropriation Ordinance #24-631 – July 15, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes – July 1, 2024, Municipal Court Docket Summary – July 8, 2024, and Treasurer’s Report – June 30, 2024. Pryor seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

STAFF REPORTS

City Administrator – City Administrator Jake Letner reported that the 2025 budget would be discussed later in the meeting.

City Clerk – City Clerk Ruth Hutley announced the City Employees Pool Party would be August 1, 2024, from 5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the city pool.

Fire Department – Fire Chief Steven Burton shared that he and City Administrator Jake Letner have been gathering financing information from local banks for a tanker truck that he is interested in bidding on that will be sold by the Joplin, MO Fire Department through a sealed bid process.

-Chief Burton reported a good turn-out for the annual Freedom Fest on July 6.

-Chief Burton reported there are currently no burn bans in effect for the city.

Police Department – Police Chief Kyle Clark reported that the police department will be participating in the Cherokee County Emergency Management’s active shooter training this Friday at Columbus High School.

-Chief Clark reported that Mindy Mayfield has recently contacted him regarding a program that would expand upon the City’s current trap, neuter & release (TNR) program for feral cats. Chief Clark said he will be meeting with her soon to learn more details.

Public Works – Superintendent Randy Coble reminded the council that Highway 69 is currently closed for repairs at the railroad crossing near Country Road from July 15 – 17.

-Coble reported city crews will be performing patching repairs on a couple of streets the following day.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Resolution 659 – Intent to Issue Taxable IRBs to Crossland Construction Co., Inc.

Ray Barmby of Crossland Construction Co., Inc., shared plans for an expansion to Crossland Construction’s corporate offices. Barmby said the new addition will be a two-story, 7500 sq. ft. space, accommodating 30 new full-time jobs in the community with a projected completion date of fall 2024. Crossland Construction Company, Inc. requested the City issue taxable industrial revenue bonds

(IRBs) in the maximum principal amount of \$3,000,000 to finance the project. City Administrator Jake Letner added that a cost benefit analysis has been performed, pursuant to the city's tax abatement policy, showing the project benefits far outweigh its costs. A full copy of the report was made available at the meeting for review. Letner indicated that no new city infrastructure would be necessary to facilitate this development. After discussion, Pryor made a motion to approve Resolution No. 659, expressing the intent of the City to issue taxable industrial revenue bonds in the maximum principal amount of \$3,000,000 to finance the construction of the Crossland Construction Company, Inc.'s new expansion. The motion was seconded by Shoemaker. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

2025 Budget Discussion.

City Administrator Jake Letner opened the discussion regarding the 2025 budget. The city experienced a nearly 57% decrease in the state assessed utilities valuation. Letner inquired about the sharp decrease and learned that the reduction is related to a series of clerical errors made by Liberty Utilities over the last two years, wherein the state assessed utility value was inflated in 2023 and reduced the following year. Letner advised that he has requested a written statement from Liberty Utilities explaining specifically what happened and has been told he will receive that information by July 16. The decrease in the state assessed utilities resulted in a 6% decrease in the value of each mil. Letner explained while this will impact the city's budget, he believes with just a few small changes most of the items previously discussed in 2025 will still be able to be implemented. Letner recommended that the City Council hold its budget hearing at the following meeting, opting not to exceed the revenue neutral rate, recommending a budget of 59.825 mils for 2025.

Health Insurance Mid-Year Update – Bukaty Companies.

Joe Holdenried and Derek Dick of Bukaty Companies presented a mid-year update of the city's employee health insurance plan. A presentation was given to the City Council regarding expenses YTD and future projections. Based on plan performance, Bukaty estimates that the fixed costs would remain the same next year or be slightly reduced.

Updates on Land Transfer – 0 E. Merle Evans Drive.

Carolyn Eddington was present on behalf of the Columbus Housing Inc. Board of Directors. She stated that the board was agreeable to selling the parcel at 0. E. Merle Evans Drive, in the amount of \$4,500 per acre for the construction of a housing development. The Board would like to ensure that a minimum of 70 feet be placed from the east end of the Cherry Creek Townhomes to the west end of the new development. The board insisted that a survey be done to ensure that the property transfer controls for this variable. Developer Jeremy Strup was present and answered questions from the council regarding the project. After discussion, it was determined that a survey of the parcel would be necessary to establish property lines and determine the acreage amount. Shoemaker made a motion to authorize City Administrator Jake Letner to order a survey of the parcel. Epler seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider Authorizing the Condemnation of the Structure Located at 326 N. Magnolia.

Doherty moved to proceed with the condemnation of the structure located at 326 N. Magnolia and authorized Mayor Grant Spieth to review and sign the resolution. The motion was seconded by Shoemaker. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider Authorizing the Condemnation of the Structure Located at 327 N. Florida.

Epler moved to proceed with the condemnation of the structure located at 327 N. Florida pending any liens and authorized Mayor Grant Spieth to review and sign the resolution. The motion was seconded by Shoemaker. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider Authorizing the Condemnation of the Structure Located at 526 W. Walnut.

Doherty moved to proceed with the condemnation of the structure located at 526 W. Walnut and authorized Mayor Grant Spieth to review and sign the resolution. The motion was seconded by Pryor. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion of Potential Demolitions Grant Opportunity.

Mayor Grant Spieth led the discussion regarding a potential demolitions grant opportunity that was recently brought to his attention. The goal would be to remove unsightly structures with the voluntary compliance of the owner and funded by the donor of the grant. After discussion, the council expressed interest in the opportunity and asked Mayor Spieth to gather more information from the donor.

Consider a Permanent Change to the Start Time for Regular City Council Meetings & Work Sessions.

Shoemaker made a motion to change the council meeting start time from 6:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. The motion was seconded by Epler. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0. City Attorney Barbara Wright will draft an Ordinance changing the start time for all regular council meetings and work sessions.

Discussion of Abating Tall Grass & Noxious Weeds on Railroad Property and Easements.

City Administrator Jake Letner opened the discussion regarding tall grass and weeds on railroad property. City Superintendent Randy Coble said he had been in contact with the county noxious weed manager who was going to reach out to the BNSF railroad. City Attorney Barbara Wright stated that city crews are not allowed to go on any of the railroad property or easements to mow.

Consider Resolution 660 – Providing Financial Support for the Crossland Housing Initiative.

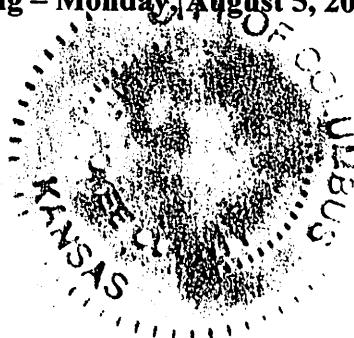
Doherty made a motion to approve Resolution 660 stating the city’s intent to participate and partner with Crossland Construction Company in Phase 1 of the Columbus Housing Initiative being developed west of Riverside Drive and south of Lake Street. Shoemaker seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Doherty moved to adjourn the meeting. Shoemaker seconded the motion. Voting aye: Doherty, Shoemaker, Pryor, Sanders and Epler. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Upcoming Events:

- **City Council Meeting – Monday, August 5, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.**



Ruth Hutley
 Ruth Hutley, City Clerk