

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 14, 2020**

The following are the minutes for the regular meeting of the City Council held at 7:00 pm on Monday, December 14, 2020 in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 590 40th Avenue N.E., Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Schmitt called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Schmitt; Councilmember Buesgens; Councilmember Murzyn, Jr.; Councilmember Novitsky; Councilmember Williams

Also Present: Kelli Bourgeois, City Manager; Aaron Chirpich, Community Development Director; Kevin Hansen, Public Works Director; James Hoeft, City Attorney; KT Jacobs; Joe Kloiber, Finance Director; Jacqueline Mulder; Will Rottler, Communications and Events Specialist; Ben Sandell, Communications Coordinator; Charlie Thompson, Fire Chief; Nicole Tingley, City Clerk

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MISSION STATEMENT, Read by Mayor Schmitt

Our mission is to provide the highest quality public services. Services will be provided in a fair, respectful and professional manner that effectively address changing citizen and community needs in a fiscally-responsible and customer-friendly manner.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Novitsky, to approve the agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

PROCLAMATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, RECOGNITION, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GUESTS

A. "2020 Citizen of the Year Award" Presentation

Mayor Schmitt recognized the work of Pat Sowada and announced her as the City of Columbia Heights "2020 Citizen of the Year Award." The plaque was presented to daughter Jacqueline Mulder, who accepted it on behalf of the family.

B. "2020 Employee of the Year Award" Presentation

Mayor Schmitt announced Fire Chief Charlie Thompson as the City of Columbia Heights "2020 Employee of the Year," recognizing his ongoing work, especially in regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. Chief Thompson accepted the award and expressed his thanks.

C. Recognition of 2020 Census Complete Count Committee Chair, KT Jacobs

Mayor Schmitt read and presented to KT Jacobs the U.S. Census Bureau's certificate of recognition honoring her for the work she accomplished in overseeing the City's 2020 Census. Ms. Jacobs accepted it and expressed appreciation to committee members for their excellent work.

D. Recognition of Councilmember Bobby Williams for 20 Years of Service

Mayor Schmitt thanked Councilmember Bobby Williams for his service to the City of Columbia Heights and presented him with a plaque recognizing his 20 years, which he accepted and said it had been his privilege to serve.

E. Recognition of Mayor Donna Schmitt for Ten Years of Service

Councilmember Novitsky thanked Mayor Donna Schmitt for her service to the City of Columbia Heights and presented her with a plaque recognizing her ten years of service. She accepted it and thanked everyone who had supported her, especially in helping make the new City Hall come into fruition.

F. 100th Anniversary Celebration Update

Coordinator Sandell and Specialist Rottler reported that 100th Anniversary Celebration items are available for purchase at City Hall. They include a commemorative calendar (\$10), poster (nine options at \$5 each), mug (\$5), lapel pin (\$5) and tee-shirt (\$10). 135 calendars have been sold to date, and 41 City-logo banners have been sponsored by local businesses and organizations and will be displayed on Central Avenue in March. The coloring contest will begin on January 6, with 8,100 coloring pages distributed to Northeaster Newspaper and Northeast Bank will provide prizes for various age groups. A snow sculpture contest will be held if there is sufficient snowfall, and historical City stories will be shared weekly on social media channels.

Public Works is assisting in flooding the west side of the bridge at Huset Park for the “CH Snowblast” skating event 3:00-6:00 pm on January 30, partnering with Dave’s Sport Shop on skate rentals and skate sharpening. Attendees registering by December 31 will be entered into a free drawing for skates.

Specialist Rottler also reported that a City resident is creating an audio version of the Bootstrap book and the City recently received a grant (\$9,000 estimate) from the Minnesota Historical Society to obtain additional historical information. Plans are being made for a “Music in the Park” event in 2021, and a list of bands is being created.

On a personal note as a long-time City resident, he thanked Councilmember Williams and Mayor Schmitt for their service.

CONSENT AGENDA

(These items are considered to be routine by the City Council and will be enacted as part of the Consent Agenda by one motion. Items removed from consent agenda approval will be taken up as the next order of business.)

Motion by Councilmember Novitsky, seconded by Councilmember Williams, to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

1. Approve October 5, 2020 Special City Council Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the City Council Special City Council Meeting of October 5, 2020.

2. Approve October 5, 2020 Minutes of the 2019 Concrete Alley Improvement Assessment Hearing

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the 2019 Concrete Alley Improvement Assessment Hearing of October 5, 2020.

3. Approve October 5, 2020 Minutes of the 2020 Seal Coat Program Assessment Hearing

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the 2020 Seal Coat Program Assessment Hearing of October 5, 2020.

