

CITY OF COLUMBUS  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
August 19, 2024  
5:30 P.M.

**ATTENDANCE**

The City Council of Columbus, Kansas met August 19, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. presided over by Mayor Grant Spieth. Council members present: Laura Epler, Lindsay Shoemaker, Kathy Doherty and Tom Pryor (via Zoom). Council members absent: Wiley Sanders.

Kathy Doherty provided the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Jean Pritchett from the Columbus Chamber of Commerce approached the Council with a request to block off streets during the chamber Business Expo, Columbus Day Festival, Halloween Walk, and Christmas Parade.

Shoemaker made a motion to close Pine Street from Kansas to Pennsylvania on September 19 between the hours of 2-7 pm for the Chamber Business Expo and Farmer’s Market. The motion was seconded by Epler. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

Shoemaker made a motion to close the streets around the city square, Pine Street from Delaware to Kansas and Maple Street from Kansas to Pennsylvania on October 12 between the hours of 5 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. for the Columbus Day Festival. Epler seconded the motion. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

Shoemaker made a motion to close Pine Street from Kansas to Pennsylvania on October 31 from 5 – 7 p.m. for the Halloween Walk. The motion was seconded by Epler. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

Shoemaker made a motion to close Maple Street between Kansas and Pennsylvania on December 4 between the hours of 4:30 – 7 p.m. for the Christmas Parade. The motion was seconded by Epler. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Doherty moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of Appropriation Ordinance #24-633 – August 19, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes – August 5, 2024, Municipal Court Docket Summary – August 12, 2024. The motion was seconded by Shoemaker. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

**STAFF REPORTS**

**City Administrator** – City Administrator Jake Letner reported that the drafting of a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Columbus is progressing. Letner said there was a meeting with Confluence last week and another meeting is planned for August 29<sup>th</sup>. A public open house is planned for the end of September.

Letner reported that Earles Engineering began work on the survey land last week at Merle Evans Drive. This survey was necessary to determine property lines for a proposed new housing addition at that location.

Letner reminded the council that another Safe Routes to School construction project will commence in 2025. Sidewalks will be constructed on West Maple St. between Washington and High School Ave. and on East Sycamore St. from First Ave to 6<sup>th</sup> St. The bid letting for the project will be in October. Letner reminded the Council that the next City Council meeting will be Tuesday, Sept. 3 since City offices will be closed on Sept. 2 for the Labor Day holiday.

**City Clerk** – City Clerk Ruth Hutley gave a year-in-review update on the swimming pool. Hutley reported payroll for the 2024 season was 42% under budget due to having fewer lifeguards and reduced hours. Hutley reported the pool brought in \$21,000 for the season compared to \$22,000 in 2023. There are plans to install increased seating and shading before the 2025 season. Hutley suggested the council consider increasing the pool employees’ wages for next year. Hutley commended accounting clerk, Rebekka Sanchez. Sanchez, who knows sign language recently assisted a new utility customer who was hearing impaired. The customer was very appreciative of Sanchez’s ability to communicate with him.

**Fire Department** – Fire Chief Steven Burton reported the department has responded to 407 emergency calls year-to-date.

Chief Burton said the department plans to keep the Ford Expedition that previously they had planned to sell, as an emergency response vehicle. He said the vehicle would be more efficient than a larger truck to operate. The Expedition would only be used in extreme emergency situations when there was no other means to transport from the scene. City Administrator Jake Letner added that the city’s liability insurance agent had been contacted about adding extra coverage for emergency transports and was told it would only increase the city’s insurance premium by approximately \$400 per year. Chief Burton shared that the Columbus Fire Department had been contacted that morning that they were the winning bidder in an auction for a tanker truck owned by the City of Joplin. Burton said the department should receive the truck soon.

**Police Department** – Police Chief Kyle Clark reported Officer Arlo Lewke was recently appointed School Resource Officer and began his new duties on August 15. Officer Lewke will be stationed at the Highland Education Center.

Chief Clark reported Preston Hosier was selected for the open sergeant position with the department. Clark added that both Lewke and Hosier have over 5 years’ service with the city police department. Chief Clark reported that Officer Denise Burns has taken over Code Enforcement duties.

**Public Works** – City Superintendent Randy Coble gave an update on the Lakewood housing addition, reporting that Crossland Construction was currently cutting the new street.

Coble reported the public works department would be returning to its regular work schedule of 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. beginning Aug. 26.

Coble announced the citywide Fall cleanup is scheduled for September 23 through Oct. 4.

Coble reported summer laborer, Jeret Best, would be continuing to work part-time through a work study program with Columbus High School.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Consider Approval of the City of Columbus’ Demolition Grant Program.**

Mayor Grant Spieth opened the discussion regarding a proposed voluntary structure demolition program. Mayor Spieth said an anonymous benefactor has approached the city with a desire to donate funds to the city to be used for the demolition of unsafe and unsightly structures. The benefactor requested that the city implement a program to facilitate the process. Mayor Spieth explained that the property owner would retain ownership of the property, and the program is strictly to help property

owners who may not be able to afford the cost of demolition themselves. After discussion, Shoemaker made a motion to approve the City of Columbus' Demolition Grant Program. The motion was seconded by Doherty. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Doherty called for a five-minute executive session at 6:27 p.m. for personnel matters of non-elected personnel to discuss employee discipline with the Council, Mayor, City Administrator, City Superintendent, City Attorney and City Clerk in attendance. Epler seconded the motion. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

Regular session resumed at 6:32 p.m.  
No action taken.

Shoemaker made a motion to terminate the employment of David Spatafora. The motion was seconded by Doherty. Voting aye: Epler, Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Doherty moved to adjourn the meeting. Shoemaker seconded the motion. Voting aye: Shoemaker, Pryor, Doherty and Epler. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

### **Upcoming Events:**

- **Labor Day Holiday – City Offices Closed – Monday, September 2, 2024.**
- **City Council Meeting – Tuesday, September 3, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.**
- **Columbus Land Bank Meeting – Wednesday, September 4, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.**

  
Ruth Hutley, City Clerk