4. Approve October 5, 2020 Minutes of the 2020 Delinquent Accounts Assessment Hearing

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the 2020 Delinquent Accounts Assessment Hearing of October 5, 2020.

5. Approve October 5, 2020 City Council Work Session Minutes

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the City Council Work Session of October 5, 2020.

6. Approve November 12, 2020 Special City Council Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the Special City Council Meeting of November 12, 2020.

7. Approve November 23, 2020 City Council Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the City Council Meeting of November 23, 2020.

8. Accept September 28, 2020 EDA Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to accept the minutes of the EDA Meeting of September 28, 2020.

9. Accept October 5, 2020 EDA Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to accept the minutes of the EDA Meeting of October 5, 2020.

10. Accept November 4, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to accept the minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting of November 4, 2020.

11. Adopt Resolution No. 2020-111, Establishing Precinct and Polling Locations for the 2021 Election Year

MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution No. 2020-111, there being ample copies available to the public.

MOTION: Move to adopt Resolution No. 2020-111, establishing Precinct and Polling Locations for the 2021 Election Year.

12. Adopt Resolution No. 2020-112, Approving the City of Columbia Heights Fee Schedule for 2021

MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution No. 2020-112, there being ample copies available to the public.

MOTION: Move to adopt Resolution No. 2020-112, approving the City of Columbia Heights Fee Schedule for 2021.

13. Cancel December 28, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting

MOTION: Move to cancel the December 28, 2020 Regular City Council Meeting

14. Authorize School Resource Officer Contract with Columbia Heights School District

MOTION: Move to authorize the Mayor and the Police Chief to enter into a Joint Powers Agreement with Columbia Heights Public Schools for the provision of a Police School Resource Officer Program as stipulated in the Joint Powers Agreement for the period of January 1, through December 31, 2021.

15. Adopt Resolution No. 2020-116, Transfer of Funds to the Fire Department 2020 Budget

MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution No. 2020-116, there being ample copies available to the public.

MOTION: Move to adopt Resolution No. 2020-116, being a resolution amending the 2020 Fire Department budget.

16. Approval of Attached List of Rental Housing Applications

MOTION: Move to approve the items listed for rental housing license applications for December 14, 2020 in that they have met the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code.

17. Approve Business License Applications

MOTION: Move to approve the items as listed on the Business License Agenda for December 14, 2020 as presented.

18. Review of Bills

MOTION: Move that in accordance with Minnesota Statute 412.271, subd. 8, the City Council has reviewed the enclosed list of claims paid by check and by electronic funds transfer in the amount of \$1,244,184.18.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

19. Adopt Resolution No. 2020-113, Levying and Adopting the Assessment for One Alley Light, Area No. 677-48

Director Hansen reported that adoption of the proposed resolution to levy for Area No. 677-48 would be for a 100-watt alley light to be installed on an existing poll that would impact five properties, with each property being assessed \$1.00 per month or \$12.00 per year. If Council approved, Public Works would then contact Xcel Energy and installation would occur in approximately three weeks.

Mayor Schmitt opened the public hearing.

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Williams, to close the public hearing and waive the reading of Resolution No. 2020-113, there being ample copies available to the public. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Williams, to adopt Resolution No. 2020-113, being a resolution levying and approving the assessment for an alley light, Area No. 677-48. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

20. Adopt Resolution No. 2020-114, Approving Final Plat for a 29-Unit Assisted Living Facility on the Property Located at PID 35-24-43-0125 (Unassigned Address), Known as the “Remnant Parcel”

Director Chirpich provided background information on the facility and its location and said the final plat is straightforward and would clean up an issue for the City, creating some drainage and utility easements that fit the project needs and make ready for a spring 2021 start-up. He reported that the Planning Commission had voted 6-0 for approval.

Mayor Schmitt opened the public hearing.

Motion by Councilmember Novitsky, seconded by Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., to close the public hearing and waive the reading of Resolution No. 2020-114, there being ample copies available to the public. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Motion by Councilmember Novitsky, seconded by Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., to adopt Resolution No. 2020-114, being a resolution of the City Council for the City of Columbia Heights, Minnesota, approving the Final Plat for Contractor Capital Company, LLC, subject to certain conditions of approval. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

21. Adopt Resolution No. 2020-115, Approving a Conditional Use Permit for a Wireless Communications Tower and Conditional Use Permit for a Fence Eight Feet in Height for the Property Located at 3939 Central Avenue NE

Director Chirpich provided background information about the site and tower and stated that the two Conditional Use Permits in Resolution No. 2020-115 would be for construction of the wireless tower and an eight-foot chain-link fence surrounding the base of the tower. It's a request made by the City and would relocate the cell antennas that were on the roof of the former bank building at 3989 Central. The primary tenant on the top of the tower would be AT&T and would be designed to hold up to three additional carriers. He reported that the Planning Commission had voted 4-2 for approval, with one member absent.

Councilmember Buesgens reported that the two disapproving Planning Commission members were concerned about the tower being located downtown and that it did not quite fit in the 40-year comprehensive plan.

Mayor Schmitt opened the public hearing.

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Williams, to close the public hearing and waive the reading of Resolution No. 2020-115, there being ample copies available to the public. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Williams, to adopt Resolution No. 2020-115, being a resolution of the City Council for the City of Columbia Heights, Minnesota, approving a Conditional Use Permit for a wireless communications tower and Conditional Use Permit for a fence eight feet in height for the property located at 3939 Central Avenue NE, subject to certain conditions of approval. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

22. Adopt Resolution No. 2020-117, Adopting a Budget for the Year 2021, Setting the City Levy, Approving the HRA Levy and Approving a Tax Rate Increase

Director Kloiber recapped the budget process and said Council had made one additional proposal after the preliminary budget, an increase in the property tax levy and in transfers to the Parks Capital Improvement Fund by \$100,000.00 each. This approximates the additional tax revenue available on property that will become subject to the general property tax levy for the first time in 2021, as a result of two Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts ending in 2020. The Council change was included and approved in Resolution No. 2020-77, and Resolution No. 220-117 is the same as that preliminary resolution. It is also the same amount used by Anoka County to prepare and mail notices of proposed 2021 property taxes to each property owner. After factoring in the TIF districts, the tax increase received by the City from this resolution would be 4.8% over 2020. However, the 2021 decrease in Metro Area Fiscal Disparities tax subsidy will shift a share of existing City property taxes to local property owners from other metro owners and the average 2021 increase for local property owners will be approximately 7.9%, though the valuation for apartments will likely be significantly higher and single-family houses may be less. He also reported that Anoka County is working to correct some errors in their Homestead exclusions for 2021.

Additionally, some technology costs initiated in late 2020 were omitted from the 2021 budget process, but the City has adequate fund balance on hand and will not use 2021 property taxes for any of these items.

The City Manager and Finance staff recommend approval of the proposed resolution.

Mayor Schmitt opened the public hearing.

Motion by Councilmember Novitsky, seconded by Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., to close the public hearing and waive the reading of Resolution No. 2020-117, there being ample copies available to the public. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Motion by Councilmember Novitsky, seconded by Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., to adopt Resolution No. 2020-117, being a resolution adopting a budget for the year 2021, setting the City levy, approving the HRA levy and approving a tax rate increase. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Ordinances and Resolutions

23. City Manager's Performance Evaluation Summary

Mayor Schmitt reported that the City Council had evaluated the City Manager's performance during the past year and concluded that she had done excellent work.

CITY COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Report of the City Council

Councilmember Novitsky said 2021 will be an improvement over 2020 and asked residents to continue to do good work.

Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Councilmember Williams thanked everyone for the privilege of serving the City and wished everyone a healthy and prosperous new year.

Councilmember Buesgens congratulated both Councilmember Williams and Mayor Schmitt on their retirements and wished them well. She has been helping the SACA Food Shelf with leftover produce and distributed them to local chicken keepers. The City forester in the Parks Department is overseeding a test section of sustainable bee lawn habitat and low-use, high-maintenance areas of park and utility grasslands and said she hopes the test areas will succeed and, if so, would like him to teach residents via seminars how to use that same type of grass. She wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Mayor Schmitt said this will be the last few weeks that she and Councilmember Williams serve and thanked everyone for their support and good wishes. She reported that she has a few upcoming Zoom meetings: League of Minnesota Cities board, Metro Cities on racial equity and MAC advisory committee.

Report of the City Manager

Manager Bourgeois congratulated Pat Sowada's family on her recognition and Chief Thompson on his. New IT programs will begin, including Code Red, and residents may register at "columbiaheightsmn.gov/alerts." Many generous donations were made to "Shop with a Cop," and the Police Department was able to help 29 families shop, helping 97 children. She thanked Mayor Schmitt and Councilmember Williams for their service, thanked the Council for their performance review of her and said staff are lucky for their input and assistance, especially in light of the pandemic and recent civil unrest.

Director Hansen reported funding was received for a joint project with the City of Minneapolis for reconstruction of 37th Avenue from Central to Stinson, and a dedicated website will be available the end of 2020 and virtual meeting hosted in January for public feedback.

He also thanked, on behalf of his department, Mayor Schmitt and Councilmember Williams for their service and assistance and said it was a pleasure to work with them.

Report of the City Attorney

Attorney Hoeft said it was a pleasure to work with Mayor Schmitt and Councilmember Williams, and he then wished everyone Happy Holidays.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Williams, to adjourn. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Tingley, City Clerk/Council Secretary